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**Goal Pursuit and Acculturation:
 A Fruitful Novel Approach to Understand Migration Success**

PhD Thesis

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Introduction

Acculturation is the process that starts when two individuals or groups of different cultural backgrounds come into contact with each other is often referred to as acculturation (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936; Berry, 1997; Sam & Berry, 2006). Acculturation is most often viewed as a dynamic, reciprocal process between the migrant and host nationals (Berry, 1997; Ozer, 2017), upon which (affective and behavioral) changes will take place in both parties (Sam & Berry, 2006; Trimble, 2003). Until recently, acculturation and the cultural adaptation of migrants was mainly viewed from two distinct perspectives: (1) the stress and coping framework of acculturation (i.e., acculturative stress, see Berry, 1970, 1997), which mainly addresses the acculturating individuals' responses to the stress and negative experiences arising from intercultural contacts (Kuo, 2014) and (2) the culture learning theory, which emphasizes the role of culture-specific skills in cultural adaptation, namely how migrants learn to negotiate their way in the new context (Kuo, 2014; Ward & Kennedy, 1994; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999).

Apart from the stress and coping perspective and the culture learning approach to migration, there might be a third aspect from which we can understand and interpret acculturation, namely the goal pursuit perspective. Interestingly, despite the fact that the migration process is often set in motion when people attempt to maximize their goal potentials, the focus on individual-level goal pursuit in relation to acculturation is largely understudied. Have migrants found what they came for? Have they managed to realize their important goals? If they do, does it mean they feel adjusted and happy and are they then willing to stay in the host country? In 2007, Chirkov, Vansteenkiste, Tao, and Lynch postulated that contemporary motivation theories have not been applied to migration research, and it is time to consider this relevant aspect in relation to cultural adjustment and migration success. The current thesis is an attempt to respond to this call and to investigate the value of applying goal pursuit theories in acculturation research.

We propose that goal pursuit helps self-initiated migrants to feel acculturated in the host country. Setting, striving for, and achieving goals might give migrants the sense that they fit into the host society and may increase their identification with host-nationals by seeing themselves as valuable members of the society (Wassermann, Fujishiro, & Hoppe, 2017), which may add to their well-being. In sum, building on previous findings using the SDT perspective and combining that with knowledge derived from research in the

acculturation domain, we investigate how the importance and attainment of personal goals (e.g., intrinsic goals, career goals and self-set goals) relate to acculturation and to well-being.

Goal Pursuit During the Three Stages of the Migration Process (Chapter 2)

In Chapter 2, we reviewed the literature on the current knowledge of how goal pursuit contributes to migration success. Research on the influence of the motivation of migrants on their acculturation and well-being is not well developed, either conceptually or methodologically. Contemporary motivation theories are awaiting to be applied in migration research (Chirkov et al, 2007). In this chapter, we aimed to provide a framework that help to understand the current state of knowledge, to identify gaps in our knowledge and to point to specific areas that need further research. We distinguished between the three stages of the migration process (pre-migration, during migration and potential repatriation and onward migration); and the three different goal facets (content, structure, process; see Austin & Vancouver, 1996). By conducting a systematic literature search we identified 30 articles that took place in a first-generation migration setting, and included both a relevant goal-related predictor variable and an outcome variable at the migrant level (e.g. adjustment, well-being, career success, political integration). Research on goal content in the pre-migration and during migration stages seemed to be most developed (see Table 1), and indicated that various motives (e.g., economic, political, cultural exploration etc.) have an impact on migrants' well-being and acculturation, however the findings are not always consistent. Differences in the 'type' (international students, expats etc.) and the origin of migrants (their home country) seem to have effects on the relationship between goal content and migration outcomes. In addition, in line with the predictions of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000), autonomy seems to be beneficial to adjustment across various groups of migrants. Research on the structure and process of goals are more scarce. We know little about how migrants establish their goals, how they monitor their progress and under what circumstances they adjust them, and we know even less about the effects these issues have on migration success. Notably, despite its relative scarcity, the existing studies on repatriation give us particularly valuable insights into the complex and dynamic nature of migration motivation. These studies tend to take the whole migration trajectory into account and view the return decision and the readjustment to the home country in light of the pre-migration motives and previous experiences in the host country (see Sener, 2018; Yehuda-Sternfeld & Mirsky, 2014).

Taken together, the goal pursuit and motivation perspective seems to be a fruitful approach to increase our understanding of acculturation, however we need a lot more research to verify and expand on the emerging themes. A couple of the many possible avenues for future research are, for instance, research on the personal relevance (goal importance, - commitment and -engagement) and on the hierarchy of goals in relation to acculturation; research on how migrants modify their goals and how such modifications relate to their success and further migration desires; or research on how differences in the type of migration, the cultural heritage of migrants, and the geographic characteristics of the move (e.g., sending and receiving countries) play a role in later migration success.

Table 1

Migration Studies Included in the Literature Review per Goal Construct Level

	Structure	Process	Content
Pre-migration	Doerschler (2006) Zimmermann et al. (2017)	Boccagni (2017) Portes, McLeod, & Parker (1978)	Chirkov et al. (2007) Chirkov et al. (2008) Dentakos et al. (2017) Doerschler (2006) Farcas & Gonzalves (2017) Kitsantas (2004) Lui & Rollock (2012) Pinto, Cabral-Cardoso, & Werther (2012) Yang, Zhang, & Sheldon (2018) Tharmaseelaan, Inkson, & Carr (2010) Tartakovsky & Schwartz (2001) Winter-Ebmer (1994) Udahemuka & Pernice (2010) Zimmermann et al. (2017)

During migration	Bernardo, Clemente, & Wang (2018) Carrasco (2010) Yoon & Lee (2010) Zhou (2014)	Bernardo, Clemente, & Wang (2018) Carrasco (2010)	Gezentsvey-Lamy, Ward, & Liu (2013) Gong (2003) Gong & Fan (2006) Recker, Milfont, & Ward (2017) Yu & Downing (2012) Zhang & Zhang (2017) Zhou (2014)
Post-migration, repatriation		Yehuda-Sternfeld & Mirsky (2014) Sener (2018)	Tartakovsky, Patrakov, & Niculina (2017)

**The Interactive Effect of Goal Attainment and Goal Importance
on Acculturation and Well-being
(Chapter 3)**

In Chapter 3, we empirically tested the relationship between goal pursuit and acculturation and life satisfaction. Previous research demonstrated the beneficial role of having intrinsic goals on well-being (Kasser & Ryan, 1996, 2001; Niemiec et al., 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000) and how such goals shield from depression and anxiety (Rijavec et al, 2006; Sheldon & Kasser, 1995). The relationship between intrinsic goals and adjustment, however, has received much less research interest (Sheldon and Houser-Marko, 2001; Chirkov et al, 2007). Yet, as we discussed in the chapter, there is a reason to expect that intrinsic goals are important for adjustment. As such, we investigated the interplay of intrinsic goal importance and goal attainment on acculturation and subsequent well-being. First, we hypothesized that the positive relationship between migrant intrinsic goal attainment and migrant satisfaction with life is mediated by migrant acculturation level. Second, we hypothesized that the negative relationship between migrant intrinsic goal attainment and migrant depression is mediated by migrant acculturation. Lastly, we predicted that the relationship between intrinsic goal attainment and acculturation is moderated by goal importance. In other words, we expected that the relationship between goal attainment to acculturation is stronger for goals that are deemed important. (Figure 1)

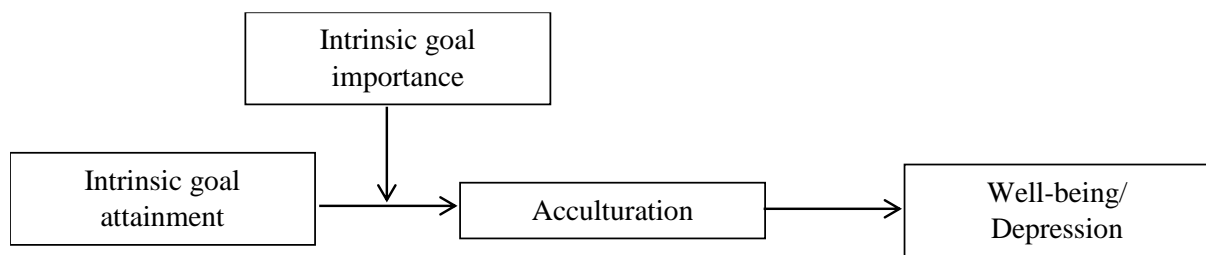


Figure 1. The proposed conceptual model of the effects of goal attainment on acculturation and well-being.

Study 1

As a first test of our hypotheses, we conducted an experiment (Study 1) with non-migrant individuals ($N=378$) in which we manipulated goal importance and goal attainment. After reading a scenario of a fictional migrant, participants filled out a series of questions regarding the perceived well-being and acculturation of the described migrant. The findings of the first study were in line with our hypotheses, confirming both our mediation hypotheses and our proposed moderator effect: Consistent with Hypothesis 1a, acculturation emerged as a significant mediator for the effect of intrinsic goal attainment on life satisfaction when importance was high ($index = 1.30$, 95% CI [1.03, 1.59]) and low ($index = 0.87$, 95% CI [0.66, 1.09]). Similarly, consistent with Hypothesis 1b, acculturation mediated the relationship between intrinsic goal attainment and depression when importance was high ($index = 0.64$, CI [-0.80, -0.50]) and low ($index = -0.43$, 95% CI [-0.57, -0.30]). Our data also revealed a significant interaction effect between goal attainment and goal importance on perceived acculturation ($b = 0.55$, $p < .01$), supporting Hypothesis 2. The positive relationship between intrinsic goal attainment and acculturation appeared to be stronger when those goals were believed to be more important rather than less important.

Study 2a

In Study 2a we aimed to replicate the experiment with a migrant sample. In this study we manipulated goal attainment and used migrants' ($N=306$) own perceptions as the measure of goal importance. We found that acculturation indeed mediated the relationship between intrinsic goal attainment and life satisfaction in case of both high ($index = 1.78$, 95% CI [1.41, 2.15]) and low ($index = 1.77$, 95% CI [1.42, 2.13]) values of the moderator, and between intrinsic goal attainment and depression when importance was high ($index = -0.92$, 95% CI [-1.14, -0.71]) and low ($index = -0.91$, 95% CI [-1.08, -0.74]). This study, however, did not reveal an interaction effect between goal attainment and goal importance on acculturation.

Study 2b

In two subsequent studies (Study 2b and Study 3) we used migrants' self-report questionnaires to test the proposed relationships. In Study 2b we asked Central-Eastern European migrants' ($N=290$) to list three of their current goals and assess their importance and attainment and we then asked them to fill out scales assessing their acculturation, life satisfaction and depression. Consistent with Hypothesis 1a, acculturation emerged as significant mediator for the effect of intrinsic goal attainment on life satisfaction when goal importance was high ($index = 0.07$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.11]) but not when importance was low. In a similar vein, acculturation mediated the relationship between intrinsic goal attainment and depression but only if the goal was considered important ($index = -0.05$, 95% CI [-0.08, 0.02]). Hypothesis 2 was confirmed, as we found a significant interaction between self-set goal attainment and importance on acculturation ($effect = 0.21$, $p < 0.01$). The results indicate that, specifically when the importance of the goal is rated highly, goal attainment predicts acculturation

Study 3

In Study 3, we tested the proposed relationship using Kasser and Ryan's (1996) Aspiration Index to measure intrinsic goal attainment and goal importance of Hungarian migrants living in the Netherlands ($N=540$). and found that acculturation indeed served as a mediator between goal pursuit and well-being. Supportive of Hypothesis 1a, acculturation emerged as significant mediator for the effect of intrinsic goal attainment on life satisfaction when importance was high ($index = 0.14$, 95% CI [0.08, 0.20]) and low ($index = 0.17$, 95% CI [0.11, 0.24]). Similarly, acculturation mediated the effects of the predictors on depression at high ($index = -0.07$, 95% CI [-0.10, -0.05]) and low values of the moderator ($index = -0.09$, 95% CI [-0.12, -0.06]). We found no interaction effect between goal attainment and goal importance on acculturation, disconfirming Hypothesis 2.

According to our findings, the attainment of important goals makes migrants feel more culturally adjusted to the host country and, in turn, helps them to feel satisfied with their lives and less depressed. Apparently attaining goals that support innate needs such as autonomy, competence, and connectedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Sheldon, Ryan, Deci, & Kasser, 2004) helps migrants to fit into a new culture and aids them through the challenges that a culture change brings. Pursuing and attaining intrinsic goals serve migration success through acculturation and life satisfaction and shields them from depression. However, we found support for the moderating role of goal importance between goal attainment and acculturation in only two of the studies. Perhaps there is a third variable that explains this

finding. Certain sample characteristics might moderate the moderating effect of goal importance on goal attainment and acculturation; if so, those characteristics should be investigated in future studies.

In Pursuit of a Career: The Roles of Migrants' Career Importance and Self-efficacy in Predicting Career Success and Acculturation (Chapter 4)

In Chapter 4, we further investigated the effect of the interplay between goal importance and goal attainment on acculturation, this time focusing on a domain specific context, namely career goals. We argued that attaining important career goals in the host country increases the extent to which migrants feel to be valuable members of the society (Wassermann, Fujishiro, & Hoppe, 2017) which potentially shields them from uncertainty or negative experiences from other life domains (see Brett, 1980; Lyons, Brenner, & Fassinger, 2005). This, in turn, may foster acculturation and feelings of adjustment. We also posited that realizing important career goals is easier for those migrants who are self-efficacious (see Gutierrez-Dona et al., 2009; Lippke et al., 2009), as self-efficacious migrants may take more initiative, are more likely to expand their networks, search for better opportunities and more generally show sustained effort (see Ballout, 2009; Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991). In a longitudinal study design among Hungarian migrants in the Netherlands ($N=170$), we tested whether Time 1 career importance in interaction with self-efficacy predicts migrant career success and subsequent acculturation in Time 2 (see Figure 2).

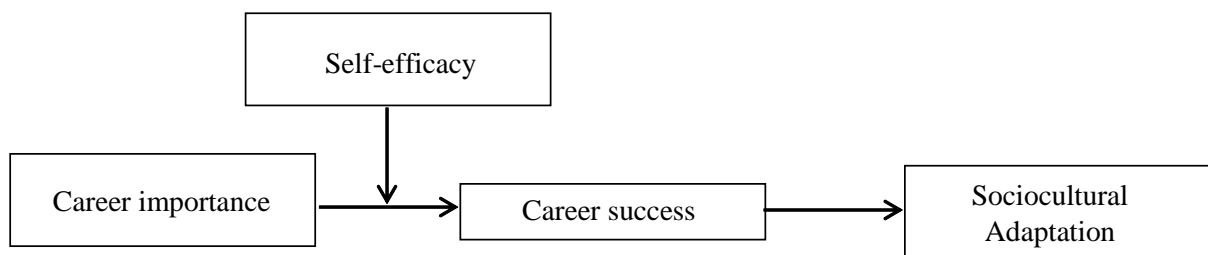


Figure 2. The proposed conceptual model of the effects of career importance on career success and acculturation.

Confirming Hypothesis 1, we found an interaction effect between career importance and self-efficacy on perceived career success ($b = 0.23, p = 0.03$): Career importance predicted perceived career success for people with high self-efficacy ($effect = 0.20, 95\% CI$

[0.06, 0.34]), but not for people with low self-efficacy (*effect* = 0.02, 95% *CI* [-0.09, 0.13]). Confirming Hypothesis 2, we found that career success predicted sociocultural adaptation ($b=0.17, p=.02$) and that career success mediated the relationship between career importance and sociocultural adaptation among people with high self-efficacy (*index* = 0.03, *SE* = 0.01, 95% *CI* [0.002, 0.08]), but not among people with low self-efficacy (*index* = 0.003, 95% *CI* [-0.01, 0.02]).

These results underpin the important role of self-efficacy in realizing work-related goals for people who have to face the hardships of migration. Furthermore, the findings draw attention to the fact that migrants' work-related goals and aspiration, and the realization of these goals are important cornerstones of their sociocultural adjustment in the host country.

The Impact of Goal Attainment and Goal Importance on Satisfaction with Life – A Polynomial Regression and Response Surface Analysis (Chapter 5)

In Chapter 5 we zoomed in on how the congruence between goal importance on the one hand and goal attainment on the other affects well-being. In this chapter, we broadened our perspective and focused on intrinsic as well as extrinsic goals. Moreover, our sample consisted of Hungarian adults (not necessarily migrants; $N=149$). First, we hypothesized that the degree of discrepancy between intrinsic goal attainment and goal importance will be associated with well-being, such that particularly if goal attainment exceeds goal importance, people will experience an increase in well-being. Furthermore, in line with the Self-Determination Theory (SDT, see Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kasser & Ryan, 1996) we predicted that the congruence between intrinsic goal attainment and importance will be positively related to subjective well-being. With regard to extrinsic goals we had two competing hypotheses: The first one being that the congruence between extrinsic goal attainment and importance will benefit well-being (similarly to intrinsic goals); The second one being that the congruence between extrinsic goal attainment and importance will be negatively associated with well-being. We used polynomial regression and response surface analysis to test our hypotheses. This analysis is ideal to measure the joint effect of two predictor variables (and their congruence or discrepancy) on a third variable (see Edwards, 1994, 2001).

In line with our second hypothesis, we find that indeed, there is a linear relationship along the line of perfect agreement ($\beta_1 = 1.29, p = .04$). This indicates that the congruence between intrinsic goal importance and goal attainment is positively related to well-being. As

Figure 3 shows, the lowest level of well-being can be found when both goal attainment and goal importance are low, and it increases towards the end of the graph where both goal attainment and goal importance are both high. We do not find that the curvature of discrepancy, which would show that attainment matters more in the equation than importance, is significant. Therefore Hypothesis 1 does not seem to be supported for intrinsic goal pursuit.

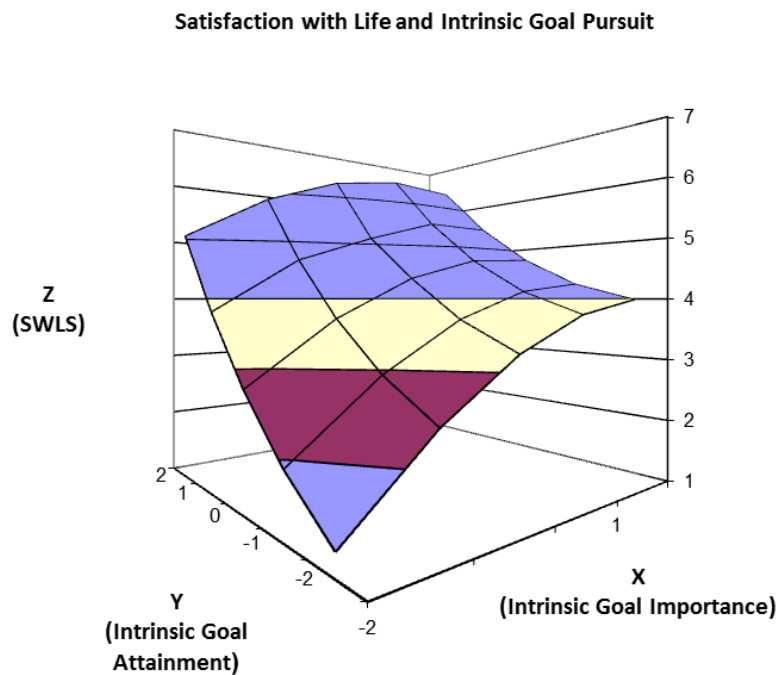


Figure 3. Satisfaction with Life as the result of the discrepancy between Intrinsic Goal Importance and Goal Attainment

Interestingly, certain intrinsic goal sub-dimensions, namely personal development ($b = -.51, SE = .17, p = .003$) and relationship ($b = -.36, SE = .15, p = .02$) showed a curvilinear effect on well-being, denoting that placing too much importance on these goals may be harmful rather than beneficial to well-being. Finally, in relation to extrinsic goals, none of our competing hypotheses were confirmed: seemingly, the realization of extrinsic goals that are considered important is neither harmful, nor beneficial to well-being. Our findings underpin the unique impact of the specific goal content on well-being, and highlight the joint effect of goal attainment and importance on well-being. It also shows that it may be worthwhile to apply polynomial regression and response surface analysis when investigating the joint effect

of goal importance and goal attainment on well-being and acculturation in the migration context.

Discussion

The aim of this dissertation was to provide an overview of our current knowledge in the field of migrant motivation and goal pursuit (Chapter 2), and to further explore the relationship between goal pursuit and adjustment, by providing more insight into how the attainment of personally important goals predict acculturation and well-being (Chapter 3, 4, 5). In due course, this dissertation presented a holistic overview of the role of goal structure, processes and content in explaining migration success in general and of the role of goal importance and goal attainment (e.g., intrinsic and extrinsic goals, career goals) in explaining acculturation and (or) well-being in particular.

We provided empirical evidence for the notion that the attainment of (important) goals makes migrants feel more culturally adjusted to the host country, which in turn, helps them to feel satisfied with their lives and feel less depressed or anxious. Goal attainment seem to benefit migrants across different goal domains. The pursuit of intrinsic goals that support innate needs such as autonomy, competence and connectedness (see Deci & Ryan, 2000; Kasser & Ryan, 1996) not only foster the extent to which people are satisfied with their lives, but also predict how well migrants fit in the host culture. Across various samples we provided evidence that attaining intrinsic goals, such as good relationships, personal development, feeling useful for the larger community and having good physical health, make migrants feel that they fit in the new culture. We provided further evidence on the beneficial role of goal attainment, showing that the attainment of any self-selected goals and specific career goals also enhances migrants' acculturation. On the contrary, goal importance seems to contribute little to both well-being and acculturation by itself. Perhaps placing high importance on certain goals can signal high expectations or pressure on the migrant, which may hinder the positive effects of goal setting and goal attainment.

Feeling successful at one's career, despite the challenges of living and working in a foreign environment is not always easy. We found support for the notion that migrants' professional goal pursuit is an important pillar of their cultural adjustment. In fact, being able to turn important career goals into career success benefits migrants' feelings of fitting in the host society. However, only self-efficacious migrants seem to be able to turn important career goals into attainment, and boost their sociocultural adjustment through their career goal pursuit. Self-efficacious migrants might be more likely to persistently work towards their goals, attempting to change their environment in a way so it fits their aspirations (see goal

engagement-promoting pathway: Shane & Heckhausen, 2013; Bernardo et al., 2018). Our findings on the one hand indicate that individuals' self-efficacy beliefs can make fundamental difference why some migrants feel successful in their environment and others not; on the other hand, it draws attention to the benefits of career goal pursuit on acculturation.

Another important finding of the present dissertation is that goal pursuit enhances migrants' overall well-being via their acculturation. In a context that carries new challenges, threats and opportunities, adjustment seem to mediate between goal pursuit and well-being. This finding has an important implication for motivation research, indicating that in new and changed contexts, goal pursuit might boost people's well-being via their adjustment. For instance, research on understanding the relationship between the motivation and the success (e.g., well-being, performance) of students, or newcomers in an organization, should take their adjustment into account. It might hold important information on why they perform well or feel satisfied despite of the challenges of their altered situation.

Research on migrants' motivation, so far, focused mainly on the content of goals, such as economic and political goals etc. The present dissertation expanded research focus on goal content, by providing evidence on the contribution of intrinsic goals to migrants' acculturation and well-being. In addition, our research also provided insight into certain aspects of goal structure, namely the impact of the interplay of goal importance and goal attainment on acculturation. However, current research does not provide much information on the goal processes of migrants; certain questions remain open. We emphasize that future research focus should be directed to the process of how migrants establish, monitor, and adjust their goals and what implications these processes hold to migrants' cultural adjustment.

By shedding light on the impact of motivation on acculturation and well-being, this dissertation may offer some tentative suggestions for migrants and professionals on how to improve migration success. First, the content of the chapters highlights that migrants themselves can actively try to affect their acculturation and well-being in the host country. Despite the drastic contextual change that migrants face when leaving their home country, dreams and ambitions can be formed, pursued and obtained and in due course give rise to the feeling of being at home and being happy in the host society. As such, migrants should bear in mind that their move should not impede their pursuit of personally valued goals. Specifically, it may be better if they do not lose focus of goals that enhance their autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Helper professionals working with migrants could also benefit from keeping a goal pursuit perspective in mind. Past research showed that having too abstract, overgeneral goal representations may decrease goal attainability perceptions, and lead to depression (Dickson & Moberly, 2013). Therefore, helper professionals may support migrants setting attainable goals, or help break down general life goals to more short-term, concrete goals. For instance, the desire of “making it in the new country” should be cropped up to certain realistic steps that provide anchor and guidance to the migrant, involving goal setting in different life domains, such as work, friendships, contact with family and friends in the country of origin, finding a place to live, understanding the administrative process in the host country etc. In the meantime, helper professionals may aid the migrants not to lose focus on superordinate goals, as these provide (and sustain) meaning, purpose and identity. In addition, helper professionals might want to help migrants amplify the progress and success they make in realizing their goals. This may increase feelings of self-efficacy and self-esteem, which are important resources of consequent goal pursuit and overall well-being (Bandura, 1997).

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