Chapter 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION
According to the latest report of the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2018) there were 244 million international migrants in 2015, nearly 100 million more than in 1990. Although migrants only make up 3.3 percent of the global population, the current rate of migration exceeded previous predictions (IOM, 2018; UN, 2017). Seventy-two percent of the international migrants are of working age, which means that there are roughly 150.3 million migrant workers worldwide (excluding undocumented migrant workers). As the IOM report outlines, the main migration destinations are Europe, Asia, and the United States. Although the United States still has the highest number of migrants (46 million), most new migrants (migrating between 2000 and 2015) moved to Germany, making Germany the second most-wanted migration destination with 12 million immigrants.

Migrants have received increased media attention in the last few years. Asylum seekers from Syria coming to Europe and the unfortunate events in the Mediterranean have sensitized people to migrant issues, even people who never cared before. The latest turns in history with the influx of refugees to Europe have undoubtably influenced people’s stereotypes of migrants (positive or negative) and perhaps also created further distance between “them” and “us” in many. As political responses have been diverse, individual perceptions have also differed widely regarding how to receive migrants or even who exactly migrants are.

Based on the features of the sending and receiving countries, the IOM (2013) distinguishes between four migration paths that help to understand certain differences in migrants and migration characteristics. The four paths categorize the sending and receiving countries based on their development (e.g., „North” for developed countries and „South” for underdeveloped countries), which results in different migration patterns (e.g., North-South and South-South). For instance, migration from one European country to another is a typical North-North migration (IOM, 2013). Migrants from the North are more likely to have marketable knowledge or skills, bringing human capital to the host country (IOM, 2013). The willingness to migrate is also highest among people from developed countries to other developed countries. In this type of migration both genders are equally represented. One example of this type of migration, for instance, comes from Hungarian migrants who move to Western Europe. Although the willingness to migrate was low (around 5-6%) in Hungary in the 1990s, by 2012 almost one fifth of the adult population was planning to move abroad for a longer or shorter time (Sik, 2012). The actual migrating tendencies radically grew from 2007 onwards, and Hungarians arrived to EU countries in growing numbers (Gödri, Soltész, & Bodacz-Nagy, 2013). Migrant Hungarians seem to be younger and more educated
than the average Hungarian population, supporting the notion that the probability of migration increases with the level of education (Blaskó, Sik, & Ligeti, 2014). The experiences of such migrants may be profoundly different from that of refugees or domestic workers of South-South migration. These differences in demographic characteristics might contribute to the nature of migrants’ reception in the host country, their opportunities in the foreign labor market, and their overall migrant experience (Hendriks, 2015; IOM, 2013; 2018; Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001).

Clearly, migrants are a diverse group that includes people like the freshly graduated psychology student who wants to pursue a career abroad, the refugee who camps out at the Keleti Railway station in Hungary for months, the corporate expatriate who is sent overseas for work, and the electrician who works abroad and goes back to his family every second weekend. Yet, despite these differences, there is a sequence of challenges that unites these migrants. They all face uncertainty (Brett, 1980), stress (Berry, 1997), identity challenges (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind, & Vedder, 2001; Liebkind, 2006), as well as discrimination and prejudice (Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000a). Although the degree of these challenges differs greatly between different migrant groups—as do their affective, behavioral, and cognitive responses (Ward et al., 2001) to these challenges—they all face the need to adjust to the new country they live in.

**Acculturation**

The process that starts when two individuals or groups of different cultural backgrounds come into contact with each other is often referred to as acculturation (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936; Berry, 1997; Sam & Berry, 2006). Acculturation is most often viewed as a dynamic, reciprocal process between the migrant and host nationals (Berry, 1997; Ozer, 2017), upon which (affective and behavioral) changes will take place in both parties (Sam & Berry, 2006; Trimble, 2003). Acculturation strategies refer to the variations in attitude and behavior that affect how the migrant relates to the host (and home) culture (i.e., assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization) and how the host society relates to the migrant (i.e., melting pot, segregation, multiculturalism, exclusion; see Berry, 1997; Sam & Berry, 2006). This framework of strategies has been widely used in acculturation research, arguably because it allows for the interpretation of the various threats, challenges, and conflicts upon intercultural contact and the degree of migrants’ adjustment. Until recently, acculturation and the cultural adaptation of migrants was mainly viewed from two distinct perspectives: (1) the stress and coping framework of acculturation (i.e., acculturative stress, see Berry, 1970, 1997), which mainly addresses the acculturating individuals’ responses to the
stress and negative experiences arising from intercultural contacts (Kuo, 2014) and (2) the culture learning theory, which emphasizes the role of culture-specific skills in cultural adaptation, namely how migrants learn to negotiate their way in the new context (Kuo, 2014; Ward & Kennedy, 1994; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999).

Generally, scholars with a psychological background are most interested in the intra-individual imprints of migration processes. Psychological acculturation refers to all the changes that happen on the individual level, entailing the migrant’s subjective experiences through involvement and interaction with a new culture (Berry, 1997; Tropp, Erkut, Coll, Alarcon, & Vazquez Garcia, 1999). Research employing the stress and coping perspective on acculturation focused mainly on how such potentially negative experiences as culture shock, stress, anxiety, and perceived discrimination influence adjustment and how the person copes with these challenges (Kuo, Roysircar, & Newby-Clark, 2006; Noh & Kaspar, 2003; Yakushko, 2010). Problems arising from stress and insufficient coping relate to depression and mental health problems (e.g., Castro & Murray, 2010; Noh & Kaspar, 2003). Conversely, successful coping enhances acculturation and, in turn, well-being (Aldwin, 2007; Kuo, Arnold, & Rodriguez-Rubio, 2014; Zheng & Berry, 1991). In contrast, research conducted using the culture learning approach emphasized the importance of the culture-specific skills in acculturation, positing that most cross-cultural problems arise from individuals’ difficulties in managing everyday social interactions (Bochner, 1972; Sam & Berry, 2006; Searle & Ward, 1990). Theories of culture learning (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward et al, 2001) emphasize the importance of the ability to fit in and negotiate effective encounters in a new cultural context (Sam & Berry, 1996). A vast body of research has found that how migrants navigate the host culture can benefit their well-being (e.g., Liebkind & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2000b; Ward & Kennedy, 1994).

Building on the insights from both the stress-coping perspective and the culture-learning approach to acculturation, Searle and Ward (1990) proposed that the measurement of acculturation should focus on psychological as well as sociocultural adaptation. Psychological adaptation should be interpreted in terms of contentment or dissatisfaction with the specific challenges of the relocation experience (see Demes & Geeraert, 2014), whereas sociocultural adaptation should be viewed in terms of how well the migrant manages certain aspects of the host culture (e.g., food and interpersonal communication, Searle & Ward, 1990). In summary, recent acculturation research interprets acculturation as the combination of context-specific psychological and sociocultural adjustment that reflects the changes the individual goes through upon migration.
Interestingly, despite the fact that the migration process is often set in motion when people attempt to maximize their goal potentials, the focus on individual-level goal pursuit in relation to acculturation is largely understudied. Indeed, apart from the stress and coping perspective and the culture learning approach to migration, there might be a third aspect from which we can understand and interpret acculturation, namely the goal pursuit perspective. Migrants (specifically the self-initiated migrants and who are not refugees) often decide to move abroad to maximize their goal potentials. Interestingly, acculturation is very rarely explained from a goal pursuit perspective. Have migrants found what they came for? Have they managed to realize their important goals? If they do, does it mean they feel adjusted and happy and are they then willing to stay in the host country? In 2007, Chirkov, Vansteenkiste, Tao, and Lynch postulated that contemporary motivation theories have not been applied to migration research, and it is time to consider this relevant aspect in relation to cultural adjustment and migration success. The current thesis is an attempt to respond to this call and to investigate the value of applying goal pursuit theories in acculturation research.

**Goal Pursuit and Human Functioning**

Human behavior is purposeful and is regulated by individuals’ goals (Locke & Latham, 1991). People tend to decide on what they want and what is important to them, set goals to obtain it, and act on these goals (Binswanger, 1991; Gollwitzer & Oettingen, 2011; Locke & Latham, 1991). Having meaningful life goals and working towards them is a prerequisite for subjective well-being (Emmons, 1986). On the one hand, setting goals that are personally desired and valued is fundamental for people’s happiness (Diener, 1984), because they give structure to people’s lives and provide a life plan (Chekola, 1974). On the other hand, the attainment of these goals is also crucial for well-being (Brunstein, 1993; Carver & Scheier, 1990; Niemiec, Ryan, & Deci, 2009; Wiese & Freund, 2005). Achieving goals tells people that they are able to overcome obstacles through effort, which in turn enhance well-being (Emmons, 1986; Niemiec et al., 2009). Striving for goals without attaining them is often accompanied by a sense of longing and the feeling that needs are not fully satisfied (Mayser, Scheibe, & Riediger, 2008). Although goal attainment has repeatedly been found to predict well-being (Niemiec et al., 2009), not all goals make a person equally happy. It is particularly the attainment of personal goals (Brunstein, 1993; Emmons, 1986) or self-concordant goals that enhances people’s well-being because these goals express personal interests and values (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999). Working towards important goals maximizes the chance of goal attainment and positively affects well-being: Important goals
motivate the individual to put sustained effort into achievement; the person is likely to engage in freely chosen and meaningful behavior during goal pursuit; and upon attaining important goals he or she feels particularly effective and competent (Sheldon & Elliot, 1999).

However, as Sheldon and Elliot (1999) pointed out, “not all personal goals are personal” (p. 484). Self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000a) posits that only those goals that support our basic inherent and innate needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are beneficial to pursue. In SDT intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are distinct, the first denoting the inherent tendency to seek out novelty and challenges, expanding one’s capacity to learn and explore, and the latter being driven by external rewards (e.g., approval). Kasser & Ryan (1996) operationalized these two types of motivation in two different sets of goals. They distinguished between four intrinsic goals, —relationship, personal growth, community, and health goals—and three extrinsic goals—money, fame, and image—and posited that the pursuit of intrinsic goals makes people happy and shields them from ill-being (Niemiec et al., 2009). Although intrinsic goal pursuit is well established in relation to well-being, there has been very little research interest in how goal pursuit relates to adjustment. Sheldon and Houser-Marko (2001) have pointed to the lack of research on the relationship between adjustment and motivational constructs and applied the notions of SDT to predict university students’ adjustment. The authors showed that self-concordant goals that fulfilled inherent needs predicted students’ adjustment and that these effects were long-standing.

**Aim of the Research and Overview**

The migration process is often set in motion when people attempt to maximize goal potentials. Migration affects a person’s demands, opportunities, resources, and challenges, and it necessitates substantial goal adjustment and the reformulation of aspirations. Whereas some formerly existing goals may need to be put on hold, other goals—goals that may not have been important in the home country—may become urgent (Kruglanski, Shah, Fishbach, Friedman, Chun, & Sleeth-Keppler, 2002) upon migration. I posit that applying a goal pursuit perspective to migration will help us to better understand migrants’ acculturation and well-being.

Important to note is that the present dissertation focuses on the relationship between goal pursuit and acculturation among *self-initiated migrants*, namely those first-generation migrants whose move was voluntary and reversible and who have no predetermined end of stay (Al-Ariss, 2010; Andresen, Bergdolt, Margenfeld, & Dickmann, 2014). Similar to other North-North migrants (see IOM, 2013), these individuals are most likely working-age people who often migrate for
better career and work opportunities and who have obtained a marketable skillset or knowledge that gives them relatively good baseline chances to succeed on their goals. Their opportunities to realize their goals and to acculturate might be profoundly different from, for instance, refugees; therefore, the findings of present dissertation are limited to this more privileged migrant group.

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

Overview of the Dissertation

In addition to the current introductory chapter, the dissertation consists of three empirical chapters and one literature review. Each chapter was written as an individual paper and can be read independently of the others. However, they might show some overlap in theoretical reasoning and methodology. All research reported in the dissertation has been conducted in cooperation with others. For this reason, I will use “we” instead of “I” from this point onwards when explaining the ideas and thoughts that were developed through collaboration with my co-authors.

The common goal of the chapters is to shed light on how goal pursuit relates to acculturation (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) and well-being (Chapter 2, 3, 5). All chapters, with the exception of chapter 5, focus on goal pursuit in the migration context. While goal pursuit, acculturation and well-being (and ill-being) are multifaceted and multi-layered phenomena, in each chapter we chose certain aspects or dimensions of these variables to focus on. In the chapters we specify which particular dimension we tested (e.g., life satisfaction) and how we operationalized it, however, in the discussion sections we refer to the umbrella term (e.g., well-being), rather than on our specific operationalization. In doing so, we hope to make our findings more easily comparable throughout the chapters. In each empirical chapter (Chapters 3, 4, and 5) we approached the relationship between goal importance, goal attainment, acculturation, and well-being from a different perspective. In Chapter 2, we set out to review the available literature on goal pursuit in relation to various indicators of migration success. We aimed to gather evidence for the relevance of goal pursuit in cultural adjustment and well-being.
in a context-specific setting. In Chapter 3, we applied our previously gained information and report on empirical research on goal pursuit and subsequent effects. In two experimental and two field studies we tested the joint effect of goal attainment and goal importance on acculturation and well-being. In Chapter 4, we sought to further understand the dynamics of the goal pursuit process in relation to acculturation in a specific goal domain. In a longitudinal field study with migrants we tested how Time 1 career importance contributes to Time 2 goal attainment and acculturation. In Chapter 5, we tested the joint effect of intrinsic and extrinsic goal importance and goal attainment on well-being among nonmigrant individuals. This chapter aimed to increase theoretical understanding of how goal importance and goal attainment jointly predict well-being. In the next section, we provide a more detailed overview of the chapters in this dissertation.

**Chapter 2.** Chapter 2 is a systematic literature review wherein we analyze the current literature on goal pursuit in the migration context. We set out to gather existing knowledge on goal pursuit in the migration context. Although it has been posited that goal-related processes are relevant to successful migration (see, Chirkov et al., 2007; Zimmermann, Schubert, Bruder, & Hagemeyer, 2017), existing research in the area is scattered and lacks an overarching theoretical framework. We aimed to fill the void by giving an overview of the current state of the field, identifying areas that need further research attention, and recommending alternative methodological approaches for future studies. We systematically reviewed the available literature, including journal articles that included a relevant goal-related construct at the migrant level, took place in a first-generation international migration setting, included an outcome variable at the migrant level (i.e., migrants’ own cognition, emotion, or behavior), and empirically tested hypotheses and assumptions. In this way we selected a final set of 30 articles. We organized the articles according to different goal facets (goal structure, goal process, and goal content; see Austin & Vancouver, 1996) in the different stages of the migration process (pre-migration, during migration, and settlement or repatriation; see Rudmin, 2009). Our discussion focused on the theoretical and methodological implications of our findings.

**Chapter 3.** In Chapter 3, relying on the findings and the theoretical predictions of the previous chapters, we empirically test whether goal pursuit enhances (perceived) acculturation and subsequent well-being of migrants. We were interested in the joint effect of goal attainment and goal importance in the migration context, predicting both acculturation and well-being. We posited that attaining important intrinsic goals enhances acculturation (for instance by enhancing a sense of belonging and social identification with the host society), and well-being,
and shields from depression. We employed a multiple-study multiple-method approach (conducting two experimental studies and two field studies) to test two predictions: (1) the relationship between migrants’ intrinsic goal attainment and well-being (satisfaction with life or depression) is mediated by acculturation, and (2) acculturation is the function of the interaction between intrinsic goal attainment and intrinsic goal importance.

**Chapter 4.** In Chapter 4 we used goal importance to predict acculturation, but rather than concentrating on intrinsic goals, we focused on domain-specific goals, namely career goals. We argued that realizing important career goals and feeling successful in their career supports migrants’ acculturation, perhaps by making them feel valuable to the host society (Wassermann et al., 2017) or by reducing the uncertainty that is strongly tied to the migration experience (Brett, 1980). In addition, we posited that being able to turn career goals into career success takes sufficiently high levels of self-efficacy (e.g., Gutierrez-Dona, Lippke, Renner, Kwon, & Schwarz, 2009; Lippke, Wiedemann, Ziegelmann, Reuter, & Schwartz, 2009). Self-efficacy determines how long a person will sustain effort in the face of difficulties and obstacles and, therefore, increases one’s chances of successful goal pursuit (Bandura & Cervone, 1986; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Self-efficacious migrants may be able to take initiatives, expand their networks, proactively search for better career opportunities, and expose themselves to career challenges despite the heightened difficulties tied to migration (e.g., language and communication challenges or uncertainty about situational requirements). By using a longitudinal survey of Hungarian migrants, we aimed to test: (1) whether self-efficacy moderates the relationship between migrants’ Time 1 career importance and Time 2 career success and (2) whether this relationship has further downstream consequences for migrants’ Time 2 acculturation level. Our results may offer practical implications on how migrants can be supported to feel better acculturated.

**Chapter 5.** In Chapter 5 we aimed to make a theoretical contribution to motivation research by further understanding the dynamics of goal attainment and goal importance in relation to well-being. Unlike in other chapters, we broadened our focus to non-migrant individuals, placing the emphasis on the nature of individual goal pursuit, and not so much on the context of the goal pursuit. Building on the results of previous chapters, we tested whether it is the attainment of the particularly important goals that shields individuals from depression and gives them a sense of satisfaction in life. In addition, while the previous chapters unveiled the beneficial role of self-determined and intrinsic goals, in the present chapter we extended our focus to extrinsic goal pursuit. Previous studies have shown that pursuing
goals can increase people’s well-being and that in order to understand the role of
goals in well-being, it is important to differentiate between the importance and the
attainment of both extrinsic and intrinsic goals (Kasser & Ryan, 1996; Schmuck,
Kasser, & Ryan, 2000). However, the question of how the congruence between
goal importance on the one hand and goal attainment on the other affects well-
being has rarely been addressed. We expected that goal attainment would be a
stronger predictor of well-being than goal importance. We also expected that the
congruence between intrinsic goal attainment and importance would be positively
related to subjective well-being. Previous studies relied on the difference score
to look at the joint effect of goal importance and attainment (Kasser & Ryan,
2001; Sheldon, Ryan, Deci, & Kasser, 2004). Difference scores, however, reduce
two conceptually distinct measures to one single score (Edwards, 1994, 2001,
2002). To overcome this limitation, we employed a more advanced methodological
approach by using polynomial regression surface analysis to test our hypotheses.
The aims of Chapter 5 were (1) to test how the congruence between intrinsic goal
attainment and importance is linked to subjective well-being and (2) to present the
benefits of using polynomial regression analysis to measure the joint effect of two
predictor variables on a third variable.

**General Discussion.** In this section we summarize the main findings of the
previous chapters and discuss how our research adds to a more elaborate theoretical
understanding of the role of goal pursuit in acculturation. In addition, this chapter
presents an overview of the strengths and weaknesses of our research, provides
suggestions for future research, and gives practical implications of the results.