

# Well-Being and Social Justice Among Moroccan Migrants in Southern Spain

Virginia Paloma · Manuel García-Ramírez · Carlos Camacho

Published online: 10 June 2014  
© Society for Community Research and Action 2014

**Abstract** The decision to migrate is normally based on expectations of improving one's actual living conditions and therefore, one's well-being. However, these expectations are not usually met in receiving contexts that relegate newcomers to lower power positions. From a liberating community psychology approach, this study aims to develop a predictive model of the well-being of Moroccan migrants living in southern Spain. Data were collected from a survey sample of 633 migrants (the average age was 31.9 years and 51.8 % were women) from 20 territorial units of Andalusia. Through a process of multilevel regression analysis, this study reveals that the well-being of the Moroccan community is closely determined by the following: (a) the level of social justice in the receiving context (openness to diversity of receiving communities, cultural sensitivity of community services, and residential integration); and (b) the individual strengths of the population (use of active coping strategies, satisfaction with the receiving context, and temporal stability in the new environment). These results empirically support the impact that different ecological levels of analysis have on well-being. Major theoretical contributions of the model and useful suggestions for improving migrant well-being are discussed.

**Keywords** Community · Context · Liberation · Migration · Oppression · Social justice · Well-being

---

V. Paloma (✉) · M. García-Ramírez  
Department of Social Psychology, College of Psychology,  
Universidad de Sevilla, C/Camilo José Cela, s/n, 41018 Seville,  
Spain  
e-mail: vpaloma@us.es

C. Camacho  
Department of Experimental Psychology, College of  
Psychology, Universidad de Sevilla, Seville, Spain

## Introduction

Although people move for countless reasons, a common motive among them is to improve their living conditions and well-being for themselves and their families. However, these expectations are often hampered in receiving contexts that relegate newcomers to lower layers of society. This is the case of Moroccan migrants in southern Spain, where their search for social legitimacy faces a perception of threat that their arrival awakens in receiving communities. This scenario compromises levels of well-being in the migrant community and supports a tendency toward social fragmentation in the receiving places (García-Ramírez et al. 2011). These circumstances call for the elaboration of theoretical models and the implementation of practices that can guide efforts to improve the well-being of migrant groups and, therefore, build a cohesive multicultural society in receiving contexts.

From the proposals suggested by a liberating community psychology approach (Watts and Serrano-García 2003), this study aims to elaborate a predictive model of the well-being of Moroccan migrants living in southern Spain. This report defines well-being as the life satisfaction as expressed by an individual and assumes that it is a multi-level and value-dependent phenomenon, strongly related with access to resources, and therefore conditioned by norms and values of social justice in the receiving society (Hernández-Plaza et al. 2010; Prilleltensky 2008). Social justice is about the “fair and equitable allocation of burden, resources, and power in society” (Prilleltensky 2008, p. 362). Liberating community psychology considers the role of contexts where the migration processes take place, explores the power relations established between receiving and migrant groups, and suggests the transformation of receiving societies as a way to achieve well-being for all

collectives (Paloma and Manzano-Arrondo 2011). This approach is particularly relevant for those displaced groups entering the receiving context of significantly disadvantaged conditions, although we recognize that this is not necessarily applicable to all migratory transitions.

We contextualize this study by showing the situation of Moroccan migrants in southern Spain. After, we propose a predictive model of well-being that arises when considering a liberating community psychology approach. Later, we describe the method carried out to corroborate the model, display the results obtained, and present the major theoretical and social contributions of the model.

### An Overview of Moroccan Migrants in Southern Spain

Andalusia is the southernmost region of Spain and one of migrants' main gateways to Europe from Africa. 7.5 % of residents in Andalusia are foreigners, although this figure rises to 19.7 % in the eastern part of the region (SIMA 2013). The Moroccan community is the largest migrant population living in the region and its members usually move there to overcome the lack of employment opportunities and social inequalities in their home country. This in addition to the strong demand for labor associated with the economic development of Spain during the last decades (that is until the exploitation of the economic crisis around 2008, just after data were collected for this study.) They usually obtain the most precarious jobs in terms of hard-working conditions, instability and low salaries, in fields such as intensive greenhouse agriculture, construction labor, and domestic service (García-Ramírez et al. 2009). The situation is particularly severe in rural areas, where many Moroccans live in segregated areas outside cities and near greenhouse areas—where they work without basic resources, such as water and electricity (Hernández-Plaza 2003). In these conditions, Moroccan migrants are in serious danger of being excluded from the distribution of and access to community services (e.g., healthcare, social services, etc.). This is due to the lack of public transportation to access these resources in the segregated areas where they usually live, language problems, the lack of knowledge regarding their rights and the services available, the perception that these services do not fit to their needs, etc. (Hernández-Plaza et al. 2010).

Research consistently observes the lack of availability, accessibility and acceptance of these services which results in a downward spiral of marginalization that increases discrimination among the receiving communities (García-Ramírez et al. 2011). Likewise, one out of every two members of the Andalusian population believes that the number of migrants residing in the region is “too many,” and 51.7 % of members are opposed to migrant groups

living according to their own customs (OPAM 2008). These circumstances require studies that determine the impact of these contextual determinants on migrant well-being, which shed light on the role migrant individual strengths play, and show how there are dynamics of interdependence that fuel the perpetuation of the social injustice conditions and the destruction of prosperity opportunities for vulnerable migrant groups.

### Migrant Well-Being from a Liberating Community Psychology Approach

We propose a liberating community psychology approach (LCPA) to integrate community psychology values (i.e., well-being, sense of community, respect for human diversity, social justice, empowerment and citizen participation, collaboration and community strengths, and empirical grounding; Kloos et al. 2012) and the emphasis of liberation psychology to transform oppressive social contexts that generate human suffering (Martín-Baró 1983; Moane 2003). LCPA works to establish (a) a new horizon, with the goal of establishing an effective service which tends to the needs of oppressed groups; (b) a new epistemology, where knowledge is built from the bottom and validated in practice; and (c) a new praxis, where scientific work is aimed at transforming the reality and balance of power relations between groups (Martín-Baró 1986). This approach urges the reintroduction of the context because “although psychological reality only acquires concreteness in individuals, its origin is in the social structure” (Martín-Baró 1983, p. 98).

LCPA contributes to the understanding of migrant well-being through incorporating (a) the dimension of vulnerability and risk of migrants' social exclusion, in terms of oppression, and (b) the development of migrant strengths to protect themselves, resist and overcome oppression according to their values, culture and needs (García-Ramírez et al. 2011). The role of power and oppression dynamics is explicitly examined and emphasized, due to their relevance for understanding the opportunities of migrant populations to achieve well-being (Nelson and Prilleltensky 2005). Migrant populations negotiate their relationship with the receiving communities with the aim of achieving well-being from different power positions at diverse ecological levels (Tseng and Yoshikawa 2008).

LCPA understands that the well-being shown by migrant collectives feeds on the dynamics of interdependence generated between contextual and individual determinants involved in the settlement process. On that basis, this paper aims to develop a predictive model of the well-being of the Moroccan population in southern Spain, gathering as major determinants (a) the degree of social

justice that exists in the context in which one resides, and (b) the individual strengths that allow one to overcome the challenges of the context.

### Well-Being as a Result of Social Justice Contextual Conditions

LCPA conceptualizes well-being as the materialization of a context's humanizing—or oppressive—character in the individual (Martín-Baró 1983). Recently, Marmot (2010) claimed that the different social conditions in which people are born, grow, live, and work are responsible for inequalities in well-being; these inequalities are not random, but minorities, and other sources of diversity are at a higher risk of vulnerability. In this sense, Prilleltensky (2012) argues that a positive association exists between the contextual degree of social justice and the degree of well-being from which a person benefits. Thus, he argues that (a) optimal conditions of social justice in the context lead to thriving, (b) sub-optimal or vulnerable conditions of social justice produce intermediate levels of well-being, and (c) persistent conditions of social injustice lead to suffering and internalized oppression.

In terms of migrant well-being, a fair multicultural society would be the one “to give everyone the right to live well with his own cultural specificity, within a framework that offers real equality of opportunity, and an underlying democratic culture affording mutual respect, negotiation in the event of conflict and continuous development of the initial cultural models” (Oliveri 2008, p. 35). In this situation, migrants can (a) access community services on equal terms, benefit from good working conditions, and gain access to standard housing in tolerant neighborhoods; (b) take advantage of a diverse social support network and participate in the society's institutions; and (c) develop a multicultural identity and achieve adequate levels of well-being (García-Ramírez et al. 2011).

Nevertheless, migrants tend to report lower levels of well-being in receiving contexts where there are oppressive conditions. Oppression is defined as a state of asymmetric power relations in which some social groups and institutions from the receiving society take advantage of newcomers to maintain their privileges (Nelson and Prilleltensky 2005). This situation is sustained and fueled, in part, by three oppression mechanisms that are outlined below; i.e., politically conservative receiving communities, impermeable community services to diversity, and residential segregation.

In a study conducted on 20 European countries, Hjerm (2007) found that the greater the *political conservatism* of a nation, the greater the level of prejudice shown by the majority of its population. Regarding this influence, the

author states that “it is dominant people and institutions amongst the majority who express, constitute and consolidate views about the minority” (p. 1256). In these cases, the receiving community usually supports the assimilation of minorities (Verkuyten 2007). This pattern is related to high levels of prejudice, that is, a defensive mechanism against the dangers perceived by the dominant groups as a challenge to their privileges (Quillian 1995). Hence, prejudice is higher among those who have a conservative political ideology, appearing reluctant to give migrants an equal distribution of resources (Bierbrauer and Klinger 2002). Evidence exists of how migrants' perception of rejection adversely affects their quality of life (Gee 2002; Jasinskaja-Lahti and Liebkind 2007).

The cultural sensitivity of *community services* is verified through the existence of an organizational mission that values diversity and commitment to the needs of migrant groups. This is through strategic principles, culturally diverse and competent employees, practices and policies adapted to the heterogeneity of their users, and an interest in establishing exchange processes and decision making along with other social agents—citizen movements, social organizations, and universities (García-Ramírez et al. 2012). The cultural competence of community service providers usually refers to the possession of knowledge and skills that enable the professional to be effective in interacting with migrant groups; and abilities to produce organizational changes to facilitate the access to and quality of services for these groups. However, Watters (2002) notes that the attempt to meet the specific needs of migrant groups comes more from the personal motivation of some professionals than from explicit institutional policies of the community services. It is therefore common for migrant groups to perceive barriers in accessing community services whose institutional image is excessively centered on the local population and insensitive towards their own customs (Ingleby et al. 2005). The migrants' perception of the degree to which the community settings value cultural diversity is positively related to their levels of well-being (Le et al. 2009).

*Residential distribution*, that is a highly segregated spatial area where migrant communities live under a situation of exclusion, is used by the dominant society to separate, limit, and treat a particular group as inferior (Logan et al. 2002). These neighborhoods have a high concentration of people with lower socioeconomic statuses, the most deteriorated infrastructures with high levels of overcrowding, and limited public transportation facilities that hamper access to community services (Williams and Collins 2001). These segregated neighborhoods usually have a high proportion of residents with the same ethnic origin. The absence of receiving members in the migrants' social network adversely affect their well-being, as they are

sources of information about the target culture, provide opportunities for language learning and facilitate the development of a sense of belonging in the new environment (Hernández-Plaza et al. 2010).

### Well-Being as a Result of Individual Strengths

LCPA recognizes the decisive influence that context has on individual well-being, but it does not limit the final result exclusively to the environment. On the contrary, it understands that migrant people may adapt, resist, and even transform possible conditions of oppression existing in their receiving contexts, and can thereby move into more appropriate levels of well-being. That is, LCPA pays attention to both the contextual determinants from the receiving society and to the migrant collectives' own strengths (Hernández-Plaza et al. 2010; Tseng and Yoshikawa 2008). Well-being is a positive state in individuals, brought about by the simultaneous and balanced satisfaction of personal, relational and collective needs that migrants have (Prilleltensky 2008). Below, we stress the main individual determinants that could cover the migrants' needs.

Among personal needs, migrants need to feel that they made a good decision in coming to the receiving context to fight for a better life. It is important that they evaluate positively their own migration experience to prevent frustration. Murphy and Mahalingam (2006) found that the correspondence between pre-migratory expectations and post-migratory reality is strongly associated with life satisfaction in the migrant population. For that reason, it is important that they maintain the *belief (and hope) that it is possible to improve their situation*. Moreover, migrants need opportunities to *define themselves in positive and active terms*, to become capable of making decisions and initiating actions oriented towards changing potential asymmetrical power relations. In this sense, Ward and Kennedy (2001) found that task-oriented coping strategies and the use of humor are associated with a higher psychological adjustment, whereas avoidance strategies are associated with depressive symptoms.

Among relational needs, migrants need the presence of both compatriots and receiving members in their social networks. A scarce presence of fellow compatriots leads migrants to a loss of cultural heritage, a lack of emotional support, and a decrease in well-being as a consequence (Phinney and Ong 2007). Moreover, social networks of compatriots play a key role in collective resistance experiences to oppressive power relationships, allowing migrants to gain control over their lives and gain capacities to respond as active agents of community change (García-Ramírez et al. 2011; Paloma et al. 2010). However, at the same time they need to develop feelings of belonging and positive

attitudes towards the receiving context (Phinney et al. 2001). Thus, the *satisfaction with the receiving context* is highlighted as a determinant of the level of migrant well-being (Jibeen and Khalid 2010). This is possible through the development of egalitarian relationships with receiving members and through migrant participation within the community life.

Among collective needs, migrants need to have the opportunity to access both a good job and community resources, such as education, health services and formal social support, in fair and equitable conditions. It is possible and easier if migrants have a legal status in the receiving community, that is, if they have any type of legal documentation (temporary visa, residence or job permit, or Spanish nationality). The more *time of residence* in the receiving context, the more probability of obtaining documentation that helps migrants to live with stability as receiving members. Research has shown that precarious working and living conditions are related to extremely low levels of well-being in terms of life satisfaction (Hernández-Plaza 2003).

Although we recognize the contributions made by the individual strengths on the well-being of migrant groups, it is important to note that, from the LCPA, these individual determinants are considered largely dependent on the degree of existing social justice in the context. Thus, (a) the use of active coping strategies are enabled by community services that are responsive to the needs of the migrant population and facilitate different ways of expression and action among its members; (b) satisfaction with the receiving context is linked to the existence of neighborhoods that present the elements needed to develop a decent life in an integrated environment; and (c) the temporal stability in the receiving context depends largely on the existing opportunities to access both good working and living conditions—which is linked to the level of tolerance towards diversity expressed by the host communities.

### Method

#### Participants

This research maintained an emphasis on access to *people in their contexts* (Trickett 2009). This required mapping out the territorial units in southern Spain to select the 20 that were representative of the different processes of migrant incorporation in that region. In this paper, “territorial unit” corresponds to the geographical setting, municipality or district, in the case of large cities, defined officially by the government of Andalusia (SIMA 2013). For the selection of the different territorial units we used the Geographic Information System (GIS) through the ArcGis software (version 9.2). This system is capable of capturing

significant visual information about the distribution of the different territorial units' structural features (Luke 2005). The principles used in the selection of the 20 units included in this study were (a) to consider only the territorial units with 100 or more Moroccans registered in the census, (b) to ensure representation of both municipalities and districts in every latitude of Andalusia, and (c) to select the ten units with the highest Moroccan activity and the ten units with the lowest activity based on the indicators mentioned in the GIS. These indicators were the number of Moroccan students enrolled in schools, the number of organizations aimed at assisting the Moroccan migrant population through their incorporation process, the number of existing mosques, the number of Moroccan users in health centers, and the number of registered migrants in the census.

Once the territorial units of interest were selected, we interviewed on average 30 Moroccan residents in every context. Their participation in the survey was voluntary, and their anonymity was assured. Participants were rewarded with a ticket to enter in a drawing for a trip to Paris or the equivalent in money. The final sample consisted of 633 Moroccan people. The average age was 31.9 years ( $SD = 8.5$ ), and 51.8 % were women. In terms of educational level, 21.6 % had no education, 24.8 % had a primary education, 39.8 % had a secondary education, and 13.9 % had a higher education. In terms of the legal status of the sample, 79.9 % claimed to possess a work and/or residence permit, 9.6 % had no legal documentation to stay in the country, 4.7 % had Spanish nationality, and the remaining 5.7 % did not answer the question. The average temporary residence in Spain was 6.3 years, with average values ranging between <1 and 49 years.

## Instruments

### *Measurement of Well-Being as a Dependent Variable*

The well-being variable was measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al. 1985). The items that make up this measurement are the following: (1) "In most ways, my life is almost perfect"; (2) "My life situation is excellent"; (3) "I am satisfied with my life"; (4) "Until now, I have the important things I want in life"; and (5) "If I could live my life again, I would change almost nothing." The scale is a Likert-type response with four options (from 1, *strongly disagree*, to 4, *strongly agree*) and showed an internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.9.

### *Measurement of Contextual Determinants of Well-Being*

The data to analyze the contextual determinants of well-being come from the survey of the migrant population and the information collected from official sources. In the phase

prior to data analysis, we calculated the arithmetic mean, in every territorial unit, of each variable whose data were collected from the survey. The use of the aggregated answers of the questionnaire as contextual measurements is a common practice in community research (Nicotera 2007).

*Political Conservatism of the Receiving Community* We counted the percentage of Conservative Party voters in each territorial unit for the 2008 General Elections in Spain from official sources.

*Cultural Sensitivity of Community Services* This was measured through the perception that the migrant population has on the degree of cultural sensitivity displayed by different community services in their environment. To determine this, we used the item "What degree of cultural sensitivity toward the Moroccan population do you think the following community services have? (a) Health services, (b) Police, (c) Social services, and (d) Public administration?" The possible answers were from 1 (*Not at all competent*) to 4 (*Very competent*). This item was adapted from the assessment tool developed by the European initiative Migrant Friendly Hospitals (Krajic et al. 2004).

*Residential Distribution* Residential segregation of the migrants in the receiving context was measured through the perception that the migrant population has on the distance their housing is from the town center. This was measured with the question "Where is your home?" taken from Hernández-Plaza (2003). The possible answers were 1 (*In the town center*), 2 (*In the urban core*), 3 (*Just outside the urban core*), and 4 (*Out of the urban core, in the country, among greenhouses*).

### *Measurement of Individual Determinants of Well-Being*

The data used to analyze the individual determinants of well-being came from the answers given by the participants during the survey process.

*Use of Active Coping Strategies* This was measured through the perception that the migrant population has on (a) their belief in the possibility of social change, and (b) their ability to influence the environment. The first indicator was measured with the item "The association to which you belong or any that could be created in your neighborhood, what probability of success could it have for improving the physical conditions of your neighborhood (cleaning, etc.)?" The possible answer responses were from 1 (*Not likely*) to 4 (*Very likely*). This item was taken from the Perceived Effectiveness of Neighborhood Associations Scale (Perkins et al. 1990). The second indicator was

measured with the item “I have almost no influence on how my neighborhood is,” with four possible answers from 1 (*Strongly agree*) to 4 (*Strongly disagree*). This item was taken from the Social Climate Scale (Perkins et al. 1990). The answers given to both items were added together to construct this variable.

*Satisfaction with the Receiving Context* This was measured through three items concerning their satisfaction, their positive assessment, and their desire to stay in relation to their neighborhood. Satisfaction was measured with the question “To what extent are you satisfied with this neighborhood as a place to live?” The possible answers were from 1 (*Not at all satisfied*) to 4 (*Very satisfied*). The assessment of their neighborhood was measured with the item “Compared to other neighborhoods, yours is...,” with the possible answers being 1 (*The worst place*), 2 (*Similar*), or 3 (*The best place*). Both items were taken from the instrument Satisfaction with the Neighborhood (Perkins et al. 1990). Finally, their desire to stay in the neighborhood was measured with the item “I hope to live in this neighborhood for a long time,” taken from the Social Climate Scale (Perkins et al. 1990). The possible answers were from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 4 (*Strongly agree*). The answers to these items were added together to construct this variable.

*Time of Stay in the Receiving Context* This information was collected by asking the participant the number of years of residence in Spain.

#### Procedure

This study was supported by the formation in 2007 of the Coalition for the Study of Health, Power and Diversity (CESPYD; García-Ramírez et al. 2010). Researchers at the University of Seville and the University of Almería established formal collaboration ties with several Moroccan migrant associations whose mission is to facilitate the incorporation of migrants in Spain. They granted us access to their Moroccan communities as well as ensured cultural validity of the methodology employed. The community coalition worked for a year to culturally validate the questionnaire through qualitative data collection from Moroccan groups. Specifically, there were (a) 31 in-depth interviews and 5 focus groups as a stimulus prior to the development of the instrument, and (b) a focus group after the final version of the questionnaire that provided suggestions for its improvement. Finally, we conducted the information collection process in 2008.

For the development of the survey, we recruited 18 members of the Moroccan population. The research group trained these people as interviewers during two sessions of

8 h in total. To avoid biases in representing the population under study, the research group urged that (a) social organizations could be used as a starting point, but not as the only source of recruitment, and (b) the interviewers should interview people of both genders, with different ages and with different work and legal situations. We used a bilingual questionnaire, so the participants could select which language they wanted to use during the interview. The instructions given were, “The questionnaire, which we present below, is part of a research project whose aim is to identify the factors involved in the integration of Moroccan migrants and the Andalusian community. It is completely anonymous. Please try to give sincere answers (there is no correct answer). Thank you very much for your participation.”

All data generated in this study were transferred to the analysis program HLM-7, a system specifically designed to perform multilevel regression analysis. This kind of procedure is appropriate in order to recover the ecological complexity of the phenomenon studied, that is, when the independent variables referred to in a particular model belong to different levels of analysis (Raudenbush and Bryk 2002).

#### Results

We proceeded with multilevel regression analysis in three parts. First, we elaborated the unconditional model which informs us that the average population estimation for the dependent variable well-being is 2.44 (in a range from 1 to 4). Moreover, there is a wide range of average well-being, ranging from 1.51 to 3.29, which depends on the territorial unit where the migrant population resides. In relation to the estimations of the parameters associated with the random effects model, the *between-groups* variance indicated a value of 0.17 and the *within-group* variance or the residual variance indicated a value of 0.20. According to these estimations, the intraclass correlation coefficient has a value of 0.46 [ $0.17/(0.17 + 0.20) = 0.46$ ]. Second, we tested the influences of the individual determinants on well-being (model A). Third, we tested both the contextual and individual determinants of well-being in the same model (model B). All determinants were grand mean centered.

#### Model A: Individual Determinants on Well-being

In this section, we want to know what individual variables significantly explain the observed variability in well-being within each territorial unit. To determine this, we included in the model the three individual determinants considered in this study (use of active coping strategies, satisfaction

**Table 1** Multilevel regression analysis on the determinants of well-being of the Moroccan population who live in southern Spain

Variables	Model A				Model B				
	Coeff. (95 % CI)	SE	t ratio	p	Coeff. (95 % CI)	SE	t ratio	p	
Intercept	2.46* (2.36, 2.56)	0.05	44.76	<.000	2.46* (2.36, 2.56)	0.04	56.67	<.000	
<i>Individual level</i>									
Use of active coping strategies	0.12* (0.04, 0.20)	0.04	3.20	.002	0.11* (0.3, 0.19)	0.04	3.16	.002	
Satisfaction with the receiving context	0.09* (0.05, 0.13)	0.02	5.32	<.000	0.09* (0.05, 0.13)	0.02	5.46	<.000	
Time of stay in Spain	0.02* (0.02, 0.02)	0.00	3.61	.001	0.02* (0.02, 0.02)	0.00	3.76	<.000	
Perception of cultural sensitivity of community services	0.08 (−0.02, 0.18)	0.05	1.61	0.108	0.05 (−0.05, 0.15)	0.05	1.13	.258	
Perception of residential segregation	−0.00 (−0.06, 0.06)	0.03	−0.14	.890	0.00 (−0.06, 0.06)	0.03	0.16	.872	
<i>Contextual level</i>									
Political conservatism of the receiving community					0.00 (0.00, 0.00)	0.00	0.21	.839	
Cultural sensitivity of community services					0.56* (0.21, 0.91)	0.17	3.26	.004	
Residential segregation					0.03 (−0.14, 0.20)	0.08	0.31	.757	
<i>Variance components</i>									
Within territorial unit	0.17				0.17				
Between territorial units	0.07				0.04				
<i>Percent of variance explained</i>									
Within territorial unit	17.32 %				–				
Between territorial units	–				40.27 %				

\*  $p < .05$ 

with the receiving context, and time of stay in Spain). Moreover, we included individual perceptions of two contextual determinants (cultural sensitivity of community services and residential segregation) at the individual level of analysis. Including these variables permits us to separate the effects that both individual (in this model A) and contextual (the next model B) levels exert on migrant well-being.

As Table 1 shows, the three individual determinants considered in this study have a positive and significant relationship to migrant well-being. More specifically, (a) a higher *use of active coping strategies* (that is, the belief that social change is possible and to perceive oneself with the ability to influence one's context), (b) a higher degree of *satisfaction with the receiving context* (that is, to be satisfied with the neighborhood where one lives, to evaluate positively one's own neighborhood, and to desire to stay in it for more time), and (c) a *higher time of stay in Spain* are positively associated with migrant well-being. Thus, we have been able to confirm the significant influence that these three individual variables have on well-being. After their inclusion in the model, the within-group variance decreased its value from 0.20 to 0.17. Following the indications from Singer and Willett (2003) to compute the proportional reduction in residual variance, we conclude that the percentage of variance explained is 17.32 % at the individual level. Moreover, data show how neither the perception of cultural sensitivity of community services

nor the perception of residential segregation have effects on migrant well-being at this individual level of analysis (see Table 1).

#### Model B: Contextual and Individual Determinants on Well-Being

Once we confirmed the existence of differences between the means of well-being in terms of territorial units, the next step in the analysis was to find out if there was a contextual determinant that could explain those differences. That is, we tried to identify *what there was* in those contexts that generated the differences observed in well-being. At this stage, we added the three contextual variables selected in this study to Model A (political conservatism of the receiving community, cultural sensitivity of community services, and residential segregation).

As we can see in Table 1, the only contextual determinant that has a significant (and positive) effect on migrant well-being is the *cultural sensitivity of community services*. This variable reflects the degree of cultural sensitivity of health services, police, social services, and public administration in the territorial units where migrants live. Thus, the cultural sensitivity of community institutions is related to the well-being of the Moroccan migrant population. As a consequence of introducing this contextual determinant into the model, variance between-groups showed a decrease from 0.07 to 0.04. Likewise, following Singer and

Willett (2003), we can conclude that 40.27 % of the between territorial units variance is explained by the inclusion of this contextual variable (see Table 1).

Nevertheless, although this contextual determinant is the only significant variable at this level of analysis, we checked the existence of high correlations among all the contextual variables considered. Thus, those territorial units characterized by low levels of cultural sensitivity in their community services are also characterized by having both very politically conservative receiving communities and some residential areas located outside of the town center where a high proportion of the migrant population lives. *Cultural sensitivity of community services* correlates strongly with both the *political conservatism of the receiving community* and the *residential segregation* variables (with values of  $-.66$  and  $-.69$ , respectively; correlations are significant at  $.01$ ). Therefore, theoretical consideration of these relationships between contextual determinants turns out to be of great interest for adequate characterization of the contexts in explaining migrant well-being.

## Discussion

This study has allowed us to elaborate a predictive model of the well-being of Moroccan migrants residing in Andalusia from a liberating community psychology approach. This model reveals how migrant well-being depends on social justice contextual conditions and individual strengths. Thus, well-being values differ widely among the Moroccan community, depending on the territorial unit where they live. In fact, the degree of sensitivity to diversity in community services (health services, police, social services, and public administration) that exists in the territorial units contributes to explain the well-being level manifested by their residents. Lack of sensitivity to diversity in community services is strongly associated with a high presence of segregated residential areas away from the urban center where migrants live, and with a high level of political conservatism among the receiving community. Hence, the level of social justice of receiving contexts is positively related to the level of well-being manifested by the Moroccan residents.

These data support Prilleltensky's (2012) argument on the close relationship that links contextual justice and individual well-being, and is consistent with the fact that the protection of vulnerable groups in a context contributes greatly to the well-being of its members (Inglehart et al. 2008). Our results are in accordance with Negi's (2013) which indicate that structural discrimination in the North-American receiving context is a robust predictor of psychological distress among Latino day laborers. The

relationship established between cultural sensitivity of community services and well-being is consistent with studies that indicate that cultural diversity shown by the community settings affects the levels of migrant well-being (Le et al. 2009). Consistent with research conducted in other European regions, the availability of community services sensitive to cultural diversity is crucial in explaining the degree of well-being of migrants and at the same time represents an important indicator of the social justice (Fonseca and Malheiros 2005).

In this sense, this study also suggests that Moroccan migrants present and/or develop a number of individual strengths that allow them to cope with the difficulties encountered in territorial units with vulnerable conditions of social justice. Thus, this paper indicates that individual determinants contribute in explaining the level of well-being shown by this collective. Our findings maintain that higher levels of well-being in the Moroccan migrant community are associated with higher levels in the following dimensions: (a) use of active coping strategies—belief in the possibility of social change and the self-perceived capacity to influence the context; (b) level of satisfaction with the receiving context—positively evaluating and wishing to belong in their neighborhood; and (c) time of residence in Spain—which allows to have documentation and show linguistic competence after residing for some continued time in the receiving context.

These findings recognize the active role that people develop in their relationship with the environment and support the fact that the context does not have a uniform impact on individuals, but that their effects are distributed differentially. Specifically, this study supports the hypothesis that links the use of active coping strategies with well-being. One's belief in social change and in their own potential to influence that change has a positive influence which is in line with other studies (Luque-Ribelles et al. 2009; Paloma et al. 2010). Therefore, migrant well-being is linked to being an active member and politically capable of contributing to the development of the new society and to the improvement of their living conditions (García-Ramírez et al. 2011). Similarly, data on the positive relationship between the positive assessment of one's own neighborhood and the sense of belonging to the new receiving context on well-being are consistent with previous studies (Evans 2007; Murphy and Mahalingam 2006). Furthermore, this study supports the literature linking the possession of tools to be competent in a new environment after residing for some continued time in the receiving context with well-being (LaFromboise et al. 1993; Jibeen and Khalid 2010). Finally, the confirmation of these three individual determinants in our model allows us to support the concept of well-being defended by Prilleltensky (2008). That is, well-being as a positive state brought by the



simultaneous satisfaction of personal, relational, and collective needs that migrants have in the new environment (through the use of active coping strategies, their satisfaction with the receiving context, and temporal stability, respectively).

The use of LCPA to study well-being contributes to an understanding of the fundamental role of contexts: the individual level is relocated within an ecological framework of analysis in which the behavior of people relates dialogically to the contextual conditions around them. Thus, our data suggest that community services which are sensitive to diversity contribute to their migrant users' process of liberation, fueling their well-being as a consequence (García-Ramírez et al. 2012). However at the same time, the migrants' own ability to generate changes in the place where they live has a great influence on the degree of cultural sensitivity shown by the community services. In previous studies, we have observed how migrants themselves became active agents of transformation in the community services which oppressed them. Paloma and her colleagues (2010) described how a group of Moroccan migrant women increased their level of well-being by carrying out effective actions, adjusted to their needs and values, in order to overcome oppressive conditions in the Spanish receiving context. Likewise, Balcazar et al. (2012) in the United States described how a group of Latino migrant parents, who had children with disabilities, developed critical awareness which led them to take action to increase their access to social activities that their children needed. All this shows the key role that oppressed groups play in the transformation of the receiving contexts' social structures and how migrant well-being is, in part, a function of their ability to overcome the unjust contextual conditions that they have to face.

Certainly, the results obtained empirically support the theoretical assumptions defended by LCPA, consolidate the utility of incorporating this perspective into migrant studies, and contribute to consider the role of power and oppression in the migration phenomena (Sonn and Lewis 2009). Specifically, this study (a) notes the existence of three mechanisms of oppression (impermeable community services to diversity, politically conservative receiving communities, and residential segregation) that sustain asymmetric power relations between receiving and migrant collectives; (b) quantifies the impact of social injustice conditions on the well-being of migrant populations; (c) supports the idea that migrant groups develop strategies to adjust, resist, and/or transform environments that cause their suffering; and (d) confirms that those who think about themselves as active and capable of influencing their environment have a better well-being.

For the transformation of society, social policies aimed at changing the organizational culture of the institutions are

required—towards one with more cultural sensitivity; intervention programs to fight the prejudices of the receiving communities, creating scenarios that permit positive intergroup encounters; and urban restructuring policies that integrate residential spaces. These macro changes “have the potential to change the micro-experiences of neighborhood residents” (Nicotera 2007, p. 48), as they facilitate the migrant population to acquire new competences, develop feelings of belonging, become involved in activities aimed at improving the community, and positively value their neighborhood and their migration experience. These individual determinants will affect the well-being of migrants and at the same time will contribute to the modification and maintenance of social structures. This is because it is expected that when migrants feel like a part of the host society, they become an “active part of the State, by being co-responsible for the functioning, maintenance, preservation and development of society” (Montero 2009, p. 151). As a result, such a situation produces positive feedback between contexts and individuals starting from a dialogical relationship established between them. These recommendations require interventions to be designed from a multilevel perspective, able “to affect not only groups of individuals, but the social structures, norms, and relationships among social structures involved in them” (Trickett 2009, p. 263). The results discussed in this paper indicate that interventions, to be effective, must be directed not only to individuals but also to the receiving contexts in which they reside (Williams and Collins 2001).

This study has limitations. One is the use of life satisfaction as a measure of migrant well-being. Its use has been criticized because respondents often have trouble differentiating how well they feel at the time of the interview or how well they are doing in their lives. Thus, the evaluative purpose is contaminated by the mood (Forgeard et al. 2011). Also its use has been criticized as a measure of overall well-being, which has led to give more relevance on how good the individual feels instead of why this individual is satisfied (Michaelson et al. 2009). We have tried to minimize these risks by using a multiple-items instrument as recommended by Diener et al. (2003). Moreover, our purpose was to relate the degree of satisfaction with solid determinants, that is, we have tried to answer, why? However, future research should strengthen the use of measuring migrant well-being regarding the enjoyment of sufficient quality opportunities to deploy their own strengths and potential.

Another limitation of this study is the use of single items, derived from measuring instruments from literature, for the measurement of the variables considered in this work. This decision was made intentionally during the qualitative phase prior to construction of the questionnaire after finding, together with the groups involved, that they

were good indicators of what we wanted to measure. The need to find a balance between making use of well-established constructs which model conceptual frameworks, capable to capture the real meaning that people give to their life challenges, and comfortable enough to use during data collection, is a challenge the scientific community is confronted with. In this regard, the use of transformative mixed methodology and the development of multilevel structural models would allow one to check the reliability of the variables analyzed, as well as their adjustment to the theoretical approach in different settings (Bernal et al. 2014).

One of the most promising developments in social sciences is the emergence of an interdisciplinary movement that advocates giving more attention to the contextual determinants of well-being, from the evidence a society's level of prosperity is linked to the degree of social justice achieved (Marmot 2010; Prilleltensky 2012). Given this fact, we are challenged to bring social transformation to the center of psychological science, articulate its achievement along with other scientific disciplines and social movements, increase the representation of marginalized voices, take the value of social justice and human diversity as a reference, and fulfill our scientific endeavor of initiatives that dignify and generate well-being in all human beings.

**Acknowledgments** This research project was funded in part by grants from the Ministry of Science and Innovation of Spanish Government (SEJ2006-14470; PSI2011-25554), and from the Department of Migrant Policy of the Andalusian Regional Government.

## References

- Balcazar, F. E., Suarez-Balcazar, Y., Adames, S. B., Keys, C. B., García-Ramírez, M., & Paloma, V. (2012). A case study of liberation among Latino immigrant families who have children with disabilities. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 49*, 283–293.
- Bernal, G., Cumba-Avilés, E., & Rodríguez-Quintana, N. (2014). Methodological challenges in research with ethnic, racial, and ethnocultural groups. In F. T. L. Leong (Ed.), *APA handbook of multicultural psychology: Theory and research* (pp. 105–123). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Bierbrauer, G., & Klinger, E. W. (2002). Political ideology, perceived threat and justice towards immigrants. *Social Justice Research, 15*(1), 41–52.
- Diener, E., Emmons, R. A., Larsen, R. J., & Griffin, S. (1985). The satisfaction with life scale. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 49*, 71–75.
- Diener, E., Oishi, S., & Lucas, R. E. (2003). Personality, culture, and subjective well-being: Emotional and cognitive evaluations of life. *Annual Review of Psychology, 54*, 403–425.
- Evans, S. D. (2007). Youth sense of community: Voice and power in community contexts. *Journal of Community Psychology, 35*(6), 693–709.
- Fonseca, M. L., & Malheiros, J. (2005). *Social integration and mobility: Education, housing and health*. Lisboa: IMISCOE Network of Excellence on Immigration, Integration and Social Cohesion in Europe.
- Forgeard, M. J. C., Jayawickreme, E., Kern, M. L., & Seligman, M. E. O. (2011). Doing the right thing: Measuring wellbeing for public policy. *International Journal of Wellbeing, 1*(1), 79–106.
- García-Ramírez, M., Albar, M. J., & Paloma, V. (2010). Migrant liberation psychology: Coalition for the study of health, power and diversity. *The Community Psychologist, 43*(1), 5–6.
- García-Ramírez, M., Camacho, C., Hernández-Plaza, S., Albar, M. J., Manzano-Arrodo, V., & Paloma, V. (2009). Psicología de la liberación e integración comunitaria: Identificando las condiciones de opresión de inmigrantes marroquíes del sur de España. In C. Vázquez (Ed.), *International community psychology: Shared agendas in diversity* (pp. 212–234). Puerto Rico: Universidad de Puerto Rico.
- García-Ramírez, M., De la Mata, M., Paloma, V., & Hernández-Plaza, S. (2011). A liberation psychology approach to acculturative integration of migrant populations. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 47*, 86–97.
- García-Ramírez, M., Hernández-Plaza, S., Albar, M. J., Luque-Ribelles, V., & Suarez-Balcazar, Y. (2012). Building healthcare stakeholder coalitions: A community psychology approach to user involvement for migrant populations. In D. Ingleby, A. Chiarenza, W. Devillé, & I. Kotsioni (Eds.), *Inequalities in health care for migrants and ethnic minorities* (pp. 188–204). Belgium: Garant.
- Gee, G. C. (2002). A multilevel analysis of the relationship between institutional and individual racial discrimination and health status. *American Journal of Public Health, 92*(4), 615–623.
- Hernández-Plaza, S. (2003). *La otra cara de la inmigración. Necesidades y sistemas de apoyo social*. Almería, España: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Almería.
- Hernández-Plaza, S., García-Ramírez, M., Camacho, C., & Paloma, V. (2010). New settlement and well-being in oppressive contexts: A liberation psychology approach. In S. C. Carr (Ed.), *The psychology of global mobility* (pp. 235–256). New York: Springer.
- Hjerm, M. (2007). Do numbers really count? Group threat theory revisited. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 33*(8), 1253–1275.
- Ingleby, D., Chimienti, M., Hatziprokopiou, P., Ormond, M., & De Freitas, C. (2005). The role of health in integration. In M. L. Fonseca & J. Malheiros (Eds.), *Social integration and mobility: Education, housing and health* (pp. 101–138). Lisboa: IMISCOE Network of Excellence on Immigration, Integration and Social Cohesion in Europe.
- Inglehart, R., Foa, R., Peterson, C., & Welzel, C. (2008). Development, freedom, and rising happiness. A global perspective (1981–2007). *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 3*(4), 264–285.
- Jasinskaja-Lahti, I., & Liebkind, K. (2007). A structural model of acculturation and well-being among immigrants from the Former USSR in Finland. *European Psychologist, 12*(2), 80–92.
- Jibeen, T., & Khalid, R. (2010). Predictors of psychological well-being of Pakistani immigrants in Toronto, Canada. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 34*, 452–464.
- Kloos, B., Hill, J., Thomas, E., Wandersman, A., Elias, M. J., & Dalton, J. H. (2012). *Community psychology: Linking individuals and communities* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Krajic, K., Like, R. C., Schulze, B., Strabmayr, C., Trummer, U., & Pelikan, J. M. (2004). *Clinical cultural competency training questionnaire*. Vienna, Austria: Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for the Sociology of Health and Medicine.
- LaFromboise, T., Coleman, H. L. K., & Gerton, J. (1993). Psychological impact of biculturalism: Evidence and theory. *Psychological Bulletin, 114*(3), 395–412.

- Le, T. N., Lai, M. H., & Wallen, J. (2009). Multiculturalism and subjective happiness as mediated by cultural and relational variables. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 15*(3), 303–313.
- Logan, J. R., Alba, R. D., & Zhang, W. (2002). Immigrant enclaves and ethnic communities in New York and Los Angeles. *American Sociological Review, 67*, 299–322.
- Luke, D. A. (2005). Getting the big picture in community science: Methods that capture context. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 35*(3/4), 185–200.
- Luque-Ribelles, V., García-Ramírez, M., & Portillo, N. (2009). Gendering peace and liberation: A participatory-action approach to critical consciousness acquisition among women in a marginalized neighborhood. In M. Montero & C. C. Sonn (Eds.), *Psychology of liberation: theory and applications* (pp. 277–294). New York: Springer.
- Marmot, M. (Ed.). (2010). *Fair society, healthy lives: The Marmot review*. London: Institute of Health Equity, University College London.
- Martín-Baró, I. (1983). *Acción e ideología. Psicología social desde Centroamérica*. San Salvador, El Salvador: UCA Editores.
- Martín-Baró, I. (1986). Hacia una psicología de la liberación. *Boletín de Psicología, 22*, 219–231.
- Michaelson, J., Abdallah, S., Steuer, N., Thompson, S., & Marks, N. (2009). *National accounts of wellbeing: Bringing real wealth onto the balance sheet*. London: New Economics Foundation.
- Moane, G. (2003). Bridging the personal and the political: Practices for a liberation psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 31*(1/2), 91–101.
- Montero, M. (2009). Community action and research as citizenship construction. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 43*, 149–161.
- Murphy, E. J., & Mahalingam, R. (2006). Perceived congruence between expectations and outcomes: Implications for mental health among Caribbean immigrants. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 76*(1), 120–127.
- Negi, N. J. (2013). Battling discrimination and social isolation: Psychological distress among Latino day laborers. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 51*, 164–174.
- Nelson, G., & Prilleltensky, I. (2005). *Community psychology: In pursuit of liberation and well-being*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Nicotera, N. (2007). Measuring neighborhood: A conundrum for human services researchers and practitioners. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 40*, 26–51.
- Oliveri, F. (2008). Policies for a fair multicultural society. On the use and abuse of “culture” in relation to migration issues. In *Council of Europe, Reconciling migrants’ well-being and the public interest Welfare state, firms and citizenship in transition* (pp. 23–55). Belgium: Council of Europe Publishing.
- OPAM. (2008). *Opiniones y actitudes de la población andaluza ante la inmigración. Resumen ejecutivo*. Sevilla: Junta de Andalucía.
- Paloma, V., García-Ramírez, M., De la Mata, M., & Association Amal-Andaluza. (2010). Acculturative integration, self and citizenship construction: The experience of Amal-Andaluza, a grassroots organization of Moroccan women in Andalusia. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 34*, 101–113.
- Paloma, V., & Manzano-Arrondo, V. (2011). The role of organizations in liberation psychology: Applications to the study of migrations. *Psychosocial Intervention, 20*(3), 309–318.
- Perkins, D. D., Florin, P., Rich, R. C., Wandersman, A., & Chavis, D. M. (1990). Participation and the social and physical environment of residential blocks: Crime and community context. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 18*, 83–115.
- Phinney, J. S., Horenczyk, G., Liebkind, K., & Vedder, P. (2001). Ethnic identity, immigration and well-being: An interactional perspective. *Journal of Social Issues, 57*(3), 493–510.
- Phinney, J. S., & Ong, A. D. (2007). Conceptualization and measurement of ethnic identity: Current status and future directions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54*(3), 271–281.
- Prilleltensky, I. (2008). Migrant well-being is a multilevel, dynamic, value dependent phenomenon. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 42*, 359–364.
- Prilleltensky, I. (2012). Wellness as fairness. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 49*, 1–21.
- Quillian, L. (1995). Prejudice as a response to perceived group threat: Population composition and anti-immigrant and racial prejudice in Europe. *American Sociological Review, 60*, 586–611.
- Raudenbush, S. W., & Bryk, A. S. (2002). *Hierarchical linear models*. Thousands Oaks: Sage.
- SIMA. (2013). *Sistema de información multiterritorial de Andalucía*. Instituto de Estadística y Cartografía de Andalucía: Junta de Andalucía. Retrieved from <http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/institutoestadisticaycartografia/sima/index2.htm>.
- Singer, J. D., & Willett, J. B. (2003). *Applied longitudinal data analysis: Modeling change and event occurrence*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sonn, C. C., & Lewis, R. C. (2009). Immigration and identity: The ongoing struggles for liberation. In M. Montero & C. C. Sonn (Eds.), *Psychology of liberation: Theory and applications* (pp. 115–134). New York: Springer.
- Trickett, E. J. (2009). Multilevel community-based culturally situated interventions and community impact: An ecological perspective. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 43*, 257–266.
- Tseng, V., & Yoshikawa, H. (2008). Reconceptualizing acculturation: Ecological processes, historical contexts and power inequities. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 42*, 355–358.
- Verkuyten, M. (2007). Social psychology and multiculturalism. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 1*(1), 280–297.
- Ward, C., & Kennedy, A. (2001). Coping with cross-cultural transition. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 32*(5), 636–642.
- Watters, C. (2002). Migration and mental health care in Europe: Report of a preliminary mapping exercise. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 28*(1), 153–172.
- Watts, R. J., & Serrano-García, I. (2003). The quest for a liberating community psychology: An overview. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 31*, 73–78.
- Williams, D. R., & Collins, C. (2001). Racial residential segregation: A fundamental cause of racial disparities in health. *Public Health Reports, 116*, 404–416.