The Impact of the Difference in Individualism, Acculturation, and Gender on Migratory Grief
and Psychological Well-being: A Cultural Comparison

Emilia Grycuk (6830994)

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Supervisor: Dr. Henk Schut

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Abstract

Due to the recent global migration crisis, the mental health of immigrants has become an increasingly pressing issue. Prior research has found that immigrants are especially distressed, which puts them at a higher risk of developing psychological disorders. However, a relatively new construct of migratory grief has not been extensively researched. This study was undertaken to explore whether the difference in individualism between home and host countries, the level of acculturation, and gender influence both migratory grief and well-being of migrants from Poland, Venezuela, and Ireland. To investigate this, a sample of 2150 participants (1021 Venezuelan, 671 Polish, and 458 Irish) answered an online questionnaire. The findings indicated that a larger difference in individualism was related to a higher level of migratory grief, lower level of acculturation was associated with a lower level of well-being, and women reported higher levels of migratory grief and psychological distress than men. Furthermore, gender was found to moderate the relationship between acculturation and migratory grief. The present study was the first one to investigate and find the relationship between the difference in individualism and migratory grief. It also demonstrates that the level of acculturation and gender have a substantial impact on both psychological distress and migratory grief. This research extends knowledge about factors that play a role in the mental health of immigrants and is hoped to contribute to the investigation of culturally sensitive clinical interventions targeting these issues.

Keywords: migratory grief, grief, well-being, distress, culture, individualism, collectivism, acculturation, gender

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Loss is an inevitable part of human existence and grief is a natural response to the universal experience of loss (Rando, 1984). Grieving allows people to process emotions related to the loss they experienced, accept the change, and prepare for a new stage in their life (Aroian, 1990; Casado, Hong & Harrington, 2010; Rando, 1984). According to Casado et al. (2010), there are two types of losses: physical and symbolic. Physical loss is tangible, i.e. loss of a person or loss of possessions. On the other hand, symbolic loss is intangible, for example, loss of social status, social role, country, identity, or beliefs. Most of the research is focused on grief and bereavement after the loss of a person. However, according to Doka (1989), people are attached not only to other people, but also to their surrounding environment (country, home), jobs, ideas, and beliefs and losing any of these may cause reactions of grief or homesickness.

People migrate for many different reasons, including political, socioeconomic, and educational factors. They move to various cultures, sometimes drastically different from their own. Migrants relocate singly, with families, or in larger groups. Many studies have discussed issues of migration in the context of homesickness or migratory grief (MG) and their consequences.

According to Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, and Van Heck (1996), homesickness is a phenomenon associated with resettlement that causes issues with adapting to the new environment, which might result in both mental and physical health problems. Homesickness covers the difficulties caused by separation from home (Nijhof & Engels, 2007; Thurber & Walton, 2012) or stressors that are related to both separation from home and adjustment to the new environment (Archer, Ireland, Amos, Broad, & Currid, 1998; Stroebe, Schut, & Nauta, 2016; Van Tilburg et al., 1996). Stroebe et al. (2016) describe homesickness as "mini-grief" and a separation phenomenon. The researchers developed a Dual Process Model of Coping with Homesickness that proposes coping with the loss by oscillation between a loss-oriented approach (mechanisms regarding primarily the experience of separation from home) and a restoration-oriented perspective (tactics focused on adjustment to the new place). Even though research about homesickness is mostly focused on temporary migration, the phenomenon might also pertain to permanent relocation.

However, many studies have found that resettlement is linked not only to stressors related to separation from the home country and adaptation to the host country but also to identity change (Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Casado et al., 2010; Eisenbruch, 1991; Khawaja & Mason, 2008; Pomariega, Rothe, & Pumariega, 2005; Vromans, Schweitzer, & Brough, 2012; Ward & Styles, 2003). According to the afore-mentioned research, both short-term and long-term relocation coincide with identity reconstruction, which seems to be a key process differentiating homesickness from MG. Thus, MG can be defined as a phenomenon that occurs as a result of long-term migration (voluntary or involuntary), is accompanied by stressors related to the loss of the home country and adjustment to the new country, both of which entail the change of self-identity.

Bhugra and Becker (2005) define identity as "the totality of one's perception of self, or how we as individuals view ourselves as unique from others." (p. 21). The authors claim that the individual consists of different parts of identities, i.e. racial, ethnic, cultural. These parts change with the development at a personal and social level that happen in the course of migration and acculturation. Acculturation is associated with adjustment processes in the host country and is defined as *"cultural socialization to mainstream culture"* in opposition to enculturation which is *"the retention of or cultural socialization to one's culture of origin"* (Yoon et al., 2013, p. 16). Yoon et al. (2013) conceptualize that acculturation is bilinear (cultural socialization to mainstream or ethnic cultures happens independently from each other), multidimensional (across many areas, i.e., cultural/ethnic identity, values behavior), and happens in the social context (i.e., work, school, community).

Many factors moderate the process of acculturation. Even though studies that explore acculturation differ in terms of contextual influence (i.e. where and when a study was conducted) and sample characteristics (i.e. gender, age, race, the voluntariness of residency, etc.), many studies agree on major acculturation moderators. Language fluency in the host country has been found as heavily influencing migrants' cultural adjustment and their level of psychological distress (Aroian, 1990; Casado and Leung, 2001; Chang, 2015; Husain, Creed, & Tomenson, 1997; Yoon et al., 2013). Consequently, a low level of language proficiency has been associated with higher psychological distress (Aroian, 1990; Casado & Leung, 2001; Chang, 2015; Husain et al., 1997; Yoon et al., 2013).

Another factor that has been found as heavily influencing acculturation is socioeconomic status, which entails a level of education, income, occupation, as well as family size and relationships. All these aspects impact post-migration adjustment in the new culture. The level of education is often linked to occupation and both of these components are very likely to influence migrants' well-being (WB; Bhugra, 2004b; Fassbender & Leyendecker, 2018; Fortuna, Porche, & Alegria, 2008). Fortuna et al. (2008) found a higher level of education to be a protective factor against a high level of distress through higher social status and access to resources and benefits. On the other hand, loss of social roles, loss of reputation, and unemployment have been linked to low self-esteem, identity confusion, and higher depression rates (Casado & Leung, 2001; Emmen et al., 2013; Khawaja & Mason, 2008; Pumariega et al., 2005). According to Bhugra (2004b), Khawaja and Mason (2008) and Young, O'Dwyer, and McGrath (2016), there is also a correlation between the existence of close relationships and family ties in the home country, psychological distress, and the level of acculturation.

Moreover, the link between socioeconomic status, language proficiency, and WB is oftentimes influenced by the reason for migration (i.e., political, economic, or educational), its voluntariness, and the geographical distance between the home country and the host country. For example, a person who was forced out of his or her country for political reasons might experience a higher level of psychological distress because of difficulty mastering another language, obtaining a job and thus, securing housing in the host country. On the other hand, an individual who relocated voluntarily to better his or her financial situation and has good knowledge of the language in the host country might express a lower level of WB. Many studies found that high psychological distress and low level of WB are associated with a higher level of MG (Casado & Leung, 2001; Casado et al., 2010; Chang, 2015; Khawaja & Mason, 2008). Thus, acculturation and MG seem to be interdependent and a higher level of acculturation is associated with a lower level of MG.

Another aspect that plays a role in the level of MG is the difference in culture between the home country and the host country. Based on Hofstede's (1997) cultural dimensions theory, societies vary in the extent to which they stress the role of an individual or a group. The researcher conceptualizes that every country has its place on the spectrum of individualism-collectivism, where more individualistic (egocentric) countries are characterized by a high value of personal autonomy, whereas collectivistic (sociocentric) countries emphasize the role of

cohesiveness and group solidarity. According to Bhugra and Becker (2005), migration from a collectivistic or sociocentric culture to an individualistic or egocentric society may increase the feeling of alienation and pose a higher risk of psychological distress. Thus, being an immigrant or a minority from a collectivistic culture in the individualistic country might substantially hinder acculturation in the new society. In the research conducted by Eisenbruch (1991), one group of Cambodian adolescent refugees was resettled to the United States, while the other group moved to Australia. That study found that the cultural bereavement level among Cambodians who migrated to the United States was significantly higher compared to those who moved to Australia. Refugees who moved to the USA also felt greater pressure to leave their native culture behind which translated into their higher level of distress.

However, the level of WB is dependent not only on the cultural differences between the home country and the host country but also on personality and other biopsychosocial factors (Bhugra, 2005). Regardless, people who move from a less individualistic society to a more individualistic one and those resettling from a highly collectivistic population to a country lower on collectivism may display mental distress (Bhugra, 2005; Bhugra & Becker, 2005). However, it is suggested that especially migrants who experience extreme changes in individualistic-collectivistic cultural domain suffer from a more intense decrease in the level of WB (Bhugra, 2004b; Bhugra, 2005; Bhugra & Becker, 2005). Bhugra (2005) conceptualizes that individuals are most likely to behave like the society they were raised in and a significant dissonance between the person's characteristics and the society in which he or she lives in is related to lower self-esteem which might lead to depression. As mentioned earlier, such negative changes in WB can be translated into a higher level of MG.

Lastly, differences in MG are also influenced by gender. Many studies found gender differences in coping with distress caused by migration (Khawaja & Mason, 2008; Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991; Sondregger & Barrett, 2004). In a ten-year longitudinal study conducted by Beiser and Hou (2001), women were found to adjust to the new country more slowly than men and showed a higher level of psychological distress in comparison with men. In addition, based on the Dual Process Model by Stroebe and Schut (2010) where an individual oscillates between a more loss-oriented approach and a more restoration-oriented approach after loss, women tend to be more loss-oriented and men are usually more restoration-oriented in their

tactics. Consistently with that study, Archer et al. (1998) found that women have a higher level of intrusive thinking regarding separation from home compared to men.

Furthermore, Martin and Doka (2000) conceptualized adaptive grieving styles with the use of cognitive, behavioural, and affective strategies of adaptation to loss. Coping strategies that might include some or all the afore-mentioned methods are on the continuum of the intuitive pattern on one side and the instrumental pattern on the other end. Intuitive grievers are characterized by a more emotional and affective expression of grief. This style of coping with loss is usually associated with women (Stroebe, Stroebe, & Schut, 2001; Vingerhoets & Van Heck, 1990; Wijngaards-de Meij et al., 2008). However, the instrumental style is characterized by a cognitive, behavioural, and problem-solving approach (Martin & Doka, 2000; Stroebe et al., 2001). Instrumentalist grievers are less likely to display emotional distress (Martin & Doka, 2000). This style is regarded as more male-like rather than female-like (Stroebe et al., 2001; Vingerhoets & Van Heck, 1990; Wijngaards-de Meij et al., 2008).

The purpose of the current research study is to explore the relationship between cultures of different levels of individualism and the intensity of MG. This study also investigates the impact of acculturation and gender on MG and WB. It is important to explore these links in order to develop an understanding of a relatively new concept of MG in the light of different cultural dimensions and factors that might influence it. Following previous research, it is hypothesized that: (a) the greater the difference in individualism between the home country and the host country, the higher the level of MG and the lower the level of WB, (b) acculturation will be negatively correlated with MG and positively correlated with WB, and (c) women will experience a higher level of MG and a lower level of WB than men.

Method

Participants

There were 3177 participants whose responses were received, among which 2161 respondents completed the whole questionnaire (68%). The responses of 11 participants were excluded because their nationalities did not match the profile of this study. Eventually, the total number of participants amounted to be 2150 with the distribution of 1021 Venezuelans (47.5%), 671 Polish (31.2%), and 458 Irish respondents (21.3%).

There were 1091 (50.7%) women and 1059 (49.3%) men in this study with statistically significant difference in gender distribution across the countries, $\chi^2(2) = 642.29$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .55. The majority of Venezuelan and Irish participants were female (65% and 77.5%, respectively) as opposed to the Polish sample that consisted of 89.3% of men. Most of the participants were between 18 and 37 years old (62.4%). Differences were found between mean age groups in the split sample ($\chi^2(2) = 15.87$, $p < .001$), indicating that Polish respondents were younger than Venezuelans.

The mean length of stay in the host country was 8.65 years ($SD = 6.35$), but most participants have lived in the host country less than or equal to five years (62.6%). Moreover, there were statistical differences across the countries ($\chi^2(2) = 398.21$, $p < .001$) with Venezuelans having migrated more recently than Irish and Polish individuals. The mean language fluency was 8.02 ($SD = 2.87$), but differences in the split sample ($F(2,2144) = 298.94$, $p < .001$) indicated that Irish and Venezuelan participants speak their host country's language significantly better than Polish subjects.

The biggest subset of participants was married (37.6%) and without children (55.1%). Chi-square tests of independence showed a statistically significant association between marital status and nationality ($\chi^2(10) = 163.7$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .2), suggesting that there were more single Venezuelans compared to any other group and more divorced Venezuelan than Irish participants, while Irish subjects prevailed in cohabitating status over Polish and Venezuelan respondents. No statistical association was found between having children and nationality, $\chi^2(2) = 5.72$, $p = .057$, Cramer's V = .06.

Moreover, the participants can be described as well-educated with an average education level being a Bachelor's Degree ($M = 3.98$, $SD = .99$). However, there were statistical differences across the countries ($\chi^2(2) = 38.77$, $p < .001$), indicating that Venezuelan and Irish individuals have a higher level of education as opposed to Polish subjects. Furthermore, the majority of the people were employed (80.7%), but there were statistically significant differences in the split sample ($\chi^2(2) = 67.57$, $p < .001$, Cramer's V = .18), suggesting higher unemployment among Venezuelans compared to Polish and Irish participants.

Lastly, most of the respondents assessed their occupation as a rather poor reflection of their education ($M = 1.61$, $SD = .61$). Differences across the countries ($\chi^2(2) = 144.522$, $p < .001$) indicated that Irish individuals evaluate their occupation as a more fair reflection of their

education compared to both Polish and Venezuelan participants. Complete demographic information is presented in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1

Sample Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	Total sample		Polish		Venezuelan		Irish	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Gender								
Women	1091	50.7	72	10.7	664	65.0	355	77.5
Men	1059	49.3	599	89.3	357	35.0	103	22.5
Age								
18-27	555	25.8	164	24.4	309	30.3	82	17.9
28-37	786	36.6	299	44.6	269	26.3	218	47.6
38-47	433	20.1	155	23.1	170	16.7	108	23.6
48-57	266	12.4	47	7.0	185	18.1	34	7.4
58-67	93	4.3	5	0.7	75	7.3	13	2.8
68-77	14	0.7	1	0.1	12	1.2	1	0.2
78+	3	0.1			1	0.1	2	0.4
Marital status								
Single	504	23.4	122	18.2	309	30.3	73	15.9
In a relationship, but not living together	170	7.9	52	7.7	94	9.2	24	5.2
In a cohabitating relationship	519	24.1	211	31.4	140	13.7	168	36.7
Married	808	37.6	251	37.4	378	37.0	179	39.1
Divorced	131	6.1	32	4.8	86	8.4	13	2.8
Widowed	18	0.8	3	0.4	14	1.4	1	0.2
Employment status								
Employed	1736	80.7	574	85.5	751	73.6	411	89.7
Unemployed	414	19.3	97	14.5	270	26.4	47	10.3

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations of Sample Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	Total sample		Polish		Venezuelan		Irish	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Language fluency								
	8.02	2.87	6.04	3.0	9.01	1.93	8.70	2.96
Length of stay in the host country								
	8.65	6.35	10.35	6.45	6.45	4.1	11.1	8.35
Education level (1 = low, 5 = high)								
	3.98	.99	3.77	1.04	4.05	.96	4.07	.92
Assessment of employment (1 = poor reflection, 3 = improvement from education)								
	1.61	.61	1.48	.58	1.54	.62	1.91	.55

Design and Procedure

The study used a cross-sectional and correlational design. Data collection took place between December 2019 and February 2020 through an online survey platform Qualtrics. The link to the questionnaire was distributed by the researchers and two other students through personal network systems such as email and Whatsapp application as well as through social media platforms – Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, causing a snowball effect. The survey was conducted in three languages: English, Polish, and Spanish. Initially, Socio-demographic part of the questionnaire and Migratory Grief and Loss Questionnaire were translated from English to Polish and Spanish by researchers. Then, Polish and Venezuelan mental health professionals conducted a back-translation procedure to assure the accuracy of translation.

This research study was registered at the Department of Clinical Psychology at Utrecht University. In order to take part in this research, participants had to originally come from Poland, Ireland or Venezuela, have migrated to another country, and be at least 18 years old. All the respondents were presented with the Study Information Form and Participant Consent form, where they were informed about the aim of the study, the amount of time needed to complete the questionnaire, anonymity, confidentiality, and their legal rights regarding participation in the research project. The completion of the questionnaire took about 15 minutes. The participants could abandon the process at any point without any consequences. At the end of the study, the subjects were debriefed and facultatively provided contact information to the researchers and the

supervisor, in case of any additional questions. The participants were not compensated for their participation in the study.

Materials

  Background Information. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of questions regarding age, gender, level of education, marital status, employment status, nationality or nationalities of participants, their countries of origin, most recent countries of immigration, the length of residence in their host countries, and their intentions of coming back to their home countries. The level of individualism of home countries and host countries was assigned based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (Hofstede, 1997).

  The subjects of the study were also asked whether they migrated to another country with their family members and/or friends and if they joined the participants in the host countries permanently at any point. Moreover, the participants were asked about the reason for their migration defined by different push and pull factors, which influence they had to rate on a Likert scale that ranged from 1 to 10, where 1 indicated *no influence at all* and 10 meant *complete influence*. In addition, the questions in the socio-demographic part of the survey asked the participants about the level of distress caused by migration, the extent to which they felt welcome in their host countries, the level of proficiency of their host countries' official languages, and the ability to maintain their national traditions. All these questions were also measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 10.

  Well-being. General Health Questionnaire (GHQ, Goldberg & Williams, 1988) was used to assess the level of participants' WB in the last few weeks (i.e., *Have you recently felt constantly under strain?*). A 12-item version of the instrument (GHQ-12) is a self-administered questionnaire, aimed at detecting individuals with a diagnosable psychiatric disorder and differentiating them from people in good mental health (Goldberg & Hillier, 1979; Richard, Lussier, Gagnon, & Lamarche, 2004). The participants answered questions on a 3-point Likert scale, where 0 meant *less than usual*, 1 stood for *no more than usual*, 2 meant *rather more than usual*, and 3 was defined as *much more than usual*.

  Cronbach's alpha for the English version of GHQ-12 is .82, while the values for Polish and Spanish versions of the questionnaire are .86 and .76, respectively (Goldberg & Williams, 1988; Makowska & Merecz, 2001; Sánchez-López & Dresch, 2008). Even though the instrument

has not been validated in Venezuela, it has been proven valid in 15 countries and in 11 languages (Goldberg et al., 1997). The internal consistency of this scale in our study was $\alpha = .82$ with α for the Spanish version of GHQ-12 equal to .87 and .88 and .86 for English and Polish versions, respectively.

Migratory Grief. The study's participants answered questions regarding the frequency of occurrence of MG in the past 30 days. It was measured using the Migratory Grief and Loss Questionnaire (MGLQ) which has an excellent internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .94 (Casado et al., 2010). MGLQ consists of 18 items that have a two-factor structure: "Attachment to Homeland" (i.e., *Things were nicer in my homeland*) and "Identity Discontinuity" (i.e., *I am not sure who I am*). All the items are scored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 3, where 0 represented *never*, 1 meaning *occasionally*, 2 defined as *often*, and 3 as *always* (Casado et al., 2010).

The original instrument was created to measure the frequency of MG. Thus, to additionally assess the level of MG, an intensity scale was added. On that scale ranging from 0 to 3, 0 meaning *not intense at all*, 1 stood for *mildly intense*, 2 was defined as *intense*, and 3 as *very intense*. The value of Cronbach's alpha for the original instrument was .93 and its value for the questionnaire with both frequency and intensity scales was .96. The internal consistency of the instrument for Polish, Irish and Venezuelan versions, separately, were also exceptionally good with $\alpha = .96$.

Acculturation. Acculturation level was measured by proxy using two variables: host country language fluency and assessment of the current occupation (*Do you think that your current occupation is a fair reflection of your education?*). Language fluency was measured on a Likert scale from 1 to 10, from 1 (*no fluency*) to 10 (*full fluency*). Assessment of current occupation consisted of five answers with *the current occupation is an improvement considering my education level*, indicating the highest score, and *not employed* indicating the lowest score. Language fluency was deemed to be of higher importance (60%) than the assessment of current employment (40%) in the creation of an acculturation variable, in line with many researchers (Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Casado & Leung, 2001; Husain et al., 1997; Yoon et al., 2013).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 26.0. After cleaning the data of responses that did not match the profile of the study, the significance level was set to .05, two-tailed. The total scores of GHQ-12 and MGLQ were obtained for both the whole sample and the split sample. The assumptions of Pearson correlation analysis (i.e., normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, multicollinearity) were tested. Univariate normality was slightly violated, but Pearson correlation and MANOVA are quite robust to it (Havlicek & Peterson, 1976; Pallant, 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Multivariate normality was also modestly violated, which resulted in removing one extreme multivariate outlier from the sample to ensure the robustness of MANOVA analysis.

For the purposes of the first hypothesis, a variable indicating the difference in individualism was created. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient analyses were conducted to investigate the relationships between the difference in individualism (continuous, range: $-72 - 85$) and MG (continuous, range: $0 - 54$), the difference in individualism and WB (continuous, range: $0 - 36$), and MG and WB.

For the purposes of the second hypothesis, an acculturation variable was created by combining two variables: language fluency (60%) and assessment of employment (40%). Then, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient analyses were conducted to explore the links between acculturation (continuous, range: $1 - 10$) and MG, and acculturation and WB.

Lastly, the assumptions of a one way multivariate analysis of variance (one-way MANOVA) were tested. Then, one-way MANOVA was conducted to explore the influence of gender (independent variable, binominal: 1 = man, 2 = woman) on MG and WB (two dependent variables).

Results

Pearson correlation coefficient analyses were performed to investigate relationships between the difference in cultural individualism between home countries and host countries (M = 19.51, SD = 26.19), MG (M = 23.05, SD = 12.44), and WB (M = 20.11, SD = 7.35). Two outliers were removed from the sample. Additionally, 17 participants were excluded since information regarding the level of individualism of their home countries or host countries was not present in

Hofstede's insights. Furthermore, due to a high positive correlation, $r(2146) = .94$, $p < .001$, of MG frequency and intensity, the original scale is reported.

A small yet significant positive correlation between the difference in individualism and MG level was found, $r(2129) = .08$, $p < .001$, indicating that a larger difference in individualism is associated with higher levels of MG. Surprisingly, larger difference in individualism was associated with lower MG among Venezuelans, $r(1010) = -.11$, $p = .001$, but implied higher MG among Irish participants, $r(452) = .16$, $p = .001$. The relationship was nonsignificant in the Polish subsample, $r(663) = .04$, $p = .322$.

A significant moderate negative correlation was found between the level of MG and the level of WB, $r(2148) = -.42$, $p < .001$, implying that a higher level of MG is associated with a lower level of WB. The correlations did not substantially differ per country with values ranging from $r(452) = -.35$ (Irish) to $r(663) = -.41$ (Polish), and $r(1010) = -.41$ (Venezuelan). Lastly, a correlation between the difference in individualism and the level of WB was found to be nonsignificant, $r(2129) = .05$, $p = .777$, suggesting that difference in individualism is unrelated to WB. This pattern holds true in the split sample, as well. The correlations for the whole and the split sample are presented in Table 3.

These results partially support the first hypothesis because a larger difference in individualism is related to higher levels of MG, MG is negatively related to WB, but the difference in individualism is not associated with lower levels of WB.

Table 3

Summary of Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations of the Difference in Individualism, Levels of Migratory Grief and Well-being

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
Whole Sample ($N = 2131$)					
1. Difference in Individualism	19.51	26.19	–		
2. Migratory grief	23.05	12.44	.08**	–	
3. Well-being	20.11	7.35	.05	−.42**	–

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3
Polish (*n* = 665)					
1. Difference in Individualism	13.72	14.98	–		
2. Migratory grief	17.37	11.73	.04	–	
3. Well-being	21.89	7.33	.02	−.41**	–
Venezuelan (*n* = 1012)					
1. Difference in Individualism	29.94	27.74	–		
2. Migratory grief	26.88	11.95	−.11*	–	
3. Well-being	19.36	7.62	.06	−.41**	–
Irish (*n* = 454)					
1. Difference in Individualism	4.76	25.84	–		
2. Migratory grief	22.84	11.25	.16*	–	
3. Well-being	19.17	6.24	−.04	−.35**	–

*$p < .05$. ** $p < .01$

A significant but small positive correlation was found between acculturation level and the level of WB, $r(2146) = .09$, $p < .001$, implying that higher acculturation is associated with higher levels of WB. Moreover, there were small positive correlations between those constructs in Polish ($r(668) = .26$, $p < .001$), and Venezuelan sample ($r(1019) = .17$, $p < .001$), while that relationship was nonsignificant among Irish participants ($r(455) = .06$, $p = .186$).

The link between acculturation and MG was found to be nonsignificant in the general sample, $r(2146) = -.01$, $p = .810$. That relationship remained nonsignificant among Irish participants ($r(455) = .09$, $p = .063$), while in Polish ($r(668) = −.24$, $p < .001$) and Venezuelan subsamples ($r(1019) = −.16$, $p < .001$) significant negative small correlations were found. Hence, higher acculturation is related to lower MG, but only among Polish and Venezuelan respondents. The correlations are shown in Table 4.

These findings partially support the second hypothesis since acculturation is positively related to WB, but unrelated to MG. However, after controlling for gender, the relationship between acculturation and MG became significant in the whole sample ($r(2145) = −.05$, $p = .017$) and remained significant among Venezuelan ($r(1018) = −.14$, $p < .001$) and Polish individuals ($r(667) = −.24$, $p < .001$). Nevertheless, gender had very little effect on the strength of the relationship in the split sample.

Table 4

Summary of Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations of Levels of Acculturation, Migratory Grief, and Well-being

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3
Whole Sample (N = 2148)					
1. Acculturation	6.80	2.17	–		
2. Migratory grief	23.05	12.44	−.01	–	
3. Well-being	20.11	7.35	.09*	−.42*	–
Polish (n = 670)					
1. Acculturation	5.49	2.24	–		
2. Migratory grief	17.37	11.73	−.24*	–	
3. Well-being	21.89	7.33	.26*	−.41*	–
Venezuelan (n = 1021)					
1. Acculturation	7.17	1.73	–		
2. Migratory grief	26.88	11.95	−.16*	–	
3. Well-being	19.36	7.62	.17*	−.42*	–
Irish (n = 457)					
1. Acculturation	7.89	2.02	–		
2. Migratory grief	22.84	11.25	.09	–	
3. Well-being	19.17	6.24	.06	−.35*	–

*p < .01

Lastly, a MANOVA was conducted to test gender differences in MG and WB. A statistically significant overall gender difference was found, $F(2, 2144) = 81.44$, $p < .001$; Wilks' $\Lambda = .93$; partial $\eta^2 = .07$. Explored separately, both MG, $F(1,2145) = 161.50$, $p < .001$; partial $\eta^2 = .07$, and WB, $F(1,2145) = 39.27$, $p < .001$; partial $\eta^2 = .02$, appeared to be significantly different across gender, using a Bonferroni adjusted α level of .025. Women reported higher level of MG ($M = 26.29$, $SD = 12.06$; $M = 19.72$, $SD = 11.92$, respectively) and lower level of WB than men ($M = 19.15$, $SD = 7.17$; $M = 21.12$, $SD = 7.38$, respectively), which supports the third hypothesis.

In the split sample, on the combined dependent variables, there were no statistically significant differences across gender among Polish ($F(2, 667) = 1.35$, $p = 2.6$; Wilks' $\Lambda = 1.0$; partial $\eta^2 = .004$) and Irish participants ($F(2, 454) = 2.55$, $p = .08$; Wilks' $\Lambda = .99$; partial $\eta^2 = .01$), whereas these differences remained significant among Venezuelans ($F(2, 1017) = 28.23$, $p < .001$; Wilks' $\Lambda = .95$; partial $\eta^2 = .05$). There was a statistically significant

difference between Venezuelan men and women, in terms of MG, $F(1, 1018) = 56.02$, $p < .001$; partial $\eta^2 = .05$, and WB, $F(1, 1018) = 13.56$, $p < .001$; partial $\eta^2 = .01$ (Bonferroni corrected). This implies that Venezuelan women experience significantly higher level of MG ($M = 28.90$, $SD = 11.54$; $M = 23.20$, $SD = 11.75$, respectively) and lower level of WB ($M = 18.74$, $SD = 7.47$; $M = 20.57$, $SD = 7.70$, respectively) compared to men. The summary of means and standard deviations for the whole and the split sample is presented in Table 5[1].

Table 5

Summary of Means and Standard Deviations of Migratory Grief and Well-being Across Gender

	Women		Men	
Variable	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Whole Sample (*N* = 2147)				
Migratory grief	26.29	12.06	19.72	11.92
Well-being	19.15	7.17	21.12	7.38
Polish (*n* = 670)				
Migratory grief	16.25	11.20	17.48	11.79
Well-being	23.22	7.30	21.73	7.32
Venezuelan (*n* = 1020)				
Migratory grief	28.90	11.54	23.20	11.75
Well-being	18.74	7.47	20.57	7.70
Irish (*n* = 457)				
Migratory grief	23.45	11.47	20.63	10.18
Well-being	19.09	6.26	19.47	6.21

Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between the difference in the level of individualism, level of acculturation, and gender and MG, and WB among immigrants from

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[1] The presented analyses were controlled for potential confounders (age, length of stay in the host country, marital status, ability to maintain traditions, feeling welcome in the host country, presence of family members in home and host countries, level of distress related to migration, and reasons for migration, i.e., economic, political, social, related to education, and personal security). Additionally, tests were controlled for gender (in the first and second hypotheses) and acculturation, employment, and language fluency (in the first and third hypotheses). These analyses did not lead to any substantial deviations in the patterns presented in the text unless reported otherwise.

Poland, Venezuela, and Ireland. First, it was hypothesized that a greater difference in individualism between the home country and the host country would result in a higher level of MG and a lower level of WB. This hypothesis was partially supported with a larger difference in individualism positively affecting MG, but not impacting WB. Moreover, a higher level of MG was associated with a lower level of WB. Second, it was predicted that a higher level of acculturation would be related to a lower level of MG, and a higher level of WB, which was partially supported. Even though the link between acculturation and MG was nonsignificant, higher acculturation was correlated with a higher level of WB. Finally, it was hypothesized that women would experience higher MG and lower WB than men, which was supported.

To my knowledge, this is the first study that explored MG and the difference in individualism between home and host countries. There was a positive association between those two constructs which is in line with Bhugra's (2005) theoretical framework stating that more extreme differences in individualism lead to migrants' more serious issues with cultural adjustment. Even though grief reactions associated with migration are often influenced by other factors such as length of stay in the host country, language fluency, or cultural differences (Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Casado et al., 2010; Eisenbruch, 1991), no such confounding effects were found. This makes difference in individualism even more relevant and shows that values inherent to people's upbringing and their countries' national characters play a big role in their experience of MG.

However, these conclusions may only be drawn from the Irish subsample, because among Venezuelans a larger difference in individualism was related to lower MG. Although these findings are surprising and not supported by the literature, they might be associated with the recent socio-economic and political crisis in Venezuela. Due to the country's critical situation, in the last few years, over 5 million people have immigrated with the most common destinations of resettlement being other South American countries, i.e., Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Chile (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR]). Since these destinations have a similar level of individualism to Venezuela (Hofstede, 1997), they might remind Venezuelans of their home country, consequently leading to a higher level of MG. Nevertheless, due to a lack of theoretical underpinning or empirical evidence, this conclusion should be treated with caution.

The relationship between the difference in individualism and migratory grief was found to be nonsignificant in the Polish sample. One of the potential explanations is offered by Bhugra

(2005) who claims that, although people usually display the values of their national countries, idiocentric individuals are more skilled at entering and leaving new social groups than allocentric persons. Since Poland is a rather individualistic country, Polish people might be better than Venezuelans at building social support networks in their host countries. In addition, due to a high correlation of individualism with modernism, people in more individualistic countries are thought to be more flexible and adaptive to changes (Berry, 1993; Kâğitçibaşi, 1994).

Furthermore, the level of MG was negatively associated with the level of WB in the whole and the split sample. This is consistent with previous findings (Casado & Leung, 2001; Chang, 2015; Khawaja & Mason, 2008) relating a higher level of psychological distress to higher MG. MG has also been found to be a predictor for lower WB (Bhugra, 2004b; Casado & Leung, 2001; Khawaja & Mason, 2008), which might be a partial explanation of these results.

Finally, despite remarks made by Bhugra (2005), the link between the difference in individualism and the level of WB was found neither in the whole nor in the split sample. This result may be explained by the fact that more common sources of higher general distress lie rather in reasons related to people's personalities (i.e., resilience), the cause of migration (i.e., forced or voluntary), or acculturation-related factors (e.g., language fluency, employment opportunities, social support, etc.; Beiser & Hou, 2001; Bhugra, 2004b; Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Casado & Leung, 2001; Khawaja & Mason, 2008).

In line with this reasoning, a positive relationship between acculturation and WB was found. These findings are in agreement with previous theoretical and empirical framework (Aroian, 1990; Bhugra, 2004a; Bhugra, 2004b; Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Casado & Leung, 2001; Khawaja & Mason, 2008; Yijälä & Luoma, 2019; Yoon et al., 2013) indicating that higher level of language proficiency, occupation reflecting immigrants' qualifications, and opportunities for advancement in the host country are associated with a lower level of distress. Furthermore, an average high level of education of this study's sample could have contributed to these results (Bhugra, 2004b; Fassbender & Leyendecker, 2018; Fortuna et al., 2008).

However, these conclusions can be drawn only for Polish and Venezuelan samples, but not for Irish participants, among whom the relationship was not found. These results are not fully understood, considering that controlling for other variables did not disclose any confounding relationship. It is especially surprising because of Irish participants having the highest mean acculturation score, highest average education level, and the longest mean residence in the host

country (which is associated with higher WB; Casado & Leung, 2001; Casado et al., 2010; Chang, 2015; Khawaja & Mason, 2008). Consequently, a potential explanation may lie in aspects related to social support or personality traits (e.g., ability to deal with stress, vulnerability, resilience, etc.; Bhugra, 2004a; Bhugra, 2004b).

On the other hand, contrary to our hypothesis, higher acculturation did not negatively relate to MG in the whole sample. It is possible that not all migrants experience grief reactions related to migration or that their grief does not involve the process of identity change (which is a part of MG). Then, their grief might be more similar to homesickness rather than MG. Acculturation-related distress may also be displayed in a lower level of WB (that can entail, e.g., depressive or anxious symptoms, social loneliness, lower self-efficacy, etc.), which this study confirms.

This can be applied to the Irish subsample, but not to Polish and Venezuelan participants, among whom negative small correlations were found between acculturation and MG. These findings mirror previous research (Bhugra, 2004b; Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Casado & Leung, 2001; Chang, 2015; Khawaja & Mason, 2008), suggesting that a lower level of acculturation is associated with higher grief reactions, among immigrants. Processes that are included in acculturation entail adjusting to a new culture and reality (and mastering them), adapting to new and unfamiliar customs, languages, and environments as well as establishing new social support systems (Bhugra, 2004b; Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Chang, 2015; Khawaja & Mason, 2008). These activities require transformation of migrants' cultural identities, roles, and self-image, which often is accompanied by grieving the loss of aspects related to one's country of origin such as traditions, social networks, significant relationships, one's reputation, and self-esteem (Bhugra, 2004b; Bhugra & Becker, 2005; Khawaja & Mason, 2008). This study shows that transformative processes of acculturation impact MG, even though these findings apply only to Venezuelan and Polish participants.

Yet, after controlling for gender, the discussed relationship became significant in the whole sample. Gender differences have been discussed in the context of acculturation-related identity changes with women usually adjusting to the new country at a slower pace, which often results in their deeper sense of loss (Beiser & Hou, 2001; Chang, 2015; Bhugra, 2004b). The role of gender in acculturation processes has also been emphasized in traditional family models, where employment and a higher level of language fluency have been linked to better

psychological outcomes in men (Beiser & Hou, 2001; Rogler et al., 1991). Hence, women's social isolation and slower adaptation to the host country often results in higher MG, which is supported by this study. Nevertheless, gender did not have a substantial moderating influence on the results in the split sample with findings remaining significant and effects being small only in Venezuelan and Polish subsamples.

The influence of gender was also supported by the results of the last hypothesis that disclosed gender differences in MG and WB. One of the reasons explaining the influence of gender on MG pertains to acculturation, which was discussed earlier. Another potential explanation relates to different coping and grieving styles of men and women (Martin & Doka, 2000; Stroebe & Schut, 2010). In the previous research (Ptacek, Smith, & Zanas, 1992; Stroebe et al., 2001; Wijngaards-de Meij et al., 2008), women were found to be more emotion-focused and confrontive than men. Even though the afore-mentioned literature investigated physical (and not symbolical) losses, these conclusions may be drawn also for MG.

Furthermore, since higher MG and lower WB have been found co-occurring (which was explained earlier), worse mental health outcomes of women are not surprising. Other researchers (Bhugra et al., 1997; Nazroo, 1997; Sondregger & Barrett, 2004) have found female immigrants to be more vulnerable to mental health disorders than men. This pattern may hold true not only because of women's emotion-oriented coping style but also because of their slower adaptation in the host country. Moreover, in situations when immigrant women remain home, they are socially isolated, which limits their access to social support (Beiser & Hou, 2001). Their acculturation is also exacerbated by the lack of opportunities to enhance their self-esteem and self-efficacy (i.e., associated with employment or mastery of a new language). All these factors increase feelings of loneliness and otherness in the new country, thus exacerbating psychological distress.

However, the patterns described above have been observed only among Venezuelans, which may be caused by their low individualism related to higher traditionalism (Kâğitçibaşi, 1994). Both Polish and Irish subsamples are nations of a rather high score of individualism compared to Venezuelans (Hofstede, 1997). Traditional family models might be more present among Venezuelans, thus leading to Venezuelan women having a higher level of MG and a lower level of WB. Another explanation of these results may lie in the reasons for migration. While Polish and Irish immigrants are mostly pulled to other countries, Venezuelans are pushed out of their society due to the recent crisis playing a big role in their psychological response to it.

Furthermore, the combination of both factors may have increased gender differences among Venezuelans and decreased them in Polish and Irish participants.

Limitations and future directions

There are several limitations of this study. First, the current research has a cross-sectional and descriptive design. It would be interesting to explore immigrants' WB and MG over time. The longitudinal design has the potential to investigate those constructs in the light of changes in migrants' acculturation, enculturation, and the length of residence in the host country.

Second, it is important to mention that Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory used for assessing the level of individualism is a rather simplified tool, which carries the risk of overgeneralization (Green, Deschamps, & Páez, 2005; Signorini, Wiesemes, & Murphy, 2009). The variability of individualism and collectivism differs also on within-country, individual, and gender levels, which this instrument cannot assess. Moreover, Hofstede's framework has been criticized for, i.e., its questionable applicability to higher education settings, problems with the use of surveys to examine cultural differences, and the lack of applicability to the world's flexible and fast-changing cultural and political landscape (McSweeney, 2002; Orr & Hauser, 2008; Signorini et al., 2009). Hence, it is important to interpret the data related to the difference in individualism with caution. Future research should consider exploring the difference in within-country individualism or use more recent models to measure this construct.

Furthermore, another instrument that is not without flaws is MGLQ. Arguments have been raised about the measure insufficiently addressing immigrants' sense of loss (Chang, 2015). Moreover, some items of the questionnaire, especially included in the "Identity Discontinuity" factor, are worded in a vague and unclear way (e.g., *I feel different)*. Last but not least, the instrument assesses the frequency rather than the intensity of MG. Despite the high correlation between the two in this study, a more precise questionnaire measuring the intensity of MG needs to be developed to ensure the robustness of methodology.

In addition, the current study used a proxy assessment of acculturation. One of the most central aspects of acculturation is socioeconomic status, which ideally should be measured providing information about one's income, among other factors. Another very important aspect is immigrants' legal status in their host countries. However, such questions were not included in this study's survey because of their sensitive nature, which could carry the risk of discouraging

participants from completing the questionnaire. Further research investigating acculturation in immigrants should include income and legal status assessment to provide more accurate information.

Finally, this study's data should be interpreted cautiously because of the respondents' average high level of education. As mentioned earlier, higher education plays a protective role in immigrants' experience. Hence, future studies are recommended to diversify the sample, potentially collecting data in more vulnerable immigrant populations, which might affect the outcomes.

Conclusion

The present study was set out to determine the impact of the difference in individualism, acculturation, and gender on the levels of MG and WB in Polish, Venezuelan, and Irish immigrants. The findings of this research are the first to support that a larger difference in cultural individualism increases the level of MG. Moreover, this study found a positive correlation between the level of acculturation and WB as well as gender differences in both MG and WB. Taken together, the results carry significant implications for a better understanding of these concepts and directions for future research.

It is important to further examine these topics to increase the recognition and knowledge of factors influencing the quality of migrants' mental health. Especially, the exploration of the relatively new construct of MG should focus on the development of effective clinical interventions targeting this issue. Such actions should benefit future changes in immigration and healthcare policies, which, in the light of the recent global rise in migration, are becoming more urgent than ever.

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