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Mother Alone: Caregiving and identity in Senegalese migrant women living in southern Spain.

Cristina del Villar-Toribio. Universidad de Sevilla

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5172-7101>

Manuel de la Mata Benítez. Universidad de Sevilla.

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9302-4786>

Javier Saavedra. Universidad de Sevilla

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2328-7708>

Alicia Español. Universidad de Sevilla

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9831-2915>

Abstract

The aim of this study was to analyze identity construction amongst Senegalese women in diaspora regarding caregiving, and to identify what challenges and negotiations they confront in their caregiving practices. We conducted semi-structured interviews with seven women of Senegalese origin who live in Andalusia, southern Spain. We conducted voice and I-position analysis, which highlighted power inequalities and was sensitive to the dynamic and dialogical acculturation process. The findings showed an identity reconstruction process from caregiving in the cultural context of their home country, where caretaking has a strong collectivist component with mutual support networks, especially in child raising and motherhood, intergenerational respect and caregiving relationships, to a more individualistic host cultural context, where motherhood is more isolated and solitary. Diasporic Senegalese women have also lost their support networks, are overburdened by caregiving work, conciliation problems, loss of social status as mothers and as adults, and racism. In such situations, their resilience strategies position them as responsible mothers, maintaining the values of their home culture and developing new strategies for searching information and support.

Keywords: Care, migration, Senegalese women, identity, dialogical acculturation

Corresponding author

Cristina del Villar-Toribio. C/ Cela s/n. 410018 Sevilla. mcrviltor@alum.us.es

Caregiving, understood as all action directed at sustaining life, is an essential daily practice that accompanies human beings throughout their developmental stages of life, and is the basis of all communal life. Care practices, whose social and economic value is undervalued, has mainly been provided by women. Feminist theories have focused on caregiving as a subject of study, questioning and debating the role of women as universal caregivers and the social, political and economic value of caregiving (Herd & Meyer, 2002;).

This study explored its role in the construction of the identity of migrant women, analyzing identity changes throughout their migratory experience. This analysis was applied within the theoretical model of the dialogical self (DST). This model is sensitive to migrant women's experiences of oppression. The approach enables an explanation of the negotiations and confrontations between culture of origin and host country in care work (Hermans, 2001; Bathia, 2002).

Senegalese Migration in Spain

Senegalese migration to Spain began in the 1970s, mostly by the Wolof ethnic group, and specifically by the Mouride Brotherhood (Sufi Islamic order) an association system based on mutual support. This style of brotherhood is hegemonic in the Senegalese diaspora and also includes people who do not belong to the Wolof ethnic group (Jabardo, 2011). Senegal does not have a direct historical colonial relationship with Spain like Morocco or Equatorial Guinea, as it was colonised by the French.

The arrival of Senegalese women has been documented since the mid-eighties. The main legal way they could enter Spain was by family reunification (Vickstrom, González-Ferrer, 2016). They reproduced their own participatory and mutual support systems, such as tontine, a system of collective savings directed by women (Sene, 2017). They also created new business models in diasporic communities, such as braiding hair and specialized afro hair styling, applying the skills for self-organization they learned in their homes and in youth associations (Jabardo & Ródenas, 2017).

Women migrants are represented in the Western social discourse as prisoners of their patriarchal society, victims of their own culture, who have to be guided and assisted for their insertion in the host society, omitting how the inequalities already present in the new context affect them (Valderrama & Yufra, 2016).

Collectivism and individualism

Caregiving, albeit an essential part of humans' social relations, depends on the cultural scenario where it is carried out. It is therefore indispensable to explore cultural values as they relate to social relations and identity construction.

In the literature, there are two widely used constructs defining cultural differences by how individuals relate to others: Collectivism and Individualism (Triandis, 1995). Collectivism is the social pattern in which individuals feel strongly bonded to each other, and see themselves as part of a group, prioritizing group goals and motivations over the individual. Individualism, on the contrary, refers to the view of the individual as separate from others, a preference for following one's own motivations and goals, and emphasizing rational analysis over the advisability of associating or separating from others (Triandis, 1995).

Applying this conceptual line of study to the self, Markus and Kitayama (1991, 2003) differentiated between the independent self, constructed separately from others, and the

interdependent self, constructed by fitting in with others. The first is associated with Western individualist cultures, where the self is construed as autonomous, and the second predominates in Oriental cultures where the self is construed referentially. This hermeneutic of the construction of the self has been applied to explain cultural differences in psychological processes such as decision-making (Kitayama, Snibbe, Markus, et.al, 2004), cooperation as a response to social dilemmas (Utz, 2004), memory (Petterson & Patterson, 2012), perceived friendship and romantic relationships (Day & Impett, 2018), stress response (He, Fan & Yang, 2021), and others.

However, some criticisms of the explanatory models for the differences between the self and social relations between cultural groups must also be considered. The independent/interdependent-self scales have validity and consistency problems in different cultural groups (Levine, Bresnahan, Park et al. 2003a, Levine, Bresnahan, Park et al. 2003b). Furthermore, criticisms of the differentiation between collectivist and individualist cultures include that: there is a lack of clarity and coherence in the concepts, cultural differences at their foundation are small, and the differentiation reproduces cultural stereotypes, and is not based on empirical evidence (Wong, Wang & Klann, 2018). Our position in this respect is that the differentiation between the independent and interdependent self continues to be current and provides a consistent conceptual framework, as shown by the recent studies mentioned as examples. However, the criticisms mentioned on consistency and clarity of the cultural differences in the construction of the self led us to adopt a dynamic, interactive perspective of the relationship between self and culture. Thus, we do not interpret cultural differences based on clearly differentiated monolithic constructs. Having a perspective that appreciates the details and flow between different cultural identities is especially relevant in a study such as this one. This means that identities are not analyzed as immersed in a single homogeneous cultural context (if there is such a thing, Hays & González, 2021), but people who have experienced a migratory process between different cultures.

Acculturation and the Dialogical Self Theory

Acculturation theory (Berry, 2008) studies the process the individual goes through when moving from Culture “A” to Culture “B”, with four possible strategies, depending on what level the individual chooses to maintain his/her/their native culture: assimilation, integration, separation and marginalization. This model, although dominant in acculturation studies in the field of psychology, has been widely criticized.

The Dialogical Self Theory (DST) (Hermans, 2001) is based on some of the criticisms of the mainstream acculturation model (Berry, 2008). This theory proposes a conception of the self as a set of I-Positions and voices that are in dialogue with the cultural context, mutually influencing each other. This dialogue, in which both the self and the culture are dynamic elements, is fluid, in contrast to other theories which conceive the self as an atomic element, separate from the context. It is a multiple self, constantly changing. DST problematizes Berry’s acculturation model (2008), questioning the universalization of relationships between cultures and the possibility of choosing acculturation strategies (Bathia & Ram, 2001, 2009; Bathia, 2012). Furthermore, by its definition, culture is treated as a static element, which neither changes nor is transformed (Gamsakhurdia, 2019), and only the individuals who are immersed in it undergo changes when they come into contact with a new culture.

Bathia (2012) describes acculturation as a dialogical and postcolonial process. Instead of assuming bicultural identities where separate entities from two different cultures meet, he proposes the use of the term diaspora, applied to migrant collectives, which describes the complexity, diversity and flexibility of their identities. The diasporic identity is positioned against the relationship of colonial subordination between the homeland culture and the mainstream culture, which conditions acculturation (Bathia & Ram, 2009). Therefore, there is no free choice of acculturation strategies (Berry, 2008). Dialogical acculturation does not attempt to find harmonious identity, but emphasizes conflict, negotiation and hybridization in a permanent dialogue. The diasporic identity produces a dialogue between the mainstream culture and the homeland culture that is marked by inequality of power, and this dialogue can be analyzed through the I-Positions, (Bathia & Ram, 2001).

Gamsakhurdia (2019, 2021), based on DST's interactive and transforming relationship between the self and culture, proposed the use of the term "proculturation" instead of acculturation. Proculturation describes the transformation that occurs when the self comes into contact with new elements, without implying necessarily physically moving, but through communication media. The contact between the self and new elements, as differentiated from Berry's (2008) acculturation model, assumes a mutual transformation, both of the self and of the culture, creating a new element. Gamsakhurdia (2019) rejects the mechanistic conception of the acculturation model delimited in time, in which at a given point in time, Culture "A" comes into contact with Culture "B". He argues for dynamic intersubjective continuity through contact with new ideas that generate emotional and cognitive changes, that is, that the contact between different cultural elements is constant and the result is the hybridization of a new cultural element.

Analysis of I-positions and voices has been applied to acculturation studies (Andreoli, 2013), diasporic identities (Bathia, 2012), proculturation (Gamsakhurdia, 2021), frontier identities (Español et.al, 2021), and the construction of identity in migrant women (De la Mata et.al 2023). All of these studies emphasize the usefulness of analyzing positions as tools sensitive to the inequalities of power and the complexity implied by the dynamic nature of the self.

Just as the DST is sensitive to the complexity of diasporic identity, so are the experiences described by postcolonial feminism in the meeting of different cultures. This approach criticizes both the androcentrism of postcolonial studies and the Western feminist view that homogenizes and universalizes the problems of women. It also proposes to analyze women's problems from a cross-sectional perspective, making the practices of colonized women visible and reporting patriarchal colonialist action (Mishra, 2013). Postcolonial feminist analyses of the construction of identity consider historical, social and material aspects in which the person is immersed fundamental (Barcinski & Kalia, 2005). For example, Andalzúa (1987) described the *mestiza* identity, defined as a fusion, breaking up the border, in this case, between the USA and Latin America, not only as a separation between territories, but also identities. The *mestiza* identity describes a unique plural identity, since it travels between different cultures and interacts with a diversity of sources and cannot be reduced to the different elements of which it is composed.

Caregiving and motherhood from a feminist perspective

This study gives special attention to childcare and motherhood, as the participants are migrant mothers. Motherhood has historically been viewed by psychology (mainly evolutionary) from a utilitarian perspective focused on its role in child development, while

Western white mainstream feminism has focused on motherhood as oppressive (Athan & Reel, 2015). However, recent empirical studies have tabled the diversity of motherhood experiences, for example, the experiences of lesbian, migrant, adoptive or imprisoned mothers. These studies complicate and widen the concept of motherhood, which may be experienced in different ways and even as empowering (Athan & Reel, 2015).

Motherhood experiences in Northern countries have been called intensive motherhood. Hays (1996) criticized this motherhood experience as demanding in time and resources, focused on the wellbeing of the children, in which the mother is the only or main caregiver, and care is given alone, enclosed in the home environment. This concept has led to interesting feminist debates on the responsibility and demands in a diversity of motherhood experiences, which question this ideal of motherhood as overburdening the mother and demonstrating their lack of social support in child raising (Budds, 2021). Recent studies also show that lack of attention to the relational needs of mothers during the postpartum period increases the likelihood of distress (Enlander et.al, 2022). How intensive motherhood impacts on the idea of motherhood as self-sacrificing among single, racialized, and low-income mothers who find it even harder to meet the expectations of “a good mother”, has also been analyzed (Elliott, et.al 2015). In contrast to these discourses of a hyper-demanding motherhood, there are feminist alternatives that advocate liberated maternity based on co-responsibility for care and collective child raising (Green, 2015). In addition, the Senegalese feminist sociologist Thiam (1982) also raised the relevance of collective actions and intersectional approaches to the struggle for gender equality in African societies, especially with regard to the inequalities caused by the unequal distribution of care work.

This study analyzes who Senegalese migrant women are when they give care, that is, how they construe their identity with regard to care and the challenges they face in this identity construction. The analysis was conducted from the perspective of the dialogical self, as it understands identity as a changing element in constant dialogue with the surroundings. This provides a dynamic, interactive perspective of how migrant Senegalese women identify themselves in relation to their surroundings and how they perceive changes during the migratory process. Through analysis of how they position themselves with regard to caregiving, and how they position others, the power relations described are inferred from caregiving practices. This study contributes to an intersectional description of gender, race, culture and motherhood to research on caregiving. For our approach to these matters, the following study objectives were posed to:

- 1) Describe the self-construction identity of Senegalese migrant women as related to caregiving.
- 2) Analyze the conflicts and negotiation in the process of identity construction that Senegalese women cope with in caregiving.

Methodology

Participants

The three participants in this study were heterosexual cisgender Senegalese women living in Seville. Selection was intentional through a local NGO. They participated voluntarily and anonymously and received a small economic compensation for their time. To ensure anonymity, the participants chose a pseudonym. The three participants knew each other and knew the first author of this article beforehand. The first author and the participants

have participated together in projects and training activities run by several local NGOs on feminism and migrants' rights. These previous contacts promoted closeness between the author and the participants, recognising similar values, sharing common spaces in the neighbourhood, and local associations. This favoured trust and rapport during the interviews. The interview with Awa lasted 71 minutes, the one with Marifaye 97 minutes, and the one with Silvia 67 minutes. All interviews were in Spanish, as the participants had a sufficiently good level of linguistic competence to express themselves clearly in this language.

Awa is forty years old, originally from Dakar, is a Muslim and identifies herself as a Wolof,¹ although her mother was of the Sereer ethnic group. Her mother tongues are Wolof and Sereer, and she also speaks French and Spanish. She had a primary education. She has lived in Spain for fifteen years and has a valid residence permit. She is married and has three daughters, eleven, seven and six years old and a three-year-old son. Her husband has a temporary job in another city. She works as domestic help.

Marifaye is thirty-two and was born in a rural area in the south of Senegal. She is a Muslim and belongs to the Sereer ethnic group. Her native language is Sereer. She speaks Wolof, French and Spanish and has a primary education. She has lived in Spain for ten years. She was recently given a residence permit. She is married, has a four-year-old daughter and a one-year-old son. She lives with her husband and children. At present she is unemployed, but had worked before as a temporary labourer and as a cleaner.

Silvia is thirty-four years old, is from Dakar, belongs to the Fula ethnic group and is a Muslim. Her mother tongue is Fula. She also speaks Wolof, French and Spanish. She has a university education. She has lived in Spain for two years. She is married. Her husband is also Senegalese and emigrated to Spain before her to look for work so they could both settle there. She has a one-year-old son and lives with him and with her husband. At the present time, she is unemployed and hoping to legalize her situation in Spain.

Instrument

An ad hoc semi-structured interview was conducted/applied. This interview was designed to collect information for a PhD thesis on the caregiving practices of African migrant women. A first pilot interview was carried out. An outline of questions to be asked was drafted following a timeline from infancy to present day divided in three parts:

- 1) Preliminary questions and information on the study. This first part collected participant demographic data and presented the objectives and conditions of the study. It also included explanatory questions on the concept of caretaking (e.g., What does caregiving mean to you?)
- 2) Caregiving in their home context. Questions on care practices, starting from their close experience (e.g., Who took care of you?) to more abstract questions (e.g., Do you think people take care of themselves?)
- 3) Caregiving in their present context. Following the model above, the questions asked were from their daily experience (e.g., Who do you take care of?) to reflections (e.g., Has the way in which you take care of them changed?)

¹ Majority ethnic group in Senegal and most widely spoken language.

Procedure

The interviews were conducted in Spanish, recorded, and transcribed for later analysis. The transcripts were analysed entirely in Spanish and only the extracts that appear in this paper have been translated. The translation of these excerpts as well as the rest of the article was done by a professional native translator. Before the interview, the participants received a consent sheet informing them of data treatment and any questions were answered. The interviews with Marifaye and Silvia were held at their homes, and the interview with Awa was held at the neighborhood association center near her children's school. This study is part of a research project for a PhD thesis whose design was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Virgen del Rocio Hospital (Seville, Spain) ethics committee.

Analysis

The first step in the analysis was to select extracts from the interviews that covered the caregiving theme, references to support networks, care-related social organizations and institutions. Later, the voices and positions in the extracts were analyzed, adapted to the proposal by Aveling et al. (2014) of three steps that we define below, adding a fourth step:

- 1) Identification of I-positions. We distinguished between *auto-position* (AP) when the narrator positions herself (e. g., "I worked very hard, from 7 A.M to 7 P.M six days per week" Labeled as *AP I-hard worker*), and *hetero-position* (HP) when she positions other persons in the narrative (Lucius-Hoene & Deppermann, 2002) (e.g., "My bother loves to ride bikes, he has a huge collection of mountain bikes" Labeled as *HP Brother-Bike lover*)
- 2) Identification of others' voices. Voices that have an explicit source in the narration (e.g., my mother said...) were identified and other voices that have no explicit source, but a more subtle voice style, were categorized as cultural echoes. These echoes are appropriations of established social discourse, ideas, beliefs and expressions of others, like an unreferenced quote.
- 3) Analysis of how the different voices and positions are related to each other.
- 4) Location/situation of the voices and positions of the participants in different cultural scenarios that appear in their narratives. The cultural scenario is understood as the set of cultural, historical and institutional aspects that make up the context of interaction between individuals and their setting (Wertsch, 1993).

To ensure the credibility of the results, a review group was created in which the authors of this study participated to review the analysis, discussing each step of the complete analysis of the three interviews in detail, increasing the capacity to listen and ensure reflexivity during the analysis (Cornejo et.al, 2017). The validity of the results was tested by using the member checking method, which consists of returning the results of research to the participants for them to validate the findings as true and pertinent (Caretta, 2016). In this case, the summary of the analysis of this study was returned to the participants and readjusted according to their comments, so the final version was validated. The member checking was also carried out in Spanish.

Findings

The findings of the interviews are summarized in the figures below. In each figure, the positions have been coded as AP, for auto-positions and HP for hetero-positions; the voices are coded as V and the cultural echoes as E, followed by a number according to its order of appearance in the interview and a label that summarizes its content.

The participant voices and positions are located in three scenarios. First, *Homeland Scenario*, related to their home culture, the people who live there and their “I” before migration. Second, *Diaspora Scenario*, referring to the description of the diasporic identity proposed by Bathia (2012), linked to the present “I” and others in their diasporic community. Finally *Mainstream Scenario*, linked to the hegemonic culture of the host place and natives that the participants mention in their narratives.

Awa

In the interview with Awa, voices and positions were found that refer to childcare and motherhood. As observed in Figure 1, Awa distinguishes between motherhood in Senegal, in the diaspora and in Spain.

(Insert Figure 1)

Figure 1. Diagram of main I-positions and voices identified in Awa's interview, separated into different scenarios. First, the voices and positions that she places in her culture of origin; followed by those that she places in diasporic life; and lastly that she places in mainstream culture in the host society.

Awa positions herself as an African mother (AP1), who finds herself in a conflict between a community child raising style that she experienced in Senegal, where all adults could participate in educating a child (HP1, everyone in Africa and V1, adult voices), and the more individualistic child raising style found in Spain (V2 Spanish Mother). Her positioning identifies her as a diasporic African mother who does not share the individualistic education style where only the mother or father can correct their children, but who cannot behave as she would in Senegal.

A.1) No, but... in Senegal for example, I... perhaps my neighbour sees my son is doing something. She can tell him something, she can tell him, she must scold him, and reprimand him. I don't get involved, if my son comes and tells me about it, I say "Very good, that's very well done, you were wrong, she corrected you". I don't interfere. And my brother can do it, and my nephew, or anyone who sees a child who does something wrong. You tell him "Look, you shouldn't do this or that, but this is fine" Maybe I can see a child complaining to his mother, and the mother will say "It's none of your business, why are you interfering"? Or something like that, so, in Africa, everybody lets you know.

In addition to community values, in the diaspora, Awa does not have the support networks for raising her children that she would have had in her home country, positioning her as a mother alone (AP3). Awa positions herself as a responsible mother (AP4), which in the diaspora means self-sacrifice, rejecting jobs where she cannot conciliate care of her children. She positions herself as non-racist (AP2), that is, she does not reject close relationships with locals, in spite of cultural differences (HP2).

A.2) No no..., I say, I... I'm not a racist. My daughter for example, I have friends who she can stay with. (..). Because now I can't do much work, I can't do much I'm not

saying that I don't need someone who can help me, if my children want to be with someone I know for a day, to spend the day. Nothing wrong with that. But to let them go there so I can be lazy ...I can't see that happening...

However, there is a latent fear of relating to the local population and to establishing support networks for raising children because she knows of several cases where Senegalese women lost custody of their children. Awa tells the story of someone she knows in this situation, a single mother who left her child in temporary care of a Spanish family while she was working away. She continues positioning herself as a responsible mother, who keeps her children with her (AP4 and AP5), but also criticizes the abuse of power of that Spanish family. Awa positions this family as liars (HP4). First, they did not help her friend, but reported her, and then they told lies to her daughter based on racist stereotypes about what life is like for girls in Senegal. From her point of view, that little girl was not only separated from her mother, but from the whole Senegalese community (HP3).

A.3) Let it be, because I'm sure that child won't want to go to Senegal when she grows up. Because she's been told a lot. That's wrong. I always say, don't leave your child with someone if you love him. (...) And you can't take them with you in the pram when you are selling, running around and all that. That's why I stopped selling, because I say I don't want to take my child with me, because he might see me running from the police. I used to sell, but when my children were born, I said "I'll get rid of this problem."

Figure 1 shows Awa's complicated caregiving situation, in which she has had to face loss of social support networks, imposition of an organizing care system, and the responsibilities that this meant without the support of her extended family. Awa insisted on her positions as a mother alone (AP4), but she does not waver in her responsibilities as a caregiver and mother, but. We interpret this conjunction of I-positions as reflecting an overload of care work. In the Member Checking stage, Awa explained that for her it was not a sacrifice to stop working as a street seller because she had made a decision to have children and knew that they had to be cared for. She even left a job in a restaurant because she could not reconcile it with the care of her first child and did not consider getting another full-time job, despite her low income. What she did consider threatening was that people who supposedly offered their help could try to take custody of her and "put ideas in the child's head."

Marifaye

During Marifaye's interview, two caregiving experiences focusing on the most important voices and positions in her narrative were highlighted. One was a significant event marking a before and after in her life: when Marifaye was fourteen, she dropped out of school and moved in with her older sister to take care of her niece. The other one Marifaye emphasizes was the culture shock of caregiving in Spain, including both generational and interpersonal relations in public spaces.

(Insert Figure 2)

Figure 2. List of main I-positions and voices identified in Marifaye's interview, separated into different scenarios. First, the voices and positions that she places in her culture of origin; followed by those that she places in diasporic life; and lastly that she places in mainstream culture in the host society.

When Marifaye tells her story, she positions herself as a caregiver (AP1), giving importance to the years she spent caring for her niece and helping her sister with housework. In spite of how hard this work was, and the determinant decision to stop studying, she positions herself as independent and as a normal African woman (AP2 and AP3) as a consequence of this decision.

MF.1) I don't "regrete"... I speak French...I have no regrets because I know that it has helped me to be an independent woman, to know how to do many things as an African woman, and as a normal woman. It helped me a lot.

Marifaye continues positioning herself as a caregiver in the diaspora (AP1). However, this positioning is conflictive, because she cannot always find people who allow themselves to be cared for (HP1 and HP2), impeding her from being what she would like to be. She does not find the same reciprocity and interdependence with which she identified herself in her youth in her family in Senegal.

MF.2) Here, I look after anyone who lets me, yes, because there in my country it is a bit different. (...) The customs, they are not the same. For example, here someone may be in need. That happens a lot. Sometimes I get on the bus, I see a person who needs the seat more than me, I get up to give it to her, "No no no" Then that person is not letting you take care of her. Yes, but there are people who do let you take care of them. Here I also take care of people a lot, people who also take care of me a lot.

She keeps talking about the lack of reciprocity in caregiving (E1), which she detects in the locals, impacting on the inattention experienced by the elderly. For example, she talks about how mothers have raised their children (HP3), but those children do not return that care to their mothers when they are old (HP4), something that she thinks is morally wrong.

MF.3): Here? Here, I say no. Because here, with our culture and mindset, they are very different. I don't like what I see of caregiving here, for example .

I: What things don't you like?

MF: Because here... only mothers look after their children here, children don't look after their mothers, and if you don't look after your own mother, you're not going to look after someone else.

Marifaye makes a negative moral assessment in *HP4 Children who do not take care of their mothers* in the *Mainstream Scenario*. This position is in direct conflict with SP4, since it does not obey the E1 mandate on reciprocity of care. This position manifests Marifaye's view that caregiving should be a duty, not as a woman in this case, but as a question that transcends gender, spanning transcendental matters like gratitude for life and care received. The continuity of *AP1 Caregiver* in the *Homeland* and *Diaspora Scenarios* exemplify, on one hand, the strong impact on Marifaye's identity of her experience as a caregiver in her early years, and on the other, her present identity conflict, where she is in contact with people who do not allow her to be who she is, or do not share her values of reciprocity of caregiving. During member checking, Marifaye clarified that the reason that there are people who leave their elders in a residence is not because they want to, but because they do not comply with their duty to care for a person who has contributed to the community and now needs care.

Silvia

Silvia is the participant who had been in Spain for the shortest time, so the I-positions of Silvia mainly correspond to *Homeland* and *Diaspora Scenarios*.

(Insert Figure 3)

Figure 3. List of main I-positions and voices identified in Silvia's interview, separated into different scenarios. First, the voices and positions that she places in her culture of origin; followed by those that she places in diasporic life; and lastly that she places in mainstream culture in the host society.

Silvia positions herself with respect to her experience with motherhood as a mother who forgets about herself (AP2), who has no time to take care of herself, as differentiated from when she had no children in Senegal (AP1). In the extract below, she describes the lack of time for caring for herself as the result of her choice of investing that time in taking care of her child.

S.1) In general, the mother takes care of everyone, but she forgets about herself. Here too. For example, I used to take care of myself a lot. I took time to remove everything from my... (...) skin, and all that, every week and everything, but now I don't have time, with the child and everything, many things, so now I have a... I don't have much time to do that, I don't feel like it either, I prefer to be with my child than ... do anything else.

During the interview, Silvia compares her motherhood experience with her mother's. She positions herself as a 24-hour mother (AP-3), who has to be with her child. In the example above, she mentions her decision to invest time in caring for her child, but she also talks about the care that her child needs, and how, with no other support, it is overburdening. When she describes what motherhood was like in Senegal, she says her mother (HP1), who had cared for nieces and nephews as if they were her own, would also have helped her care for her children (HP2).

S.2) That, that wasn't my responsibility. I wasn't with them 24 hours a day, and I'm always with this child, you see? (...) For her it makes no difference whether it's her nephew or her own child, always. For her... For me, it is not the same, because it is, I am here, they are there, but yes, the child was in the same house as them, at the same time, of course. There is no difference. They are all children in my line, my sisters' children are my children too, that is what they say. For example, they are his cousins, they don't say they are cousins, they say they are brothers, that he is my sister's son and all that, so for me there is no difference.

Silvia, in addition to mentioning the lack of support networks as above, also tells how she coped with this problem. In her case, as a new mother (AP4) and alone (AP5), she found the information on how to care for a baby that she lacked, and would have received from her mother, on the Internet

(AP6).

S.3): (...) the first bath has to be given by me. I didn't know all that, imagine, on my own there, without my mother, without anything, so very hard, eh like me, I use my mobile phone a lot, I look up everything on the internet, how to give the first bath, how to breastfeed, all that, and little by little, it's going along well.

Throughout the interview, Silvia repeats her feeling of loneliness and lack of support, especially because her mother is so far away. When she positions her mother as being a mother to everyone, she is introducing a latent discourse of motherhood as dedication (E1). Such dedicated motherhood would not be as sacrificing as what she is experiencing, because she is alone, and therefore, there is no other choice of caregiver for her child (AP7).

S.4) No, things would be different if it was in my country, I'm not going to be with him 24 hours a day. Of course, my mother could help me in many ways, I would be calmer at night if he punished me, because I could leave them with my mother, but here I can't. Because my mother always takes care of the children. Because my mother always looks after the children, my sister's children, it's my mother who looks after them, she always does, even though she is older, but she likes to look after the children, so if I was there with my child, she would look after him more, of course, that's what she does.

Finally, Silvia positions herself as a Senegalese (AP 8), who like Marifaye, is influenced by the cultural echo of the value of taking care of the elderly members of the family (E2), and she does not understand how Spaniards can leave their family elders in a residence (HP3). The confrontation in this case shows the problems between *Diaspora Scenario* and *Mainstream Scenario*, as in the following example:

S.5) Here, elderly people are in a residence, although there are some who are with their children, but most of them go to... the residence, but I can't understand it. It is not like that in my country, the older ones are always with their family, which is not that easy, but we try.

Like Awa and Marifaye, Silvia positions herself as a Senegalese woman with regard to the current period of their lives away from Senegal versus how they perceive Spanish caregiving practices regarding their children's education or care of the elderly. For Silvia, coping with motherhood in the *Diaspora Scenario* means loneliness, as well as a different way of relating to her child from how she related to her mother, brothers and sisters and cousins, growing up in an extended family. The relationship with her son is much more intense and demanding in Spain than it would be in Senegal.

Discussion

Based on the findings of this study, we elaborate a discussion along two lines of argument. The first focusses on how participants deal with the difficulties they face in relation to care and motherhood. The second discusses how interaction with a culture that the participants see as individualistic affects care and its implications for identity. The discussion ends with a paragraph referencing other studies with similar results.

Diasporic Senegalese Mothers at the crossroads

Regarding the challenges and negotiations with which Senegalese migrant women must cope in caring, the findings highlight: 1) their lack of support networks in caring (mainly in child raising); 2) loss of their perceived social value as adults and as mothers; 3) the difficulty in reconciling time spent at work with time needed for care practices, a situation aggravated by precarious employment characterised by unstable working hours.; and 4) the threat of structural racism present in the protection of minors. Despite these difficulties, diasporic Senegalese women develop resilience strategies, such as

positioning themselves as responsible mothers, maintaining the values of their home culture, and developing new strategies to search for information and support.

Being a mother, identifying oneself as a mother, is not reduced to childbearing or the relationship with one's biological children. Motherhood is also a phenomenon influenced by social and cultural context. Therefore, identifying oneself as a mother in Senegal is different from identifying oneself as a diasporic Senegalese mother. The participants in their homeland context position themselves as mothers, as a figure of authority and of caregiving. Awa positions adults in Senegal as persons with the authority to correct and instruct any child in a public space; Silvia defines her mother as the mother of all her child's cousins; Marifaye describes the moment when she took over care of her niece (as a second mother) as a step toward adulthood. The identities of the participants and of other women in their families are conditioned by whom they are and what they do in an extended-family caregiving network. Diasporic motherhood is identified with the loss of support networks, but also involves a loss of identity and of social status.

Mothers, caregivers, and the elderly are perceived as less valued in the diaspora scenario. It is not the same to be recognized as a mother by children, nieces and nephews and other children in their care, with the status of authority that implies, than just by your biological children. The participants' perception of the externalization of care of the elderly is considered immoral, not complying with the duty of reciprocity of care and devaluing the elderly. In the diaspora, Senegalese women face dual conflicts. One is material, overburdened by caregiving and precarious employment; and the other is symbolic, loss of social recognition of motherhood and the threat of still losing social value in their old age. Colonialism, in addition to exploitation and subjugation of African societies, leads to a loss of social status for women (Oyeronke, 1997). This loss of status is replicated in the diaspora, as a forced change in identity from a maternal identity linked to collective care practices to a maternal identity defined by isolation.

The identity of migrant mothers is modeled by historical and colonial relations, economic inequalities, discrimination and racism between the homeland and the host contexts (Mattar & Pestana, 2015). In Awa's case, the impact of racism on her identity as a mother and her care practices can be observed. She positions herself as a mother alone, something which is not different from other local mothers. Nevertheless, in her case, the attempt to establish new support networks with local people is conditioned by negative experiences in her setting. This means to her a risk of her being considered a poor mother and having custody of her children taken from her. Migrant women are in a vulnerable legal position when fighting for the custody of their children if they are reported. The situation of precarious employment along with racism (Briones-Vozmediano, et.al, 2020) causes mothers to be under threat. Racism and otherness mark the identity of migrant women (Bathia, 2012). In order to analyze this inequalities, intersectional feminism states that there are different causes of oppression that affect multiple identities (Crenshaw, 2017). In the diasporic scenario, Senegalese migrant women undergo oppression as women, as migrants, and as Africans. This intersectional perspective makes visible what cannot be seen when gender and race are conceptualized as separate oppressions (Tamale, 2020).

Challenging the colonial representation of subaltern women, African women design strategies for resisting the oppression they undergo in the diaspora. Awa positions herself as a responsible mother, a resilient position from which she can enunciate her capacity to seek stability in precarious employment and maintain her family. Marifaye reaffirms

herself as a caregiver, despite the opposition from the social setting. Silvia positions herself as an overburdened mother, but at the same time, as a mother with resources for coping with her loss of networks. In all three cases, participant agency is present in identifying themselves as Senegalese in a setting that discriminates and rejects them. Afrofeminist approaches emphasize African women's agency as an active part of their communities and their families (Duru, 2013). The capacity for agency of African women appears as a major factor, as resilience to discrimination and racism in diasporic communities.

Tensions between individualism and interdependence

Identity changes during the interaction with a new culture perceived as more individualistic. Furthermore, the changes that they have undergone in their motherhood experience show a complex juxtaposition of elements that involve both interdependence and autonomy. The findings showed that migrant Senegalese women's construction of the self of migrant Senegalese women in caring includes elements related to interdependence, merging the self with others, but we have also found elements of agency, autonomy, and independence.

Kagitsibaçi (1996) questions the distinction between an independent and an interdependent self where the first implies a preference for autonomy. On one hand, she suggests that psychology is a product of Western origin. As such it reflects the individualist ethos of the Western world, and exports itself to the rest of the world as the ideal model of human behavior. On the other, all societies promote satisfaction of people's needs for relatedness and autonomy to a greater or lesser extent, so that feeling connected to others does not necessarily imply lack of autonomy. Therefore, Kagitsibaçi argues for an autonomous-related self which recognizes and satisfies the needs for relation and autonomy. This model fits in with the positions of Marifaye as caregiver, a position in itself interdependent. Although the act of caregiving cannot be conceived without others, implying that attention is focused on the other, at the same time she positions herself as an independent woman based on her capacity for caring for others. That includes the dimensions of autonomy in the form of self-agency and relatedness at the same time.

The importance of the family caring for its elders as an ethical and moral question has a strong relational character that forms part of the participants' socialization process. However, the definition of the interdependent-self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) does not include the possibility that relatedness and autonomy are both promoted at the same time in one cultural context. The complexity of the relationship between these two dimensions is stronger in the example of Silvia, "The mother who takes care of everyone but forgets herself." The fusion of self with others is evident, but is it an unequivocal indicator of less autonomy attributed to the interdependent-self? From a Western perspective, it probably is. However, recent studies on postcolonial African feminism advocate for the decision of motherhood and reproductive autonomy as a matter that can be understood collectively (Telo, 2020). From this point of view, the answer to this question is not so evident, since the line of what we consider autonomy may be blurred.

The results of this study ratify and enlarge on the results of others on caregiving. For example, a recent study by Olasunkanmi-Alimi, Natalier and Mulholand (2022) argues that everyday racism models the caregiving practices of diasporic African women, in their case, caring for the elderly. This study offers similar findings applied to child raising and

their identity as mother and caregiver. It also shares recent findings that show that the discourses of intensive motherhood harm the wellbeing of mothers and do not serve their relational needs (Enlander et.al, 2022; Budds, 2021; Kestler-Peleg & Lavenda, 2018), contributing a intersectional analysis of motherhood in Western societies.

Among the limitations of this study, we could mention that the participants spoke in a learned language (Spanish), which could involve the loss of nuance in their narratives, and the sample size which does not allow transferability of these results to all Senegalese migrant women. However, the type of analysis (I-positions and voices) in this study did not attempt to produce generalizable knowledge but to offer contextualized knowledge that explains how this reality is perceived from a concrete perspective. The interpretation of the results is conditioned by feminist and postcolonial criticism, although this view provides a particular knowledge that broadens mainstream perspectives.

Conclusions

In conclusion, there are a series of cross-cutting oppressions on who, how, where and in exchange for what care is given, in which gender is a determinant factor, but not exclusively. Migrant women who come from settings with socially and culturally-rooted community support networks have to face both the loss of the support itself and the identity cost of being outside of that network. The challenge this means in facing racism and discrimination determines their caregiving practices and how they define themselves and their motherhood.

Liberal feminism, which focusses on promoting individual changes as a strategy for achieving gender equality, is a major contribution to women's empowerment and freedom. Nevertheless, care as an object of feminist study shows the undeniable interdependence of human beings. This interdependence highlights the limitations and privileges of these perspectives that emphasize individual empowerment. That is, the proposals for individual empowerment of liberal feminism do not include the experiences of women who live on the margins of society at an intersection of oppression. However, there exist other feminist proposals from the margins, such as bell hooks (1984, 2000), who state that the construction of collective support networks can have a major liberating impact on the lives of these women (Green, 2015). The voices of the participants urge to address the issue of care and motherhood from a collective point of view. The current work organization system is a hindrance to the well-being and dignity of caregivers, particularly those in the most vulnerable groups. Consequently, a feminist movement must involve a reexamination of the productive-reproductive work paradigm, incorporating an intersectional approach.

Based on the matters analyzed here, other research questions could be posed such as whether there is a relationship between the trend to institutionalize caregiving and progressive individualization of society; or the role that aunts, daughters-in-law and nieces have in transnational caregiving chains. The knowledge generated in this study may be applied to social interventions for Senegalese migrant women with children in their care, focused on their relational needs. This study warns about the need of intercultural dialogue on different child-raising styles, especially between diasporic communities and child protection services.

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Biographical Note

Cristina del Villar-Toribio is a PhD candidate in Psychology at the University of Seville. She holds a Master's degree in International Migration, Health, and Well-being, a Master's degree in Development Cooperation, and a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. Del Villar-Toribio's research interests include feminist studies, care practices, migrations, qualitative methodologies, and cultural psychology.

Manuel L de la Mata, PhD in psychology, is Full Professor in the Department of Experimental Psychology at the University of Seville and the head of the Laboratorio de Actividad Humana (Laboratory of Human Activity) Research Group. His recent research is centred on the narrative construction of self and autobiographical memory in cultural context, self-identity in migration and gender and culture. Recent publications are about the narrative construction of the self in cultural settings, the relationship between sociocultural factors and autobiographical memories and theoretical and methodological developments on cultural–historical perspectives.

Javier Saavedra is Associate Professor in the Department of Experimental Psychology at the University of Seville and a member of the Human Activity Laboratory Research Group. He is also a collaborating researcher at the Andalusian Foundation for the Social Integration of People with Schizophrenia. His main line of research is the recovery of people with serious mental illnesses. He is interested in care processes in socio-cultural settings, especially in discursive and communicational aspects. He worked for almost a decade providing professional care to mental health patients in residential care homes.

Alicia Español holds a PhD in Psychology and is Assistant Professor in the Department of Experimental Psychology at Universidad de Sevilla. Her research primarily focuses on border experiences in life and examines how those experiences impact identity. Her research also encompasses migration phenomena, and border studies through qualitative methods and from a socio-cultural perspective. Her most recent publications include a co- edition of a special issue on borders in psychology (*Theory & Psychology*, 2021).