

## **THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TRAVELS, MIGRATION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY**

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*Abstract: In the context of globalization, many people are traveling or are experiencing the migration and thus interact with people from other nations. The goal of this study was to explore the relationships between travels abroad, migration and national identity. Participants to this study were 240 Romanian people (68.8% female), aged between 18 and 66 years ( $M=26.37$  years,  $SD=9.39$ ). 67.5% of them travelled abroad or had migration experiences. Participants completed a self-reporting instrument which assessed the contact with members of other nations and national identity concept with five dimensions: membership (person's worth for or contribution to the in-group), private (person's view of the in-group's value), public (other persons' view of this group), identity (contribution of in-group membership to the self-concept of the person), and comparison (person's view of group worth compared with other groups). Our results indicated that travelling abroad and migration are not significantly related with the general score of national identity, but only with membership, public and comparison dimensions: peoples travelling abroad have appreciated that Romanian nation is better viewed by strangers and that it is better in comparison with other nations. General national identity score positively correlated with gender (women had more positive identity than men), age, education and with career attainment. Educational implications of the results are discussed.*

*Keywords: national identity, migration, travel, education, career*

### **Social and national identity**

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) states that one part of our self-concept is defined by belongingness to social groups and by the value and the emotional significance attached to these memberships. Social group is a number of people who feel and perceive themselves as belonging to this group and who are said to be in the group by others (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Tajfel (1979) indicated that social identity theory is based on social categorization, social comparison and self-esteem. Peoples recognize their-selves as members of social groups (e.g. gender, family, community, religion, ethnicity, nation etc.), and evaluate each other through the categorization process. Behavior as solidarity within our group and discrimination against other groups were explained through social identity processes, as ways of self-enhancement and to gain positive self-esteem.

Brubaker and Cooper (2000) argued that the „identity” is an ambiguous term, with contradictory meanings, encumbered by reified connotations, and claimed that is the time to go beyond identity. A recent autochthon work (David, 2015) focused on common psycho-cultural background of Romanians but avoided the concept of identity, though it approached akin topics like *how do we are* versus *how do we think we are*, and *how do we want to be*. David (2015) inventoried peculiar traits of Romanians, highlighting the necessity to re-evaluate their utility of some of them, like minimal cooperation, mistrust in others, obduracy, which in assured the past individual and collective survival, but today are often counterproductive. From constructivist perspective, national identity as a component selfhood concept in a fluid, multiple, constantly re-negotiated manner. To maximize effectiveness in the globalized environment, it is critical to have strong identity and purpose and to be open, prepared to change and engaged with others (Marginson, 2010). Identity comes to the fore whenever people are uncertain about belongingness. Identity is a dynamic process of feeling „at home”, a sense of belonging in which self-identity is tied to a particular place with spiritual, emotional, nationalist, patriotic connotations.

National identity is conceptualized as a sense of belonging, as feeling of being closer to nationals than to outsiders, an awareness of commonality of language, myths, memories, and customs, but also of economy and laws, rights and duties. National identity serves to gain distinctiveness to others, and to differentiate itself (Triandafyllidou, 2009).

Education in general, has been used as a tool for promoting national identity (Moskal, 2016). National literature and historiographic discourse, but also music and visual arts have a critical

role in shaping national identity at collective level (Boia, 1998; Iordachi, Trencsenyi, 2003; Nicolae, 2012). Through digestion and actualization of the past, historiography contributes to social cohesion (Boia, 1998). In Romanian settings, historiographic discourse was often preoccupied to define “enemy” and to search counter positions: traditionalists/modernists, autochtonists/Westernizers, nationalists/pro-Europeans, national tradition/modernity. Perceiving Romanian culture as a peripheral “small culture” and living the frustration of the destiny to be part of such culture generated identity crises and boosted nationalist discourse, as a symptom. This can explain Romanians psychological duality of self-aggrandizing and self-despising stances toward the own national group (Iordachi, Trencsenyi, 2003) and psychological complexes of superiority and of inferiority (David, 2015). Romanian culture is collectivistic, and it doesn’t facilitate the interaction of his members with strangers (David, 2015). Collectivism of Romanian culture was explained through the lack of economic resources and the need of security, often Romanian territory being in the past a peripheral part of more empires and theatre of war between these (David, 2015). Under the pressure of globalization, post-communist Romania needs find pre-communist symbols and values, to reconstruct, and to reinvent its national identity (Kaneva, Popescu, 2011). After 1990, Romania had muddled its way through economic, educational and reform. Large number of people has moved and has followed their individual trajectories, with or without appropriate migration status (Triandafyllidou, 2009).

### **Migration and national identity**

For migrants, the question of identity is boosted by the separation by origin cultural group and the feeling of being an outsider in the host society (Amit, Bar-Lev, 2015). Lerner, Rappaport, Lomsky-Feder (2007) suggested that immigrants do not abandon their cultural identities, but they use these as tools for constructing their individual and collective identity in the host society. Globalization, circulation of people, goods, messages, information, ideas and cultural products facilitate multiple citizenships, instead of building one national identity (Weingrod and Levy, 2006), the transcendence of national identities and emergence of de-territorialized identities. Dispersion of population - immigrants, expatriates, refugees, guest-workers, overseas community and ethnic communities - who maintain to some degree cultural boundaries and social and emotional ties with homeland can constitute a diaspora (Brubaker, 2005). Contemporary Diasporas are transnational communities featured by multicultural, hybrid identities, because

immigrants develop their identity as result of encounter of otherness and of willingness to become competent to communicate and to interact with otherness (Weingrod and Levy, 2006).

Western countries are interested to attract highly skilled, hard-working and motivated immigrants, while immigrants, taking advantage of the more permeable borders since EU enlargement, are interested to leave the origin countries to improve their quality of life (Annissette, Trivedi, 2013; Moskal, 2016; Triandafyllidou, 2009). These societies promote an inclusive and negotiated nationalism, contributing to the social democracy (Moskal, 2016). The integration of highly skilled migrants in the host societies is related to their life satisfaction (Amit, Bar-Lev, 2015) determined by objective parameters, such as education and standard of living, but also by subjective parameters – the individuals' subjective well-being, the involvement in social networks and social activity. Previous research documented the problems of migrants' adaptation in host societies because of devaluation of foreign credential. Walsh (2004, apud Annissette, Trivedi, 2013) revealed that majority of foreign-educated professionals take jobs not related to their training when they first came to Canada, and that less than 25% of those who were actually employed were working in the field for which they had been educated. The lack of language proficiency may constitute a barrier with negative impact on the everyday lives and identities of migrants (Moskal, 2016), especially for young people struggling to adapt to the educational systems and work market.

Often, contemporary migration is circular - migrants leave their homelands and return after certain time. This return is often problematic; to adapt to the host culture, migrants pass through an acculturation process of changing in their values, attitudes, behavior, and perceptions. Thus, many repatriates report feelings of 'not fitting in' the home environment, as a member of an out-group within their home country (Sussman, 2000). Adults and children experience negative emotions, disappointment and stress resulted from re-adaptation problems in schools (Kunuroglu, Yagmur, Vijver, Kroon, 2015).

National identity comes in front when people need to know who they are by comparison with others, especially different. Not to repeat the mistakes of the past, it is necessary to prevent through education all forms of nationalisms, of radical and extremist forms of expressing national identity, and to facilitate building well-balanced national and transnational identity, helping people to live and to develop with otherness.

## **Present study**

Literature in migration and globalization field suggests the importance of positive national identities and the openness to collaborate with others for good adaptation to the globalization world (Lerner et al. 2007, Marginson, 2010, Weingrod, Levy, 2006). In Romanian context, relative few recent studies focused on the role of interaction with otherness in the shaping of national identity. This study aimed to explore dimensions of Romanians national identity related to travels abroad and migration. The questions of this study were if national identity is influenced by the experience of time spent abroad, and also if the demographic variables such as age, gender, education level, residence environment (urban/rural), integration in the work market, having or not a job concordant with own specialization influence national identity as global concept, or in its dimensions.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

To this study participated 240 Romanians, students and adults integrated in the work market, 68.8% female, aged between 18 and 66 years ( $M=26.67$ ;  $SD=9.37$ ), 90% under 40 years old; 62.1% residents in urban areas; 95.4% residents in Romania. Majority of participants had high-school diploma (61.7%), 18.3 had bachelor degree, 18.8 master or doctoral diploma, and only 1.3% had elementary education level. 33.3% of participants had a job and 24.2% had job concordant with their specialization. 68% of respondents have travelled abroad or migrated and 79% of those who had this experience travelled 12 months or less, mostly in touristic aims.

### **Measures**

National Identity Scale (NIS, Lilli & Diehl, 1999), a self-report instrument with 20 items, was administered to explore five dimensions of national identity: **membership**, a person's worth for or contribution to the in-group (e.g. „I am a worthy member of the nation I belong to”), **private**, a person's view of the in-group's value (e.g. „In general, I'm glad to be a member of the nation I belong to”), **public**, other persons' view of this group (e.g. „Overall, my nation is considered good by others”), **identity**, contribution of in-group membership to the self-concept of the person (e.g. „In general, belonging to this nation is an important part of my self-image”), and **comparison to outgroups**, how valuable is own nation compared to other (e.g. “The nation I belong to is superior to other nations in many respects”). Each dimension was measured through four items; each item was rated on 8 point scale, from 1 – strongly disagree to 8 – strongly agree.

Ten items were reversed (e.g. „Overall, my nation has very little to do with how I feel about myself”, „Most people consider my nation to be more ineffective than other nations”). Alpha Cronbach for entire scale was 0.83.

The travel and time spent abroad was measured in months. Respondents declared place of residence (in Romania or in another country) and mentioned the time spent abroad expressed in months. Participants filled-in a self-report questionnaire on volunteer base.

## Results

Data indicated that, in our sample, on an eight points scale, national identity (NI) global score was positive (M=5.15, SD=.96), the score for all dimensions being above the half of scale (4.5). There were differences between dimensions: higher scores were obtained in private (M=5.88; SD=1.33), membership (M=5.63, SD=1.32), identity (M=5.03, SD=1.39), while public and comparison were obtained the lower scores placed near the half of the scale (M=4.67; SD=1.23; M= 4.55; SD=1.31).

Table 1. Means, SDs of national identity global score and on dimensions

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Membership	240	1,75	8,00	5,6344	1,32304
Private	240	1,50	8,00	5,8813	1,33133
Public	240	2,00	8,00	4,6771	1,23024
Identity	240	1,00	8,00	5,0333	1,39520
Comparison	240	1,25	8,00	4,5583	1,31484
National identity	240	2,35	7,60	5,1569	,96692
Valid N (listwise)	240				

T tests for independent samples indicated significant differences in NI ( $t(238)=-3.71$ ,  $p=0$ ), public ( $t(238)=-4.54$ ,  $p=0$ ), identity ( $t(238)=-3.55$ ,  $p=0$ ), and comparison ( $t(238)=-2.37$ ,  $p=0$ ) by gender. Women had higher scores than men on NI and public, identity and comparison dimensions. Integration in work market determined also significant differences: people having a

job had higher scores in NI ( $t(238)=-2.52, p<.05$ ), in membership ( $t(238)=-2.22, p<.05$ ), public ( $t(238)=-2.8, p<.05$ ), identity ( $t(238)=-2.2, p<.05$ ) and comparison dimension ( $t(238)=-2.5, p<.05$ ) than people who don't have a job. Moreover people having qualified jobs had better scores than their counterparts in NI ( $t(238)=-3.49, p<.05$ ), membership ( $t(238)=-4.52, p=0$ ) and identity ( $t(238)=-3.34, p<.005$ ).

The Anova One-Way Games-Howell post hoc tests indicated differences determined by education level: participants with Master/PhD diploma and Bachelor degree had significantly higher scores in NI than persons with elementary education ( $MD=.89, p<.05$ ;  $MD=.64, p<.05$ ); participants with Master/PhD diploma had significantly higher scores in membership than people with high school diploma ( $MD=.76, p<.05$ )

Pearson correlations (see Table 2) indicated that national identity was weakly, but positively related with gender - women tend to express slightly positive identity than men ( $r=.234, p=0$ ), with age ( $r=.288, p<.005$ ), with education ( $r=.14, p<.05$ ), with having a job ( $r=.18, p<.005$ ), and having qualified job ( $r=.22, p<.001$ ).

Membership dimension of NI correlated positively with age ( $r=.21, p<.01$ ), education ( $r=.21, p<.01$ ), with having a job ( $r=.15, p<.05$ ) and a qualified job ( $r=.28, p<.01$ ). Public dimension of NI positively correlated with gender ( $r=.28, p<.01$ ), age ( $r=.24, p<.01$ ), travel ( $r=.20, p<.01$ ), time spent abroad ( $r=.15, p<.05$ ), and with having a job ( $r=.18, p<.01$ ). Identity positively correlated with gender ( $r=.22, p<.01$ ) and age ( $r=.27, p<.01$ ), with having a job ( $r=.15, p<.05$ ) and with having a qualified job concordant with own specialization ( $r=.21, p<.01$ ). Comparison dimension weakly correlated with gender ( $r=.15, p<.05$ ), age ( $r=.21, p<.01$ ), travel ( $r=.14, p<.05$ ), time spent abroad ( $r=.14, p<.05$ ) and with having a job ( $r=.16, p<.05$ ).

High positive correlations were between age and education ( $r=.50, p<.01$ ), having a job ( $r=.65, p<.01$ ) and having a qualified job ( $r=.59, p<.01$ ); also high positive were found between education having a job ( $r=.52, p<.01$ ) and having a qualified job ( $r=.54, p<.01$ ).

Table 2. Correlations



		Correlations												
		gender	age	education	travel	timeabroad	job	qualif_job	membership	private	public	identity	comparison	nat_id
gender	Pearson Correlation	1	,097	,144*	-,095	-,086	,057	,066	,094	,111	,282**	,224**	,152*	,234**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,135	,025	,144	,184	,378	,311	,146	,087	,000	,000	,019	,000
age	Pearson Correlation	,097	1	,509**	,318**	,312**	,654**	,590**	,210**	,116	,241**	,274**	,214**	,288**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,135		,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,001	,072	,000	,000	,001	,000
education	Pearson Correlation	,144*	,509**	1	-,009	-,062	,520**	,548**	,212**	,047	,047	,120	,112	,148*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,025	,000		,886	,341	,000	,000	,001	,469	,472	,063	,084	,022
travel	Pearson Correlation	-,095	,318**	-,009	1	,877**	,228**	,065	-,060	,049	,202**	,019	,142*	,093
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,144	,000	,886		,000	,000	,314	,356	,450	,002	,770	,027	,152
timeabroad	Pearson Correlation	-,086	,312**	-,062	,877**	1	,226**	,029	-,081	,020	,155*	,006	,142*	,063
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,184	,000	,341	,000		,000	,659	,214	,753	,016	,925	,027	,327
job	Pearson Correlation	,057	,654**	,520**	,228**	,226**	1	,778**	,159*	,010	,179**	,153*	,161*	,180**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,378	,000	,000	,000	,000		,000	,014	,878	,005	,018	,013	,005
qualif_job	Pearson Correlation	,066	,590**	,548**	,065	,029	,778**	1	,282**	,085	,107	,212**	,118	,221**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,311	,000	,000	,314	,659	,000		,000	,188	,099	,001	,069	,001
membership	Pearson Correlation	,094	,210**	,212**	-,060	-,081	,159*	,282**	1	,404**	,386**	,435**	,396**	,716**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,146	,001	,001	,356	,214	,014	,000		,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
private	Pearson Correlation	,111	,116	,047	,049	,020	,010	,085	,404**	1	,432**	,392**	,506**	,747**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,087	,072	,469	,450	,753	,878	,188	,000		,000	,000	,000	,000
public	Pearson Correlation	,282**	,241**	,047	,202**	,155*	,179**	,107	,386**	,432**	1	,394**	,579**	,750**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,472	,002	,016	,005	,099	,000	,000		,000	,000	,000
identity	Pearson Correlation	,224**	,274**	,120	,019	,006	,153*	,212**	,435**	,392**	,394**	1	,307**	,700**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,063	,770	,925	,018	,001	,000	,000	,000		,000	,000
comparison	Pearson Correlation	,152*	,214**	,112	,142*	,142*	,161*	,118	,396**	,506**	,579**	,307**	1	,756**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,019	,001	,084	,027	,027	,013	,069	,000	,000	,000	,000		,000
nat_id	Pearson Correlation	,234**	,288**	,148*	,093	,063	,180**	,221**	,716**	,747**	,750**	,700**	,756**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,022	,152	,327	,005	,001	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) and \*\*.

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). N=240

## Discussion

This study explored national identity concept with five subordinated dimensions, membership, private, public, identity, and comparison. We aimed to measure how Romanians perceive their belongingness to national group, in what degree they consider that Romanian national group is valuable and that others consider it as valuable, how much contributes the membership to the national group to defining their self-concept, and how they perceive the own nation compared to others.



In this sample, results indicated that Romanians have generally a slightly positive national identity, and especially that they perceive themselves as active members in national group and that national group is worth appreciating. This result confirms other research indicating that people need to have positive self-esteem through belongingness to national group (Tajfel, 1979; Tajfel, Turner, 1986).

There were differences in Romanian national identity generated by gender, age, education, and insertion on work market. Generally had more positive national identity women, older people, and people with higher level of education, having a job and having a qualified job concordant with own specialization, which confirm previous studies indicating that education is a powerful tool in shaping national identity (Moscal, 2016), but also studies endorsing that work and life satisfaction increase motivation to belong to national group (Amit, Bar-Lev, 2015). Moreover, people educated in schools during communist regime have been exposed to a sort of more eulogistic discourse about national culture with its symbols, heroes, and values of the past (Iordachi, Trencsenyi, 2003), while in post-communist school curriculum, the place of national history and of Romanian classical literature was reduced (Nicolae, 2012). This trend may explain the stronger sense of national identity of older people.

Results in national identity dimensions are quite different. A stronger sense of membership had older people, people with higher levels of education and having a qualified job. People declared that they are worth members of their nation to the extent that they had jobs, and especially if they had specialized jobs (Amit, Bar-Lev, 2015). Females and older respondents, people travelling abroad and having a job appreciated that other have a better image about Romanian nation than people which not have a job. Interaction with otherness positively influenced the conception about how others perceive Romanian nation. Stronger identification of self with national group expressed also women, older people and people having qualified job. Women, older people, people having time spent abroad appreciated own group as being better in comparison with others, and this finding highlights the importance interaction experience with others for having more positive and realistic perception of own national group.

## **Conclusion**

For better adaptation in the globalized contemporary world, people need positive and strong identities and openness to collaborate with others to achieve goals and to develop themselves.

The results of this study highlighted the importance of gender, age, education, travelling and work experience in shaping national identity. Education helps people to build positive and healthy national identity because it relates them to the national culture and also to foreign cultures, and facilitate insertion in the work market and contribution to social development.

This study has also limitations which need to be considered. The sample was not representative for Romanian population. Future studies need to be carried out on larger samples, with more people having a job, people from diaspora, from rural, disadvantaged areas, people with elementary and secondary level education and people not included in superior education institutions. Moreover, type of education is a variable which need to be controlled because people with studies in history, social studies, arts and humanities, can have more positive national identity.

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