



Acta de investigación psicológica

ISSN: 2007-4832

ISSN: 2007-4719

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Facultad de Psicología

#widrak, Justyna; Krys, Kuba; Kwiatkowska, Anna;  
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Polish Honor and Norwegian Dignity: Life Satisfaction, Acculturation, and Self-Worth 1  
Acta de investigación psicológica, vol. 9, no. 3, 2019, pp. 5-13  
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Facultad de Psicología

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22201/fpsi.20074719e.2019.3.316>

Available in: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=358971648002>

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# Polish Honor and Norwegian Dignity: Life Satisfaction, Acculturation, and Self-Worth <sup>1</sup>

## *El Honor Polaco, La Dignidad Noruega: Satisfacción de Vida, Aculturación y Autoestima*

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Received March 15, 2019; Accepted October 30, 2019

### Abstract

Locus of self-worth shifts from internal in cultures of dignity to external in cultures of honor. It remains yet unknown whether it can be modified, for example, under an influence of important life events, as migration to a culture of a distinct logic. Our study aimed to analyse relationships between the locus of self-worth and the acculturation strategies on life satisfaction. We collected data from 60 heterosexual Polish couples living in Poland, 120 Polish migrant couples in Norway, and 60 Norwegian couples living in Norway. Groups differed from each other in life satisfaction and in locus of self-worth, with Norwegians valuating the self the most internally and Poles in Poland the most externally. Our results on locus of self-worth show that Polish culture fits in the classification of culture of honor, while Norwegians represent culture of dignity. Moreover, a series of hierarchical linear regressions demonstrated that both locus of self-worth and acculturation strategy are significant predictors of participants' life satisfaction, with a moderating role of migrants' attachment to Polish culture and adaptation to Norwegian society.

**Keywords:** Migration, Acculturation, Satisfaction of Life, Locus of Self, Honor and Dignity

### Resumen

En las culturas de dignidad, que ocurren principalmente en los estados del norte de los Estados Unidos, Canadá y el noroeste de Europa, la autoestima es inalienable y se valora internamente. Esto significa que la autoestima se basa en los logros, las decisiones y los valores del individuo (Aslani et al., 2016). En las culturas de dignidad, nadie puede privar a los individuos de su valor, ya que su ubicación está en lo más profundo de la persona. Por el

<sup>1</sup> Research was supported by the Norway Grants in the Polish-Norwegian Research Programme operated by the National Centre for Research and Development (no Pol-Nor/202343/62).

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contrario, en culturas de honor, el valor de una persona se basa en cualidades internas y externas. El honor puede ser quitado, si una persona rompe las reglas de conducta social. El locus de la autoestima cambia de lo interno en las culturas de dignidad, a lo externo en las culturas de honor. Aún no es claro si se puede modificar, por ejemplo, bajo la influencia de eventos importantes de la vida, como la migración a una cultura de una lógica distinta. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo analizar las relaciones entre el locus de autoestima y las estrategias de aculturación sobre la satisfacción con la vida. Se levantaron datos de 60 parejas heterosexuales polacas que viven en Polonia, 120 parejas polacas de inmigrantes en Noruega y 60 parejas noruegas que viven en Noruega. Los grupos diferían entre sí en la satisfacción con la vida y en el locus de la autoestima, los noruegos valoraban el yo más internamente y los polacos en Polonia más externamente. Los resultados en el locus de la autoestima muestran que la cultura polaca encaja en la clasificación de la cultura del honor, mientras que los noruegos representan la cultura de la dignidad. Además, una serie de regresiones lineales jerárquicas mostraron que tanto el locus de la autoestima como la estrategia de aculturación son predictores significativos de la satisfacción con la vida, con un papel moderador del apego de los migrantes a la cultura polaca y la adaptación a la sociedad noruega.

**Palabras clave:** Migración, Aculturación, Satisfacción del Vida, Locus de Autoestima, Dignidad, Honor, Psicología Cultural

Between the years 2004 and 2015, the number of Polish migrants in Norway rose almost 10 times to over 90,000 individuals, becoming the biggest diaspora of all ethnic groups (Godzimirski, Stormowska, & Dudzińska, 2015). This occurred most likely due to the opening of the labour market for Polish citizens, which caused this dynamic growth after Poland had accessed the European Union. At first sight, Polish and Norwegian cultures might not seem very distant, compared for instance to Pakistani and Norwegian. Yet, European Social Survey's (2008) results yielded very visible discrepancies between the two countries, even in basic dimensions (Żadkowska, Kosakowska-Berezecka i Ryndyk, in press). Norway represents one of the societies that is most satisfied with life, while Poland is one of the most dissatisfied (European Social Survey, 2015). The latest wave of migration from Poland to Norway brings a unique opportunity to observe how migration may influence people's satisfaction with life.

Reviews of literature suggest that migration may have a complex influence on wellbeing, as some studies report positive, and other report negative relationships between wellbeing and migration (Lönnqvist, Leikast, Mähönen, & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2015). There are numerous factors related to migrants' life satisfaction in the host country (D'Isanto, Fouskas, &

Verde, 2016; Mara & Landesmann, 2013) and the type of acculturation strategies they adopt (Abu-Rayya, 2009). Migrants have to overcome many difficulties and obstacles, such as cultural differences in terms of values, differences in self-construals (e.g. internal vs. external locus of self-worth), the language barrier, and potentially limited social support from their family and old friends (González & González, 2008; Neto, 1995). On the other hand, migration to a welfare state like Norway may bring many benefits, for instance financial stabilization, new employment and self-development opportunities (White, 2010). It is thus not obvious how the experience of moving from a country where satisfaction with life is low to another country where satisfaction of life is high may influence migrants' wellbeing. With our study, we aimed to offer new insights into the thus far understudied relationships between life satisfaction, locus of self-worth (internal vs external), and acculturation strategies of Polish migrants moving to Norway. The purpose of this paper is to document the meaning of locus of self-worth in acculturation processes. It does so by analysing the effects of locus of self-worth and adopted acculturation strategies on well-being of migrants. Therefore, this paper extends the current discussion on intercultural relations between hosting society and migrant groups.

### Self-Worth in Dignity and Honor Cultures

Scholars have made various attempts to distinguish variables useful for classifying cultures. Although the most popular distinction is the individualism-collectivism of cultures (e.g., Hofstede, 1980), some suggest that we may need to pay more attention to other cultural dimensions (Bond, 2002). Such approach was presented by Leung and Cohen (2011), who introduced a new theoretical framework, organising cultures around three general logics of dignity, honor, and face. The core concept underlying this classification is the sense of internal vs. socially conferred personal worth. In “dignity cultures,” occurring mostly in Northern states of the USA, Canada and North-Western Europe (In Lee, Leung, & Kim, 2014), self-worth is inalienable and valued internally. This means that self-worth is based on the individual’s accomplishments, decisions, and values (Aslani et al., 2016). In dignity cultures nobody can deprive individuals of their worth, since its locus is deep inside the person. On the contrary, in “honor cultures,” one’s worth is based on both internal and external qualities. Honor can be taken away if a person breaks rules of social conduct. “Face cultures,” finally, occur mostly in East Asian societies, where self-worth is derived externally from social relations. One focuses mostly on protecting his or her face by following social rules, hierarchy, or by having personal connections with prestigious others (In Lee, Leung, & Kim, 2014). In this study, the logics of dignity and honor are relevant; therefore, we focused only on these two.

Each of the cultures links distinct values and codes of conduct, affecting the way people perceive an individual and his or her place in society. Dignity cultures usually build egalitarian societies, where individuals are, at least theoretically, equal, while honor cultures arise in “lawless” environments, where a weak state does not guarantee acting upon the law by all members of the society (Henry, 2009); therefore, individuals in honor cultures use “payback” as a method of establishing social hierarchy and regulating interpersonal relationships.

Although the distinction between cultures of dignity, honor, and face seems clear and simple, in reality it is difficult to provide a “pure” example of

each. Nevertheless, in most cultures one may distinguish some prevailing features determining to which type of culture – dignity, honor, or face– they belong. Following this approach, we hypothesised that Polish culture belongs to honor cultures (Krys, et al., 2016; Szmajke, 2008) and Norway to dignity cultures (Leung & Cohen, 2011). Migration from one culture to another may cause a culture clash, as values manifested by migrants can be opposite to values and norms existing in the host society (Sung, 1985; Winkelman, 1994). In our study, we thus analysed the change from honor culture to dignity culture among Polish migrants in Norway.

### Acculturation Strategies

Migration forces people to answer two basic questions regarding the shape of their relationships with one’s heritage culture and with the host culture. The first question concerns cultural maintenance: *Do I maintain heritage culture and identity?* The second is related to the cultural adaptation: *Do I adapt to the culture of the majority?* (Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senécal, 1997). Having assorted these two variables, Berry (1997) introduced a concept of four acculturation strategies. The positive answer to both questions leads to the *integration* strategy, usually considered in the literature as the most beneficial for the individual (Zagefka & Brown, 2002). If one sheds his or her heritage identity and decides to accommodate to the new culture, one undertakes the *assimilation* strategy. Finally, *isolation* happens when one maintains close and vivid connections with the home culture and does not participate in the host society. The least understood is the *marginalisation* strategy; an individual rejects both host and home cultures and excludes herself from participation in the social life (Berry, 1997).

Since the integration strategy is usually the most beneficial for migrants (Zagefka & Brown, 2002), we expect it should be related to the highest life satisfaction. This strategy is the most likely to be chosen when cultural distance, understood as a subjective discrepancy between home and host culture, is the smallest. The better the person-culture fit, the higher the subjective wellbeing (Angelini, Casi, & Corazzini,

2015; Friedman, et al., 2010). When considering the internal vs external locus of self-worth (Gullestad, 2002), Polish migrants valuating their self-more internally, i.e. being closer to Norwegian culture, should experience higher life satisfaction, since this way they fit better in the host society. In our study we tried to answer two questions: 1) does the internal locus of self-worth assure higher life satisfaction? and 2) what is the relationship between the chosen acculturation strategy, locus of self-worth, and satisfaction of life of Polish migrants in Norway?

To provide a thorough analysis of the relationship between life satisfaction, acculturation strategies and locus of self-worth, we carried out a quantitative study on Polish couples living in Poland (PP), Polish migrant couples living in Norway (PN), and Norwegian couples living in Norway (NN).

We expected that a more internally valued self would result in more satisfied Polish migrants with their lives, but not Poles living in their homeland. We also expected that integration and assimilation strategies for migrants with an internal locus of self-worth would be related to higher life satisfaction than for those with a more externally valued self. In case of migrants choosing the isolation or marginalisation strategy, we hypothesized that the internal locus of self-worth would not be a significant predictor of their well-being.

## Method

The study presented here was a part of the large interdisciplinary project – PAR Migration Navigator – aimed at the thorough description of processes facilitating smooth acculturation of individuals migrating from a less egalitarian to a more egalitarian society. The analysis presented here is based on selected data collected in a quantitative investigation designed to examine issues related to the work-life balance and gender equality among couples living in their home and host country.

## Sample

We recruited Polish and Norwegian heterosexual couples aged 21 - 65 years. We aimed to collect data only from participants who lived with their partner,

since being in a relationship or being single might have clearly affected the well-being and chosen acculturation strategies. The sample comprised 120 Polish (60 couples) living in Poland, 240 Polish migrants (120 couples) in Norway, and 120 Norwegians (60 couples) living in Norway; 52% of both Norwegian and Polish relationships were informal, the other couples were married. In all groups, the age structure was similar: the majority of respondents were between 25 and 35 years old and less than ¼ belonged to the young adults group (18 – 25 years old).

## Procedure

Every participant was asked to individually fill in a questionnaire without consulting the answers with his or her partner. The questionnaire consisted of scales covering three general areas: work-life balance, acculturation, and gender equality. A complete set of scales totalled 201 questions in the longest version, which PN (Poles in Norway) completed, and 172 in the shortest version, which NN (Norwegians in Norway) filled in, since non-migrants did not fill in the acculturation scales. All scales lacking a Polish and/or Norwegian adaptation were translated and re-translated independently by two native speakers in order to construct two equivalent language versions (Brislin, 1970). Every participant responded in his or her native language.

*Life satisfaction.* We created a list of items related to private and professional life. Respondents were asked to judge using a visual analogue scale, how satisfied they were with each of the fifteen areas: amount of free time, self-development possibilities, division of house chores, work, relations with his/her partner, relations with supervisors, relations with co-workers, ways of spending free time, finances, performed tasks, salary, health, life in general, family life, and sexual life. We ran a factor analysis with Varimax rotation to test the factorial structure of the scale for each of the groups (PP, PN, NN) separately. The analysis displayed inconsistent structure across groups; hence, we decided to analyse further only items loading on the same factors in all three groups. As a result, we obtained two subscales: *private life satisfaction* and *work satisfaction*. Private Life Satisfaction (PLS)



was calculated as a mean of four items: health, family life, sexual life and life in general. Work Satisfaction (WS) was calculated as the mean of three items: salary, finances, and performed tasks. Both subscales characterise satisfactory internal reliability: (1) for PLS: Cronbach's  $\alpha_{PP}=.86$ ,  $\alpha_{PN}=.81$ ,  $\alpha_{NN}=.88$ , and (2) for WS:  $\alpha_{PP}=.82$ ,  $\alpha_{PN}=.68$ ,  $\alpha_{NN}=.73$ .

**Acculturation scale.** To measure acculturation strategies (only for the group of migrants - PN) we chose the scale designed by Polek and Schoon (2008), used originally in studies of Polish migrants in the Netherlands. We tracked the tendency to maintain own traditions and customs with Polek and Schoon's subscale, the Own Culture Maintenance (OCM; e.g., *I am proud of being Polish*). We measured the tendency to acquire the host culture traditions and behaviours with the Adaptation to Host Culture (AHC) subscale (e.g., *I feel a member of the Norwegian society*). Each subscale contained five items and presented a satisfactory level of reliability: Cronbach's  $\alpha_{OCM}=.76$  and  $\alpha_{AHC}=.82$ . The subscales turned out to be moderately inter-correlated ( $r=.32$ ,  $p<.01$ ), suggesting that although related, these two scales track different phenomena.

**Internal Locus of Self-Worth (ILSW).** We measured the inalienable versus socially conferred worth (i.e., internal vs. external locus of self-worth) with the scale originally proposed by Leung & Cohen (2011). It was built with four items (1) *how others treat me is irrelevant to my worth as a person*, (2) *how much*

*I respect myself is far, far more important than how much others respect me*, (3) *no one (except me) can make me feel diminished*, and (4) *no one can take a person's self-respect away from him or her*. The scale proved high reliability with Cronbach's  $\alpha>.92$  in each group. A higher score means more internal locus of self-worth.

For all scales, participants were asked to mark a cross on a 100 mm visual analogue scale, from *I do not agree at all* (on the left) to *I agree completely* (on the right). Next, we scored the results from 0 to 100, by calculating the distance from the beginning of the scale using 1 mm as 1 point. The numbers did not appear on the scale though, only the verbal endpoints' labels (Kawada & Yamada, 2012).

## Results

As predicted, Norwegians (NN) turned out to be the most satisfied and the most internally valuating self, and on the contrary, Poles in their home country (PP) turned out to be the least satisfied and the most externally valuating self. Thus, in the first step, we used ANOVA to test if PP, PN, and NN differed in private life satisfaction, work satisfaction, and internal locus of self-worth. The level the three variables differed between Norwegians and Polish in Poland, while the Polish migrant group turned out to be in-between these two (Table 1). Furthermore, all groups were more satisfied with their private life than with their work.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Characteristics and Correlations for Internal Locus of Self-Worth, Work Satisfaction and Private Life Satisfaction in Three Analysed Samples*

Group	N	Age	female	1. ILSW	2. WS	3. PLS.	$r_{ILSW \times WS}$	$r_{ILSW \times PLS}$	$r_{WS \times PLS}$
		M (SD)	%	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)			
Poles in Poland (PP)	120	31.2 (7.0)	50	53.7 <sub>a</sub> (26.2)	48.8 <sub>a</sub> (20.7)	77.8 <sub>a</sub> (17.3)	.11	-.04	.42**
Poles in Norway (PN)	240	32.2 (7.9)	50	60.5 <sub>ab</sub> (33.3)	64.9 <sub>b</sub> (15.1)	81.9 <sub>a</sub> (15.8)	.12	.29**	.41**
Norwegians (NN)	120	31.2 (7.0)	50	65.2 <sub>b</sub> (22.7)	74.1 <sub>c</sub> (15.0)	88.4 <sub>b</sub> (13.5)	.11	-.08	.22*
F				4.7**	73.1***	14.0***			

Note. ILSW – internal locus of self-worth, WS – work satisfaction, PLS – private life satisfaction;  $r$  – correlation coefficient.

\*\*  $p<0.01$ . \*  $p<0.05$ .

In the second step, we calculated the correlation between internal locus of self-worth, private life satisfaction, and work satisfaction. As predicted, the correlation between the internal locus of self-worth and private life satisfaction was found only in the Polish migrant group ( $r_{PN}=.29, p<.05$ ) but not for non-migrant groups  $rs<.08, ps>.40$ ; for details see Table 1). Moreover, in the Polish migrants group, neither adaptation to host culture, nor own culture maintenance were correlated with internal locus of self-worth (both  $ps>.50$ ).

In order to investigate more thoroughly the relationships between acculturation strategies, migrants' life satisfaction, and their locus of self-worth, we calculated a series of four regression analyses. In the first step, to test if acculturation strategies and internal locus of self-worth are predictors of higher life satisfaction, we performed two separate linear regression analyses, with work satisfaction as the dependent variable in one regression analysis, private life satisfaction in the other one, and locus of self-worth, adaptation to host culture, own culture maintenance, and the interaction between the last two as dependent variables in both analyses. We did not include demographic variables, since no significant correlation between them and work and private life satisfaction was found. We confirmed that all independent variables were significant predictors of private life satisfaction. For work satisfaction, however, all variables but the interaction were significant predictors (Table 2).

**Table 2**  
*Influence of Internal Locus of Self-Worth and Acculturation Strategies on Private Life and Work Satisfaction in Polish Migrants in Norway*

	DV: private life satisfaction		DV: work satisfaction	
	<i>r</i>	$\beta$	<i>r</i>	$\beta$
ILSW	.29**	.27***	.12	.13*
AHC	.15*	-.02	.16*	.14*
OCM	.33**	.32***	.09	.01
AHC* OCM		.20***		.03
adjusted $R^2$		.19		.03
<i>F</i>		15.6		2.5

Note: Linear regression. ILSW – internal locus of self-worth, AHC – Adaptation to Host Culture, OCM – Own Culture Maintenance; *r* – correlation coefficients,  $\beta$  – standardized regression coefficients; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Therefore, in the next step, we analysed the acculturation (OCM vs AHC) interaction by testing their moderating effects on the private life satisfaction of Polish migrants. First, following the approach of Bedyńska and Książek (2012), we divided the sample into two groups based on the results on the OCM scale: (1) those characterised by a relatively strong attachment to Polish society (SAP), and (2) those characterised by a relatively weak attachment to Polish society (WAP); as a cut-off point we used the median of the OCM scale. Next, we ran again regression analyses, separately for SAP and WAP groups, with private life satisfaction as the dependent variable, and AHC and ILSW as predictors. In the SAP group, acculturation to Norwegian society positively predicted private life satisfaction. On the other hand, the result in the WAP group was the opposite – the weaker the acculturation to Norwegian society, the more satisfied were Polish migrants with their private life. In both groups, more internal locus of self-worth was related to higher private life satisfaction (Table 3).

To obtain a complete picture of the relations between the acculturation strategies, internal locus of self-worth, and life satisfaction, we calculated

**Table 3**  
*Moderation Effects of Acculturation Strategies on Life Satisfaction Analysed Separately for Own Culture Maintenance and Acculturation to Host Culture*

OCM as moderator:		SAP group		WAP group	
		$\beta$	<i>t</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>
Model I	AHC	.23*	2.62	-.12	1.25
Model II	AHC	.22**	2.64	-.17*	1.84
	ILSW	.28**	3.34	.31**	3.37
<i>R square</i>		.13		.11	
AHC as moderator:		SAN group		WAN group	
		$\beta$	<i>t</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>
Model I	OCM	.19**	2.16	.46***	5.36
Model II	OCM	.14	1.56	.45***	5.41
	ILSW	.29***	3.40	.25***	2.96
<i>R square</i>		.12		.27	

Note: ILSW – internal locus of self-worth, AHC – Adaptation to Host Culture, OCM – Own Culture Maintenance, SAP – Strong Attachment to Polish culture, WAP – Weak Attachment to Polish Culture, SAN – Strong Attachment to Norwegian Culture, WAN – Weak Attachment to Norwegian Culture;  $\beta$  – standardized regression coefficients; *t* – *t* value

another linear regression separately for migrants with relatively strong attachment to Norwegian culture (SAN) and those relatively weakly attached (WAN). In the WAN group, the attachment to Polish culture predicted higher private life satisfaction, whereas in the SAN group we found no relation between attachment to Polish culture and private life satisfaction. In both groups, internal locus of self-worth turned out to be a significant predictor of higher private life satisfaction (Table 3).

## Discussion

This study examined differences in life satisfaction between Polish couples in Poland, Polish migrant couples in Norway, and Norwegian couples in Norway. Our findings highlight the role of acculturation strategy and internal locus of self-worth in life satisfaction. We operationalised the acculturation strategies using two variables— the adaptation to host culture and own culture maintenance (Berry, 1997). As our results confirmed, Polish culture may be regarded as a culture of honor, while Norwegian culture is a rather good example of culture of dignity (Leung & Cohen, 2011). The core variable, on which the differentiation is based, is the internal vs. external locus of self-worth. Therefore, in the present research we focused on this variable as an important factor in acculturating Polish migrants to the Norwegian culture.

Our data confirmed that Poles valued their self relatively more externally and Norwegians relatively more internally. As predicted, Polish migrants in Norway valued their self-more internally than those who lived in Poland, but still not as internally as Norwegians did. We suggest two possible compatible explanations: having such a disposition as internal locus of self-worth might facilitate making the decision to migrate in general, but in particular, to choose Norway as a new land to live in, where this disposition seems to work as a strong asset/resource. The other explanation is that the experience of living in Norway and being exposed to Norwegian values trigger a shift in migrants' locus of self-worth. Future studies should shed light on which of these explanations is valid.

Our data stands in line with the results of the European Social Survey (2008): Poles are dissatisfied with

their private lives, whereas Norwegians are highly satisfied. Polish migrants though are again in the middle. We assume that people coming to Norway benefit from the welfare state by obtaining higher income, better housing conditions, and social rights, although due to other factors they are unable to reach the same wellbeing level as hosts (Krys, Świdrak, Kwiatkowska, Kosakowska-Berezecka & Vedøy, in print). One of these factors is the chosen acculturation strategy: integration, assimilation, isolation, or marginalisation. Data support the hypothesis that different acculturation strategies influence migrants' private life satisfaction. Which strategy is optimal does not seem obvious though. In our study, locus of self-worth, Polish culture maintenance, and adaptation to Norwegian culture turned out as significant factors of private life satisfaction in the migrant group. Moreover, we found a significant interaction effect between both relationships with Poland and Norway, which yields the surprising conclusion that, in some cases, marginalisation strategy might be more adaptive than assimilation.

Again, we propose two interpretations of the abovementioned effect. Norwegian culture is usually described as an example of individualistic culture, but in fact local communities and familism play an important role in people's lives (Gullestad, 2002). Norwegian, horizontal individualism emphasizes sameness and equality between individuals and thus enables interactions between two persons equal to each other. Following this logic, one is more open to other, similar people, which creates room for cooperation between them (Komarraju & Cokley, 2008). This may hinder the blending in of newcomers into local social networks. Perhaps focusing on the relationship with one's partner, maintaining close rapports with family and friends in Poland, and rejecting any contacts with Norwegians, actually make it, paradoxically, easier to feel higher satisfaction in the Norwegian society.

On the other hand, the role of the internal locus of self-worth seems to play a crucial role in shaping private life satisfaction. We hypothesise that migrants who value their self-more internally report higher satisfaction of life because they do not base their happiness on the external circumstances of their life,



since their happiness is rather valued internally. This would explain why people who choose the separation strategy and whose self-worth is located internally are satisfied with their private lives.

We noted several limitations in this study. To begin with, there is a possibility that the relationship between life satisfaction and acculturation strategy is bidirectional (González & González, 2008): perhaps people who are happy with their life in general adapt more easily to new environments (Scheier & Carver, 1992; Conversano, et al., 2010). Furthermore, it also seems possible that a third variable, such as resilience (Ying, 1992), uncontrolled for in this study, is responsible for both life satisfaction and better acculturation, understood here as a more internally valued self. It is also important to mention that our sample included heterosexual couples only. Non-heterosexual couples and single individuals may build their life satisfaction based on distinct factors than people in heterosexual relationships.

In the end, we would like to note that usually migrants report higher stress and must overcome difficulties unknown in their homeland. Nonetheless, migration to a welfare state like Norway may bring many benefits, called pull factors, including financial stabilization, new employment and self-development opportunities (Mara & Landesmann, 2013; Neto, 1995).

To summarize, both locus of self-worth and the chosen acculturation strategy play important roles in shaping migrants' life satisfaction, with a moderating role of attachment to home culture and adaptation to the host society.

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