MIGRATION AND ACCULTURATION: CHARACTERISTICS AND CULTURAL VALUES

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Abstract: *What is the basis of ethnic change is designated by some researchers through two distinct points: acculturation - learning the cultural traits of the host society and ethnic identification – maintaining the original ethnic identity. The central idea of this perspective is that ethnic groups or individuals belonging to these groups maintain in different ways the language and culture of origin, while integrating into the host society. But acculturation process depends on a number of issues such as location, purpose and duration of interactions between individuals belonging to different cultures and meets different degrees of manifestation. If minorities cannot adapt to a new culture, they suffer a process of cultural alienation manifested as rejection and hatred towards the host culture and the desire to return to the culture of origin. In this study based on the latest research in the field, we analyze the situation of Romanians in Italy regarding the adaptability in the host society.*

Keywords: *acculturation, migration, culture.*

Defining concepts

One of the most visible aspects of globalization is migration, be it from the rural to the urban areas, from one region of the country to another or from one's home country to a foreign one. Sometimes, migration is seen as an "invasion" of the poor in the developed world, where they seek wealth, but who end up adding up to the numbers of marginalized, excluded and deviant individuals, or as a "plague" (Bocancea, 2011: 4), striking the rich western society, creating numerous problems with respect to the migrations toward Italy, France and Spain where the western media has stated countless times that deviance is by excellence a phenomenon related to migration. Other times, migration is seen as a phenomenon benefiting the rich societies, by luring the intellectual layer from poor countries, without having participated to its professional training (*ibidem*). Both perspectives consider the actual movement of a population, be it temporary or permanent.

Customs and policies on accepting immigrants are very different worldwide, depending on the history of how the states were built as well as on their economic variations. For example, the current population in America and Australia was developed through immigration, after the decimation of the indigenous population as a result of conquering and slavery. Italy and Spain, countries which were traditionally emigrant, have now become states for immigration. Migration affects significantly the individual and collective identities and creates new identities. Frontiers, mentalities, lifestyles and even the global system can change. That is why noticing in due time the transformation of an identity, either inside or outside a nation, is very useful. For Julia Kristeva, the statute of the emigrant compared to the country of origin is seen as "paradise lost", "mirage of the past" (Kristeva, 2002: 275), never found again.

The notion of acculturation was first used by the American anthropologists in 1880 used to describe the process of cultural change between two or several autonomous and distinct ethnic groups coming in contact. The acculturation was defined by various anthropologists as a phenomenon which takes place when groups of

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individuals having different cultures come into permanent contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns. This definition was regarded as a starting point for the subsequent clarifications and statements on defining the concept.

The fundamental issue of ethnic change consists in two different aspects: *acculturation* – leaning the cultural features of the host society and *ethnic identification* – keeping the original ethnic identity (Laroche, Kim et. alii, 1997). However, the main idea of this fundamental issue consists in the fact that the ethnic groups or the individuals belonging to these groups keep, in various ways, the original language and culture while integrating with the host society.

According to M. Laroche, C. Kim and M. K. Hui (1997), ethnic identification can be defined as a force pushing the individual toward the old roots, whereas acculturation guides the said toward new horizons. Nevertheless, the process of adapting to a foreign culture does not necessarily entail loosing one's ethnical identity.

The acculturation process depends on a series of issues, such as location, purpose and duration of the interactions between the individuals belonging to different cultures and knows many levels of manifestation. If the minority group cannot adapt to the new culture, it will go through a cultural alienation process which appears as rejection and hatred toward the host culture and the desire to return to their culture of origin. As a measure of adjustment, one takes into account the contact index with the receiving society or adopting the values from the host country.

Carola Suárez-Orozco uses a new concept in the specialized literature, describing the results of the contacts between people and migrations and believes that the "mission" of immigration is to create a *transcultural identity* (Suárez-Orozco, 2008: 36). The author explains this with the fact the youth must merge creatively the matters concerning the two or several cultures, that is the tradition of the parents and of the new culture or cultures. Thus, one develops an identity which does not need to choose between cultures, but which integrates features of the two cultures (the culture of the parents and the new culture in which they are raised).

Case study - Romanian immigrants in Italy

We have selected Italy as a case study because it is currently the country with the largest number of Romanian immigrants (circa 1 million). To the extent in which they want to live and work abroad for several years, one has to ask whether Romanians that choose Italy are still interested in preserving their Romanian values and traditions or assimilate significantly those belonging to the host population. Keeping this in mind, during March 9th – March 30th 2012, we carried out in Italy a survey based on a face-to-face questionnaire, on a sample of 305 Romanians residing in Italy. From the sample, 51.1% of the respondents were women and 48.9% men, adults ($\geq$ 18 years old), non-institutionalized, living in Italy for at least one year, other than for tourism.

In the current survey, a significant percentage of respondents (70.6%) stated to be living in Italy for more than 6 years, whereas only 29.40% have lived here between 1-5 years. The obtained data show that most Romanians have immigrated before the accession into the European Union (January 1st 2007), leaving in general definitely, given that very many Romanians have called for their families and friends to join them along with the border liberalization.

How long have you been living in Italy?	**Percentages**
1-5 years	29.4%
6-10 years	47.5%

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11-15 years	21%
16-20 years	2.1%
Total	100%

Table no. 1. Distribution of the respondents depending on their period of living in Italy

The first living periods are in general focused on the efforts of becoming integrated (finding a job, a home), efforts which require that the immigrant know the best practice rules of the receiving country.

When asked whether they feel integrated in the Italian society, over 65.5% of the Romanians said "yes" and 32.8% said "no". When asked to give three reasons due to which they feel integrated, from the total of 65.6% of the respondents, 7.6% did not provide any reasons. Romanians in Italy list the most frequent reasons for feeling integrated, as follows: finding a job (97 answers), friendship with Italians (67 answers), the respect with which they are treated in Italy (65 answers), speaking Italian (60 answers), living with their families in Italy (37 answers). We can thus notice quite well-founded reasons for which Romanians in Italy feel integrated by the host society.

If one of the main reasons for leaving Romania was to find a job, it appears that Romanians have reached that objective, while the income generating activity carried out throughout Italy is the main reason for justifying the integration within the host country.

When asked to give three reasons due to which they do not feel integrated, from the total of 32.8% of the respondents, 9.5% did not provide any reasons. The main reasons refer to the interaction with Italians which generate humiliating experiences for Romanians, determining them to consider the Italians racists (30 answers); Romanians feel like foreigners in Italy and confess to not having friends (25 answers), not having a job (17 answers), different mentality than the Italian one and the Romanians' lack of adaptation in Romania (15 answers).

As far as the attitude of Romanians in Italy toward phenomena such as: emigrating from Romania, accepting/taking the identity of the country where one emigrates, keeping the Romanian identity/culture, the received answers show that:

- (63%) of the respondents agree with emigrating from Romania, 24% disagree with emigration, 10.2% are undecided.
- 45.6% of the respondents say they would take over the identity of the country where they emigrate, 16% disagree with the statement, whereas 16.1% are undecided.
- circa 85% of the respondents support keeping the Romanian culture, 2.9% disagree with this and 10% are undecided.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree	DK/ NA	Total
1.Emigrating from Romania	18.7%	44.3%	10.2%	14.8%	9.2%	3%	100%
2.Accepting/ taking the identity of the country of emigration	14.1%	31.5%	22.3%	16.1%	9.8%	6.2 %	100%

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3.Preserving the Romanian culture	47.5%	36.7%	10.2%	1.6%	1.3%	2.6 %	100%

Table no. 2. Summary table on the distribution of the respondents depending on their appreciation toward the following phenomena: emigrating from Romania, staying in the country – in Romania, accepting/taking over the identity of the country of emigration, preserving the Romanian identity/culture

Values shared by the Romanians in Italy

In order to find other cognitive dimensions as well on the integration of Romanians in Italy, the aim was to identity the values that they share in their families. A key role in passing down the language, the customs and the values of a people belongs to family. When being asked "How important is family to youin , most respondents (92.8%) stated that family is very important.

How important is family to you?	**Percentages**
Very important	92.8
Quite important	0.7
Important	5.2
Not at all important	0.7
DK/NA	0.7
Total	**100**

Table no. 3. The distribution of percentages of the item targeting the importance of the family for the respondents

Asked to appreciate on a scale from 1 to 5 (where 5 is the highest value) the contribution of family in passing down the Romanian values, 44.6% of the respondents answered that family contributes to a high and very high extent to passing down values, 33.8% see the contribution to be moderate, whereas 21.6% say that the contribution is little and very little.

On the other hand, most Romanian emigrants in Italy (75%) communicate more in Romanian within their families, while 18.4% in Romanian and Italian and circa 5% more in Italian. Thus, the results of the survey indicate a preservation of the national identity beyond the country's boundaries, within the community of Romanians in Italy, especially due to the fact that they speak their mother tongue.

When asked to "Name some representative personalities for Romania", 207 of the 305 respondents (68%) answered. The respondents have given many open answers, of which we mention just the first ten representative personalities for Romania, depending on the choices of the Romanians in Italy: Mihai Eminescu (48.3%) mentioned by 100 Romanians, Ion Creanga (15%) mentioned by 31 respondents, Gheorghe Hagi (12%) mentioned by 25 people, Nadia Comaneci (11.1%) mentioned 23 times, Adrian Mutu (8.7%) - 18 respondents, Traian Basescu (8.2%) - 17 respondents, Gigi Becali (7.24%) 15 respondents, Nicolae Ceausescu (5.8%) - 12 respondents, Al. I. Cuza (4.8%) - 10 respondents and Constantin Brancusi (4.34%) mentioned 9 times.

From the gathered data, we notice that the national poet Mihai Eminescu is the one with the most answers, mentioned by almost half of the respondents as Romania's key figure. The next key figure that Romanians abroad take pride in is the great story-teller Ion Creanga. On positions three, four and five there are Gheorghe Hagi, Nadia

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Comaneci and Adrian Mutu, key figures for Romanian sport, known both nationally and internationally. The current president of the country, Traian Basescu came in sixth. Gigi Becali, known both in the football world and in the political world as well is at number 7. Another key figure for Romania is Nicolae Ceausescu, the last Romanian communist leader. Alexandru Ioan Cuza, ruler of the United Principalities came in ninth in this order, while the sculptor Constantin Brancusi takes the tenth place, being the only key figure in art that the respondents mentioned.

Conclusions

This article presents various aspects on how Romanian immigrants have become integrated in Italy. Whether it is seen as an *invasion* of the poor into the developed world, or as a *plague* striking the rich western societies, migration is first of all a phenomenon setting cultures in motion. As far as the attitude of Romanians in Italy is concerned, migration is a phenomenon which is accepted and encouraged by co-nationals working abroad.

We have seen that a large number of Romanian immigrants claim a double identity, even a double citizenship. Although 45.6% of the respondents would accept the identity of the country where they emigrate to, 85% agree to keep the Romanian identity. The high percentage of favorable answers for preserving the Romanian culture may indicate that, although they left their country of origin, the respondents still feel great attachment to Romania. Moreover, by speaking their mother tongue in the family, one can see the preservation of the national identity beyond the borders of the country. This shows that, although they now live on the territory of another country, Romanian immigrants are strongly attached to the cultural values in their country of origin.

The integration of immigrants and of younger generations into a new culture is a clear action of acculturation, with long term social implications. However, true integration requires transcultural identity efforts coming both from the new-comers and from the long term residents.

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