The acculturation of immigrants
Case study: types of acculturation of the Romanian immigrants in Madrid

Assist. Prof. Cristina ILIE, Ph.D. candidate
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Craiova
Romania

ABSTRACT

The way in which an inclusive culture imposes its defining patterns over a less influential culture is called acculturation. In this article we will discuss the four strategies of acculturation and we will see how the Romanian immigrants in Madrid have adapted to the culture of the host society. By analyzing the results of field research we will discover the types of acculturation created among the Romanian immigrants in the city of Madrid.

Key words: Acculturation, immigrants, Romanians, Madrid.

1. The acculturation and integration of immigrants

The term "acculturation" is suggested as early as 1880 by John Wesley Powell to describe the transformation of the lifestyles and thinking of immigrants in their process of interaction with the insertion society.

In 1936 Redfield and his collaborators considered acculturation as a cultural phenomenon, defining it as a change in culture, resulting from the contact between two distinct and independent cultural groups.

In 1967, Graves proved that acculturation involves the emersion of new relational ways in everyday life from both the receiving society members as well as the one of the new immigrants. The notion of "psychological acculturation" advanced by Graves refers to these new behaviors and accommodation strategies. "Research in this area has showed a large number of individual differences in how to adapt to changes in acculturation. These strategies consist of three elements: preferences or attitudes of acculturation, concrete changes in behavior or "behavioral changes" and the difficulty level experienced by individuals in dealing with the situation or "acculturation stress" (Sabatier and Berry 1997).

„Acculturation is the process by which an inclusive culture imposes over the representatives of a less influential culture through socialization agents (predominantly secondary), its defining patterns (Gavreliuc 2011)". This produces lasting and profound changes on the individual and collective personality.

"In cases of degeneration and identity crisis of the integrating environment, due to the turbulent social conditions, the misplacement and historical ruptures which generate large reconfigurations of values and attitudes, there can also appear "reverse acculturation" where the bigger culture (including demographically) is seized and modeled by the smaller culture (Gavreliuc 2011)".

2. Acculturation strategies of immigrants

"The way in which immigrants change and adapt over time to the receiving society is an important aspect of intergroup relations. But adaptation and changes do not only occur for newcomers. Multiculturalism definitely implies adaptations also in the host society (Sabatier and Berry 1997)".

In literature, there were proposed several ways of analyzing the attitudes of acculturation. In our opinion, the surest way to know the position of the individual in front of acculturation is to observe his position regarding two problems:
-   The first issue refers to maintaining and developing ethnic distinction of groups within society. For groups and the individuals that are part of these groups, they should determine whether maintaining their cultural

identity and traditions is or isn't an important value and establish which the extent to which they should be kept is.
-   The second problem concerns the desire for intercultural contact, meaning to establish whether, for groups and the individuals that are part of these groups, the relations with other groups have an important dimension and to what extent these relationships are necessary.

This approach is presented since 1989 by Berry and his collaborators, highlighting four acculturation strategies:
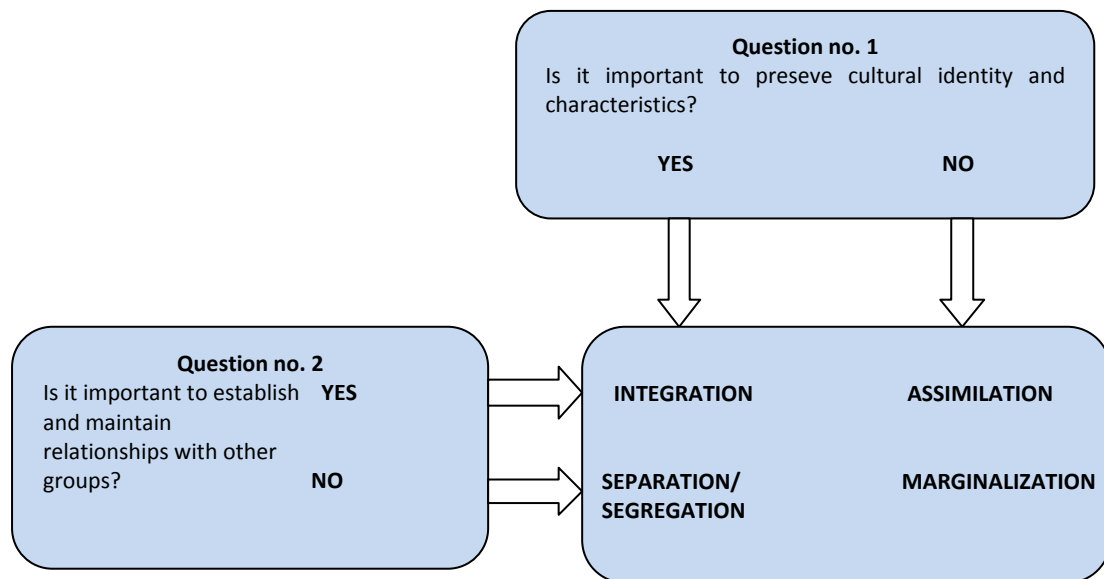- Assimilation,
- Integration,
- Separation and
- Marginalization.

In field research, in order to find out the level of acculturation, 2 questions are used:
- It is important for you to establish and maintain relationships with other groups?
- It is important for you to preserve cultural identity and characteristics?
Both questions have as answers two variants: "YES" and "NO".

This will generate a model with four cells, each cell representing an acculturation strategy: Assimilation, Integration, Separation and Marginalization.

Illustration no. 1 - Criteria of acculturation strategies

Assimilation is the first form of acculturation and results from the negative answer to the first question and the positive one to the second. Through assimilation, a minority people abandon their identity and original cultural characteristics in order to be assimilated into the host society.

"Assimilation is, actually, a one - way process that includes the adoption of language, customs, values and then way of life of the dominant group by the newcomers who are, thus, immersed into the host society (Gavreliuc, 2011)". However, this concept of assimilation apparently acquires negative connotations, given that the original cultural identity is completely lost.

As Alin Gavreliuc explains in his book „Intercultural psychology" it may happen for assimilation to be disguised, superficial. Thus, the individual, in order to be accepted by the host society, adopts a strategy of assimilation, wearing a mask of relinquishment of the original identity, when in fact he preserves his culture.

Children are most likely to be assimilated by a foreign culture. They have a significant tendency towards conformism (Gavreliuc, 2011), can quickly adhere to school and social rules, to the language imposed by the external environment.

Integration, the second form of acculturation, is common when the answers to both questions are positive. The minority group maintains its cultural identity of origin, but at the same time take steps to adapt to the host society, to become a part of it.

The reintegration process is a multidimensional one, because in it, "all the elements of the integrating part are redefined by the newcomer, through a reinterpretation common in members of the first generation immigrants (Gavreliuc, 2011)".

This solution, the reintegration one, seems to be the most convenient for both the immigrant, because it satisfies his psychological needs, and the host society, because there is a good cooperation between members from outside and the welcoming society members.

Segregation (*or separation*), is the third form of acculturation, which results from the positive response to the first question and the negative one to the second question. Thus, the absence of relationships with members of the receiving society associated with the preservation of national identity will eventually lead to a separation between the minority group and the majority one. The fact that members from outside do not have relationships with members of the host society can be either because of the rejection coming from the integrating society or the individual's desire to maintain this distance.

Marginalization is the fourth form of acculturation and we encounter it when we have a negative answer to both questions. When national identity is not maintained and there are no relationships with citizens of the host country, the situation of the minority group is difficult to shape, being probably accompanied by a high degree of individual and collective confusion as well as anxiety.

3. Case study: types of acculturation of the Romanian immigrants in Madrid

Between June and August 2012 I conducted a personal research on the Romanian community in Madrid.

The sample was used for quantitative research was of 428 Romanian immigrants living in Madrid, with ages over 16.

In selecting the sample of 428 people I sought that the proportion of men and women surveyed "to be equal to their actual proportion among the total population (Buzărnescu, 2010)", thus, 221 women were interviewed, representing 51.63% of the sample and 207 men, representing 48.36%.

By interviewing 428 people there was achieved an investigation rate of 0.75% of the total Romanian immigrants in Madrid with ages over 15 (56.632 people) and a rate of 0.67% of the total conationals immigrants in the capital of Spain in 2012.

In the applied questionnaire we asked two questions to determine the type of acculturation:
1. **Is it important for you to preserve national identity and Romanian cultural characteristics?**
2. **Is it important for you to establish and maintain relationships with citizens of Spanish origin?**

Table no. 1 - Answer to the question: Is it important for you to preserve national identity and Romanian cultural characteristics?

Variants	Percents
Yes	93.7
No	5.8
Don't Know/ Don't Answer	**0.5**
TOTAL	**100%**

Illustration no. 2 - Answer to the question: Is it important for you to preserve national identity and Romanian cultural characteristics?

5,8%   **0,5%**
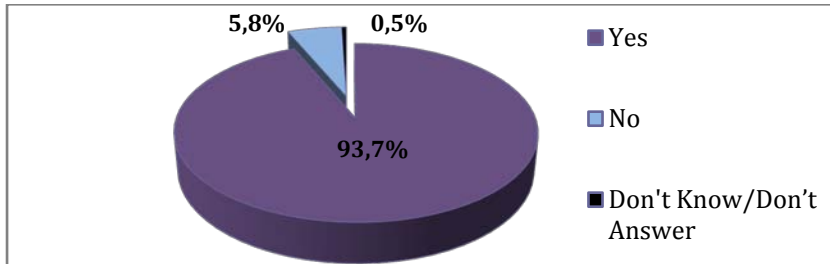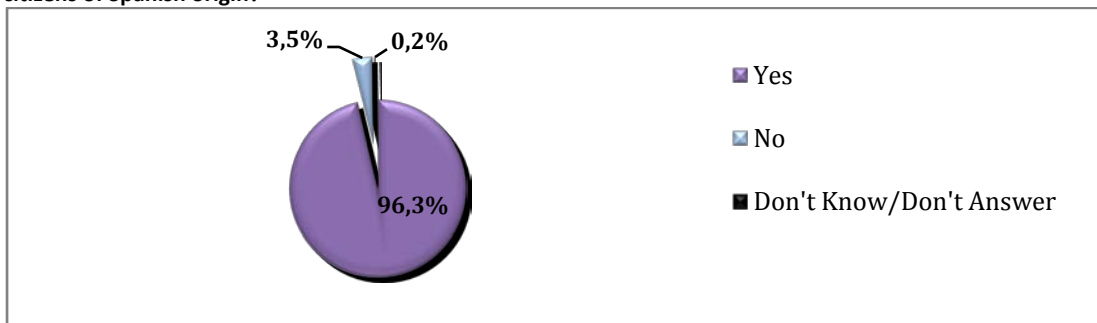
■ Yes

□ No

93,7%

■ Don't Know/Don't Answer

Table no. 2 - Answer to the question: Is it important for you to establish and maintain relationships with citizens of Spanish origin?

Variants	Percents
Yes	96.3
No	3.5
Don't Know/ Don't Answer	**0.2**
TOTAL	**100%**

Illustration no. 3 - Answer to the question: Is it important for you to establish and maintain relationships with citizens of Spanish origin?
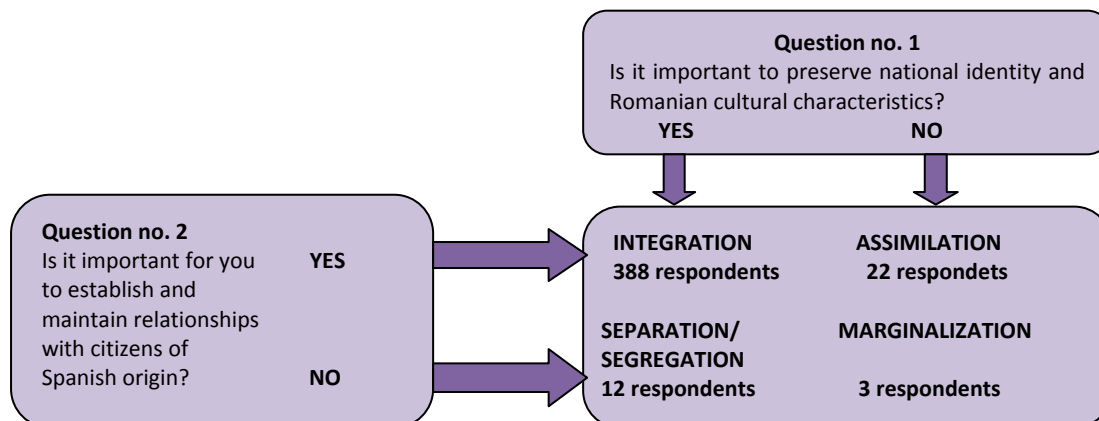
3,5%   **0,2%**

■ Yes

□ No

96,3%

■ Don't Know/Don't Answer

Doing the correlation of the responses to question: "It is important for you to preserve national identity and Romanian cultural characteristics?" with those from question: "It is important for you to establish and maintain relationships with citizens of Spanish origin?", we will discover the types of acculturation created among the Romanian immigrants in the city of Madrid.

Illustration no. 4 - Types of acculturation among Romanian immigrants in Madrid

Question no. 1
Is it important to preserve national identity and Romanian cultural characteristics?
YES   **NO**

Question no. 2
Is it important for you   **YES**
to establish and
maintain relationships
with citizens of
Spanish origin?   **NO**

INTEGRATION
388 respondents

ASSIMILATION
22 respondets

SEPARATION/ SEGREGATION
12 respondents

MARGINALIZATION

3 respondents

We corroborate the obtained results with what we stated in the theoretical part of the work and we will see all the 4 types of acculturation created among Romanian immigrants in the capital of Spain:

1. **Assimilation** is the first form of acculturation and results from the negative answer to question 1 and the positive one to question number 2. It is a process that involves the adoption of language, values, customs and eventually the Spanish way of life by Romanian immigrants. We note that 22 of the Romanian immigrants who responded to the questionnaire, i.e. 5.14 %, can be considered "assimilated" by Spanish society.

2. **Integration** is seen when the answers to both questions are positive. Romanian immigrants maintain their cultural identity of origin, but at the same time make efforts to adapt to the host society, to become a part of it. A rate of 90.65% (388 - absolute value) of the respondents can be classified as integrated into Spanish society. We note that, at another question from our questionnaire: "Do you feel well integrated into Spanish society?" in a percentage of 89,95% the respondents said that they feel well integrated . So, the difference between the answer at this question and the percentage of 90,65 % obtained by correlating questions no. 1 and 2 is small, of only 0,7 percentage points. Thus, this question being doubly checked, we can safely say that a rate of approximately 90 % of Romanian immigrants in Spanish society are integrated.

3. **Segregation** (**Separation**), results from the positive response to question number 1 and the negative one to question number 2. The reduced number or the absence of relations with citizens of Spanish origin associated with maintaining national identity will ultimately lead to a separation between Romanian immigrants and Spanish society. A number of 12 Romanian immigrants surveyed, i.e. 2.80 % of them, fall into the typology of "segregation'.

4. **Marginalization**, the fourth form of acculturation, is found when we have negative answer to both questions. When national identity is not maintained nor there are relationships with citizens from the host country, the situation of the minority group is difficult to shape, being probably accompanied by a high degree of individual and collective confusion and anxiety. We can consider as marginalized only 3 of those interviewed, i.e. a rate of 0.70 % of immigrants. In fact all 3 people declared they were not well integrated into Spanish society, were not too proud of their Romanian citizenship nor attached to it, but also declared to be unattached to Spanish citizenship.

For 0.5 % of the respondents (2 persons) we have not identified the type of acculturation because they did not respond to question number 1.

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