BE(LONG)ING AND BECOMING: IMPACTS OF GLOBALIZATION ON CULTURAL IDENTITY

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to identify and analyse some effects of migration, highly intensified by the process of globalization, at the individual level. The focus is on the ability of individuals to establish and relate to their own identity, their adaptation to a new cultural environment, and the measure in which they are influenced by the process of acculturation. Theoretical aspects are accompanied by a case study on some adaptation examples of Romanian residents in the area of Bordeaux, France.

Keywords: culture, acculturation, national identity, adaptation, globalization

The starting point of this paper is discussing the concept of globalization. Hence, it is interesting to see how Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr., recognized as founders of the neoliberal school of thought, refer to this concept. Although the paper *Governance in a Globalizing World* is more focused on political than cultural aspects, it is a useful tool in the analysis of the current process of globalization. The two authors consider that a distinction should be made between *thin and thick globalization*. They support their arguments by giving the example of the Silk Road, which represented an economic and cultural connection between Europe and Asia, as falling under the category of thin globalization. This road was used by a relatively small number of merchants, because of the appearance of new maritime routes between the two continents, and the goods being commercialized had a relatively low impact. On the other hand, the intense current operations on the global financial markets have an impact that qualifies them as a good example of thick globalization. As a result, people who refer to the current process of globalization as a new one, should keep in mind that this affirmation is not valid unless they refer to the extent at which globalization has reached and to the economic, military, environmental, socio-cultural, political, legal, etc. implications that the events taking place in a particular area have in other areas, as an innovative factor. Otherwise, globalization is not new; it is just an intensified process of the previously experienced globalism.[1]

According to Keohane and Nye, it is the density of networks, the increased degree of institutionalization and the increased international participation that make current globalization a distinct phenomenon. Yet, the information that is being conveyed via the highly developed and intensified networks is not always genuine, but it is interpreted in the context of distinct national policies and local cultures.[2]

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[1] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr., **"**Governance în a Globalizing World" (2000), in Robert Keohane, *Power and Governance in a Partially Globalized World*, London, New York, Routledge, 2002, pp. 194-201.
[2] *Ibidem,* pp. 199-200.

This aspect does not set all area and all counties on a level of equality, and influences do not necessarily go both ways. Discussing the relation between globalization and development, Paul Dobrescu asserts that the negative social impact of globalization is partly because of the discrepancies between the developed counties and those that are on the verge of development, as the least developed ones do not have the same capacity of *defence*. In some cases it could lead to reduction in poverty, but the accumulation of richness can also lead to an even bigger discrepancy among countries. Dobrescu also raises awareness on the relation between the countries with a similar degree of development and the way in which they relate to each other. He considers China to be the country with the highest chances of imposing itself in the international environment.[3]

As globalization comprises action and reaction, next I am going to focus on the reactions of the individuals in front of this global phenomenon, more precisely on the stress that they might experience.

The theories on the specific relations between stressors and stress could be divided into two categories: systemic stress, with foundations in physiology and (Selye 1976) and psychological stress, with foundations in cognitive psychology.[4]

The endocrinologist Hans Selye introduced the concept of General Adaptation Syndrome. According to Selye, as a result of some analyses performed from a physiological perspective, there are three different types of reactions to stress: the alarm reaction (initial phase of shock and countershock), the phase of resistance (alarm symptoms disappear and this could indicate adaptation to those particular stressors) and the phase of exhaustion (the capacity of reaction to stressors disappears and the symptoms of the first phase reappear, without possibility of resistance, which leads to irreversible damages.[5]

A different approach to stress and its management is that of Richard Lazarus and Susan Folkman (1984). They propose the Transactional Model and they assert that stress is not a direct reaction to stressors, but more the capacity of reacting to the stressor and of controlling reactions. Psychological stress is determined by the appraisals made by a person regarding the environment and the encounters with that particular environment. Stress should be analysed on the sociological, psychological and physiological level; these levels interrelate after the elaboration of distinctive principles. The three levels can be put together through mediation and cognitive evaluation.[6]

Lazarus and Folkman make a distinction between primary and secondary appraisal. Primary appraisal refers to the occurrence of an event that could affect the individual's wellbeing, whereas secondary appraisal refers to the methods of coping with that particular event and with the stress factors that it produces. They also identify a third type of appraisal: reappraisal, which occurs in the context of new information related to the environment or of the individual's own reactions. Due to cognitive efforts of managing stressors, a situation

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[3] Paul Dobrescu, *Viclenia globalizării. Asaltul asupra puterii americane,* Iaşi, European Institute, 2010, pp. 15-21.

[4] Heinz Walter *Krohne, „Stress and Coping Theories”*, in *The International Journal on the Biology of Stress*, vol. 22, Pergamon, 2002.http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~schuez/folien/Krohne_Stress.pdf, accessed in 07.08.2011.

[5] Additional information on this topic is available in Hans Selye, *The stress of life*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1976, and Hans Selye, *Stress without distress.* Philadelphia, Lippincott, 1974.

[6] Richard S. Lazarus and Susan Folkman, *Stress, Appraisal and Coping*, New York, Springer, 1984,pp. 287-289.

initially perceived as a threat could afterwards be perceived in a positive manner, as a challenge, and this change in perception is already a first step towards adaptation. Hence, the relation individual-environment is perceived as a bipolar relation of transactionalisation.[7]

In the case of coping with the stress caused by the intercultural encounters, the model proposed by Lazarus şi Folkman seems to have a clear applicability, as the manifestations are more psychological than physiological. Also, the reappraisal phase is necessary for an accurate actualisation of the current situation.

Next, in order to move from the general concepts to their applicability, we are presenting a case study on Romanian residents in Bordeaux area, France. The research methods used in this case study are the interviews, field research and participant observation. The subjects have been chosen due to their similar background. Apart from their sex, their Romanian origin and their young age (24 to 30 years old), another similarity is the fact that all ten interviewed women had been beneficiaries of a study programme in France. After having finalised their study programmes, they returned to France as residents. Another reason for selecting the ten subjects is the fact that we consider their adaptation stories to a different cultural environment as success stories. This strategy of selecting the research subjects, of studying realities starting from a number of success stories in a certain domain of analysis, is a common strategy in qualitative research. [8]

The goal of this qualitative research was to follow and analyse the adaptation processes to the cultural environment of the above mentioned area. The semi-directed interviews focused of the following aspects: the circumstances under which the interviewees arrived to Bordeaux, the internal and external factors that contributed to the adaptive evolution, adaptation means and strategies, cultural differences between the area of origin and Bordeuax, interactions with foreign origin, French and Romanian origin citizens, the statute of foreigner, the attitude to the county of origin, the intercultural couple relations, identity related issues, the perception of what *being at home* represents. Naturally, the focus changed during the interviews, due to the particularity of each separate case.

In order not to alter or misinterpret the outcomes of the interviews, but to get sufficiently involved as to comprehend the situations and the messages conveyed by the interviewees, we have attempted to use the technique of *empathetic neutrality*, proposed by evaluation researcher Michael Quinn Patton.[9] For a genuine representation of the opinions expresses by the interviewees, we will use the quotation method. Quotations are considered to be a useful means of presenting language particularities, of illustrating the significances assigned to certain social phenomena, of representing the particularities of an individual or of certain groups of individuals.[10]

In this article, we are presenting a series of outcomes of the case study, structured in three main categories: preserving cultural identity and integration to the new cultural

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[7] *Ibidem*, pp. 31-36.
[8] *Michael Quinn Patton, Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 3rd edition, Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2002, p. 7.
[9] *Ibidem*, pp. 49-50.
[10] Clarissa White, Kandy Woodfield and Jane Lewis*, "Reporting and Presenting Qualitative Data"*, in Jane Ritchie and Jane Lewis (editors), *Qualitative Research Practice, A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi, SAGE Publications, 2003, p. 313.

environment, the perception on the country of origin, and their perception on where *home* is. In order to protect the confidentiality of the interviewed subjects, we are using fictional first names.

We are commencing the analysis the analysis on preserving cultural identity and integration to the new cultural environment from the paper *Becoming Intercultural. An Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation[11],* of the communications researcher Young Yun Kim. In this paper, Kim describes the adaptive process of passing from one cultural environment to another, and explains the structure of this process and the main variables that influence the degree of adaptation of the individuals to the foreign cultural environment. She considers that intercultural adaptability has reached the level of a human universal phenomenon. Adaptation is perceived as a dynamic and complex process of evolution. A clear separation between the concepts of we and they is not applicable in this context where people move freely across borders. In spite of the different categories of travellers across borders and their degree of involvement, Kim asserts that there are certain common attributes from the perspective of the challenges that they are faced with; the discrepancies between the familiar and comfortable environment and the lack of this familiarity in the host environment limits their capacity of functioning efficiently, as functional models are no longer applicable.[12]

As a result, these persons experience the phase of existential alert*[13]*. In order to face this condition, there are two distinct possible approaches, namely the resistance to change and the attempt to keep as much as possible from the guidelines used in the home environment, and the effort of reaching the same statute as the natives of the host environment.

But the two directions do not necessarily exclude each other and the case of Dana, master student and also employee at the University of Bordeaux, is illustrative of both directions. For her, keeping the cultural traits of the Romanian culture is very important, but, as she has a stable workplace in Bordeaux and has a relationship with a native French, she also tries to integrate and to acquire some aspects of the French social behaviour. Hence, from a social point of view, she is aiming at a maximum integration and she is disturbed by the fact that she is still being perceived as a stranger: *I was told many times, for example people made the remark: oh, but you speak French very well, but I knew [...] on the one hand, when I was being told that: Ah, you speak so well! , I was frustrated in a way, ah, ok, so they realized that I am a foreigner because of the accent*.

From a religious point of view, on the other hand, she is still a practitioner of orthodoxy, considered to be an important aspect of her identity: *this is why I like Bordeaux, because there is a Romanian church here and an orthodox one, but particularly a Romanian one. This is very important, because if that wouldn't have existed in the city where I live in France, I think it would be more difficult for me, probably it would be more difficult, because I need, I need this not necessarily to go to church to speak to Romanians, I don't quite feel the need, not really*.

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[11] Young Yun Kim, *Becoming Intercultural. An Integrative Theory of Communication and Cross-Cultural Adaptation*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 2001.
[12] *Ibidem*, pp. 4-5.
[13] *Ibidem*, p. 5.

As we can see in the testimonial above, the church does not represent for her a social framework of connecting with people of the same origin, but her purse is a religious one. Nevertheless, we can see in her speech that interacting with Romanians is perceived as an advantage of going to church, but it is not her main purpose. Elaborating on the topic of religion, Dana expresses her discontent for the fact that France is a laic country, and this is one of the reasons why it is important to have found the proper place for her religious evolution as well, not just the social, professional or personal one. Her religious beliefs do not seem to affect her couple relationship and neither the social one. This is also due to the fact that her partner and future husband is not particularly interested towards religious aspects. Yet, the relation with his mother, who has strong religious beliefs but who is catholic, was influenced in a negative way because of the discrepancies in believes and practices. It is through mutual respect that they have managed to find a way of putting these differences aside and to properly communicate.

Raluca, arrived in Bordeaux in 2007 through an Erasmus student mobility programme, adapted easily to the area, particularly due to the fact that she was willing to make some major changes in her life when she was back home. The idea of new did not represent an obstacle to adaptation, because it was exactly the new that she was looking for: *I just wanted to leave home, to try to do something new*. This strategy of adaptation is functional as it is mostly based on expectations. Certainly, it is natural for some expectations to exist as, without them, the willingness for something new would be difficult to imagine, but a good strategy could be not letting expectations take over reality, and trying not to make too many predictions about the new cultural environment, trying not to turn an exercise of imagination into a reality that should exist because we expect it to. Naturally, this does not mean that expectations could not prove to be according to the actual situations, but it is better to keep them at a level where their non-accomplishment does not have a major psychical impact on us. Let's keep in mind that there are some situations when an unexpected reality could lead to great results.

Next, we are going to analyse the discourses of the interviewed persons from the point of view of their perception of the home country and home culture.

Dana is nostalgically talking about her home country, but also with saddens, because of the difficult economic and political situation that her family and friends back home are going through: *I am very disappointed of the political, economic situation and so on; [...] I am sorry for my family that is in Romania and for all those in Romania that I know would deserve much more.*

Wondering what would be the best way of presenting her country, Maria has become more interested in aspect related to Romania's situation than she was when she was living there, such as the political situation. She also considers that she does not know enough about her own country or about the neighbouring countries: …*when I was in Romania I was not preoccupied by a lot of things: I was not preoccupied by politics, there were a lot of things I did not know, and the funniest thing is that I did not know many things about The Republic of Moldova, which is right next to us, I had never visited countries that are next to us…*She does not agree with those people who judge the situation in their countries of origin after having left: *indeed, it is complicated to look at Romania from France even if you want it to, because for me it seems to be a very coward thing to do.*

Aurora makes a clear distinction between material and spiritual aspects when she talks about the changes in the perception on her home country. *The perception that I had of our country changed, as only when I came to France did I realise, by comparison, that there really are rich and poor countries. I am talking here strictly from a material point of view, as standard of living. Then, from a spiritual perspective, I believe that Romania is richer [...]. The simple fact that we have kept the holiday traditions – even if they also got lost in time – you can still feel the holiday spirit during Easter or Christmas, I find it to be clear evidence in this sense.*

The last case we are going to present is the one of Ilinca. Her situation is slightly different from the other, as she arrived in France as a full-time student, not through study mobility. Also, as she arrived in France in 1999, she witnessed a series of important events, both at a national and an international level, and we can consider that her opinions have a wider framework of analysis. As she occupies a leading position in a French - Romanian association, the contact with the home country is frequent. She says that her opinions are regarded in a sceptical way in Romania, as she has been abroad for too long to be aware of what is currently happening there. She disagrees with this perception: *But, on the contrary, I sometimes believe that I know more due to, well, the echo of the media, and, moreover, here you can listen to anything, you can listen to the TV back home, you can be 100% connected to Romania, all the TV stations, all the radio stations, the newspapers, the family that is there, just that there the distance to your own life does not exist.* Hence, she considers herself to be even more qualified to analyse situations back home than those that actually live there, because she is just as informed, but more objective.

We also consider pertinent her opinion on the perception of Romanians in France and on the changes that have occurred during the 11 years that she has been living there. She makes a clear distinction between the image that the media has created about Romania and the general perception of ordinary people: *I do not think anything changed. This is what our association does; it tries to make an incomplete image complete. I consider people to be curious by nature, and this is important. So, I believe that our media image does not correspond with the image that ordinary people have, because the moment people do not know a lot of things about a country they are going to tell you: I do not know much about Romania, and they will not have this preconceived idea that they talk about on television.*

We could interpret that this second discourse of Ilinca contradicts in a way the first one, as she mentioned media as one of the means of her keeping updated on the situation in Romania, and, on the other hand, she considers the image illustrated by the media not to be in accordance with the actual situation. Still, both her assertions could be valid if we consider the multitude of sources that she mentioned for keeping informed, the type of information, and the way you decide to interpret the information that you receive. Political or social events and the general opinion of the population clearly have different degrees of interpretability and subjectivity in analysis. And, in some cases, even people living in a particular country could be misinformed about a situation happening in their country but that they are not dealing with directly.

Another aspect that Ilinca brings into discussion is the attitude of people going to France, or to a new cultural environment, with a feeling of inferiority or playing the role of a victim. Even if in certain circles the attitude towards your country of origin could be a

negative one, the individual has the possibility of changing this preconception and of forming his or her own opinions in the new cultural environment, as preconceptions can go both ways. Indeed, getting informed about the foreign region is a means of obtaining support and guidance, but information can be obtained from unreliable sources, or it can be outdated, or simply not applicable to particular situations. The personal experience of each individual, as we can see in the case of these three persons with similar backgrounds and ages, makes the new cultural environment be perceived differently, but, as we have seen in all the cases above, it raises awareness on the culture of the country of origin as well.

The next topic of our analysis is represented by the answers given by the interviewed persons regarding the place where they feel at home, and their perspective on returning to their home country. In most cases, returning to Romania is not excluded, but it is less probable than the one of staying in the host country, in two of the cases the possibility of returning is excluded, and in one case, even if the possibility of returning to Romania is reduced, the one of remaining in the Bordeaux is also reduced.

As the last case is different from the other nine, we are going to begin our analysis with this one. Cristina, enrolled as PhD student in Bordeaux, does not clearly state that she does not intend to remain in Bordeaux, but we can sense in her discourse that she is less inclined than the others to embrace this environment and that she does not see a possibility of things to improve: *I have the feeling that I am not going to change my group of friends before I leave*.

The two persons that totally exclude the possibility of returning to Romania are Elena, who has been married to a French citizen for a few years, and Dana, who is engaged to a French citizen. Since they decided to get married and to start a family in Bordeaux, the decision concerning their return home has already been taken and they are no longer in a phase on incertitude. Nevertheless, their perception towards their host country is different. Dana, as we have previously discussed, is still strongly attached to her Romanian identity and to her country of origin: *You know how the saying goes: in my soul I will always be Romanian, it is on the first place, but, at the same time, I realize that France will always be the country that adopted me, that helped me very much, where I have met [my fiancée]. So, I cannot keep the distance and say that I am not French, but I am not, it is clear that I will never be, but I must accept this situation just like you accept a person [...] once you leave to another country you get used to the culture there, you start to unconsciously integrate a lot of things, you become a bit like them, [...] you leave a part of yourself aside, you leave it behind and you are somehow between two bridges and it is an identity problem after all, because you no longer know where you are, it is very complicated".* She is still reluctant to asking for the French citizenship and she perceives obtaining the citizenship as abandoning the Romanian one.

Elena's situation is different because, before arriving to Bordeaux, she did not feel her roots deeply settled in a particular country or culture. She was born in the Republic of Moldova, and she had to go through a first adaptation process when she moved to Romania for her studies. She changed the cultural environment when she took part in a student mobility programme in Bordeaux, than she returned to Romania, but to a different part of the country, and she studied there for one year, before going again to Bordeaux. The political and economic situation in the Republic of Moldavia, the little contact that she has kept with

Romania and the relationship with her husband made her choose to settle down in Bordeaux. She says: *you see, I am with an identity made of pieces [...] I have found my identity, the way I am, with these three countries. So, I have built my identity from one year to the other.* In Elena's speech on her own identity, we can notice the fact that she does not feel affected of having lost her roots as the other interviewed persons, particularly because she had not managed to grow roots in any of the areas where she resided before moving to Bordeaux. She is naturally attached to her place of birth, but she finds it difficult to identify with that place. She left her country and her family at such an early age that the different cultural experiences easily influenced her personality and her identity. As a result, she seems to have embraced the statute of foreigner, which she does not perceive in a negative way or as putting her in any position of inferiority. She seems to have found her own identity by being exposed to the diverse intercultural environment and by experimenting different identity options.

John Tomlinson asserts that the impact of globalization on cultural identity should not be perceived as something negative and that this identity is a product of globalization, not a *victim* of it. As nowadays we can no longer make the same type of connections between a geographical space and a certain cultural identity, globalization has been perceived a as an identity destructive factor. Still, embracing this type of identity puts under doubt the concept of national identity, because of deterritorialization.[14]

Though not expressly stated, we can see in Maria's discourse the intention of remaining in Bordeaux. At the time the interview was taken, she was working for an association in charge of adolescents with communication of family problems. She was socially active and she was promoting Romania's image abroad. In her discourse, she is judgmental neither to the French nor to the Romanian culture. She finds the attitude of denigrating your own culture totally inappropriate: *I was mostly annoyed by the Romanians who come here and start to criticize Romania: Romania is that and that. It does not make sense because what we are at this moment is not due to the French influence. All their educational grounds, all their beliefs, their way of thinking, their capacity of analysis and so on, most of that comes from Romania. So, if you give all that up, practically there are not many things to be proud of, so I do not understand this type of attitudes.*

Even if she clearly points out that her reasons for leaving the country have not been financial, financial aspects do represent some of the reasons for not returning home. Returning to the country of origin is not excluded, but it is not perceived as one of the first options: *it is difficult to make a projection in the next 5-10 years, and I can still decide to go back home; I think it has never been black and white.* It is interesting, in her case, to see what is the role of her family and friends, who support the idea of her staying abroad and even advise her not to return.

Laura's perception on where home is represents a good example to illustrate the notion of *liquid modernity[15]*, introduced by *Zsigmunt* Bauman, which is a modernity where space loses its capacity of constraint and individuals adapt easier to the changes caused by external factors. Highly involved in her professional activity, both in Romania and France, Laura says

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[14] John Tomlinson, „Globalization and Cultural Identity", in David Held, Anthony G. McGrew, (editors), *The Global Transformation Reader*, 2nd edition, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2003, pp. 269-278.
[15] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2000.

that she started to focus less and less of her statute of foreigner and on the difficulties that come with this statute, though there have also been moments when this aspects affected her much more. For her, the question was never about returning home of staying in France; it was about doing her job and developing her career in France or in Romania. After managing to build a career in France, the situation slightly changed. When asked what she would do if a similar position would be available for her in Romania, Laura answered that she would accept it only if the one in France would no longer be available. Then she gives other arguments against returning at home: *But this would involve…yes, I think I would do it […] I think there isn't much I can do than to sit and wait for things to go in one direction or the other. Yes, well, I think it is also a strategy in order not to make a decision*. Her strategy of not problematizing too much this aspect and of not considering her decisions as being radical and definitive seems to have worked for her psychological and socio-cultural adaptation: *I think this is a personal strategy that I have learned by necessity in time, because it is very difficult to choose and, on the other hand, I do not understand why you have to choose; I mean, I think that I can do both.*

When asked about feeling at home, Laura said that, at the moment, she feels at home in Bordeaux. *I have tried to make at home the place where I live, what is more convenient at a particular moment, because there is still a neurosis that is pretty strong, if you let it take you over: oh, what am I going to do, oh, where am I going, oh, am I coming back? Let's be serious, we are in 2011.*

Even if she is living in France, Laura still feels very connected to Romania and she says that she has recently bought an apartment in Romania, for her visits back home: *You wake up for example at 9 o'clock in the evening that you have no place to sleep at night and that you have to go to a hotel; it is a horrible feeling, so it creates an even larger gap regarding where my home is and this is, after all, my country and I should have a place here, but you actually don't […] this is, after all my country and I should have a place here.*

The last case we are going to present is the one of Alina, who considers herself very insecure of what she is going to do: *At the moment, I do not know what I intend to do because this is a pretty difficult question for me, because I have been asking myself this question every day and I cannot find an answer. […] I ask myself: what do I want to do next; do I want to go home, to find a job and then go on holidays at the Black Sea?* We can see that she treats her option on returning home in a slight ironical way, perceiving her return as a way of entering into a sort of routine, a sort of limitation in her evolution. Hence, even if she declares not having reached a decision yet, she seems to be more willing to explore other options that to return to Romania.

The anthropologist Gordon Mathews, in a comparative study on groups belonging to American, Japanese and Chinese cultures, analyses the connection between belonging to a certain national culture and the belonging to the *global cultural supermarket, a*nd the tensions that an individual is faced with in this context.[16] Mathews considers that the freedom of choice within the cultural supermarket is mostly an illusion, because the way in which we are culturally and personally formed guides and limits this freedom. The cultural supermarket is

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[16] Gordon Mathews, *Global Culture/Individual Identity. Searching for Home in the Cultural Supermarket*. London,New York, Routledge, 2000.

structured according to directions dictated by economic and political aspects, so the choice and the shaping of cultural identity by individuals who oscillate between what they are and what they could become is actually limited by the possible identities made available by the global cultural supermarket.[17]

Ward, Bochner and Furnham talk about four possible styles in the reactions of individuals to the influences of intercultural contact, in relation to the influence of the second culture on the ethical and cultural identity of the individual: sometimes individuals could reject the culture of origin and adopt the new culture; another reaction is to reject the influences of the second culture, considered to be a foreign, and to withdraw within the culture of origin; another reaction is of oscillating between the two cultures without finding a place in any of them; some people, though these cases are less common, are capable of synthetizing different cultural identities and of developing bicultural or multicultural identities.[18]

The highest degree of acculturation and adaptation of foreigners to a new cultural environment is reached at the stage of assimilation within the host environment. The power of the foreigner to bring changes to the characteristics of the dominant culture are minimal, especially in what the immediate and easily noticeable changes are concerned. As a result, the process of adaptation causes psychological stress on the individual who tries to adapt but, at the same time, not to lose specific features of the culture of origin. The stress causing conflict is between the need for acculturation and the resistance to deculturation. Kim calls this changes *stress-adaptation-growth dynamic*, the three elements being interdependent. The individuals that are considered to have adapted successfully are the ones who managed to solve their identity conflicts, who understand that cultural barriers are not impossible to be overpassed and who consider that borrowing elements from different cultures does not represent a loss for the individual or for those cultures.[19]

To conclude, the cases analysed in this paper can be considered to be success stories for the process of adaptation. It is true that some oscillate between staying abroad or returning home, but the balance is in favour of reaming in the host country. We can consider them as successfully adapted individuals, as they have managed to embrace the new cultural traits and they have turned them into opportunities.

As previously illustrated, adaptation could be reached through tolerance, respect, availability, self-control, focusing on personal or professional accomplishments, having a positive attitude, embracing the opportunities available in an interculturally challenged world. Hence, there are no guidelines that could be applicable to all individuals, even when faced with similar situations. As we cannot all be the same, we cannot become or evolve in the same manner and, nowadays it is almost impossible to clearly sate the belonging to only one particular place.

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[17] *Ibidem*, p. 186.
[18] Colleen Ward; Stephen Bochner; Adrian Furnham, The Psychology of Culture Shock, London, Routledge, 2001., pp. 30-31.
[19] Young Yun Kim, *op.cit,*, pp. 52-67.

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Note: The translation of the original interviews from Romanian to English has been done by the authors.