

Acculturative Stress in Latin-American Immigrants: An Assessment Proposal

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The aim of this paper was to develop an instrument to assess levels of stress experienced by Latin-American immigrants in their acculturative process in Spain. A sample of 692 immigrants from Latin America, aged 20 to 63 years, took part on this study (54.9% males and 45.1% females). A 24-item questionnaire with high reliability (.92) was elaborated. Six factors related to acculturative stress were found: 1) discrimination and rejection; 2) differences with the out-group (native Spaniards); 3) citizenship problems and legality; 4) problems concerning social relationships with other immigrants; 5) nostalgia and longing; and 6) family break-up. Our findings show that participants have a high level of stress related to nostalgia and longing, family break-up, and the perception of discrimination and rejection by natives. The usefulness of the instrument and its applications and restrictions are discussed.

Keywords: acculturative stress, latin-american immigrants, instrumental study.

El objetivo de este trabajo era desarrollar un instrumento de evaluación de los niveles de estrés vivenciados por inmigrantes hispanoamericanos durante el proceso de aculturación en España. En este estudio participaron un total de 692 inmigrantes de América Latina (54.9% hombres y 45.1% mujeres) de entre 20 y 63 años de edad. Mediante el procedimiento aplicado, se construyó un instrumento de 24 ítems con una elevada consistencia interna (.92) y con seis factores que hacen referencia a diversas fuentes de estrés de aculturación: 1) discriminación y el rechazo percibido de los autóctonos por el hecho de ser inmigrante; 2) diferencias con el exogrupo (autóctonos españoles); 3) problemas de ciudadanía y legalidad; 4) problemas de relaciones sociales con otros inmigrantes; 5) la añoranza y nostalgia respecto a personas del país de origen; y 6) la ruptura de la familia. Los datos obtenidos indican que los participantes presentan un elevado estrés relacionado con la añoranza, la ruptura de la familia y la percepción de discriminación y rechazo por parte de los autóctonos. Se discute la utilidad del instrumento, sus aplicaciones y limitaciones.

Palabras clave: estrés de aculturación, inmigrantes hispanoamericanos, estudio instrumental.

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Throughout the decade of the 1990s, the number of immigrants greatly increased in Spain (Almoguera, López, Miranda, & Valle, 2007; Bodega, Cebrián, & Martín, 2006; Díez, 2005; Moya & Puertas, 2008; Urdiales & Ferrer, 2005). Most of them came from Africa and Eastern Europe and, especially Latin America, which has become the most significant continental source in recent years. According to the Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración (Permanent Observatory of Immigration), which depends on the Ministerio de Trabajo e Inmigración (2008, Ministry of Work and Immigration), the number of foreigners with a residence card or permit in Spain in March, 2008, was 4,192,835, and 30.28% of them were of Latin-American origin (50.11%, if only the extra community foreigners are taken into account). Considering the data from the Census of the Region of Murcia, among the extra community foreigners, the Latin-Americans also comprise the most numerous group in Murcia: 50.56%.

The migratory process is an experience with many potential sources of stress. The importance of certain stressors has been underscored: communication problems, social and cultural differences, economic problems, unemployment or poorly paid jobs, social marginalization, perception of discrimination, and, especially, the loss of social and family support (Hovey, 1999; Vargas-Willis & Cervantes, 1987). Some cognitive factors have been proposed to modulate the impact of these sources of stress: the perception of freedom of choice (forced vs. non-forced migration) and the expectations about the conditions of adaptation and one's capacity to deal with the process as a whole (Zarza & Sobrino, 2007). Although language difficulties have usually been emphasized as an important source of stress for Latin-Americans in the USA (Arcia, Skinner, Bailey, & Correa, 2001; Cervantes, Padilla, & Salgado de Snyder, 1991; Cruz, Marshall, Bowling, & Villaveces, 2008; Rodríguez, Myers, Bingham, Flores, & Garcia-Hernandez, 2002), in the case of Spain, its potential as a stressor is much weaker. In this sense, there is only some discomfort in the first weeks of the stay related to three aspects: Spaniards' louder volume when speaking, more informality in relationships, and occasional misunderstandings due to the use of different words or words with different meanings (Ruiz, Torrente, Ramírez, & Benito, 2005).

Some of these stressors, and particularly those related to differences between the country of origin and the host country in rules, beliefs, roles, and cultural values, usually produce a strong demand for the immigrant's initial adaptation, which has been called "cultural shock" (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). This situation can be understood as a first phase of a much more extensive process that involves cultural and psychological change, the result of contact between cultural groups and their individual members, and which leads both parts (natives and immigrants) to have to adapt mutually: This is the "acculturation process" (for a more extensive description, see Berry, 2005).

Research of the effects of the acculturation process has followed two approaches (Berry, 1997). On the one hand, there are changes in the repertory of subjects' habitual behavior that facilitates the adjustment of the individual to society and that are carried out without any trouble, and that involve selective, spontaneous, or deliberate changes. Therefore, they can be considered adaptive and they emerge mainly from changing customs and habits and from the cultural learning of new behaviors. However, when a cultural conflict appears that involves a greater demand for the subject, or when the diverse factors of the acculturation process demand more effort for their adaptation, then we are in the so-called terrain of "acculturation stress". In this case, individuals face problems derived from the intercultural contact that cannot be dealt with easily, and that put their psychological resources for adaptation to the test, and psychological health problems may arise.

Many clinical symptoms and problems have been found to be related to acculturation stress, especially: (a) a broad array of anxious-depressive symptoms: feelings of loss, loneliness and uprootedness, nostalgia and longing for family, suicidal ideation, anxiety about the new unknown environment, fear, nervousness; (b) increase of toxic behaviors, especially tobacco and alcohol; (c) increase of psychopathological problems, especially depressive and anxious disorders; (d) diverse family problems: Conflictivity, lack of cohesion, destructuring, etc.; (e) increase or maladjustment of other health problems: hypertension, diabetes, etc. (Achetogui, 2008; Arcia et al., 2001; Finch, Hummer, Kolody, & Vega, 2001; Finch & Vega, 2003; Hovey & King, 1996; Kasirye et al., 2005; Kossek, Meece, Barrat, & Prince, 2005; Lara, Gamboa, Kahramanian, Morales, & Hayes-Bautista, 2005; Miranda & Matheny, 2000; Padilla & Borrero, 2006; Sam, 2006; Tran, Fitzpatrick, Berg, & Wright, 1996; Vinuesa & Suris, 2004). Thus, acculturation stress in immigrants is relevant due to the relation between stress and health, but its study can also provide information about the risk of emotional and behavioral alterations that can hinder the possibilities of immigrants' adaptation.

Diverse instruments have been developed to study acculturation stress in Latin-Americans, among which the following are noteworthy: the *Hispanic Stress Inventory* (Cervantes, Padilla, & Salgado de Snyder, 1990, 1991); the *Multidimensional Acculturative Stress Inventory* (Rodríguez et al., 2002); and the *Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans-II (ARSMa-II)* (Cuellar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995). However, these instruments were designed for Latin-Americans who migrate to the United States, so the approach of the items and the factors that comprise them are inadequate for Spain. Moreover, in our country, there are no instruments specifically designed to assess stress in these immigrants.

The target population of this study is the collective of Latin-American immigrants, who, according to the

official data, are the majority and who present a series of differential characteristics compared to other collectives: Their emergence in Spanish society has been recent and massive, and, albeit with some nuances, they share the same language and, most of them, the same religion.

Studies using qualitative methodology (Ruiz et al., 2005; Ruiz, Torrente, Rodríguez, & Ramírez, 2007) identified a series potentially stressing factors in the acculturation process. Specifically, analysis of the content of the interviews identified six stressful situations: (a) problems related to handling documents, (b) work- and housing-related problems, as basic daily life aspects, (c) competitiveness and tension in social relations with fellow countrymen and other immigrants, (d) destructured family because of emigration, (e) cultural differences between country of origin and Spain, and (f) discrimination and/or perceived rejection. To a great extent, these factors coincide with five groups of potential stressors identified by other authors for this collective of immigrants (for a review, see Zarza & Sobrino, 2007):

- Stressors related to the migratory process. The condition of being legal or illegal is usually one of the stressors with the greatest impact on immigrants' health (Finch & Vega, 2003).
- Stressors from language-derived problems. As commented above, in the case of the Latin-American immigrants, this source of stress is minimal.
- Stressors resulting from social and cultural differences. In this sense, it is noteworthy that Latin-American families are patriarchy-governed, a model in which the sex roles are very well defined. However, this pattern is changing towards more tolerant and democratic family structures in Spain. This cultural change can favor the proliferation of conflicts both within the family system (in the couple or between parents and children) and among members of the in-group and the out-group because of different conceptions about roles and family dynamics.
- Stressors related to economic problems and margination. Latin-American immigrants usually make up one of the collectives with the highest rates of unemployment and poverty in the host countries, which puts their adaptation resources to the test.
- Stressors produced by the loss of social and family support. The family is usually the main source of social support in the Latin-American culture (Abalos, 1998), so the migratory experience of Latin-Americans usually has a negative impact on their structure and functioning (Santiago-Rivera, Arredondo, & Gallardo-Cooper, 2002).

The main goal of the present work is to elaborate a scale to measure the levels of acculturation stress in immigrants of Latin-American origin, also determining the sources of stress, on a percentage basis, that have the most impact on this collective, and the main sociodemographic variables related to this kind of stress.

Method

Participants

In the first (qualitative) phase, we carried out a total of six discussion groups in five municipalities of the Region of Murcia. Participants were 44 Latin-American immigrants (22 men and 22 women), between 20 and 64 years of age (50% were between 20 and 34, 43.2% between 35 and 49; and 6.8% were over 50), from Ecuador (70.45%), Colombia (20.45%), and Bolivia (9.1%).

In the second (quantitative) phase, 648 immigrants participated, 356 men (54.93%) and 292 women (45.07%). Mean age was 32.35 years ($SD = 8.57$; 32.52 ± 8.09 in the men and 32.13 ± 8.57 in the women). Participation was voluntary and the participants identified themselves by number codes, thus maintaining their anonymity in the treatment and use of the data.

In total, 692 immigrants from Latin America participated in this work. Table 1 shows the characteristics of the sample.

Procedure

For the first phase (qualitative), we elaborated a guideline for the group interview with the aim of collecting the commonplace issues and concerns of the immigrant population, on which to base the scale construction. For this purpose, we reviewed diverse documents that were adapted, reformulated, and extended by the research team with occasional advice from the key informers. The final questionnaire had the following sections: emigration to Spain, work, social relations, housing, health, leisure, religion public, administrations, immigration and citizenship, racism, family and education.

In order to maximize the validity of the information from the group interviews, we united the criteria of the interviewers, avoiding directing the responses, promoting the free expression of ideas and experiences, and respect among the participants in each group session. Likewise, we emphasized the confidentiality of the information and the need for sincerity. We also asked the participants' permission to record the discussion in order to subsequently transcribe and analyze it.

For the second phase, we generated an initial pool of 72 items that corresponded to the sources of stress identified from the analysis of the qualitative data: citizenship and legality; access to work and housing; peer relationships and relations with other minority groups; family destructuring; cultural differences; and discrimination or mistreatment (Ruiz et al., 2005, 2007).

This pool of items was: (a) critically reviewed and reformulated by the research team according to precise criteria of item elaboration (Edward, 1957); (b) analyzed by means of in-depth interviews with a total of 8 Latin-American immigrants, and (c) reviewed again by a group of

Table 1
Descriptive Characteristics of the Sample

VARIABLE	N	%
Sex		
<i>Male</i>	356	54.9
<i>Female</i>	292	45.1
Age		
<i>20-34 years</i>	417	64.9
<i>35-49 years</i>	195	30.3
<i>More than 50 years</i>	31	4.8
Civil status		
<i>Single</i>	262	40.8
<i>Married</i>	329	51.2
<i>Divorced/Separated/Widowed</i>	51	7.9
Housing		
<i>Owner</i>	120	18.5
<i>Rented</i>	528	81.5
Studies		
<i>No studies</i>	23	3.6
<i>Basic studies</i>	156	24.2
<i>Middle studies</i>	319	49.5
<i>University studies</i>	147	22.8
Work situation		
<i>Indefinite contract</i>	170	26.7
<i>Odd jobs</i>	279	43.9
<i>No contract/ does not work</i>	187	29.4
Years in Spain		
<i>Less than 3</i>	180	28.6
<i>Between 4 and 6</i>	237	37.6
<i>More than 7</i>	213	33.8
Expectations of permanence in Spain		
<i>Less than 2 years</i>	54	8.5
<i>Up to 5 years</i>	200	31.3
<i>More than 5 years</i>	282	44.2
<i>Always</i>	102	16.0
Legal situation		
<i>Legal</i>	484	74.8
<i>Illegal</i>	163	25.2

experts. We thereby obtained a final 32-item questionnaire, distributed in six subscales corresponding to the categories of stress sources identified in the qualitative phase.

Participants were requested to rate the degree of distress or discomfort that each situation or event had caused in the past six months, on a Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*I have not had this problem*) to 5 (*It has affected me a lot*).

The general questionnaire included items about sociodemographic data (sex, age, work situation) and other

items of interest for our research, such as information about the legal situation, the foreseen stay in Spain, or the type of housing where they lived. This kind of information is considered relevant because it relates the success of the migratory process to certain contextual factors that help us to understand how the individual adapts to a new society (Lara et al., 2005; Miranda & Matheny, 2000).

For the selection of the municipalities to sample, we used the population data from the census of the Region of Murcia (Centro Regional de Estadística de Murcia, 2008), identifying all the towns that met two requirements: (a) that there was a high enough percentage of immigrants so they would be “visible” to the native citizens (as of 5%), and (b) there should be more than 2000 immigrants registered in the municipal census, so the population would be sufficient to carry out the sampling. Using these two requirements, we selected a total of 8 municipalities.

To perform the interviews, we selected 8 interviewers of Latin-American origin who underwent a series of training sessions. The interviewers signed a document in which they accepted their remuneration to be subject to their passing a random telephone verification procedure after the interviews. This procedure consisted of randomly phoning 10% of the participants. There were no noticeable incidents in this sense.

To select the participants, we used the information from the census of the Region of Murcia, stratifying the sampling by sex (two categories) and age (three categories: 20-34 years, 35-49 years, and 50 or over), thus generating six sampling groups. Figure 1 shows the final fit of the distribution of the population to the sample.

In order to encourage responses, the participants received a present after completing the questionnaire. The interviews were performed by means of an incidental procedure for a two-month interval.

Once the information had been obtained and recorded in the database, the following criteria were followed to refine the scale: (a) initial reliability was improved by eliminating the items with the lowest item-scale correlations, and (b) principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed on the resulting items, using four criteria: (i) the eigenvalue of each factor should be higher than 1, (ii) each factor should explain at least 5% of the total variance, (iii) the factor loadings of the items on the factors should be at least .40, and (iv) the items comprising each factor should have adequate internal consistency.

The statistical analyses were performed with the SSPS statistical package, version 15.

Results

The analyses performed identified a total of 24 items that met the aforementioned technical and theoretical criteria, obtaining an internal consistency of .92.

Factor analysis identified six factors that explained 61.40% of the variance. Table 2 shows the rotated solution of the analysis, with the factor loading of each item on the

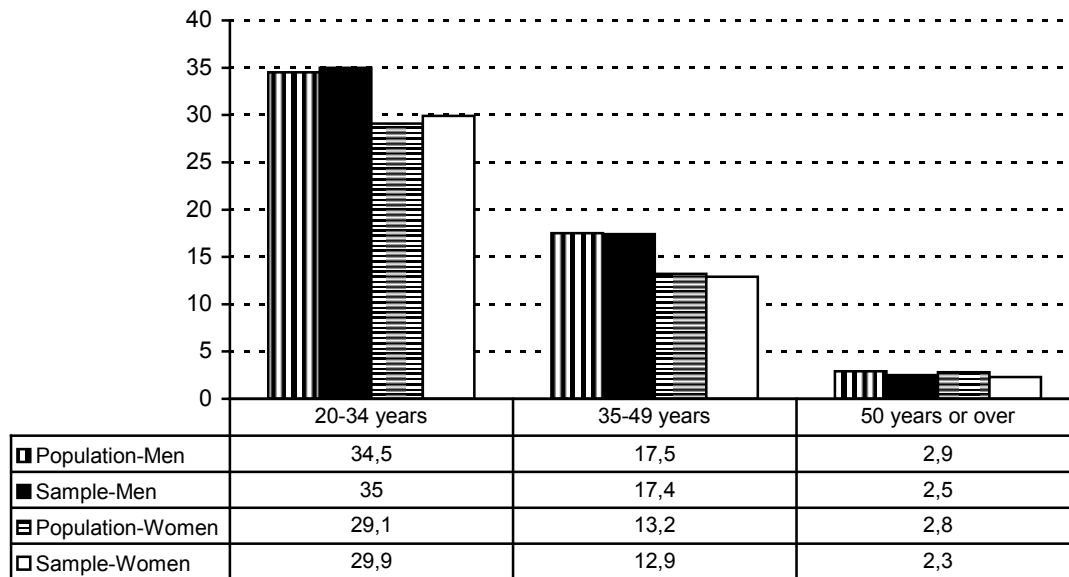


Figure 1. Distribution of population and sample as a function of sex and age.

resulting factor. The percentage of explained variance for each factor is also shown.

Table 3 shows the descriptive data of each item and the analyses of reliability of each factor and of the scale.

The first factor, which we called Perceived discrimination and rejection, explained 12.02% of the variance. It includes six items about the perception of discrimination because of being an immigrant (i.e., “that they took advantage of me at work for being an immigrant”) and the perception of rejection by native citizens (i.e., “that some Spaniards look down on me for being an immigrant”). The internal consistency of this factor was .86 and the item-factor correlation ranged between .62 and .67.

The second factor refers to Differences with the out-group, and explains 11.57% of the variance; it has four items concerning the way the native citizens talk, the food, religiosity, and the children’s education. The internal consistency of this factor was .70 and the item-factor correlation ranged between .47 and .52.

The third factor, called Citizenship and legality, explains 10.57% of the variance. It is made up of four items related to problems with housing and work associated with illegality, as well as “the feeling that I can be expelled from Spain at any time.” The internal consistency of this factor was .79 and the item-factor correlation was between .52 and .68.

The fourth factor, Social relations with other immigrants, explains 10.10% of the variance. It is made up of four items

related to stress derived from the relations with fellow countrymen (rivalry, fraud, or lack of social relations) and with other non-Latin-American immigrants. Its internal consistency was .74 and the item-factor correlation ranged between .52 and .55.

The fifth factor, which we called Distance from origin, explains 9.28% of the variance. It is made up of four items about the loss of contact and longing for people living in the country of origin as well as the perceived cultural differences between their country and Spain. This factor has an internal consistency of .71 and the item-factor correlations range between .44 and .57.

The last factor, Family break-up, explains 7.86% of the variance and has an internal consistency of .66. Despite having only two items, it was not excluded from the final questionnaire because the qualitative studies have emphasized that family destructuring and the problems associated with emigration have a great emotional impact on immigrants (Torrente, Ruiz, Ramírez, Benito, & García, 2005; Torres, 2008). Nevertheless, as we shall comment in the discussion, we consider it should be the object of review in future works.

Along the lines of the proposed goals, and according to the means observed, we confirmed that the most important source of stress is related to longing and nostalgia ($M = 2.91, SD = 1.28$), followed by mistreatment and perceived rejection by the natives ($M = 1.78, SD = 1.37$),

Table 2
Factor Analysis of the Scale

Items	Factors					
	FI	FII	FIII	FIV	FV	FVI
18. That they took advantage of me at work for being an immigrant.	.70	.10	.19	.17	.12	.25
2. That I have had to work for very little pay because I am an immigrant.	.68	.10	.27	.08	.10	.34
14. That our working day is too long just because we are immigrants.	.65	.17	.25	.16	.16	.25
24. That some Spaniards look down on me for being an immigrant.	.62	.41	.06	.28	.17	-.04
3. That some Spaniards want to hint that I am inferior to them.	.55	.51	.02	.21	.21	-.04
12. That some Spaniards hint that this is not my country.	.49	.35	.20	.39	.26	-.06
29. The way that Spaniards educate their children.	.19	.72	.03	.06	.10	.05
23. Spaniards' lack of religiosity.	.12	.62	.07	.29	.09	.17
17. Having to adapt to Spanish meals.	.09	.58	.23	-.02	.22	.32
11. The way the Spaniards talk.	.21	.42	.24	.30	.17	.12
1. My irregular situation as a foreigner has hindered my possibilities to find work.	.15	-.01	.79	.13	.16	-.01
7. The problems I have had because I have no "papers".	.16	.11	.78	.19	.15	.05
13. The difficulties to obtain housing because I have no "papers".	.18	.20	.63	.39	.05	.10
19. The feeling that I can be expelled from Spain at any time.	.21	.43	.58	-.02	-.02	.27
3. The rivalry and envy of other fellow countrymen.	.20	.03	.12	.72	.21	.02
9. That there are fellow countrymen who take advantage of me.	.31	.07	.24	.62	.03	.22
21. Having few social relations with fellow countrymen.	.06	.32	.18	.56	.04	.34
15. The conflicts with other groups of immigrants who are not Latin-Americans.	.11	.43	.15	.54	-.04	.16
4. Missing the people I left in my country of origin.	.10	.04	.10	.03	.83	.09
22. Feeling far from my family.	.20	.14	.06	-.05	.65	.32
5. The cultural differences between my country and Spain.	.08	.36	.22	.19	.61	-.14
1. Having lost contact with some people from my country.	.17	.07	.07	.25	.54	.25
16. That my family has broken up because of emigration.	.14	.11	.04	.20	.17	.73
28. Having family problems because of emigration.	.24	.18	.08	.15	.18	.69
% Explained variance:	12.02	11.57	10.57	10.10	9.28	7.86

Note. Boldface indicates the items that load on the factor.

and family problems derived from migration ($M = 1.70$, $SD = 1.59$). Table 4 shows these data, and the number and percentage of participants at each level of stress, established as a function of the response categories to the items: 0 and 1 = *low level*; 2 and 3 = *moderate level*; 4 and 5 = *high level*.

As can be seen in this table, 5.1% of the Latin-Americans of the sample presented a high level of stress in the global score. With regard to the factors of the questionnaire, 33.8% reported a high of level stress in the factor "Distance from origin", 14.4% displayed high stress in the factor "Family break-up," and 12.7% referred to high stress related to "Discrimination and perceived rejection" by the natives.

Of the sociodemographic variables studied concerning cultural stress, the following were notable: the role of illegality, $t(645) = 3.84$, $p < .001$; housing, $F(2,645) = 6.59$, $p < .001$; the work situation, $F(2,633) = 6.60$, $p < .001$; the time spent living in Spain, $F(3,627) = 2.90$, $p < .05$; and their expectations of permanence, $F(3,634) = 2.61$, $p < .05$. These results contribute evidence of external validity because, according to our expectations, the immigrants

with the least stress are the ones who: are living legally in Spain, have their own dwelling, have a work contract, have been more than 2 years in the country, and have higher expectations of permanence (more than 5 years).

Furthermore, the correlations of the global score of the questionnaire and the diverse subscales with the anxiety and depression scores of the *Symptom Check-List-90-R* (SCL-90-R; Derogatis & Cleary, 1977), in the Spanish version (González de Rivera, De las Cuevas, Rodríguez, & Rodríguez, 2002), provide additional evidence of external validity (see table 5). In this sense, positive correlations were observed in all cases (from $r = .301$ to $r = .517$), and all of them were highly significant ($p < .0001$).

Discussion

The goal of this work was to elaborate an assessment instrument of the levels of stress experienced by Latin-American immigrants during the acculturation process inherent to their migratory experience. There were two

Table 3
Descriptive Data and Reliability Analysis of the resulting Scale and the Factors

Factor	Items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Item-factor correlation	Alpha coefficient
1. Discrimination and perceived rejection	12. That some Spaniards insinuate that this is not my country.	1.73	1.68	.65	.86
	14. That our work day is too long because we are immigrants.	2.04	1.90	.66	
	18. That they took advantage of me at work for being an immigrant.	1.69	1.82	.66	
	20. That I have had to work for very little pay because I am an immigrant.	1.81	1.87	.62	
	24. That some Spaniards look down on me for being an immigrant.	1.69	1.70	.67	
	30. That some Spaniards try to hint that I am inferior to them.	1.74	1.77	.62	
2. Differences with Out-group	11. The way the Spaniards talk.	1.26	1.46	.48	.70
	17. Having to adapt to Spanish meals.	1.56	1.60	.47	
	23. Spaniards' lack of religiosity.	1.26	1.58	.52	
	29. The way that Spaniards educate their children.	1.51	1.71	.50	
3. Citizenship and legality	1. My irregular situation as a foreigner has hindered my possibilities to find work.	1.27	1.73	.61	.79
	7. The problems I have had because I have no "papers".	1.74	1.92	.68	
	13. The difficulties to obtain housing because I have no "papers."	1.31	1.80	.61	
	19. The feeling that I can be expelled from Spain at any time.	1.25	1.69	.52	
4. Social Relationships with other immigrants	3. The rivalry and envy of other fellow countrymen.	1.44	1.60	.53	.74
	9. That there are fellow countrymen who take advantage of me.	1.36	1.73	.55	
	15. Conflicts with other groups of immigrants who are not Latin-Americans.	.94	1.40	.52	
	21. Having few social relations with fellow countrymen.	1.14	1.48	.53	
5. Distance from origin	4. Missing the people I left in my country of origin.	3.48	1.69	.57	.71
	5. Cultural differences between my country and Spain.	2.25	1.73	.46	
	10. Having lost contact with some people from my country.	2.35	1.84	.44	
	22. Feeling far from my family.	3.56	1.75	.50	
6. Family break-up	16. That my family has broken up because of emigration.	1.71	1.88	.49	.66
	28. Having family problems because of emigration.	1.69	1.80	.49	
				TOTAL ALPHA	.92

Table 4
Sources of Stress

Variable	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>N (%)</i> Low stress	<i>N (%)</i> Moderate stress	<i>N (%)</i> High Stress
Cultural stress (global score)	1.74 (1.01)	304 (46.9)	311 (48.0)	33 (5.1)
F1: Discrimination and perceived rejection	1.78 (1.37)	313 (48.3)	253 (39.0)	82 (12.7)
F2: Differences with out-group	1.40 (1.17)	405 (62.5)	219 (33.8)	24 (3.7)
F3: Citizenship and legality	1.39 (1.40)	403 (62.2)	183 (28.2)	62 (9.6)
F4: Social relations with other immigrants	1.22 (1.16)	443 (68.4)	179 (27.6)	26 (4.0)
F5: Distance from origin	2.91 (1.28)	106 (16.4)	323 (49.8)	219 (33.8)
F6: Family break-up	1.70 (1.59)	355 (54.8)	200 (30.9)	93 (14.4)

Table 5
Correlations between Sources of Stress and Anxious-Depressive Symptomatology

Variable	Anxious Symptoms	Depressive Symptoms
Cultural stress (global score)	.516***	.517***
F1: Discrimination and perceived rejection	.480***	.476***
F2: Differences with out-group	.385***	.394***
F3: Citizenship and legality	.301***	.304***
F4: Social relations with other immigrants	.456***	.423***
F5: Distance from origin	.365***	.383***
F6: Family break-up	.372***	.391***

reasons for our interest in the assessment of acculturation stress in this population: Firstly, this is a very relevant collective in the current composition of the migratory groups in Spain, and secondly, because of the confirmed relations between stress and certain psychological health disorders, which could affect the degree of well-being and psychological and sociocultural adaptation of the immigrant.

Once the above-mentioned procedures of analysis and the technical and theoretical criteria had been applied, the final instrument has 24 items with a high internal consistency (.92). The factor analysis identified six factors, also with good internal consistency (between .86 and .66), which refer to diverse sources of stress derived from (a) discrimination and perceived rejection by the natives for being an immigrant; (b) cultural differences with the natives; (c) housing and work problems associated with the situation of illegality; (d) problems of social relations with other immigrants, either fellow countrymen or from other collectives; (e) longing and nostalgia, mainly related to the loss of contact with people from the country of origin; and (f) break-up of the family nucleus and of the extensive family network when only one or various members of the family emigrate, leaving others in the country of origin. As mentioned, this last factor only has two items, but it was included in the final questionnaire because of the suffering we observed due to this in the group interviews performed in the prior phases of this project and in other studies, as we shall comment below. Nevertheless, we consider it should be improved in the future, increasing the number of items and the internal consistency of the factor.

Among the advantages of the instrument, we note:

1. Satisfactory psychometric properties, high internal consistency and robustness of the questionnaire, both as a whole and the factors that conform it. The conjoint factors explain 61.40% of the variance and the factors themselves explain between 12.02% (the first one) and 7.86% (the last one). The factor loadings of the items are, in all cases, higher than .40;
2. Due to its format, it is easy to manage and requires little time to administer;

3. The questionnaire is easy to interpret in general, as are the factors, in particular.
4. The results obtained provide evidence of external validity.

Besides the psychometric properties of the questionnaire, and according to the data obtained, we find firstly, a percentage of participants (one out of three) who report high distress related to longing and the loss of contact with people they left behind in their country of origin and who are important to them. We also observed a high level of distress related to the break-up of the nuclear family as a consequence of emigration. These results coincide with other works that have emphasized that the migratory process usually involves intense suffering related to the break-up of social links and family relations, which frequently causes family reunification to be one of the chief life goals of these people (Padilla & Borrero, 2006; Ruiz et al., 2005; Torres, 2008).

Likewise, we observed high stress generated by situations of rejection and discrimination because of being an immigrant. Diverse investigations suggest that high levels of acculturation stress in immigrants usually lead to emotional states with anxious-depressive symptomatology, suspicion and hostility towards the natives, and a higher incidence of alcohol-related problems (Finch et al., 2001; Lara et al., 2005).

In our opinion, the questionnaire we present may be useful to study the complexity of acculturation stress in Latin-Americans, and it can contribute to the development of predictive models of the adaptation of this collective, as well as to the development of psychosocial intervention programs.

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