

Discursive Analysis on the Sense of Community of Latin Americans in Malaga
Análisis discursivo sobre el sentido de comunidad de los latinoamericanos en Málaga

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of a qualitative study whose interest lies in understanding how Latin Americans residing in Malaga build their sense of community. To collect information, 23 in-depth interviews were conducted with people from Latin America. Through a detailed analysis of these interviews, three Interpretative Repertoires were identified: *The diffuse limits of the sense of community*, *communities as the backbone of the sense of community*, and *the language of love as a facilitator of the sense of community*. The importance of formal and informal organizations for the development of a sense of local community is highlighted. The *sense of community*, related to the place of residence, is the result of a mental process of overlapping senses of community towards communities, where the *language of love* is the protagonist. A limitation, and the potential of this study, is that the sense of community is the subjective manifestation of the community, so the experiences of each person influence its social construction.

Keywords: 1. immigration, 2. multiple senses of community, 3. discourse analysis, 4. Malaga (Spain), 5. social inclusion.

RESUMEN

Este artículo presenta los resultados de un estudio cualitativo cuyo interés radica en conocer cómo los latinoamericanos residentes en Málaga construyen su sentido de comunidad. Para la recogida de información se realizaron 23 entrevistas en profundidad a personas latinoamericanas. A través de un análisis minucioso de las mismas, se identificaron tres Repertorios Interpretativos: *los límites difusos del sentido de comunidad*, *las comunidades como eje vertebrador del sentido de comunidad* y *el lenguaje del amor como elemento facilitador del sentido de comunidad*. Se pone de relieve la importancia de las organizaciones formales e informales para el desarrollo del sentido de comunidad local. El *sentido de comunidad*, propio del lugar de residencia, es fruto de un proceso mental de solapamiento de los sentidos de comunidad hacia las comunidades, donde el *lenguaje del amor* es protagonista. Una limitación del estudio presentado, y también potencialidad, es que el sentido de comunidad es la manifestación subjetiva de la comunidad, por lo que su construcción social está influenciada por las vivencias de cada persona.

Palabras clave: 1. inmigración, 2. múltiples sentidos de comunidad, 3. análisis del discurso, 4. Málaga (España), 5. inclusión social.

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INTRODUCTION⁶

Due to the special importance that Latin Americans living in Malaga ascribe to the communities - both formal and informal - in which they participate, the need arises to explore how they build their sense of community linked to the place where they develop their lives. Previously, the experience of multiple senses of community and the apparent loss of relevance of the neighborhood concept has been noticed in this collective. The weakening of the traditional sense of community attributed to the neighborhood makes us think about how the construction of the sense of community is evolving among citizens, specifically among immigrants, to facilitate coexistence and integration of the population as a whole in their local area. Hence the interest in developing a qualitative approach focused on the question: Is it possible that the multiple senses of community professed by Latin Americans in Malaga give rise to a sense of community proper to the place where they reside? Attempting to answer the question posed in the research presented in this article, the general goal is to know how people of Latin American origin residing in Malaga build a sense of community typical to the place of residence. Specifically, the elements and relationships that are established between the various communities that help them build it socially are analyzed.

In the words of Montero (2004), elements of mobility, transformation, sense of belonging and social identity stand out in the concept of community. The community, referring to the place where people develop their lives, is the context where its members, through interrelation, and therefore participation, share values, experiences, or symbols that can lead to the development of a sense of commonality (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009).

In the community sphere, what is understood as politics and economics are the fundamental pillars of the reproduction of life, and therefore, of the consolidation of the network of relationships that are generated in said context (Gutiérrez & Salazar, 2015). Political ecology and especially community feminism defend the need to reflect on the links between people, and between them and everything that nurtures and encompasses them, this network of relationships being necessary to guarantee the reproduction of community life (Navarro & Gutiérrez, 2018). Thus, “community feminism (...) rescues the ancestral struggles of great-great-grandmothers (...), and presents itself as the other side of hegemonic feminism, as it does not pose an inter-gender confrontation for individual rights, but rather affirms the being-woman from the community” (Cano, 2017, pp. 59-60).

A construct closely related to the notion of community and community feminism is the sense of community, introduced by Sarason in 1974 (Távora & Cueto, 2015). It is defined

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as the “perception of similarity with others, a conscious interdependence with others, a willingness to maintain this interdependence by giving or doing to others what is expected of them [and] the feeling of being part of a larger and firm structure on which one depends” (Sarason, 1974, p. 157). According to Navarro & Gutiérrez (2018), this community interdependence is materialized in a set of activities and synergies, in contexts where people interdepend on each other to move forward with our lives. McMillan & Chavis (1986) presented the most widely accepted model of community sense to date, consisting of a multidimensional structure: membership, shared emotional connection, influence and integration, and satisfaction of needs. Community and the social construction of a sense of community are two elements with a great capacity to explore the quality of life and social inclusion of immigrants. Through a sense of community, people can consolidate their identity in the context in which their lives unfold. This fact is based on belonging to a common space of coexistence and linked to the processes of social integration, which can lead to an awareness of collective solidarity (Gualda, 2011).

Migration and adaptation to a new country involve a process of building a sense of community in an unknown context. People of Latin American origin feel closely linked to their community of origin, highlighting the interactions that occur between the social practices developed in the destination and their efforts to maintain their presence in the home community (Suárez, 2010). The sense of community symbolizes par excellence the subjective manifestation of the community, in a historical era in which, despite continuing to be an important element, the influence of territory is being relativized due to technological development and a variety of social changes (Ante Lezma & Reyes Lagunes, 2016).

Recently, the conceptualization of a multiple sense of community has been consolidated, understood as the social phenomenon in which people experience belonging to different communities and their own experience of their respective senses of community simultaneously (Mannarini & Rochira, 2014). In the field of migration, few studies analyze the interconnections between community constructions, the multiple senses of community, and the development of a sense of attachment connected to different communities (Brodsky & Marx, 2001). Wiesenfeld (1996) pointed out that local communities arise from the multiple personal identities of their members, where the interaction of individuals can lead to the social construction of a community. Through a dialectical process between the individual, sub-community, community, and social levels, the construction of “we” is created. This dimension, called macro-belonging, coexists with micro-belongings, the latter related to multiple collective identities and are based on diversity and privacy. People do not live in a single community but in a set of nested, and therefore interconnected communities in which specific needs are satisfied and that can coexist within a territorial community.

The notion of multiple sense of community contributes positively to the study of the process of immigrant social inclusion, by capturing the simultaneous orientations of individuals towards various communities and the consequent development of a compound

sense of attachment towards them (Mannarini & Rochira, 2014). Simultaneously, the multiple senses of belonging interact with each other to different levels of intensity and overlap and can influence people at the individual, organizational, and community level by, for example, reinforcing the collective identity in the place where they develop their lives (Ramos-Vidal, 2014).

Transnationalism and multiculturalism are two essential elements if one is to understand contemporary migration and the development of multiple senses of community in an increasingly multicultural and technological society, where very diverse religions, traditions, and social relations coexist and revalue the recognition of cultural identity (Rodríguez, 2011). Transnationalism understood as the sustained and dynamic interconnection between the origin and migrant-receiving societies are not incompatible with adequate social integration in the society of destination (Portes, 2005). The transnational perspective supports that immigrants do not break their ties with the society of origin. Thus, “These practices contribute to developing what has been called ‘transnational communities’ (...), or new types of social formations within a ‘transnational social space’ (...)” (Parella, 2007, p. 154).

It was “shown that migrants are inserted in networks that extend across multiple states and that the identities, as well as the cultural production of migrants, reflect their multiple locations” (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004, p. 64). Members of transnational communities, and the organizational forms of these collectivities, stand out for their capacity for resistance and opposition to the State and the hegemonic forces of the economic system, which makes it so that conceiving the transnational character of migration implies assuming that migrants and communities acquire the skills necessary to face the social risks, costs, and conditions of migration societies (Canales & Zlotniski, 2001). The possibilities that technologically-mediated communication provide for maintaining contact with friends and family represent a breakdown of the space-time limit; at the same time, it provides important support for community connection and, therefore, for building a sense of community for immigrants in the host society (Li, Hodgetts, & Sonn, 2014; Martínez, Peñaranda-Cólera, Vítóres, & Íñiguez-Rueda, 2011).

The organizational capacity and relevance of women in coping with and satisfying community needs, and therefore in developing a sense of community, should not be overlooked, as it sometimes even destabilizes the previous gender order through mobilization of new synergies and resistance linked to coping with trauma or participation in social life (Fernández, Waldmüller, & Vega, 2020). In this way, “In community networks whose activities are focused on guaranteeing the satisfaction of (...) needs (...), power relations are eminently fluid and derive from agreements” (Gutiérrez & Salazar, 2015, p.38).

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative method of a phenomenological nature is proposed that makes it possible to know the meaning that phenomena acquire in the social and cultural contexts they emerge from. Thus, a deep understanding is provided about what people of Latin American origin living in Malaga understand as and how they socially build their sense of community. The work material employed is not only made up of documentary reviews, but also the products of work or discussion whose literal transcription generates a text to analyze within a specific social setting (Cubells, Calsamiglia, & Albertín, 2010). These materials have been analyzed from a social constructionist approach (Ibáñez, 1994), aiming at detecting which are the subject matters that the participants make use of in order to talk about the socio-cultural meanings that relate to their own sense of community. The gender approach has also been taken into account in the analysis, as it is deemed that the sense of community in contemporary Malaga society can be better understood this way (Taylor & Bogdan, 1990).

A qualitative method of psychosocial orientation was employed; specifically, discourse analysis (DA) after Potter and Wetherell (1987). The analytical tool of the interpretive repertoires (IR) has been made use of.

PARTICIPANTS

This study is part of longitudinal research on the social inclusion of people of Latin American origin in Malaga. From the initial sample of 40 people, a total of 23 participants were selected as key informants in the process of construction of the object of this study. In line with Glaser and Strauss (1967), in this study, the concept of a statistically representative sample disappears in favor of a progressive construction of the same. The final selection process of the participants was carried out Ad Hoc and intentionally. This process ended once the informants no longer contributed anything different in the interviews (Bolseguí & Fuguet, 2006). The sample was intended to be varied in terms of the place of origin, the time of residence in Malaga, and the age of the participants. In addition, an attempt was made to link both genders in the study to identify interests, roles and understand the social relationships between the different participants (Taylor & Bogdan, 1990). Men and women between the ages of 23 and 45 years were selected from Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, Cuba, Chile, and Paraguay, who at the time of meeting them had been residing in the province of Malaga for at least two years.

The selected sample includes characteristics of homogeneity, but also heterogeneous factors. Regarding homogeneity, it was considered that the participants were of Latin American origin and Spanish-speaking; also, familiarity with the social environment in terms of a minimum interaction of 24 months. Following after Gouin, Zhou, and Fitzpatrick (2015), people who had been living in Malaga for at least two years were selected, on the grounds that the initial experiences for immigrants, especially during their first year, are

characterized by high adaptation difficulties both in psychological and sociocultural terms. The time spent in the host country provides meaning to life experiences and positively influences the adaptation of immigrants (Millán-Franco, Gómez-Jacinto, Hombrados-Mendieta, González-Castro, & García-Cid, 2019).

The heterogeneity criterion shows the diversity of the participants themselves. Therefore, heterogeneity was presented as a function of sociodemographic characteristics (sex, age, marital status, and country of origin). No age limits were established regarding these data, but all participants were older than 23 years. Also, participation was not restricted based on marital status, academic training, employment status, or having a residence permit.

Inclusion criteria are the following: residing in Malaga, being a Latin American immigrant, and being of working age. In addition, accepting participation in the study that supports this article was required by means of informed consent. The consent document explained the object of the study and the research procedure. Participants were informed that they had the right to refuse participation or withdraw from it at any time. The exclusion criteria focused on non-compliance with these last requirements. Table 1 shows the characteristics in terms of age, sex, place of origin, and time of residence in Malaga of each of the participants.

Table 1. Characteristics of the Participants

Age in years	Sex	Country of origin	Time of residence
31	Female	Cuba	4 years
40	Female	Argentina	17 years and 2 months
38	Female	Colombia	2 years and 7 months
25	Male	Argentina	15 years and 1 month
25	Female	Argentina	15 years
26	Male	Bolivia	5 years
44	Male	Colombia	15 years and 5 months
35	Female	Colombia	3 years and 3 months
44	Female	Colombia	18 years and 5 months
26	Male	Argentina	14 years
41	Male	Argentina	14 years and 2 months
45	Male	Venezuela	11 years
35	Female	México	12 years
31	Male	México	4 years and 6 months
45	Female	Paraguay	12 years

29	Female	Paraguay	2 years and 5 months
32	Male	Colombia	2 years and 6 months
45	Female	Chile	10 years
34	Male	Colombia	5 years
44	Female	Venezuela	3 years
32	Male	Venezuela	3 years
40	Female	Argentina	28 years
23	Female	Paraguay	2 years and 1 month

Source: Own elaboration based on the information obtained from the interviews carried out with the participants.

Recruitment Procedures

Initially, the snowball sample was employed to recruit the 40 participants with whom the research began. Thereafter, 23 people participated in this study. Informal procedures were used to contact these participants via telephone and virtual social networks.

Information Gathering

The semi-structured interview and the procedure guide used were developed by the researchers based on a review of related studies and instruments that were used in previous research projects. The interview script consisted of 17 questions that made up four differential blocks. The first of them addressed questions related to the theoretical construction of McMillan and Chavis (1986) on the sense of community. The second block was completed with questions aimed at determining the multiple senses of community with which the participants felt identified, as well as the interactions that occurred between them. The third block aimed to know the specific communities with which the participants established emotional ties. Finally, the fourth block sought to analyze the influence of new information and communication technologies in shaping the sense of community.

All interviews were carried out in the province of Malaga, in a comfortable environment (coffee shops, parks, and such) to facilitate the participation of the interviewees. These interviews were carried out during August and September of 2018; their duration ranged from 51 to 66 minutes. In each of the interviews, the researchers began by explaining confidentiality matters, and the goals and benefits of the study. They were informed that they had the right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the research at any time. Authorized interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis process has been divided into two phases: the textual phase and the conceptual phase. The textual phase began once the interviews were transcribed. From that moment on, the task consisted in identifying the textual excerpts that fulfilled the two requirements that Íñiguez and Antaki (1998) assign to discourse in order to differentiate it from any other type of text: that through the excerpt it is possible to interpret what the participants say, and that said textual excerpt suffices to describe and explain the reality of the participants themselves. Once this task was completed, the discourse analysis began.

Thus, the conceptual phase followed. Here the information was unified into groups that contained the same meanings to encode them and obtain our basic unit of analysis: the interpretive repertoire. Indeed, this analysis process was carried out by identifying a series of discursive strategies on which the speakers are constructing the discourse regarding the multiple senses of community.

This phase of the analysis involved a series of meetings for the researchers to make decisions about the texts and find out where to place them in terms of their function. The work team analyzed the information separately and together, from the obtainment of the first fragments and throughout the information production process, enriching its treatment and validity (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The discursive strategies resulting from this were modified over and over again, until in a consensual way a structure was achieved able to explain the object of study. Establishing relationships between codes to identify the set of strategies led to the formation of the IR. Generally speaking, repertoires are the discursive frameworks in which the participants base the rhetoric of their communication (Domínguez & Montalbán, 2017). The study relied on the software ATLAS.TI (version 8) to carry out this analysis.

RESULTS

This section presents the representations that the participants have built around their multiple senses of community and the relationships established between them. It is through these relationships that the interviewees explain and experience their feelings about the communities to which they belong. Three interpretive repertoires have been identified: the diffuse limits of the sense of community, communities as the backbone of the sense of community, and the language of love as a factor that facilitates the sense of community. These repertoires are closely related and have been used as analysis tools to explain how Latin American people living in Malaga build a sense of community typical to the place of residence.

The Diffuse Limits of the Sense of Community

This repertoire illustrates the evolution of the conceptualization of the sense of community towards a relational phenomenon, rather than a territorial one. In other words, the traditionalist discourse that understands the sense of community and the community itself as a shared geographic area gives way to a new way of constructing this sense, in which the bonds of trust, solidarity, and reciprocity take on a special role for the interviewees. The following lines of argument show how the interviewees view the commitment acquired in social relationships as a fundamental pillar on which what they describe as their feeling towards one or more communities is based:

If you are not supportive, if you decide not to help, if you decide not to share, if you decide not to be respectful, ... it is hard to create a community (Marina, personal communication, August 12, 2018).

...keeping up with reciprocity I would say, to keep it, that is, at the beginning and throughout, a constant flow of actions, conversations, sharing feelings. That must be reciprocal... that is how I believe a sense of community can be maintained (Maximiliano, personal communication, August 12, 2018).

...being committed to go and help when we get together, helping in events and so on, that are organized as an association, I do that, and that is the sense or the feeling of community, of participation, of putting your time, deciding to help, to commit and so on... (Graciela, personal communication, September 8, 2018).

It was noted that the participants do not mention the identification of the population with a specific geographical limit. However, interviewees do highlight the similarity to the culture of origin and friendship as new alternatives on which the feeling of belonging to one or more places is founded. These facts are confirmed in the following extracts:

...but I mean my favorite place not so much for people in general, but for Spanish people. Eh... I was raised in Fuengirola, but if I were to be part of a strong community and were to say, "I am Spaniard." Extremadura reveals me, makes me be myself, reminds me of Argentina (Paula, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

I have been so far as to Algeciras because one of my connections has been other Latinos —Mexicans for example—, but they have had children here now. I am about to leave for Cadiz, almost, but I have also been all the way to Ceuta. And now I also have friends in Ceuta, Mexican friends, hehehe, that I met due to courses or churches or associations. So, you develop connections and now I feel that I belong to the entire Eurafrica ... (Roberto, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

The traditional notions of the sense of community do not seem to be consistent with the perceptions of the interviewees and their ways of relating to others in Malaga. It has been shown how Latin Americans build a community from a very personal vision, encompassing very diverse and particular mental and territorial conceptions (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009). Thus, the following fragment confirms that the subjective manifestation on the

conceptualization of community is based mainly on the feelings of the person involved, considered as an element of a personal nature:

... I started in Fuengirola and then went over to Mijas Pueblo, and now I am extending over to Malaga. I attended events with travelers, to open my mind and then be able to extend over... to other places. Then I stayed in Marbella for a year, I have been supporting these matters for two years, associations, churches... for me it's all about the need to help and share at the same time... these small things make me feel boquera (local to Malaga) (María Fernanda, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

Conversely, it has been observed that the community, and therefore the feeling of community, is not only defined through the subjective configurations of the people but is also oriented towards the search for the individual good within a common good. As detailed in the following line of argument, the community becomes an ethical frame of reference to make an adequate assessment of oneself and the people who make up said community:

...acceptance, also from my side, I have to accept that I am here, I mean, it's not only that I want groups to accept me, no, also accepting myself and seeing what can I do, what can I offer, right, being accepted is one thing, and another is what kind of fruit I'm giving once I'm well-received, I mean... people are now at least giving the chance, so now it is what can I give, what do you need, what can I offer you... (Carlos Eduardo, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

Communities as the Backbone of the Sense of Community

According to Royal and Rossi (1996), and linked to the previous repertoire, the relational component of the sense of community seems to have gained importance in recent times. It is evident that the feeling of belonging and the opportunities to interact with others is achieved by actively participating in relational communities. That is, in various formal and informal groups. The following quote reflects this: "I am in all kinds of groups, people from Spain, I know some people from Argentina, eh... I am in groups from work, they are communities, they are friends, but they are... I mean to say, they are communities" (Clarisa, personal communication, August 12, 2018).

The interviewees do not feel rooted in the neighborhood, nor close to their neighbors. Some of the participants follow these lines or argument: "I have no contact with people from my neighborhood, but it's for no particular reason or anything bad ..." (Alex, personal communication, September 3, 2018); "There is no way I can connect with my neighbors, lifestyle has a lot to do with it, the rhythm of our lives, work, the everyday lives of both them and me. We all mind our own business and that is what matters, it's an independent society" (Yanet, personal communication, August 12, 2018).

As indicated in the following testimonies, interviewees establish new forms of social participation centered on spontaneous and informal self-help groups, non-governmental organizations, and semi-virtual communities:

...I volunteer for the association Malaga Acoge. I'm a volunteer for about two years now and I help people who don't have an e-mail, too, I help them look for a job. It's a great satisfaction, I feel welcomed and supported (Karen, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

It is because of the church that I knew about the Adintre association. The person running the church knows the person running this association. This person was looking for someone to manage their social media and so on, and I know how to do that and I like that field, so I offered myself and told this person that I would help with what I could. I'm organizing myself and my time based on that (Vanessa, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

...the situation with AMPA was that my mother and I used to attend the meetings and in one of them they asked if anyone wanted to volunteer. It was also a chance to know another area, not only the church and so on, but also other types of people, and assimilating better myself, and it helped me a lot, truth be told ... (Liz, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

Public spaces, and especially the public and private resources provided by the church, the *Asociaciones de Madres y Padres de Alumnos* (AMPAs - Associations of Mothers and Fathers of Students), the *Asociación Adintre* (Andalucía Integra - Adintre Association, Comprehensive Andalucía), the *Asociación Málaga Acoge* (Málaga Welcomes Association), among others, have proven to be key for the social construction of their sense of community. These formal and informal organizations are considered the backbone of this sense of community since they facilitate and promote effective participation and integration in the place of coexistence. In fact, participants explain that: "community means participating wherever I can, and helping, in my free time, as I'm doing now for example, in the associations, eh..." (Daniela, personal communication, August 12, 2018).

...for example, I'm currently supporting the AMPA. I mean, if the group's leader needs someone to help, I try to make things easier. Some of the professors also approach me often, asking me to elaborate some sort of report on my thoughts about my participation in, for example, the talent show. Thanks to that the relationship grows stronger and I assimilate better (Liz, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

Community feminism is noticeable in the AMPAs, which are for the greater part led and supported by women, although with the active participation of some men, evidencing their special organizational capacity and relevance in mobilizing resistance and facing community needs. In the development of activities that aim to satisfy community needs, in this case the education and schooling of minors, it can be noticed how power relations are fluid and based on agreements.

Consequently, it has been observed that the form of participation of Latin Americans is directed at communities that somehow demand less commitment, and therefore, somehow promote individualistic attitudes. But at the same time, it highlights the existence of reciprocal altruism among the members that make it up. In the quote below, one participant explains how they can offer different types of aids or benefits to others at a moderate cost effort to themselves:

...I offered to volunteer in managing and supporting an association that runs a food bank, so I met a lot of people there, but really a lot, Spaniards, Moroccan, ...so I started making connections there in the events, with churches... and then, well now I'm helping the orphanage... I like what I do, being able to help... (Valentina, personal communication, August 12, 2018).

Fundamentally, these are communities characterized by certain social practices according to their interests and tastes. Generally, it can be seen that these organizations are based on a system of values and customs that, since their inception, have been associated with the traditional roles of women. In this way, communities develop under a social, and also cultural, construction, in which the roles of the participants, their expectations, social frameworks, and forms of sociability make up a network of constituent elements of certain behavior patterns that can be linked to gender. Thus, the participating women mainly perform functions related to help, care, and volunteering.

In fact, the following excerpt shows how what can be termed reciprocal altruism gives way to what some of the male participants recognize as a way of taking advantage of the other:

Uhm... it's hard because, of course, with every group, they can be reciprocal or rather take advantage, then it goes, eh..., I have this group of friends from Mijas Pueblo who... with the passing time we also became friends and so, but what happened is that this girl and her friends, sure, it turned out that I became as a sort of drug for their symptoms, acetaminophen for their problems, of her and her friends. So, in the long run, I don't see reciprocity, no... (Marco, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

Also due to the possibilities currently offered by new information and communications technologies (ICTs), informal communities of a semi-virtual nature are emerging. These communities are so named because they are established on a physical basis, but at the same time they rely on ICTs to maintain and strengthen contact in the community:

...for example, you can find my event on Facebook, it shows as "X," that's the name of the group, so I put there that it's for networking, friendship, tabletop games... eh, Facebook, eh, there's also WhatsApp groups where people sometimes don't know each other, I ask for permission... (Roberto, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

Therefore, ICTs are considered an alternative way to build a new concept of the sense of community, as they can redefine the physical space of traditional communities, such as the church and the previously mentioned associations (Málaga Acoge and Asociación Adintre), to include the cybernetic space. As detailed by the interviewees, these communities can be found all over different virtual networks such as Internet forums, WhatsApp groups, and blogs: “We have a WhatsApp group, we have a Facebook group, and a Discord group [chat], we even share a blog” (Julio César, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

As outlined in the following quotes, online social networks, and communication tools such as WhatsApp arise as new environments that enrich social relationships: “For example, my birthday party, well I invited everyone, made it public, well almost viral, hehehe, I mean, I announce it via Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp...” (Graciela, personal communication, September 8, 2018). Thus, cyberspace is positioned as a new public space for the development of local identity:

...what I do, for example, I ask, are you interested in a WhatsApp group where we plan meeting at cafes? It's to make friends, doesn't matter if you're, I mean if you come with your wife. The point is meeting other people, from other cultures, whatever else, and sharing (María Isabela, personal communication, August 12, 2018).

Generally, participants use these social networks not only to stay connected with these communities but also to communicate with their family and friends in their country of origin. The following is an example of this:

I have been in situations like that with mixed feelings, between wanting to go back to my country [and not doing so], but well. The conversations, video calls with my family, my mother comforts me. I think the support from my family and friends greatly improve my emotional situation (Diego, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

According to Li, Hodgetts, and Sonn (2014), this fact fosters among the participants the phenomenon of transnationalism, and therefore the construction of multiple identities and belongings. Likewise, within semi-virtual communities, the interviewees resort to the discursive strategies of the feeling of belonging, and mutual exchange, support, respect, and commitment as a way to sustain those identities and belongings:

I think Facebook, Instagram, help you relate with people and have managed to connect a lot. In these social network communities respect is very important, also being very open, committed, hehehe, because respect is essential, and availability... (Blas, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

In this way, understanding the transnational nature of migration implies assuming that these migrants stand out for their ability to resist and face the social risks of migration societies (Canales & Zlolniski, 2001).

The Language of Love as a Factor that Facilitates the Sense of Community

This repertoire is named thus due to the fact that in the discourses of the participants it can be noticed that love, affection, and daily life are categories or pillars that act as an element of cohesion in the communities, helping to contribute to a sense of community of their own. And so, through the discourse of the interviewees, this sense of own and characteristic community can be understood as the result of the processing of the emotional experience of each person regarding the social relationships that they keep every day: “You need that physical contact, visual contact, you need quality time, acts of service, gifts, those are languages of love, basic things that we humans need...” (Roberto, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

Uhm..., pfff, you could say it's love, how close I feel to these people, because I feel the people here, no? I mean, eh..., knowing all the traditions, how they behave, how they are, how I am to them, eh..., several things, uhm, that make me feel that I'm inside... that I belong... (Marco, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

In the very discourse of the speakers, it becomes evident how everyday life is associated with notions of love, feeling and participation, which can be understood as the unifying elements of the sense of community proper to the place of residence: “Everyday things, common things, that is what makes me feel that I belong here...” (Carolina, personal communication, September 15, 2018). “Everyday life, eh... and opening up, you know, opening your heart and saying... uhm... saying I feel Malagueño, well... it's everyday things, common things, that is what makes me identify as Spaniard...” (V́ctor Hugo, personal communication, August 10, 2018).

Everyday experiences are considered a protective factor that promotes social well-being, which increases the sense of security, belonging, emotional stability, cohesion, and the satisfaction of social needs. These strategies are the main support of this repertoire and are constituted and at the same time developed in the communities already mentioned in the previous interpretive repertoire (AMPAs, Málaga Acoge & Asociación Adintre).

In this repertoire, a series of discursive strategies related to the construct of the sense of community gain relevance, with an important implicit emotional component. Thus, interviewees resort to the rhetorical strategy of adoptive families or brotherhood to categorize the emotional relationships they establish with the people around them. This idea as the main component of rooting in the place of residence is evident in the discourse of the participants: “I lived with a grandmother with whom I was not biologically related but adopted me, eh, from Estepa, but in Marbella for 40 years now. So, for me she's my grandmother now, you know, just as I have my adoptive grandmothers, I mean, mothers, I have a lot of Spanish mothers, fathers...” (Roberto, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

For me it is family, for my that's important, the center of it all is the family, I mean, being able to say, look, I have a father, a mother, eh... brothers, sisters, cousins, and

then I start adopting, you know, as if, hehehe, I start adopting wherever I arrive at and... for me it's easier. In every country where I have been, I have made another family, I'm still in contact with them till now, so, eh, to me that is belonging... (Sebastián, personal communication, August 12, 2018).

For me belonging to Fuengirola is a feeling of immediate fraternity, eh... it's meeting a friend, the friend of a friend as if you were friends your entire lives; this sort of immediate fraternity, eh... it makes me feel like that's where I'm from, that I'm Spaniard (Marco, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

An element closely related to the construction of an adoptive family in the host location is that of the multiculturalism that characterizes Malaga. As the testimonies of the participants indicate, it is their relationship with people from different places that finally makes them feel part of the place where they live:

It all started because I began to connect with people, first because I offered to volunteer to run an association; then I met a lot of people there, but really a lot of people, Spaniards, Moroccan, African, I mean Nigerian, all kinds. Then I began to connect in their events as well, churches, parties with the Nigerian and then, well, now I'm helping the orphanage we have in Nigeria, sure, and now with the Moroccan... I try to connect with all subcultures or the other cultures that arrive while I'm there... (Roberto, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

In the following lines of argument, it is evidenced that the coexistence of Latin Americans with people belonging to different contexts converges in a sense of familiarity that they understand as a key element for the development of a feeling of community towards the place where they develop their lives (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009; Távora & Cueto, 2015). From this perspective, the sense of community towards the place where they develop their lives could be understood as transnational, not linked to a specific context, since the support of family and friends regardless of their location favors their integration in Malaga. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

It is at my job where I meet different kinds, all kinds of people, people from abroad who come, let's say, from Scandinavia, Great Britain, everywhere, I know people from those places. Also, in the church that I attend, I get to know other kinds of people, ah, also where I study, different kinds of people, they make up the community where I begin to socialize, familiarize, and communicate with them, knowing a little more (Julio César, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

References in this repertoire to stability and permanence over time in these communities and to obtaining full citizenship are two elements that in the interviews are related to the fact of providing greater security and social inclusion in the place of residence:

I find myself feeling different from how I felt when I got here, even from the first months, or the first year here... particularly when it comes to integrating into different communities, talking to them, communicating. These communities opened their doors wide for me as if I were here for millions of years.

This helped me to feel a little more, to have that identity emotionally speaking, but sure, you also have basic needs such as a job so you don't have to depend on others all the time. Can you see? So, that way, with a job, I think I could cover the legal side of it, which is obviously necessary (Liz, personal communication, September 3, 2018).

As has been seen, the participants resort to discursive strategies linked to the feelings of love and affection, such as the feelings that take hold in communities over time and that help them to gain a certain degree of self-confidence and, therefore, provide them with security in the place of residence. The discursive references aimed at protection, respect, dependency, and the satisfaction of needs enable them to participate in Malaga society. This series of strategies help them achieve a certain balance between their autonomy and a connection to where they live. Therefore, the participants consider them the essential factors allowing them to maintain a sense of commonality in the place of residence.

CLOSING REMARKS

This article has aimed to show the contents, positions, and relationships that convey the discursive production on the social construction of a sense of community proper to the place of residence. Three interpretive repertoires have been identified: the diffuse limits of the sense of community, communities as the backbone of the sense of community, and the language of love as a factor that facilitates the sense of community. These repertoires are linked and explain how people of Latin American origin living in Malaga build “their” sense of local community.

The evolution of the sense of community towards a relational phenomenon has been evidenced, noting that the various lifestyles within the collective enable the sense of community to develop, even if a common territory is not shared (Maya-Jariego, 2004). For Latin Americans, the place of residence is losing relevance as a relational context, this is reflected in their lack of rooting in neighborhoods. The links to other people, established through memberships in formal and informal organizations, are providing them more and more the social support, trust, sense of belonging, and reciprocal commitment that they once obtained from family and neighbors (Royal & Rossi, 1996). Active participation in relational communities, specifically in various formal and informal groups, is key to experiencing these elements that contribute to building a sense of community in one or more communities (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009).

These new forms of participation focus on informal and spontaneous self-help groups, non-governmental organizations, and what has been defined as semi-virtual communities. Participants highlighted how cultural closeness, and especially friendship, constitute new alternatives on which the feeling of belonging to one or multiple locations is founded (Briones, Verkuyten, Cosano, & Tabernero, 2012).

People of Latin American origin residing in the province of Malaga build a community from a very personal and subjective vision, encompassing very diverse and particular mental and territorial conceptions, where feelings are a transcendental element of conceptualization (Ante Lezma & Reyes Lagunes, 2016; Mannarini & Fedi, 2009). There has been a redefinition of the importance of the territorial component for the social construction of the sense of community. It has been confirmed how the public spaces and the public and private resources that the church and the associations or AMPAs provide constitute themselves into spaces for coexistence. This fact makes the person-environment relationship relevant for the social construction of “their” sense of community (Berroeta, Ramoneda, Rodríguez, Di Masso, & Vidal, 2015).

Community feminism has become evident, especially in the AMPAs, demonstrating the organizational capacity and relevance of women to mobilize resistance and face community needs (Fernández, Waldmüller, & Vega 2020). In addition, these organizations are based on a system of values and customs that reproduces the traditional roles of women.

Over time, people of Latin American origin adapt to the lifestyle in Malaga, where they become more individualistic in their relationship with the neighborhood (Uña, Clemente, Espinosa, & Fernández, 2009). When it comes to forms of participation, although reciprocal altruism is appreciated, they are mostly focused on communities that require less commitment and may conceal individualistic attitudes. Currently, the sense of community of people of Latin American origin residing in Malaga is based more on shared interests than on physical closeness (Maya-Jariego & Armitage, 2007). A transformation of community participation is evident in the collective, which explains their participation in religious centers or associations rather than in the neighborhood.

Due to the development of ICTs, migration no longer implies the absolute loss of connection with the country of origin (Peng, 2016). In the Latin American community in Malaga, one can speak of the birth of informal communities of a semi-virtual nature. These communities have been formed in an offline context, yet they still rely heavily on ICTs to maintain and strengthen themselves. Online social networks and technology can redefine the physical space of traditional communities using the cybernetic world, enriching social relationships, and therefore are transcendental support for the construction of a sense of community and the integration of immigrants in the context where they are welcomed (Li, Hodgetts, & Sonn, 2014; Martínez et al., 2011; Vancea & Boso, 2014).

ICTs improve the fluidity of contact with both the society of origin and that of destination, making it possible to break the human space-time limit and positioning cyberspace as a new public space wherein to develop local identity (Melella, 2013). Technological development encourages transnationalism and the construction of multiple identities and belongings among immigrants (Li, Hodgetts, & Sonn, 2014). It is quite telling that in the context of semi-virtual communities the discursive strategies of the feeling of belonging, and mutual

exchange, support, respect, and commitment are resorted to as a way to sustain those identities and belongings. These elements largely reflect the traditional components of the sense of community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986), demonstrating that semi-virtual communities can also be the basis for building a sense of community. Also, understanding the transnational nature of migration implies acknowledging that these migrants stand out for their ability to resist and face the social risks of migration societies (Canales & Zolniski, 2001). The sense of community towards the place where people of Latin American origin living in Malaga develop their lives could be understood as somehow transnational, in as much as it is not linked to a specific context, and because the support of family and friends regardless of their location favors their integration in Malaga.

Both everyday situations and feelings of love and affection towards other people are discursive categories employed by speakers that, in a certain way, contribute to the development of a sense of community typical to the place of residence.

The emotional component acts as social glue between the multiple senses of belonging that people experience simultaneously. These, through mutual interaction, can reinforce the collective identity as related to the place where they develop their lives (Ramos-Vidal, 2014). Everyday life is associated with notions of love, feeling, and participation, which can be understood as unifying elements of the sense of community of the place of residence and promoters of social well-being (Mannarini & Rochira, 2014). Once again, the relevance of the emotional component is reflected by the fact that forming an adoptive family and the development of fraternity can explain the attachment to the place of residence and an own construction of a sense of local community (Eguren, 2011).

Multiculturalism relates to the concept of an adoptive family, given that living with people of diverse origins ultimately results in a feeling of familiarity key to the development of the process (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009; Távara & Cueto, 2015). In addition, the very experience of the passing of time in these communities and the obtaining of a residence permit are two aspects that are related to greater social standing and inclusion. The combination of time, space, and place are relevant elements in the construction of a sense of community and citizenship (Waters, 2011).

Ultimately, this study invites the scientific community to continue generating new information regarding the sense of community. For this reason, the need to analyze the construction of the sense of community in other groups of immigrants living in Malaga and to deepen the gender approach arises. One of the limitations, at the same time a potentiality, is that the sense of community is par excellence the subjective manifestation of a community, so its social construction is highly influenced by the experiences of each person. Consistent with Berroeta et al. (2015), the territory and the spaces for coexistence also have a notable influence on the construction of the sense of local community. The need to revitalize neighborhoods requires rethinking how to establish social intervention strategies that from

Social Work and related disciplines value the importance of common space and territory in social inclusion and the well-being of the population. Social policies must be oriented towards the implementation of measures that, from the respect of cultural diversity, promote intercultural relations and consolidate the sense of local community.

Wrapping up, both the importance of formal and informal social organizations as mediators between the individual and community levels, and as promoters of participation in the place of residence, has been highlighted, as well as the relevance of the family concept for the development of a sense of local community (Ramos-Vidal, 2014). Love and affection, the satisfaction of needs, interdependence, the passage of time, and the use of ICTs all enable migrants to participate in the society of Malaga, resulting in a balance between their autonomy and the connection to the place where they develop their lives. The sense of local community—in a way common, yet also individual—is the result of each person’s processing of their emotional experiences from the social relationships they keep in every day. It has been shown how this sense of community typical to the place of residence is the result of a mental process of overlapping senses of community towards the various communities in which the individual regularly participates, wherein the “language of love” is a protagonist.

Translation: Fernando Llanas.

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