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Moving across (Im)mobility categories: the importance of values, family and adaptation for migration

Naiara Rodriguez-Pena

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Moving across (Im)mobility categories: the importance of values, family and adaptation for migration

Naiara Rodriguez-Pena  ^{a,b}

^aUniversity of Kent, Canterbury, UK; ^bART-Dev, Université Paul-Valéry, Montpellier, France

ABSTRACT

The aspiration-capability framework introduces four (im)mobility categories – mobility, voluntary immobility, involuntary immobility and acquiescent immobility – which have received considerable attention. However, few studies have examined how people move across such categories. Drawing on the migration experiences of 17 self-identified Latin American gay individuals, this paper shows how prospective migrants can be pushed into a state of involuntary immobility by their families, and how they can adapt to overcome immobility and fulfill their migration aspirations. The article finds, firstly, that heteronormative values and familial expectations regarding sexuality shape the possibility of mobilizing the family's economic, informative and emotional resources. Secondly, I discuss the adaptation strategies that individuals use to surpass involuntary immobility. To understand movement across (im)mobility categories, as well as the role of social boundaries for migration, this paper differentiates between individual and collective migration aspirations and capabilities. In doing so, the article introduces an approach to explore how interactions between social groups and their individual group members shape the (im)mobility projects of the latter.

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Introduction

Migration theory has long focused on why people move, although recent criticism of the field's 'mobility bias' (Schewel 2020) has gained momentum. Schewel (2020) has called for greater research on immobility and argues that why people do *not* move lacks coverage. This disinterest on immobility dynamics has mainly emanated from the assumption that people move if they want to, which presumes that immobility is a static state. However, since 2002, researchers have increasingly paid attention to the drivers of immobility (Schewel 2020), to how people remain in place (Mata-Codesal 2015), or to the 'adaptive preferences' that follow unfulfilled aspirations (Carling and Schewel 2018; Mata-Codesal 2019). The year 2002 is relevant for migration and immobility studies as research on the frustrated migration aspirations in Cape Verde resulted in the first aspiration/ability framework, as Carling (2002) proposed considering the ability and

CONTACT Naiara Rodriguez-Pena  nr320@kent.ac.uk

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the aspirations to move independently. He suggested three (im)mobility categories: mobility – the result of both aspirations and abilities –, voluntary immobility – being able to move but not aspiring to do so– and involuntary immobility – aspiring to migrate but being unable to do so. Schewel (2015) introduced another category of immobility, acquiescent immobility, to present people unable and not aspiring to migrate. The term ‘ability’ has been gradually replaced with the more comprehensive notion of ‘capability’ to examine how different (im)mobility categories relate to the freedom to achieve well-being (de Haas 2003, 2010). This sets the scene to investigate, among other dynamics, the structural factors that constrain or encourage mobility (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013; de Haas and Fransen 2018; Lubkemann 2008), the intrinsic and instrumental rationales behind the aspirations to move or to stay put (de Haas 2021), or how, over time, individuals adapt to move across (im)mobility categories. This article engages with this last line of research.

Whereas the aspiration-capability framework offers the conceptual tools to examine (im)mobility outcomes, scholars have mostly focused on specific (im)mobility categories, such as involuntary immobility and its causes and consequences (Carling 2002), acquiescent immobility (Schewel 2020), voluntary immobility (Mata-Codesal 2018) and the relation between developmental processes and mobility (de Haas 2003). Nevertheless, the framework itself does not explain how people move between such analytical categories (Mata-Codesal 2019; Schewel 2020) and studies on the transition between different states of (im)mobility remain, unfortunately, scarce. Investigations include, for instance, Ortiga and Macabasag’s (2021) research on Filipino nurses with unfulfilled international migration aspirations who transitioned towards a state of acquiescent immobility after an active assessment of what emigration entails. Similarly, Mainwaring (2016) shows that migrants negotiate with smugglers, border guards and other migrants to continue their journey and avoid immobility. These studies highlight the adaptive preferences that follow a lack of migration capabilities to fulfill migration aspirations (Torre Cantalapiedra and Mariscal Nava 2020), or the strategies to negotiate the social closure and entrapment generated by globalization and global power asymmetries (Mainwaring 2016; Ortiga and Macabasag 2021). Yet, we still know little about the adaptation mechanisms, effort, time and resources needed to overcome a state of involuntary immobility and migrate, especially for those who fail to conform to sociocultural and familial norms and whose mobility is limited by other group members (cf. Adeel and Yeh 2018; de Haas and Fokkema 2010). In this sense, Carling and Schewel (2018) argued the relevance of exploring how individual aspirations interact with responsibility towards the kin to comprehend the effect of the family on migration aspirations and capabilities.

This article continues with this line of research and examines the migration aspirations and capabilities of 17 self-identified Latin American homosexuals who moved across (im)mobility categories. All interviewees experienced two transitions: first, following the disclosure of their homosexuality, they moved from a state of prospective migration to involuntary immobility, and, then, after adapting and negotiating their (im)mobility, they moved from involuntary immobility to final migration. This paper seeks to address the following questions: How can sociocultural norms push people into involuntary immobility? How can we disentangle individual migration aspirations and capabilities from those of the family? As ideal migration aspirations are thwarted, how do individuals adapt their aspirations? This article has three aims. First, I argue

that the involuntary immobility of the interviewees is a result of the heteronormative expectations of the family. This highlights how intra-household power dynamics influence the migration decision-making process beyond the more often researched variables of gender and age, and also merges migration and sexuality studies (Mai and King 2009), providing further insights on why people fall into involuntary immobility. Second, I emphasize the strategies and adaptation mechanisms that the interviewees put in place to cope with and overcome a state of involuntary immobility. I differentiate three strategies: considering alternative destinations, shifting the conditions under which migration was initially desirable, and establishing alternative migrant networks online to expand migration capabilities. Finally, to bring more comprehensively together the movement between (im)mobility categories, I distinguish between individual and collective¹ migration aspirations and capabilities. In doing so, this article analyses the circumstances that constrain access to network resources, beyond politico-economic factors, and how individuals adapt when their migration aspirations clash with collective familial convictions about *where* to live (Carling and Schewel 2018).

Adapting to move across (im)mobility categories

Adaptation is a process of change to meet new circumstances, and I situate this research in a growing literature on how individuals adapt and negotiate their aspirations and capabilities to move between (im)mobility categories and reach an aspired state of (im)mobility (see Carling and Schewel 2018, 958; Mata-Codesal 2018). Prior research details the adaptive strategies, such as expanding capabilities, that migrants employ during their journeys to fulfill their migration aspirations. For example, Mainwaring (2016) explores how migrants contest border controls by negotiating with smugglers, other migrants and also border guards during their movement across the Mediterranean to reach their destination and avoid involuntary immobility. Travel strategies such as joining migrant caravans are also considered adaptative mechanisms to avoid involuntary immobility, especially among low-income migrants who lack the capabilities to hire a smuggler (Torre Cantalapiedra and Mariscal Nava 2020). Adaptation also takes place in destination communities, especially for undocumented migrants whose experiences and aspirations are shaped by immigration policies. Haugen (2012), for instance, explores how controls of tenancy registrations constrain the movement of undocumented Nigerian migrants in China, who carefully assess when and for what reasons they engage in intra-city travel to circumvent the police and avoid a second state of immobility (see also Stuesse and Coleman 2014). The lack of official documents also hampers the mobility of refugees in Thailand, who endure limited mobility in urban spaces and reside in areas difficult to access to avoid detention (Stevens 2018). These studies show how migrants adapt their capabilities and aspirations during their journeys, as well as once migration has occurred, in an effort to avoid falling into an undesired (im)mobility category.

However, studies on the adaptive strategies of aspiring migrants or those with unfulfilled aspirations are less common. In these cases, adaptive preferences are still largely based on theoretical reflection and remain hypothesized. These mechanisms can take three forms: first, individuals might subconsciously subdue their aspirations to move if they do not have the capabilities to do so to increase their subjective life

satisfaction (Carling and Schewel 2018); secondly, they might try to set strategies up to expand their migration capabilities; and finally, they might become more flexible regarding the conditions under which migration is desirable (Mata-Codesal 2019). Some scholars in this subfield show how individuals can move across (im)mobility categories once they have adapted their aspirations to migrate. For example, Ortiga and Macabasag (2021) focus on Filipino nurses and argue that transitioning from involuntary to acquiescent immobility is not a passive action of ‘giving up’ on migration aspirations, but, instead, an active process in which aspiring migrants balance their past endeavors and future prospects. These same authors (Ortiga and Macabasag 2020) also demonstrate that unfulfilled aspirations to migrate overseas can lead to internal migration, which concurrently reshapes migration aspirations: while in some cases aspiring migrants adapt their preferred destination choices and career paths to be able to migrate internationally, others develop low aspirations to move and transition towards a state of acquiescent immobility. Similarly, Martin and Bergmann (2021) show how COVID-19 has impacted the aspirations to move, triggering a transition on migration aspirations from high to low, and consequently, from a state of aspiring mobility to acquiescent immobility in order to adapt to the current scenario.

While important, these studies mostly focus on how politico-economic structural constraints regarding the fulfillment of migration aspirations shape adaptation mechanisms and mobility across categories. We still know little about the time, resources and effort needed to surpass a state of involuntary immobility, especially when individual migration aspirations are constrained by cultural, social and family norms. Carling and Schewel (2018) recently explored the developments related to the aspiration-capability framework and pointed out that ‘individual aspirations cannot always be disentangled from concerns for kin. And when such commitments discourage migration, it is not obvious whether the effect is about aspirations to stay, or rather, constraints on the ability to move’ (958). Previous research has stressed how family values and norms, especially regarding age and gender, limit the mobility of family members. Adeel and Yeh (2018) argue that sociocultural dynamics limit the mobility of women in Pakistan by shaping how, where and for what reasons they migrate. Similarly, de Haas and Fokkema (2010) found that in Morocco male migrant household heads avoided family reunification, even when other family members aspired to move to Europe, fearing the family would lose their faith and become ‘Westernized’. In this vein, researchers have also focused on how the household can push some members to emigrate, even when migration is not appealing (Mata-Codesal 2018, 5; see also de Haas 2003; Stark and Bloom 1985). These studies provide a starting point to investigate how individuals adapt, negotiate and cope with cultural and familial norms.

In this paper, I investigate how individuals face familial decisions about (im)mobility. I discuss how social and family norms and values, linked to heteronormativity, impact the migration project of aspiring migrants, pushing my interviewees from prospective migration to involuntary immobility. I also show how, despite family constraints, individuals can adapt and move across (im)mobility categories, from a state of involuntary immobility to final emigration. In doing so, I focus on adaptive preferences, one form of interaction between aspirations and capabilities. The aspiration-capability approach has marked a turning point in migration studies, leading to a growing set of researchers who apply a two-step approach to the field (for a revisit of the model see Carling and Schewel 2018). Mobility outcomes are, according to this framework, impacted by the evaluation

of (im)mobility as a course of action – (im)mobility aspirations – and the realization of such aspirations at a given point in time – migration capabilities (Carling and Schewel 2018, 947). This approach allows to disentangle complex questions around how migration aspirations and capabilities shift over time, leading to movement between (im)mobility categories (Schewel 2020; Ortiga and Macabasag 2021). An empirical examination of how people adapt their aspirations and capabilities over time to move across categories following a clash with kin is yet to be seen, and for this reason, I find it useful to differentiate between individual and collective (im)mobility aspirations and capabilities.

An individual and collective perspective of the aspiration-capability framework

Migration decisions are made as members of a group (de Haas 2021), and as such, migration aspirations and capabilities are shaped by group dynamics. To grasp how aspirations and capabilities interact within groups, I find it helpful to differentiate between individual and collective (im)mobility aspirations and capabilities. In this paper, I refer to collective *familial* aspirations and capabilities. Nonetheless, *collective* has an ampler connotation and can also encompass the aspirations and capabilities at the neighborhood, village or regional level.

By individual aspirations I refer to the convictions that dictate *where* individuals envision themselves living a good life. Collective aspirations are the familial convictions about *where* family members should live. This last term is closely associated with the culture of migration theory. As emigration becomes a rite of passage and deeply engraved in the values and repertoire of the community, the likelihood of subsequent migration increases and emigration changes the values, norms, aspirations and perceptions of the community (Ali 2007; Jónsson 2008; Massey et al. 1993). While a culture of migration can shape collective aspirations about mobility, it is important to differentiate both terms. This is because the term ‘collective’ encompasses different groups, such as family and friend circles, neighborhoods, or villages, among others. Regardless of the existence of a regional or national migration culture, these groups might have distinct (im)mobility aspirations. Differentiating the collective aspirations of groups provides an approach to explore, on the one hand, how a culture of migration penetrates the decisional context of communities and whether particular groups have distinct ideas about (im)mobility. On the other, given that a culture of migration creates strong feedback mechanisms and, therefore, a framework to evaluate emigration (Horváth 2008), exploring the aspirations of specific collectives can elucidate the gain or loss of momentum of a migration culture (see Timmerman, Hemmerichs, and de Clerck 2014). Nevertheless, the distinction between individual and collective aspirations is not straightforward, as the term ‘aspiration’ marks an intersection of personal, collective, and normative dimensions’ (Carling and Collins 2018, 915). In fact, individual preferences are a manifestation of social contexts and, therefore, cannot be completely detached from family or community (aspirational) norms, despite reflecting individual inclinations and preferences about migrating or remaining in place (Boccagni 2017). Likewise, collective familial aspirations capture the aspirational norms and the family standard of behavior, but they are also mediated by individual assertions and experiences. For instance, positive experiences of the migratory kin might reinforce collective (and individual) inclinations towards migration.

Individual capabilities, in this paper, are the financial, human and social resources that the individual owns exclusively. These cannot be accessed by other family members without the permission of the individual. By familial capabilities, I refer to the resources owned by the family network, which are accessible either with the permission of the head of the household or with the consent of most network members. Yet, differentiation between the individual and collective capabilities may be vague. For instance, interviewees, who contributed to family resources over several years found themselves excluded from accessing these same resources after their self-disclosure, in turn constraining their mobility.

The distinction between individual and collective (im)mobility aspirations and capabilities is useful for two reasons. First, whereas the aspiration-capability framework is not individualistic on an ontological level, the model is usually applied to individual (im)mobility projects (Schewel 2020, 337). Yet, migration scholars (Carling 2002; de Haas 2003, 2014) have described how social patterns and dynamics impact individual aspirations and capabilities, and some empirical studies have focused on the interrelation between the (im)mobility dynamics of household members (Mata-Codesal 2018, 5). Distinguishing between individual and collective levels within the aspiration-capability framework sets the scene to investigate more deeply the interactions between individuals and social groups (see Mata-Codesal 2019) and allows to explore, for example, how intra-household power dynamics might affect individual aspirations and capabilities (Carling and Schewel 2018, 958). This is especially important given that over time, familial relationships and individual statuses within groups change. Secondly, introducing individual and collective levels into the aspiration-capability framework facilitates the analysis of the voluntariness of individual (im)mobility. ‘Almost all forms of migration entail choices and constraints’ (Schewel 2020, 336); as a result, individual and collective levels of analyses provide room to study the degree of choice and coercion that group members place on one other. Indeed, in some cases individuals migrate to allow other family members to remain in place (de Haas 2003; Mata-Codesal 2018), which generates questions about the agency involved in this decision. Is the individual migrating for a personal conviction? To what extent do individuals put family aspirations before their own? In other occasions, individuals with unfulfilled aspirations need to adapt following structural (Ortiga and Macabasag 2021) or familial (de de Haas and Fokkema 2010) constraints on their (im)mobility aspirations. Differentiating between collective and individual aspirations and capabilities allows inquiry into which degree of agency is involved in the decision to adapt and whether social groups can push individuals into involuntary adaptation. The experiences of the interviewees provide some answers to these questions. After discussing the data collection, I first explore individual aspirations and capabilities within family structures, showing how the interviewees moved from a state of prospective migration to involuntary immobility. Then, I delve into the adaptation strategies of the interviewees to fulfill their migration aspirations.

Methods and data

This article is based on sixteen semi-structured interviews and five informal conversations, which compose the data collection. These captured the life histories, family dynamics, migration trajectories and migration aspirations and capabilities of seventeen²

Latin American homosexual individuals. The interviews were conducted in Spanish during the first half of 2018 in the metropolitan area of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, except for one interview which was conducted in English. Of the interviewees, eleven were male and six were female; they ranged from 25 to 39 years of age; two were undocumented international migrants, whereas the other fifteen were documented at the time of the interviews. Fifteen lived in Amsterdam, while two resided within its metropolitan area. They migrated to Amsterdam between 2011 and 2017, between their mid-20s and mid-30s. Initially, all interviewees aspired to migrate to the USA, and they all planned their movement there with other kin members. They all lived in their respective parental houses while planning their migration to the USA, and expressed dependency upon the economic or informative assistance of their social networks in order to complete the move. All participants expressed searching for an LGBT-friendly society in which social protection mechanisms were relatively advanced. Prior to their migration, twelve interviewees remained involuntarily immobile for an average of thirteen months, and five interviewees for an average length of five years. This immobility occurred after the interviewees had planned their movements with the assistance of their social networks, and after they came out to their families as gay. See [Table 1](#) for an overview of the interviewees' characteristics.

All interviewees, regardless of gender, age or nationality, self-identified as 'gay' or 'homosexual'. In this article, I employ these terms, instead of the theoretically more comprehensive notions of 'queer' or 'non-straight' (Callis 2014; Dilley 1999). I do this to avoid imposing certain categories on my research group and an external perspective on their sexual orientation. The objective of this study was not to understand why the interviewees employed certain terms over others to define their sexual orientation and I therefore try to maintain an emic perspective on this matter. Given the sensitive nature of this research, in some cases prior to conducting the interviews I held informal

Table 1. Descriptive characteristics of the interviewees.

	n
Gender	
Male	11
Female	6
Country of origin	
Argentina	2
Brazil	1
Chile	3
El Salvador	1
Mexico	6
Nicaragua	1
Peru	1
Venezuela	2
Relatives in the USA	
Yes	13
No	4
Exclusion from the family network	
Temporary	12
Permanent	5
Time experiencing involuntarily immobility	
Less than 1 year	5
1–2 years	7
2–5 years	3
More than 5 years	2

conversations³ with the participants in an effort to break down research-participant barriers and create a safe space for the interviewees to share their experiences, as well as to provide room for the participants to ask questions about both the study and myself. As an outsider to the LGBT community, the interviewees were particularly interested in understanding my relationship with the queer community, and to check whether I could understand their stories of struggle. Even if I cannot determine how participants perceived me, I believe that being a Spanish-speaker and a migrant myself created commonalities with the interviewees, leading to a less asymmetrical researcher-participant relationship.

Respondents were recruited through several Facebook groups, including *Españoles y Latinos en Amsterdam*, *Argentinos en Amsterdam*, *Holandizadas en el mundo*, *Colombianos*, *Latinos y Dominicanos en Amsterdam*, *Cubanos en Holanda*, and *Mexicanos en Amsterdam*, as well as through organizations working with migrants and gay groups in the Netherlands, such as *Casa Migrante*, *Mil Colores* and *Phoenix Sudnl*. All qualitative data was coded using the following structure: (1) codes based on the disclosure experience, which facilitated the inquiry about changes in family dynamics; and (2) migration-specific codes, which traced, among others, the reasons for migrating, the selection of destination and the resources to move.

The fieldwork revealed that all interviewees experienced an initial exclusion from the family's emotional, informative and material resources after disclosing their homosexuality. There were, however, differences in the exclusion experienced by the interviewees. Twelve participants were temporarily shunned from the family network (ranging from eight months to almost two years), and afterwards, received family support⁴ to emigrate. The fact that the relationship with family members improved over time matches the findings of earlier studies in the United States (Cramer and Roach 1988) and the United Kingdom (Valentine, Skelton and Butler 2003) that reveal the complexity of the disclosure process. The remaining five interviewees suffered permanent exclusion from the family resources and experienced a longer period of involuntary immobility, ranging from two to eight years; these interviewees adapted both their aspirations and capabilities to fulfill their aspirations to migrate. The sample offers the opportunity to examine how relatively well-off prospective migrants were pushed into a state of involuntary immobility. Indeed, eight interviewees perceived their financial situation to be the same as that of the average household in their communities of origin, and nine considered theirs to be better-off, either because of their family's higher socio-economic status or because of the remittances of migrant relatives. The fact that all interviewees eventually realized their aspirations to migrate also sheds light on the adaptation mechanisms each employed to overcome their state of involuntary immobility.

Individual aspirations and capabilities within the family structure

This section focuses on understanding how individual migration aspirations and capabilities are intertwined with cultural and familial norms and values. For this, I discuss two major phases in the evolution of the migration aspirations and capabilities of my participants: first, a period when the interviewees voluntarily subdued their migration aspirations to allow the mobility of other family members, and second, a period after

disclosure when the individuals were excluded from the family network and experienced a constraint in their migration capabilities, pushing them towards involuntary immobility.

Aspiring and planning mobility: subduing migration aspirations for the sake of the family

The migration aspirations of the interviewees date back to adolescence. As teenagers, freedom of expression and experiencing sexual liberation were the main motivations to leave, but these evolved over time. Some interviewees considered that local economic opportunities were limited, increasingly precarious and unfit for their educational qualifications. For instance, Rosa, a Mexican graphic designer who lived with her parents until her migration to Amsterdam in 2017, initially considered migration a strategy to experience her homosexuality more freely and have a public romantic relationship. However, over time she found it difficult to find a stable, well-paying job as a graphic designer in Mexico, and migration became a strategy to also find a better job. Societal expectations and limited opportunities to meet and socialize with other homosexuals also aggravated her discontent with the wider local environment. These sentiments of being emotionally stuck and trapped were shared by others, such as Raul, a 39-year-old man from El Salvador, Laura, a Mexican biologist, or Dario, a Venezuelan in his mid-20s, who felt that migration was a good strategy for socializing with other gay people and liberating oneself.

The USA was considered *the* land of opportunity for all interviewees due to its economic dynamism, the perception of greater open-mindedness compared to that of their hometowns and because most participants had close kin, extended family or acquaintances with whom they had a good relationship living there (see Table 1). Having migratory kin in the USA shaped individual as well as collective migration aspirations. First, frequent contact with the migrant network played a crucial role in increasing the interviewees' aspirations to move. They became increasingly aware of the opportunities for socialization in the USA as the migrant kin gossiped, for example, about 'all the gay bars you can see here'. This concurrently increased the aspirations to escape repression and entrapment in their own communities. Monica, a Mexican neuropsychologist who has an uncle and an aunt in Arizona, explained that leisure opportunities there boosted her aspirations to move. Similarly, the expectation of support from Spanish-speaking gay networks increased aspirations to move. The importance of gay communities for incorporation processes has been observed in other studies exploring the sexual identity of migrants (Cantú 2009). Raul mentioned:

'I wanted to move to the USA, not only for the economic opportunities, which are way better than in El Salvador, but also because I really wanted to hang out with other gay people[...] and have gay friends'.

Secondly, the positive experiences of migratory kin improved the household's perceptions of the USA, which in turn encouraged interviewees to migrate for the purpose of obtaining higher comfort and wages, as well as to fulfill their professional ambitions. Maria, an artist in her mid-20s who comes from a rural community in North-East Brazil, was encouraged by her parents to move to the USA with her aunt in order to

find a good job and better social benefits. After finishing his studies, Manuel, a Venezuelan dental technician, also received his mother's support to migrate to the USA, later joining his aunt to improve his English skills and working conditions. According to the interviewees, migratory kin primarily shared positive experiences about their mobility; this not only reinforced the family migration aspirations and positive attitude towards the USA, but also shows that migrant networks tend to omit negative information.

The migration aspiration of my interviewees concurred with those of the family in nearly all cases. Laura and Rosa, two gay females from Mexico, did mention that when they first shared their aspiration to move to the USA, they encountered negative responses and attempts to discourage them from emigrating, especially from their mothers. Others such as Pedro, a Chilean tour guide, and Javier, an Argentinian computer scientist, were discouraged from migrating due to the fact that they had stable jobs in their communities of origin, and therefore risked lowering their socio-economic status upon migration. However, over time the family became more positive and supportive. Despite the consensus between individual and familial migration aspirations, some interviewees consciously postponed planning their migration projects to contribute economically to the movement of other family members. The immobility of the participants thus enabled the migration of others (see Mata-Codesal 2015). This is the case, for example, of Jose, a male from Nicaragua who supported the migration of his cousin with his savings, or of Raul, who assisted his oldest brother. Rationales for postponing the migration project revolved around two notions. On the one hand, it reinforced a shared sense of belonging and values, such as caring for family members and engaging in mutual material and emotional exchanges. Raul mentions: 'I helped them whenever they needed, however I could because they are my family and that is what family does'. Assisting other family members financially was not, according to Jose and Raul, mandatory, and instead they could have refused sharing their savings. Yet, Raul stressed that:

'Even if I could have kept the money for myself, for my journey, I cannot see myself doing that. My brother needed help and I did not hesitate. That is who I am. That is what family is for. It was the right thing to do'.

On the other hand, by contributing to the mobility of other members the interviewees expected reciprocation when their turn to migrate came (see Portes 1998). Pedro, from Chile, mentioned: 'It was an unwritten norm. You help and then you will be helped'. In contributing to the wellbeing of the family, the interviewees expected unconditional support from the network and access to collective migration capabilities. Indeed, when the interviewees first started planning their migration to the USA in their early-to-late-20s, they all lived in the parental household, and even though they had savings of their own, they also needed the family's financial support to emigrate. Some, such as Monica, Laura or Manuel, needed the assistance of the family to apply for an F-1 visa and support themselves through the duration of their educational and language-training programs. Others, such as Gabriel, a Peruvian man in his late 20s, were hoping to be employed in their migratory kin businesses. In addition, interviewees could access provisional accommodation and job references once in destination, which proved to be important drivers to opt for a particular state. In this manner, social obligations, expectations

and the exchange of support triggered a perceptive cause–effect relationship between past actions, present assumptions, and future mobility imaginaries.

Clashing with heteronormative family values: from prospective migration to involuntary immobility

Some of the interviewees started planning their migration to the USA in their early 20s, while others did so in their late 20s. They all received initial support from their families both in origin and in destination communities. A case in point is Raul, who after contributing monetarily to the migration project of his older brother, started planning his migration together with his parents and migrant brother in 2006. Manuel was also supposed to migrate in 2011, after planning his move together with his mother and aunt. However, these planned migration projects never materialized. Why was this so?

All the interviewees decided to disclose their homosexuality prior to migrating, even if there were important differences in the disclosure processes. Some, like Alfredo, a Chilean man in his late 30s, decided to strategize their disclosure by initially approaching siblings and heterosexual close friends (see Edwards 1996). Others started introducing non-heteronormative behaviors, including bisexuality and asexuality, in conversation to test parental reactions. The reasons for coming out were various. Some respondents, including Manuel, were afraid that the migratory kin would inform their parents about their outings once they were in the USA, triggering a transnational exchange of reproaches. Others were planning on emigrating with their partners. Those with secure working positions and good life quality aimed to stop family efforts to discourage their migration. This was the case for Pedro and Javier, who had stable jobs with chances of promotions, and whose families could not understand their aspirations to migrate to the USA. Coming out to the family was, for them, a last resort to make the family understand why they aspired to move, despite their comfortable economic position. Other interviewees wanted to leave without major secrets kept from their parents. After disclosing their sexual orientation, the interviewees suffered rejection, shame and violence from other family members, as well as exclusion from emotional and material resources, corroborating the findings of earlier studies on the sociology of the family (Cramer and Roach 1988; LaSala 2000; Valentine, Skelton and Butler 2003).

The isolation from the family's economic and emotional resources was based on family expectations and heteronormative values, and the impossibility to access the family's resources limited the interviewees' individual migration capabilities. Their migration project was planned, and in some cases even scheduled, and only after coming out to the family they were unable to mobilize the collective capabilities and fulfill their individual migration aspirations. This shows the tense relation between individual aspirations and family values, as not conforming to the heteronormative standard governing family expectations resulted in constraints on the capability to move. Jose and Raul explained their immobility this way:

'Why didn't I migrate? Good question. My uncle helped me to prepare the whole movement, my dad was on board, my mum was sad but also happy I would have a better life. I was migrating with my boyfriend, so I obviously needed to say something. It went to hell [...] I wish I hadn't said anything' (Jose, Nicaragua).

'Everything was planned. I had the intention of moving to the USA. I have family there; we were in good terms. But I came out and all changed. Nothing happened [...] I could not even contact them' (Raul, El Salvador).

Adhering to the family's heteronormative values appeared a necessary condition to mobilize collective capabilities and, therefore, the disclosure immersed the interviewees in involuntary immobility. However, the timing and nature of the exclusion from the family capabilities differed and so did the experience of immobility. We can distinguish two groups: first, women, those living in bigger cities, farther away from extended members of the family and raised in a less conservative and Catholic environment, suffered less permanent isolation. In contrast, men, particularly those coming from small towns and with very close ties to the extended family, suffered continuous exclusion from the familial emotional and material resources. This confirms Portes (1998, 16) elaboration on the negative consequences of social capital, as the extent of restrictions onto individual (sexual) freedoms depended on both the location and the level of contact with other group members.

Twelve interviewees were able to continue their migration project after a shorter period of marginalization, ranging from eight months to almost two years. During this time, some interviewees worked double shifts to increase their individual capabilities. A case in point is Marcos, a Mexican mechanic who started working around 13 h a day in two different car repair shops to increase his savings. Others tried to mobilize the support of friends. They all felt confused due to the rapid change in their circumstances and some resigned themselves to staying in their communities of origin at times. Monica, who wanted to pursue a master's degree in the USA, put it this way: 'I worked so hard. I asked some friends to help me out but travelling to the USA is very expensive. I thought I would never make it and I told myself to get used to that idea'.

The remaining five interviewees experienced a more permanent exclusion from the family's emotional, informative and economic resources, which in turn impeded their mobility for more than two years. Excessive financial and emotional control meant postponing the migration project as the participants experienced a rapid decline in their overall resources. In these cases, apart from being incapable of migrating internationally, the interviewees also experienced immobility within the community of origin. In fact, some interviewees were unable to meet same-sex friends without family interference, while others' savings were taken to limit their activities. Disclosing their homosexuality also implied mobility restrictions within the family household, as some interviewees tried to avoid the common areas, including the kitchen and the living room, to stay away from disapproving relatives. Manuel put it this way:

'Coming out was hell, but it was way worse what came afterwards. My mum became extremely controlling, so I couldn't come and go as I used to. The worse part was going home at night. I tried to stay as much as possible in my room to avoid the confrontation'.

In this manner, nonconforming to family values not only impeded accessing the family collective capabilities to migrate, but also entailed involuntary immobility within the community of origin and the family household. Additionally, to prevent the interviewees from migrating, the core family impeded communication with already-settled extended kin members, not only in the USA, but also in other Latin American countries and in Europe. Raul, for instance, has some relatives in Mexico and Spain, and even though

he was not planning to migrate to these countries, his relatives stopped picking up the phone after his disclosure. Raul thinks that his father impeded his communication with his extended kin to prevent his migration and control him.

LaSala (2000, 71) has already argued that within increasingly disapproving families, restricting the access to familial resources and disrupting the network's functioning is often a resort to pressure homosexual individuals to reject their sexual orientation and control them. Differentiating between individual and collective migration capabilities is important in these cases, as the interviewees might not have remained immobile with the support and assistance of their families. The distinction between individual and collective capabilities is, however, blurry. Some interviewees that experienced permanent exclusion from the family network had economically supported the mobility of other family members in the past, which consequently resulted in difficulties to differentiate between individual and familial capabilities (see Mata-Codesal 2019, 47). This was, for instance, the case of Jose and Raul. The interviewees considered that the network capabilities, which included not only economic resources but also key information and assistance from migrant kin, were also their own individual resources, as they had also assisted other members' mobility in the past. Not being able to mobilize the familial capabilities seemed unreasonable, which increased feelings of entrapment and the willingness to adapt and surpass the state of involuntary immobility.

Adapting to move: from involuntary immobility to final migration

After experiencing a first transition in their mobility status, from prospective migration to involuntary immobility, the interviewees adapted and negotiated their aspirations and capabilities to move from involuntary immobility to final migration. This transition differed depending on the temporariness of the exclusion experienced.

Twelve out of seventeen interviewees experienced a temporal exclusion from familial capabilities, and, after a time ranging from eight months to two years, their family situation improved. They were able to re-enter the family support network and mobilize the collective capabilities to continue their migration projects, yet they lost self-determination in the selection of the destination. Before the disclosure, the USA was a destination also supported by other family members. Nevertheless, coming out implied accessing the family economic resources under certain conditions. The mobilization of family resources came with the household decision about *where* to move. The Netherlands, and particularly Amsterdam, appeared as an alternative destination. Given that this study is solely based on the experiences of the migrants I cannot determine why the families chose this destination. Still, some interviewees shared their assumptions: those who came to terms with their parents think that their family perceived Europe as more LGBT-friendly and that they were trying to protect their children; in sharp contrast, others asserted that facilitating their migration to Europe was a strategy to avoid the migrant network in the USA and the extended family in the origin countries from noticing their sexual orientation. Notwithstanding the reasons, the family aspirations about *where* their children should live changed post-disclosure, when the interviewees failed to conform to the (hetero)sexual norm. Despite initial reluctance, the interviewees ended up migrating and abandoning their aspirations to move to the USA:

'After some months, they were supportive. Mum told me that I was coming to Amsterdam, where being homosexual does not matter, where it is not an issue [...] It was not what I wanted. I did not know anything about the Netherlands. I thought about staying in Mexico, but I do not think it was up for discussion' (Laura, Mexico).

On the contrary, five participants experienced permanent exclusion from the familial capabilities. As a result, they did not re-enter the family network, which hindered their migration project for periods from two to eight years. Despite the constraints experienced to emigrate to the USA, they decided to continue with their migration projects, as the discrimination experienced from their families increased their discontent and awareness of the homophobia within their own communities, concurrently boosting their migration aspirations. These interviewees adapted in two manners: (1) they expanded their migration capabilities, which resulted in (2) the adaptation of their migration aspirations, particularly regarding the ideal destination and the circumstances under which mobility was desirable.

First, after realizing that the situation with their families was not improving, these interviewees expanded their migration capabilities using alternative channels, such as social platforms, to get informed and to create substitutive networks. Facebook groups became a primary source to increase their awareness about opportunities elsewhere and to set a point of contact with other Latin American gay migrants. Jose summarized these instances:

'I started joining Facebook groups because I really did not know how to get information otherwise. People were very nice, they started giving very good tips, websites that could be helpful ... I created strong friendships and some even suggested I could stay with them until I could get a job'.

Being able to secure initial accommodation and assistance to obtain a job enabled overcoming a state of involuntary immobility, as the interviewees started building strong trusting relationships over the Internet with other homosexuals living in Europe, which in turn led to a network of support that facilitated their decision to move. The manners in which the Internet and new technologies impact migration capabilities need to be further researched, as they are key information-sharing spaces between immobile and mobile subjects. This area of research is particularly important as agency is essential to understand how the involuntary immobile adapt through the expansion of their migration capabilities, which echoes Carling and Schewel's (2018) call to surpass equating aspirations to agency and capabilities to structural opportunities and constraints, as 'the interplay of structure and agency shapes each of the two steps' (958).

Secondly, migration aspirations shifted in two manners. On the one hand, socializing with gay migrants in Europe encouraged searching for alternative destinations. Although some interviewees initially contacted Latin American Facebook groups in Spain and Italy, poor employment opportunities ruled these countries out as destinations. Whereas the USA had continued to remain *the* destination in the minds of the interviewees, their exposure to the experiences of other gay migrants in Amsterdam, together with the lack of support from their migrant kin in the USA, ultimately tilted the scales. Raul highlighted: 'Nobody was picking up the phone. I did not have anybody else in the USA, so why not Amsterdam?'. As a result, the expansion of their social

capital facilitated the consideration of an alternative destination, shifting their migration projects over time away from their desire to migrate to the USA. For others such as Jose and Raul, the circumstances under which they were willing to move became more flexible. While undocumented migration was overwhelmingly a red line before disclosing their homosexuality, they gradually became keener towards the option of overstaying a tourist visa. Adapting the circumstances under which migration was desirable was key to overcoming involuntary immobility, as these interviewees perceived that they did not have the financial or informative means to obtain a visa without family support. Since the conditions under which migration is acceptable and the geographical orientation of migration change over time, it is relevant to include different time horizons to explore how (im)mobility aspirations change (Mata-Codesal 2019) and whether such shifts facilitate moving out of unwanted (im)mobility categories.

Discussion

The aspiration-capability framework introduces four (im)mobility categories, facilitating the study of how people move across them. Although scholars have called for further research in this area (Mata-Codesal 2019; Schewel 2020), studies remain scarce. Emerging investigations in this matter primarily highlight how people adapt and move across categories due to a lack of migration capabilities (Torre Cantalapiedra and Mariscal Nava 2020) or following entrapment dynamics (Mainwaring 2016; Ortega and Macabasag 2020, 2021). The stories of the respondents show the need for migration scholars to investigate how cultural and social values impact the mobility of individuals and their movement across (im)mobility categories. This shifts the emphasis from the political and economic factors affecting migration aspirations and capabilities towards also highlighting the relevance of social boundaries and socio-cultural norms in two-step migration models.

The stories presented demonstrate that family norms and expectations regarding sexuality play an important role in shaping who can mobilize the family economic, informative and emotional resources. Identities and behaviors that depart from traditional social norms and expectations can affect family relationships and individual positions in the network. This can subsequently impact the mobilization of network resources and the capabilities of individuals to move, pushing aspiring individuals into a state of involuntary immobility. While research highlights the implications of structural forces for aspiring individuals, it is important to merge migration studies with other disciplines such as sexuality (Mai and King 2009; Manalansan IV 2006), ageing or disability studies in a more comprehensive manner. This is necessary so as to encourage a shift in exploring the mechanisms underpinning immobility away from economic, structural lines towards the clashes between social groups and group members (see Carling and Schewel 2018). Whereas these clashes limited my interviewees' capability to move at first, the decision to adapt shows that 'capabilities and aspirations are not things that one simply has or does not have; they exist along a spectrum' (Schewel 2020, 336) and are dependent on how and under which conditions individuals aspire to move (Mata-Codesal 2019). For the respondents, as their dream migration vanished, other strategies became desirable, including the usage of social platforms to create substitutive networks,

the consideration of alternative destinations or adjusting the desirable conditions for migration. By focusing on my participants' adaptive preferences to move beyond involuntary immobility, this paper joins the call of other researchers who have discussed the importance of exploring adaptation mechanisms to better understand how individuals cope with immobility and move across (im)mobility categories (Carling and Schewel 2018; Mata-Codesal 2019; Ortiga and Macabasag 2021).

Simultaneously, to acknowledge how the participants moved across (im)mobility categories, this article highlights the benefits of differentiating between individual and collective (im)mobility aspirations and capabilities. This differentiation facilitates investigating how the interactions between social groups and group members condition (im)mobility projects, as sociocultural norms and intra-household power dynamics limit the mobility of certain groups along lines such as gender, age, sexuality, or nationality (Adeel and Yeh 2018; de de Haas and Fokkema 2010). Likewise, this distinction encourages research on the degree of individual agency needed to fulfill (im)mobility aspirations when these conflict with familial desires. Future research could expand on how family aspirations and capabilities align with or disrupt individual aspirations and capabilities, as well as the influence of this on the (im)mobility decision-making process. More generally, this research supports recent literature regarding how social norms and expectations can prevent individuals from fulfilling their inner aspirations (de de Haas and Fokkema 2010; Mata-Codesal 2018). This paper provides an empirical case on the potential of distinguishing between individual and collective levels within the aspiration-capability framework as an approach to understanding how the family might shape its members' (im)mobility and how people can adapt and negotiate to move beyond an unwanted (im)mobility category.

Notes

1. In this paper, I refer to collective *familial* aspirations and capabilities. Nonetheless, *collective* has an ampler connotation and could also encompass the aspirations and capabilities of the community, for instance (see page 5).
2. This is because two interviewees were interviewed together.
3. These informal conversations are not part of the data collection process.
4. Valentine, Skelton and Butler (2003) acknowledge that parental acceptance is a process and that homophobic families can also adapt and support non-heterosexual individuals.

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ORCID

Naiara Rodriguez-Pena  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7928-0978>

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