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ARTICLE

Experiences of oppression, liberation, and well-being among Moroccans in Andalusia

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the settlement experiences of Moroccan migrants living in Andalusia (southern Spain). Taking a liberation psychology approach, we focus on the roles that power relations, oppression, well-being, and liberation play in the newcomers' adaptation to the host country from a sociopolitical point of view. Based on grounded theory, we analyze the narratives of 28 Moroccan migrants across two different contexts within Andalusia; 15 participated in in-depth interviews and 13 in 2 separate focus groups. A series of theoretical propositions emerged from the analysis, taking into account (a) conditions of oppression, (b) responses to conditions of oppression, and (c) the well-being continuum. These interrelated dimensions were found to shape different migration trajectories, leading to either maintaining the unjust living conditions or choosing to confront them. In the latter case, migrants actively engaged in transformative civic actions promoting social justice and symmetrical power relations between the migrant and native-born populations. The main contribution of this study is to value migrants by defining their migratory experiences and how, in their view, the liberation process is achieved.

Since the early days of migration, the decision to leave one's home country has often been reached in contexts characterized by limited opportunities to achieve well-being, sometimes under conditions of extreme social inequality. Although new host societies usually offer better chances to attain well-being, the incorporation of migrant populations is frequently produced under disadvantaged conditions. Here attention is given to the role of power dynamics as a key psychosocial process when negotiating these outcomes in varying cultural contexts, which are commonly characterized by asymmetrical relations between natives and newcomers. Moreover, it takes into account transactional relationships across different levels of analysis. The main aim of this paper is to identify the roles that power relations—oppression, resistance, and liberation—play in the migration experiences of Moroccans in Andalusia from a sociopolitical point of view. We start from the premise that the existing asymmetrical relations between the native-born and migrant populations are central to the latter's adaptation process, emphasizing how the ultimate goal of migrants is to achieve well-being.

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Research conducted by Berry (2005) has represented significant advances in the study of acculturation within the field of transcultural psychology, establishing processes of changes that serve both populations. Reviewing and expanding upon his model, several authors have introduced new elements of analysis, such as the need to further explore how and why acculturation occurs (Chirkov, 2009, Rudmin, 2006), viewing it as a dynamic process in which migrants act as active agents (Ward & Masgoret, 2006). Acculturation from a multidimensional approach requires the analysis of a confluence of different factors, ranging from ethnicity, identity, and cultural values to the context of reception (Schwartz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). Developments following on from Berry's model, such as the relative acculturation extended model (Navas et al., 2005), the interactive acculturation model (Bourhis, Möise, Perrault, & Senécal, 1997), and the developmental model of acculturation and cultural adaptation (Castro & Murray, 2010) have incorporated some of these elements.

In this paper, acculturation processes are understood within the framework of power dynamics that take place between natives and newcomers. These dynamics have not been sufficiently covered in studies approached from the perspective of transcultural psychology, which has led to the perpetuation of intergroup conflict deriving from asymmetries of power, inequality, and an absence of social justice (García-Ramírez et al., 2009). To analyze acculturation processes while taking into account asymmetrical power dynamics, we turn to liberation psychology (LP, García-Ramírez, de la Mata, Paloma, & Hernández-Plaza, 2011, Martín-Baró, 1986, Montero & Sonn, 2009, Nelson & Prilleltensky, 2005).

Both LP and community psychology share a common interest in identifying the specific realities and structural dynamics that cause oppression and exclusion (Montero, Sonn, & Burton, 2017). LP addresses migration from an ecological perspective by defining conditions of oppression as processes that occur at different interconnected levels (e.g., personal, relational, and community-based), emphasizing the dynamic interrelationship between people and their social systems. As such, oppressive conditions give rise to psychological patterns characterized by feelings of inferiority and weakness, which act as barriers to action that reinforce these conditions of oppression (Watts & Serrano-García, 2003, Moane, 2003). This internalized oppression explains why some migrant groups legitimize their subordinate status in the receiving country (Martín-Baró, 1986, Paloma, García-Ramírez, & Camacho, 2014). It views culture as a dynamic and transactional relationship that involves subtle and complex processes through which individuals negotiate with others and in which power dynamics play an essential role (Kosic & Phalet, 2006).

Hence, adaptation outcomes are classed as outputs of multiple interdependent relations among different phenomena at multiple levels, activated in a fluid, dynamic, constant, and often unstable way, with the aim of achieving well-being (García-Ramírez et al., 2009). From a LP perspective, migrants, when treated equally and fairly in the different domains of their lives, achieve greater well-being in each domain. Migrant well-being means becoming an accepted member of the new society; this involves gaining power and control, building a life project based on a freely determined identity, enjoying decision-making opportunities, and being able to effectively participate in key areas of everyday life (García-Ramírez et al., 2011, Paloma, Herrera, & García-Ramírez, 2009, Prilleltensky, 2008a).

Last, LP emphasizes the need to understand how, in this case, Moroccan migrants perceive the settlement process they engage in, namely, through their own narratives, to develop a historically and socially contextualized adaptation model (Chirkov, 2009). There are many studies that address the issue from the immigrant's perspective and report how living under oppressive conditions entails daily experiences of violence, poverty, and fear which lead to a devalued view of self, treating inequality as a natural state. Simultaneously, LP paves the way for explaining how Moroccan migrants resist oppression and develop strengths, considering every human group capable of resisting the asymmetries of power and transforming oppressive sociopolitical structures.

To summarize, LP enables us to understand why and how migrants endure and fight against situations of social inequality and asymmetries of power. It explains how the conditions of oppression faced by this population are embedded within all levels of social structure relating to their local settlements and underpinned by a dominant ideology (García-Ramírez et al., 2009). In addition, this approach allows us to observe how oppressed migrants develop the capacities and strengths to respond to unequal conditions. These should be the starting point for planning and designing culturally sensitive and value-driven liberation strategies (Martín-Baró, 1986). This theoretical perspective is compatible with aspects of constructivist research and with the intent to catalyze social reflection and change

through participatory processes. The Moroccan migrants' narratives allow us to (a) comprehend how their personal life stories are negotiated within this specific framework, told in the communities where they live; (b) understand the influence that culture and context have on their personal lives; and (c) unravel their accounts of oppression and liberation (Rappaport, 2000). The main aim of our study is to explore the roles that power relations, oppression, resistance, and liberation play in the settlement experiences of Moroccan migrants living in Andalusia, and to examine the different adaptation strategies emerging from their narratives.

1 | METHOD

1.1 | Moroccans in Andalusia: Research context

Andalusia is Spain's southernmost region and one of the main gateways to Europe from North Africa. At the time of study, 7.5% of Andalusia's residents were non-native, although this figure rose to 19.7% in the eastern part of Andalusia (Sistema de Información Multiterritorial de Andalucía, 2013). Moroccans were the largest foreign-born group living in the region according to official figures. The main settlements in Andalusia are rural areas (RAs) and marginalized urban neighborhoods (MUN). These circumstances occurred despite the huge demand for labor as a result of Spain's strong economic growth over the past decade (up until the global financial crash [circa 2008] and shortly after the above figures were published). In RAs, migrants work in jobs characterized by precarious working conditions, namely, intensive greenhouse agriculture or other types of temporary agricultural labor. They live in substandard housing often located in the greenhouses where they work, many without electricity and running water. In marginalized urban neighborhoods, migrants find employment as unskilled construction workers or in the services sector, often with no work contract and experiencing considerable legal instability. Although some differences exist among sectors, Moroccan migrants usually live and work with limited access to healthcare and basic community resources, frequently suffering high levels of ethnic prejudice and discrimination (García-Ramírez et al., 2009, Hernández-Plaza, García-Ramírez, Camacho, & Paloma, 2010).

1.2 | Participants

A total of 15 Moroccan migrants living in Andalusia participated in in-depth interviews, with diverse profiles by gender; both contexts (RA or MUN); legal status on arrival (documented or undocumented); and labor situation in terms of number of months worked during the previous year (more or less than 9 months) as indicators of work stability (see Table 1). This combination of variables ensured a variety of profiles and adaptation outcomes. Settlement diversification proved relevant because of the differences observed in the living and working conditions of Moroccan migrants depending on their location. Participants were recruited through contact networks and via snowball sampling. Contacts were made in person or by phone. The main purpose of the in-depth interviews was to gather information about migration and adaptation experiences from the perspective of the interviewees.

Two focus groups comprising Moroccan key informants were conducted with eight and five participants, respectively. Purposive sampling was used to select Moroccan key informants who met the following criteria: Moroccan migrants with a broad and varied view of the migration phenomenon who are actively engaged in social and community projects involving Moroccan migrants. All spoke Spanish and Arabic. The purpose of the focus groups was to gain knowledge about migration and the adaptation processes of Moroccans living in Andalusia, paying particular attention to collective experiences from the perspective of Moroccan key informants.

1.3 | Instrument

The interview guide was developed for this study, taking into account dimensions relevant to LP and those addressed in the acculturation process. It was contrasted with—and culturally oriented towards—a group of Moroccan leaders. The

TABLE 1 Profile of In-Depth Interview Participants

Participant profile
Abdellah. Middle-aged male, lives in a poor neighbourhood in a RA, regular legal situation. Works in agriculture and construction less than nine months a year. Regrouped his family. He feels Moroccan.
Ali. Young woman living in a RA, undocumented. Changes jobs depending on the season and works more than nine months a year. Considers learning Spanish and the native culture a duty. She feels Moroccan.
Brahim. Male, lives in a RA, regular legal situation. Has worked as a painter and builder's labourer. Currently working as a machine technician and works more than nine months a year. He feels integrated and Moroccan. Considers learning Spanish essential and integration a need.
Chaima. Middle-aged female, married, lives in a RA. Arrived undocumented and now has a regular legal situation. Works in agriculture less than nine months a year. She has no relationships with natives and maintains her own traditions.
Foudad. Male, lives in a RA, regular legal situation. Works as a painter more than nine months a year. Considers learning Spanish important. He feels Moroccan but Spanish.
Amina. Middle-aged female, lives in a RA, regular legal situation. Works in agriculture and the services sector less than nine months a year. Emigrating allowed her to have more freedom, to start work and to continue her education.
Hanan. Male, lives in a RA with his family, arrived undocumented, currently in a regular legal situation. Works in agriculture less than nine months a year. He maintains his own traditions and feels Moroccan, but feels like a guest in Morocco.
Ibrahim. Male, lives in a RA with his father and brother. Undocumented. Works in agriculture more than nine months a year. Considers learning Spanish important and uses it when interacting with natives.
Ikram. Young woman living in a RA with her family, regular legal situation. She has had several jobs, currently unemployed, works less than nine months a year. Natives are her main source of social support. She considers herself integrated.
Fatima. Middle-aged female, lives in a RA with her family. Has been running a bazaar for five months; works more than nine months a year. She maintains her own traditions and feels Moroccan.
Mounir. Male, lives in a RA with his family, undocumented. Works in agriculture less than nine months a year. Speaks Spanish. He maintains his own traditions and feels Moroccan.
Jaoudad. Middle-aged male, lives in a MUN with his sister, regular legal situation. He is unemployed, works less than nine months a year. He maintains his own cultural traditions and feels Moroccan.
Khalid. Middle-aged male, lives in a MUN with his family, regular legal situation. Runs an ethnic business, works more than nine months a year. He is Muslim but feels Spanish. He is more interested in interacting with natives than with Moroccans.
Nassira. Female, lives alone in a MUN. Undocumented on arrival but now has regulated legal status. She has had several jobs. Works less than nine months a year. She believes in integration when both groups make an effort.
Saida. Female, lives in a MUN with her family, regular legal situation since arrival. Works in the services sector. She feels like a Moroccan migrant. Believes that the Spanish and Moroccans have to make an effort in order to get to know each other.

Note. RA = rural area; MUN = marginalized urban neighborhoods.

interview guide was divided into four sections according to the phenomena of interest: (a) questions about sociocultural adaptation and psychological well-being from personal experience; (b) description of characteristics of the settlement context; (c) individual and group characteristics, delving into the work situation, health habits, and lifestyle of the person being interviewed and of the Moroccan collective in general; and (d) social relations, exploring aspects of social support provided by those who make up the interviewee's social circle, as well as organizational participation and the role of community-based organizations. The questions and issues served as a guide, meaning that we could tackle the points of interest as and when they emerged during the interview.

1.4 | Data collection

The interviews with Moroccan migrants were held in private locations previously negotiated with the interviewees. The interviewers were men and women aged between 20 and 55 years from the academic (university) community, with experience in conducting in-depth interviews and additional training. Some were Spanish speakers while others spoke both Spanish and Arabic. The range of profiles meant that each participant could be interviewed by the person most closely matched on sex, age, and linguistic skills. The interviewer and a support person were present to provide assistance in all interviews and focus groups. Another member was also at hand to help the conversation in Arabic

along when required. All interviews were taped and took an hour and a half. The focus groups lasted for 2 hours. All interviewees gave consent to have their voices recorded and were fully aware of the nature of the project behind these interviews and focus groups. The names given in this study do not correspond to the interviewees' actual names, thus meeting the informed consent and confidentiality criteria.

1.5 | Data analysis

We analyzed information obtained according to the systematic grounded theory approach proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998), who identified three types of coding: open, axial, and selective. We used ATLAS.ti 5.2 software to organize and manage data. Two Spanish female analysts from the academic (university) community performed the analysis. They worked in a coordinated manner but independently, comparing all analyses and agreeing on the categories extracted as well as on the interpretations.

Open coding started with an initial reading and a comprehensive understanding of the narratives, followed by line-by-line reading and text fragmentation. To facilitate the conceptualization of each segment, sensitive questions were asked (e.g., What is happening here? Who is involved? How do they define the situation?). Descriptive categories were established, theoretically developed, and refined using a constant comparative process to look for content similarity, generating more abstract categories or families. During *axial coding*, we regrouped codes, looked for interrelations among descriptive categories and created conceptual categories. These categories were once again subjected to constant comparative analysis and theoretical saturation. Relations between categories were identified by responding to where, when, why, and how questions. Finally, *selective coding* led to theoretical integration and data interpretation; new concepts were added to previous ones in a process guided by the researchers' theoretical sensitivity. Here we performed code abstraction, looking for regularities, explanations and propositions, constructed an argument and made comparisons with existing literature. The categorization process is shown in Table 2.

We carried out several procedures to ensure trustworthiness of data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Two experts, namely, a Spanish male and a Spanish female, both from the academic (university) community and trained in qualitative and independent research, determined confirmability; they read the transcriptions, evaluated the thematic summaries and coding structures, and documented what were revealed to be the main themes. Both experts also tested the final coding profile to ensure that any bias was explained. Dependability was addressed through the identification of common themes and by performing consistency checks on the coding structures that emerged. The analysts' and experts' interpretations were compared to determine consistency. The key informants rated credibility after checking whether their points of view were included and by evaluating the accuracy of the interpretations.

2 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and the discussion are shown together. According to the Grounded Theory, both processes are performed simultaneously and so we wanted to show it. Different conceptual subcategories emerged from the narrative analysis, namely conditions of oppression, responses to conditions of oppression, and a well-being continuum. From this we can clearly see how the interviewed Moroccan migrants perceive their local settlements in Andalusia, identifying a series of oppressive conditions—exclusion, exploitation and manipulation—to which they react in several ways—acritical acceptance, accommodation and resilience—depending on critical awareness and activated resources. Different stages are identified—internalized oppression, exhausting resources, and well-being—based on the opportunities and resources that the environment affords and on their well-being experiences.

2.1 | Conditions of oppression

From a LP perspective, oppression refers to sociopolitical conditions which favor some people or groups over others, allowing the former to enjoy privileges, opportunities, and resources to achieve well-being (Nelson & Prilleltensky,

TABLE 2 Example of Coding for "Conditions of Oppression" and "Responses to Conditions of Oppression"

Subcategories	Categories	Characteristics	Indicators
Conditions of oppression	Exclusion	Segregation	Location in physically isolated areas
		Social fragmentation	Divide among social groups—cultural, administrative, gender-based and economic status criteria—
			Limiting political participation
		Rejection	Opposition, disdain, apathy
			Subtle or direct
			Avoiding contact
	Exploitation	Precarity	Underemployment
			Consequences: hindrance to socio-economic development, lack of free time, deteriorating health, weakened social networks
	Manipulation	Lack of information	Omitting information
			Exercised by the media and institutions
		Stigma	Associated with delinquency, drug use and trafficking, poverty, lack of documentation, and machismo
			Associating the Muslim religion with extremism and terrorism
			Portraying a negative image of immigration
Responses to conditions of oppression	Acritical acceptance	Assumption of the status quo	Resigning oneself to the precarious conditions
			Regarding the status quo as permanent
		Lack of recognition of social injustice	Success or failure rests with the individual
			Lack of recognition of socio-political factors at play in the individual's personal situation
	Accommodation	Assumption of the status quo as unchangeable	Adapting to the dominant integration model
			Maintaining a positive sense of self
			Achieving social and material rewards (e.g., avoiding discrimination)
		Perception of social injustice	Control exerted over the group
			Exploitation in the workplace

(Continues)

TABLE 2 (Continued)

Subcategories	Categories	Characteristics	Indicators
	Resilience	Recognition of social injustice	Differences in migrant workers' rights
		Activation of resources to alter the status quo	Education and training (e.g., Spanish and customs)
			Confrontation (e.g., confronting personal attacks, taking part in riots and demonstrations)
			Social networks (e.g., meeting up with friends, social support, community participation)
			Enterprising action (e.g., setting up businesses, establishing associations)
			Cultural expression (e.g., promoting and practicing Moroccan culture, enhancing cultural roots)
Well-being continuum	Internalized oppression	Assumption of the dominant narrative	Belief in the impossibility of climbing up the social scale
		Lower sense of control	Dejection, hopelessness
			Barriers to taking action
	Exhausting resources	Oppression is considered unjust	Actions to adapt to oppressive situations or transform them
		Some achievements	Social and material rewards
		Conflicting feelings of well-being	Incomplete feeling of well-being
			Pessimism, helplessness
	Well-being	Experience of needs satisfaction	Attainment of expectations and self-determination
			Happiness
			Positive appreciation of self-determination
		Recognition of effort	Progress made over time
			Positive outlook for the future

2005). Narrative analysis reveals how the native-born population creates mechanisms of oppression, seeking to maintain their position of privilege, which is shown through their daily experiences. Three processes have been identified in this study: *exclusion*, *exploitation*, and *manipulation*.

2.1.1 | Exclusion

The Moroccan interviewees perceive their collective exclusion through segregation, social fragmentation, and the denial of citizenship rights. Segregation is seen in narratives that report on the ghetto-like confinement faced by the community: "I feel that we're Moroccan, that we're in ghettos. I don't mix with the rest…. People who come from the towns have it harder…. They don't mix with the Spanish, hardly ever" (Amina). This isolation is especially prominent in the rural context. Berry (2005) describes segregation as a tendency to place migrants in physically isolated, marginalized neighborhoods. This means limiting their access to, among other things, community and health services and segregating them from the native population.

Social fragmentation manifests itself through unequal opportunities to enter the labor market, which tends to restrict migrants to the most precarious jobs, thus resulting in a segmented, stratified, and exclusive workforce: "I've worked in the countryside … in construction…. I can't get other jobs" (Foudad). Differential access to the labor market also depends on the migrant community's country of origin. The following words from a focus group (FG) member places the Moroccan community as the most rejected group living in the region: "Moroccophobia exists…. There's more labor supply than there is demand.… And what does the business owner do? Classify" (Salim, FG). Social fragmentation refers to the different ways in which the migrant population is divided into jobs, with varying degrees of precarious employment, or into contexts with different opportunities for development (Moane, 2003): As one interviewee says: "The person goes out in the morning till the afternoon [and] he doesn't speak to the Spanish, he doesn't socialize with them–all day with Moroccans. How do you expect them to integrate?" (Mounir). This situation leads to the exclusion of migrants from social networks, especially from contact with the native population.

Last, at the citizenship level, they mention restrictions on the right to vote as something that prevents them from enjoying all rights accorded to citizens: "The Spanish Constitution … it doesn't give a foreigner the right to vote" (Redoudan, FG). This disenfranchisement highlights the political exclusion experienced by the group, which is also observed in their weak presence at all levels of the political system as well as in positions of power across all sectors of society, including community services, the judicial and legal systems, business, art, and culture. As Nora (FG) reveals: "They don't care that a Moroccan woman is there shouting in defense of Moroccan women." According to Deutsch (2006), the unjust treatment that oppressed groups receive is a form of moral exclusion. Nordin (FG) expresses it in terms of a "cultural vacuum."

2.1.2 | Exploitation

This concept emerges when the migrants talk about the working conditions they face. These conditions are characterized by instability, seasonality, and mobility: "They worked there for 2 months and when the season ended they came here to Almería" (Ali); low salaries: "Exploitation of immigrants is seen in the working hours, salary, type of contract which is temporary, saying goodbye at any moment" (Fatima); and insecurity: "The boss doesn't buy anything, perhaps you can put a mask on but that's it, I buy the gloves myself … no boots, no trousers … no cap" (Abdellah).

It has been widely argued that oppressed groups are more frequently subjected to unemployment and poverty (Moane, 2003). As a result, the Moroccan migrant population's personal and financial development is hindered, with exploitation hampering their access to decent jobs and community structures that protect their workers' rights. They have no choice but to accept precarious jobs under the threat of being reported or sacked and end up clashing with the native population whose members have become the executive branch of inequality: "Precarious work is the factor that prevents a person from leading a decent life. Because someone who has an unstable job can't rent, can't buy a house, can't settle down, can't settle" (Omar, FG).

2.1.3 | Manipulation

The interviewees reflect on the stereotypical information that the media provide regarding migrants: "They make the problem worse … in the newspapers, on TV and they use grim terms … they generalize … talk about 'pateras' [referring to a small boat], murder, theft. They always have to label immigrants, always on the front pages" (Omar, FG). The respondents believe that the media generalize the negative actions of some members of the group and in turn overdimensionalize.

> *The media, when an event like this happens [referring to the Madrid attacks on March 11, 2003], well, they broadcast it … I hear about some arrests … then it's dropped but nobody talks about it and there's fear … of all the arrests…. 1 or 2 % of the people have been, let's say, charged. (Bilal, FG)*

Manipulation also emerges from the perception of being invisible by the media: "Us, the Moroccan immigrants, we never debate in the media" (Nora, FG). Therefore, *manipulation* is expressed by how the administration, business world, and the media distort information to naturalize exclusion and place it at the service of their interests. This is what Moane (2003) called cultural control and which has implications when it comes to building one's self, identify, self-esteem, the ability to express oneself, and feelings belonging to the realm of society: "People say … here come the immigrants … they take all the jobs, they arrive by patera, the children die on the boat…. I'm not going to reply" (Fatima).

Montero (2003) talks of how informational power is channeled through the media via politics and the economy, naturalizing and justifying the asymmetries of power. Some interviewees believe they are perceived in a stereotypical fashion, blamed for the unrest: "When there's a robbery or a scandal, they brand the undocumented immigrants." (Brahim). Their community is considered a backward society that restricts women's freedoms:

> *She thinks that in Morocco everybody wears a djellaba…. She says to me, "It really surprises me that you live alone. Don't your parents say anything about it? … I'm surprised that you're there, you're not married, because you're Arabic." (Nassira)*

As Prilleltensky (2012) indicates, a continuum of oppression is experienced, which in our case goes from persisting conditions to suboptimal conditions of justice, including vulnerable conditions of injustice. The position that migrants keep in this continuum affects their opportunities and the resources to combat it, which in turn affects adaptation outcomes. We now analyze the different ways in which the Moroccan migrant population responds to oppression.

2.2 | Responses to conditions of oppression

Oppression has a negative impact on an individual's psychological functioning and limits the possibilities of contributing toward a shift in the status quo. That said, there are those who, despite living in oppressive environments, invest significant time and effort to change these conditions or create new ones, which protects them from experiencing oppression. We have identified three responses to conditions of oppression based on opportunities and available resources, recognizing the oppressive situation as being unjust, and engaging in actions that bring about change in power relations: *acritical acceptance*, *accommodation*, and *resilience*. These narratives shed light on the different paths or trajectories that newcomers take, determining the extent to which they are successful in their cultural adaptation within a specific context of migration (Castro & Murray, 2010) and, in particular, the possibility to initiate a psychopolitical development process (Watts, Griffith, & Abdul-Adil, 1999).

2.2.1 | Acritical acceptance

This response implies activating the necessary resources to meet the demands of the environment, settled into an established order while unaware of the asymmetries of power. It can be expressed in a myriad of ways; for example, by diminishing migrants' work prospects, this group ends up consenting to this underemployment and values their achievements with a certain degree of optimism.

I can get work … although it's not the work I wanted before … it's like if you had a cloud. In Morocco, for example, you want to be a judge … because I studied law … but when you get here, your mind can make you get used to something telling you it isn't bad. (Nassira)

Acritical acceptance manifests itself through habituation (Montero, 2003) in specific labor market niches, believing that future generations won't be able to break out of these habituated patterns either. This makes it impossible to carry out actions that could instigate change: "Because there are a lot of Moroccans that when they come here, they only want to work, and they think that when children come here and they turn 18, they have to work" (Ibrahim).

Some interviewees acknowledge that positive relations between the migrant and native-born populations, as well as the former's success, depend upon the effort made: "It depends on the people…. Work and effort is required to be an acceptable person, you have to do a lot…. And for us in this task, well, it depends on the people" (Bilal). They set aside the sociopolitical conditions that impact on the outcomes of individual effort and do not perceive the situation as one of social injustice: "So I am living there and I am doing things well and I can work. If I do it wrong then it doesn't work, then I'm good with them." (Abdellah)

2.2.2 | Accommodation

Some of the interviewed Moroccans are aware of the conditions of oppression they face, regarding them as structural and permanent. This reaction is observed when they incorporate certain Spanish customs into their lives to avoid discrimination, while also maintaining their traditions, culture, and religion albeit in a limited and controlled fashion. This is expressed in terms of accepting the idea that the status quo is here to stay and that they will always be treated like migrants: "Although you get Spanish nationality and everything, you're still an immigrant to the Spanish" (Nassira).

One accommodation scenario is accepting the police's role in monitoring khutbah sermons so the community can continue practicing their ceremonies: "Every Friday he has to take the Khutbah, the sermon he gives on Fridays, to the police" (Bilal, FG). Meanwhile, in social relations they feel forced to adopt the main language to make contact with the host group: "Because if I do not speak Spanish while I am here … there is no communication. We will not understand each other (Spanish and Moroccan) … then we (Moroccans) have many obligations (Hamza, FG). Migrants are aware of social injustice but accept social harmony in a context whereby the status quo remains unchanged. As such, accommodation entails a passive process of adaptation to the host context that allows one to maintain a positive sense of self and a degree of material and social gratification as pointed out by Watts et al. (1999).

2.2.3 | Resilience

This resilience emerges when the interviewees recognize the asymmetrical power dynamics and oppose them by activating the existing resources and using new ones. Castro and Murray (2010) define resilience as an adaptive response to the changes that are experienced with migration and that involves a persistent effort to cope with a hostile environment. But this response is not merely adaptive as it implies a critical awareness of oppression, meaning that transforming mechanisms are also activated. Thus, resilience is understood as an individual's or group's capacity not only to encourage, build, and commit themselves to positive social relations, but also to confront the conditions of oppression.

One of the resources that emerge from the narratives on both a personal and an interpersonal level is the establishment of social support networks: "Here in Almería, I attend courses at the INEM [referring to the Spanish Employment Agency], Cruz Roja, Almería Acoge, the Chamber of Commerce–all looking for work" (Amina). Other strategies include education and training and self-employment initiatives: "Although Moroccans have all the difficulties, they improve their quality of life. They're going to do business. They open their own bazaars…. They strive for something better. And it gives financial independence" (Nora, FG). From another interviewee's experience:

Meetings three times a week … the children learn Arabic and the Moroccans learn Spanish and there you'll find some Spanish who want their wives to learn Arabic, and they give and take classes, and Moroccans take classes to learn Spanish, Arabic…. Once a week you bring sweet treats, tea, share things. (Ikram)

Different resources are also observed on a community level, such the collective's struggle for their rights through social consciousness and action regarding oppression as coordinating activities that help migrants claim their rights and voice their own values, putting them into contact with—and establishing—associations that defend their rights: "We have to make an effort … as agents for our fellow Moroccans…. We have to build work strategies here in Almería, work strategies to defend our interests" (Salim, FG); "I am voted to represent them at work…. They are one of the doors to defending workers' rights and equal rights like the rights of the Spanish … so there is mutual support." (Brahim, RA); "For me to become president of an association … it was a very tough fight against the Spanish…. This is a criticism and I say it loud and clear" (Nora, FG). Liberation behaviors are observed in this context (Watts et al., 1999), owing to the fact that they involve a process of resistance to the oppressive forces (Prilleltensky, 2008b).

Acritical acceptance, accommodation, and resilience are dynamic in nature, and are expressed differently across different domains of life (e.g., politics, the world of work and finance; social and family relationships; and religious beliefs, customs, outlooks, principals, and values). In this regard, Genkova, Trickett, Birman, and Vinokurov (2014) have observed how adapting to the host culture, or/and maintaining cultural patterns of origin, can have their advantages depending on the circumstances. One respondent talks of how he "puts up with" his working conditions, a peripheral life domain: "People get used to the poison…. In the afternoon they feel like they have a cold … you can't do anything about it … and I just put up with it" (Abdellah). However, he also considers it essential to maintain his customs, a central life domain: "The food hasn't changed. It's the same as in Morocco … I can't leave that." What the narratives do show, according to Genkova et al. (2014) and Navas et al. (2005), is how migrants respond to oppression differently, yet consistent with the life domains. These responses depend upon the opportunities to be found in each context, their expectations and interests, and whether or not they can attain well-being.

2.3 | Well-being continuum

In general terms, scholars recognize well-being as a positive state matched with needs satisfaction and positive feelings like happiness. As exemplified in the narratives, we decided to place well-being as running along a continuum, in the sense expressed by Prilleltensky (2012), to the extent that achieving well-being is considered the core aim of the migration experience (Paloma et al., 2009). This experience should be understood as a journey taken to realize one's life project in a new environment, and by initiating transformative civic actions and seeing their effect when striving to overcome conditions of oppression. The different reactions to conditions of oppression concur with three observed stages in the narratives: *internalized oppression*, *exhausting resources*, and *well-being*. They are compatible inasmuch as they are dissimilar across the different life domains.

2.3.1 | Internalized oppression

Acritical acceptance is linked with internalized oppression, stemming from a lack of power and degradation. The following words reveal how the migrant adopts the narrative of the dominant group regarding the impossibility of rising up the social scale: "Always as a laborer … he'll always go on doing the same work. He can never get ahead." (Brahim). One interviewee describes the internalized oppression experienced by her fellow countrymen and women, believing that, naturalizing it, they have to accept these precarious jobs because they are not in their own country: "They won't do it in Morocco, but when they come here, they say that it isn't my country and I have to take on any type of work … and I'm not entitled to ask for anything else. So you work anywhere" (Nassira).

Meanwhile, another respondent expresses a lack of recognition of the oppressive situation she currently faces, showing dejection: "I didn't dream of much either…. But, look, I'm okay. I'm not in a bad way. I work a lot. I'm exhausted. I hardly see my children … but I'm okay" (Saida). The consequence of this is a feeling of hopelessness among migrants who have been unable to achieve their goals: "I'm depressed because I don't have a job or a house. I rent a place, and my children … they're not working" (Chaima). To this we can add a loss of control–when people experience cognitive dissonance, finding themselves unable to resolve the dialectic between pressure from the dominant culture and their own culture: "You often find yourself forced to keep up the pace, of a culture that isn't your own and this distracts you a bit, you lose control of yourself, and then one ends up, ends up losing their identity" (Issam, FG). These psychological

patterns act as a barrier to taking action, thus contributing to maintaining this oppression (Martín-Baró, 1986, Moane, 2003, Watts et al., 1999) and perpetuating conditions of injustice (Prilleltensky, 2012).

2.3.2 | Exhausting resources

This emerges from interviewees who perceive the situation of oppression as unjust, and who attempt to carry out actions to adapt to it or even transform it. However, repeated failure results in giving up; a respondent describes being faced with what seems to be an impossible task: “Moroccan associations here in Almería have failed completely … I think there is no variety in their activities and don’t reach all of us” (Nordin, FG). The next respondent is aware of the labor abuses but gives no indication of any possible changes in sight, despite efforts to fix the situation, reflecting learned helplessness in her words: “It’s a hotel where you have to work a lot. From the outset, the working conditions haven’t been clarified…. I’ve always looked for work but I haven’t found it” (Amina).

Prilleltensky (2012) notes how some adaptation efforts can contribute to feeling good, but they can also have negative consequences when oppressive conditions persist. Thus, accommodation to the environment yields social and material rewards (Watts et al., 1999), but this entails a degree of pessimism when one realizes that life can be better. This is the case of the following interviewee; she feels good, sees progress in her migratory trajectory, and yet this feeling is not complete as little has changed in her collective perception.

> *I’ve achieved what I wanted. I have my house; I’ve fought for this, I live well, I have Spanish friends too, and Arabic. I’ve integrated really well…I can work, although this isn’t the job that I wanted before…it’s like if you had a cloud. In Morocco, for example, you want to be a judge, because I studied law. But when you get here, your mind can make you get used to something, telling you that it isn’t bad working in domestic service. After this job, it’s going to work out; I can make a success of things. Then the clouds that you already had in your head start coming down. The reality is something other than a dream that you had when you were 18 and, as such, reality dictates more. Well, good, with people the truth is it’s all good … although recently things are really bad with the racism and all that. (Nassira)*

2.3.3 | Well-being

Well-being comes across when the interviewees experience satisfaction and enjoyment in their personal lives given their achievements. Well-being is understood as satisfying needs in different areas of life and striking a balance between personal, relational, and collective needs (Prilleltensky, 2008a): “Yes, a good decision because here you can find work. In Morocco I wasn’t working. There’s a big change and I’ve more or less reached my goals” (Hanan). Here we can also highlight wellness, which is held as a freely decided identity; in other words, the possibility of maintaining certain customs and practising one’s religion, the legitimacy of the resources selected to achieve well-being, plus the capacity and power to participate in decision making and reciprocal exchanges. A feeling of satisfaction also emerges upon perceiving the progress made over time: “I don’t believe that there’s a permanent state of happiness or a permanent state of unhappiness. It depends if I resolve or have success in something specific, well, then I’ll be happy” (Redoudan, FG); “We’re working for the common interest of our society. Therefore, there must be reciprocity in terms of me treating you well, respecting you, trying to give you time, etc., well, you have to show the same towards me” (Bilal, FG).

At times, the interviewees admit that they still haven’t achieved the goals they set out to accomplish in their new home; however, they feel that they are on the right path: “Happiness for me is that the person is content with their life. That they’ve achieved some things…. I still haven’t achieved it…. Coming was 100% the right decision. Compared to Morocco, my quality of life has indeed improved” (Foudad). They acknowledge the asymmetry of power and deem it adjustable, thus perceiving well-being attainment as liberating their community. One respondent sees education and training as the driving force behind this change: “When we talk about opportunity, we think of the future…. So for me I have to learn Spanish well to seek out more opportunities … to find better work … to be happy” (Mounir). Meanwhile, another interviewee believes that this change will fall to the next generation: “I have faith in the next generation … in the immigrants’ children” (Bilal, FG).

2.4 | Conclusion

Our results show that the way in which conditions of oppression present themselves exerts an influence on the newcomers' responses, yielding different well-being outcomes depending on the life domain. Oppression is facilitated by the dehumanization process that the dominant group exercises over the oppressed, regarding them as incapable of possessing a valuable culture and good moral principles with which to participate successfully in society (Paladino et al., 2002). The grounded theoretical premises of this study are as follows: (a) the conditions of oppression suffered by newcomers in their new settlements play a decisive role in the adaptation process, in which there are fewer opportunities and resources and therefore less possibilities for achieving personal goals; and (b) conditions of oppression impact on well-being depending on how well newcomers are able to respond to it. Resilient responses result in greater levels of well-being; they become aware of their oppression and develop active responses that enable access to resources and social networks, which provide them with the means to resist oppression. These premises allow us to recognize the importance of the active role that migrants play in relation to their environment, and the fact that the context-specific effects are not evenly distributed for everyone.

Resilience as an active adaptive response paves the way for liberation, understood as a cultural and psychological transformation process whose goal is well-being attainment. This is primarily determined by the met expectations for a better quality of life and the received support of others and social recognition; the effort invested in attaining goals; and a positive outlook for the future (Paloma et al., 2009, Prilleltensky, 2014). However, there are those who go only halfway (accepting or adjusting to the status quo). Ward (2013) understands adaptation as a process that requires a balance to be struck between facing a diverse set of demands and—on occasions and even somewhat contradictorily—managing roles and negotiating identity, religion, and social demands. In this study, this balance refers to the possibility of maintaining traditional values and embracing the established order even if it is not accepted, which at times reflects power inequalities.

The narrative analysis has allowed for a bottom-up perspective, which gives voice to a silenced community and invites us to understand the interviewees' views about their own process of change. This focus (a) has facilitated our awareness of the dominant neoliberal ideology in the context of migration research and (b) has overcome the biased emphasis placed on individualism, equality, and social interest, or the idea that migrants choose to emigrate (Gaus, 1983). Defining it in terms of conditions of oppression implies admitting that Moroccan migrants move because of the social injustice in their country and because they are under the illusion that Europe is a place of opportunities and freedom.

This study highlights the fact that well-being is achieved by citizens who take active measures, regarding migrants as a force to be reckoned with in political transformation. For this reason, social policies should not only recognize diversity and distribute responsibilities and benefits fairly, but they should also take it a step further and celebrate distinctiveness. This means promoting equal participation, giving the migrant population the opportunity to tell their story. This makes perfect sense if we borrow from Montero (2009), when she says that migrants will play an active role in the state if they feel part of the receiving society, sharing in the management, maintenance, and preservation of society's development. Community professionals should facilitate and instigate social change, promote social participation and positive relations, and encourage both the migrant and the native-born populations to develop awareness in relation to opportunities, which conceal cohesion and coexistence in diversity. Studies are also needed that can be used as guidelines for social change and that propose key strategies for multilevel implementation (Trickett, 2009).

Number of participants, recruitment strategies and study design have been chosen to appropriately place the study's outcomes in context. Interviewing 15 people means a limited number of narratives. Although we have taken every care to reach theoretical saturation, this may affect the "transferability" of the results. We suggest that future studies include a larger number of participants. Recruiting interviewees through community leaders, together with the study's voluntary nature, may have diminished the diversity of perspectives regarding the adaptation strategies used. Replicating the theoretical model in other migrant communities and in other environments would provide greater validity.

This study incorporates the power dynamics into the models that explain the migration experience, thus converting the migrants' well-being into a question of social justice and fairness (Prilleltensky, 2012), which can be expressed differently in the same migration context. We are now to understand it as a process that requires a fair and equitable distribution of obligations and privileges, rights and responsibilities, and losses and gains. It also implies dynamics of fair, transparent, symmetrical, and participative decision making. Perhaps even more importantly, this vision firmly commits our current and future scientific endeavours to building the necessary foundations for a just society, where everyone is treated with dignity and where oppressed minorities can achieve liberation.

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