ROMANIAN IMMIGRANTS' INTEGRATION INTO CANADIAN

SOCIETY: OTTAWA AND MONTREAL

by

MIHAELA – ECATERINA VIERU, MA Candidate

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THESIS ABSTRACT

The thesis proposed to deal with the integration of the Romanian immigrants in Montreal and Ottawa, by approaching it not in its fixed economic, social, and political dimensions, but rather as a fluid process of individual and collective re-identification within a new economic, social, and political environment. In doing so, it was shown how the Romanians in recent waves of immigration (after 1989) are experiencing a period of adjustment, trying to gradually come to terms with their new identities, partly shaped by the inherent power relations that govern their status as immigrants, partly constructed and altered by their own perceptions and interpretations of this status and of the situations in which they find themselves. The findings of the research indicate that their interpretation is mostly influenced by their economic achievement – since the economic purposes prevailed in their decision to emigrate – age at immigration, and time spent in Canada.

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1 *INTRODUCTION*

After the Communist regime had been removed, in December 1989, people in Romania began hoping for an enhanced future, but the hardships of the economic transition this country has been undergoing for more than fifteen years made many of my co-nationals – friends, relatives, acquaintances – want to make a better life for themselves elsewhere. Some of them chose to leave Romania, looking for rapid economic achievement. Consequently, they spent only several years in a foreign country, most often a European one, where they generally worked hard, so as to have the necessary financial resources to support their families, or even to set up a small business in Romania. Taking into account the experiences of these people with whom I came into direct contact in Romania, as well as their stories about many other Romanians they had met abroad, I found out that most Romanians who decide to legally emigrate to a Western country are young people, in their twenties or thirties, generally with a good education, who yet cannot find their way back home. As previously mentioned, it was my perception that they are looking for relatively rapid economic fulfilment that could offer them an improved social status when they return to Romania after a few years. A collateral cause for such circumstances might be the fact that there are few countries promoting immigration programs as a state policy, which could allow foreign people to settle in for good and have a life as they expected. Are their expectations met though? What is the price they have to pay when emigrating to another country?

The answer to such questions is partly influenced by the individuals' ability to adjust to the social and economic situation of the host society, but also by the society's capacity to support and offer them an appropriate social, economic, cultural, and political environment. Some countries that promote immigration policies at a national level, for example Australia, New Zealand, Canada, have also developed integrationist programmes, which are supposed to enable

the newcomer to experience a smooth integration within the already existing social-economic structures. The implementation of such programs is in fact an implicit acknowledgement that living in another country, with a different geography, as well as new values, system(s) of beliefs, and social, cultural, economic, and political practices, may have potentially negative effects on both the immigrants and the host society itself, in case the former fail to integrate. These negative effects may range from ethnic segregation to unemployment, poor housing, mental health problems, school drop-out rates, criminality etc. on the part of immigrants, which will undoubtedly have consequences on the social, economic, political, and cultural stage of the incorporating country.

Integration poses problems related to the *immigration* process itself, *ethnicity*, and the *multiple identities* adopted by the individuals in their adjustment experiences. These problems have to be analysed from the perspectives of both the immigrant and the host society, as the whole process of integration is a matter of social interaction at different levels. The analysis in this paper is mainly focussed on the immigrants' perspectives in Canadian society, particularly the recent waves Romanian immigrants (after 1989). Yet, their experiences will be framed by an examination of the general social environment that influences their perceptions and sets up the premises for their coping with the social reality.

The term 'integration' may be used in its instrumental sense, referring to the process by which the immigrants become active subjects within the host society at an integrative level. This process includes the transformations that the newcomers must undergo in order to use and produce the material and symbolic resources needed for life in Canada. In other words, being integrated means to fully participate as a member in the social, economic, politic, and cultural life of the host society, to be recognized as such by the others, and to have access to various services and resources society provides to all its members (Taylor, 1992; Zani & Palmonari, 2003; Ricci,

2001; Hutnik, 1991; Li, 1999; Penninx, 2005). On the other hand, integration may be considered in its symbolic dimension, as it is my belief that each individual has his/her own personal measure for what integration means; most often, one may not consciously see his/her adjustment experiences as *the* way towards integration, but s/he aims at feeling comfortable within the host society from a physical, material (financial), and/or psychological point of view. Considering integration in its symbolic dimension is consistent with the anthropological approach of the research, as in this study I am also seeking to document what it is that makes Romanian immigrants feel good within Canadian society, feel comfortable with themselves, that is what particularities, if any, Romanians display in their integration process as a group or as individuals.

The complexity of the ethnicity and immigration issues applies to Romanians in Canada, whose communities in Ottawa and Montreal are the focus of the research. Specifically, I am exploring the *experiences of recent Romanian immigrants (after 1989) in Canada, as they are adjusting to a new social life in Canadian society.* This process involves many behavioural transformations and potentially many stressful psychological experiences. I mainly approach integration as a process of re-identification (Hébert, 2001), as a journey to self-discovery and self-invention (Bissoondath, 2005) within a new social environment.

Rationale and research objectives. My research focus has been determined by the current reality that there are many Romanians who choose to emigrate to Canada. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC, 2004), Romania ranks the 8th in the top ten source countries supplying immigrants to Canada, with a total of 5,655 permanent residents in 2004, and the 2nd in the range of European countries, right after the United Kingdom which sent 6,058 immigrants to Canada in 2004. It also ranks the 6th as an immigrant supplying country to

Montreal (1,563 immigrants admitted in 2001) and the 10th in the case of Toronto (2,445

immigrants admitted in 2001). The total number of Romanian immigrants living in Canada at this

moment is believed to be 130,000 – 150,000 people (Romanian Embassy in Ottawa, p.c. June,

2005). Of these, most reside in Toronto (about 50,000), Montreal (about 40,000), and Vancouver

(about 30,000). With this study, I am trying to find out *whether and how the Romanian*

immigrants in Ottawa and Montreal adjust to the different and sometimes conflicting demands of

living within two or more cultures at the same time, how they perceive themselves in this process

and how they think they are perceived, and what the social/experiential consequences of their

interaction with a new social and economic environment are (adapted from Hutnik, 1991).

The research revealed many interesting aspects about Romanian permanent residents'

lives and ways of dealing with a new situation. My perception of Romanians as a people is that

their verbal and attitudinal behaviour displays a mixture of customs and beliefs, generally of

Latin origin (as a consequence of the historical origin – e.g. kinship and family patterns,

gesticulation and way of talking, language, leisure), but with various other Slavonic accents (by

virtue of geographic space vicinity – e.g. religion, cuisine, language), and Turkish and/or German

influences (exerted during the times of foreign occupation – e.g. building architecture, customs,

cuisine, leisure activities, language). Moreover, their way of acting and thinking may have been

influenced by the 43 years of Communism, when the freedom of speech and movement across

the borders was impeded and restricted to such an extent, that those who took a chance and

illegally left Romania put in danger their own lives and those of their relatives who remained in

the country. That is why, I am documenting if and how the *Western values are perceived,*

embraced, internalised, or resisted by the Romanians living here. I am also exploring *whether*

there are differences in their perceptions depending on the English or French provinces they

settle in, more specifically Ontario (Ottawa) and Quebec (Montreal). Another concern is *whether*

they form a community only from a demographic point of view, or we could also speak of a

Romanian ethnic community as a system with internal social, cultural, and economic links.

These questions cannot be answered without first addressing more general issues

regarding **ethnicity**. *Is ethnicity 'objective' or 'subjective' that is, is it merely a manifestation of*

structural, institutional, or other measurable features such as common descent, religion,

language, customs and so on, or is it also a question of self-definition and attribution by others,

or is it both? Is ethnicity a question of maintaining boundaries between ethnic groups or is it

what is enclosed by those boundaries? Is ethnicity behaviourally 'real' or is it 'symbolic' or

'affective'? (adapted from Podolsky, 1991). In other words, I am exploring whether the

Romanian immigrants express their ethnicity in cuisine, dress code, traditions, customs, religion

etc., or they rather feel psychologically and affectively attached to the idea of being Romanian,

without necessarily showing it in practical terms, or they manifest a combination of both.

The paper is also dealing with issues of **identity** in its multileveled manifestations. This

perspective is mainly induced by my belief that *integration is basically a process of*

identification; immigrants learn to come to terms with their new identity/identities, partly shaped

by the power relations that govern their status as a minority, or as immigrants, partly constructed

by their own perception and interpretation of this status and of the situations in which they find

themselves. Within this framework, I am considering ethno-cultural identity and identification as

a factor that may shape the immigrants' process of integration. In their journey to social

adjustment, they may experience conflicting demands about the retention, diffusion, or loss of

ethnic identity (Hutnik, 1991). *Is ethnicity a hindering or an enhancing factor for integration?*

How much does it influence the process of personal and/or social identification during

integration? Is this process dynamic and fluid, or is it fixed in the forms in which ethnic heritage

and background are shown? Is loss of ethnicity a pre-condition for full social integration? Can

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immigrants retain their ethnic identity and feel integrated at the same time? Could we speak of partial integration? What are the manifestations of the integration process? Is it a matter of age, education, personal character?

The identification process is important when speaking of immigrants' integration, as people are different in all aspects and they should not be essentialised in reductive categories. Their needs are fundamentally the same on a general level, but present variations according to the personal 'set-up', 'race', gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and other identity markers. In my research, I am exploring the respondents' status as immigrants and their ethnicity as the main indicators in the way they adjust to the social, economic, and cultural landscape in Canada. I am also interested in finding out whether there are other attributes and/or variables that come up during their integration experiences and influence the way they identify themselves, potentially leading to specific characteristics that govern the way they cope with Canadian social reality. In this respect, I am considering whether there is any characteristic that sets up the framework for their collective identity, any feature that defines them as a particular social group, or their integration is mainly perceived in the individual dimension.

Theoretical approach outline. The theoretical approach is interdisciplinary, focussing on the meso- and micro- level of analysis, with anthropological and psycho-sociological perspectives. The reason for adopting such a view lies in the question whether Romanians in Canada do form a community with internal social and economic links and ethnicity as the determinant factor for their collectivity, or they are just a group whose members are fighting for the recognition of their social status as Canadian citizens/residents, confronting themselves with individual shifting identities that they have to embody in order to achieve a certain economic level, which would in turn offer them the psychological comfort that they did not make a mistake by emigrating to Canada.

I am interested in the Romanians' lived experience as immigrants going through the difficult process of adjusting to a new social, economic, and cultural environment. I made the assumption that the outcomes for them are shaped by their social, cultural, and gendered previous locations as emigrants, and that they themselves as immigrants are "agents in their behaviour, interpreting, and constructing within the constraints of structure" (Brettel & Hollifield, 2000: 4). While gender is acknowledged as an indicator of potential differences in the way Romanian immigrants manage to integrate into Canadian society, I am not expanding on it in the interpretation of the data, keeping in line with the research objectives. The gender dimension in the integration process is a topic complex enough to constitute the focus of a separate paper.

In my approach to the challenges immigration poses, I consider the social relations as having a great impact on the way the process of social integration develops. My specific concern is with the ethnic and mainstream social networks. While these networks could be interpreted as social capital, as a means for facilitating integration, it is yet important to acknowledge the power relations inherent in these social relations, which are at the basis of the immigrants' potential perception of their ethnicity as a social disadvantage. I am borrowing here from Li's critical perspective on the cultural representation of immigrants in Canada: "Immigrants are not in the position to demand changes in Canada, because they have made the choice to come to a pre-existing social order" (Li, 2004: 28). Their representation in social policy silences *their* voices and "denies *them* a place in the representational space of the normative and symbolic order" (Li, 2004: 28; emphasis mine, for adaptation, to be distinguished from the word "immigrants" in the text). I am using this perspective related to cultural theory, promoted by Hall (1996), in my emphasis on the social relations governing Romanian immigrants' integration, which are both reproduced and produced by the dominant discourse on immigration and multiculturalism. The discourse on Canada's immigration and multiculturalism policy abroad leads to the creation of an

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idealised image of this country, which may play a central role in the immigrants' option to emigrate and hence in the way they cope with the social reality here.

Ethnicity is a field of study which has developed in close relation with *gender, class,* and *'race'* (Petrovic, 2000). The most obvious link of the four is rendered by the *power relations*, which have an all-pervading influence on social interactions. Hence, there is the trend to approach the interrelated fields from the perspective of the two categories: "majority" and "minority" (Petrovic, 2000). This perspective does not offer an integrative view of all the aspects involved by social interaction, in spite of casting light on how perceptions are shaped so as to perpetuate power relations in society. That is why, in the present study, I am combining the above-mentioned view with the approach that integration is a process through which the immigrants take on fragmenting, shifting, and constructed identities in order to manage in different situations that they did not expect to experience before coming to Canada. It has been argued that the very core of the problem is a matter of representation and recognition: what is important is how people perceive themselves in their relations with the others, how the others think about them – as a result of both the social discourse and direct contact – and how these dimensions shape social exchanges in a variety of ways (Taylor, 1992; Hutnik, 1991; Anderson & Friderers, 2000). Gender, 'race', ethnicity, and potentially any other identity marker, including the immigrant status, are but social constructs, being assigned meanings through social interaction.

I am rather considering ethnicity in its psychological, symbolic dimension, as both a construct of social relations and as an individual trait that is activated according to different social contexts, so as to differentiate the group the individual feels part of from other groups. Gans (1979) argues that feeling part of an ethnic group is a basic psychological need, reflecting an emotional or cognitive affiliation to a historical, cultural, and sometimes social background and

practices, without necessarily showing it in practical terms, that is through involvement in ethnic activities or submission to community norms, values and beliefs.

Most research regarding immigrants' acculturation and integration within Canadian society has focussed on the degree the ethnic connectedness influences the individual's ability to adapt to Canadian social and economic reality. The educational attainment, as well as economic achievement, of the German, Ukrainian, Portuguese, Middle Eastern, Arab, Asian, Indo-Pakistani, Chinese, and Indo-Chinese immigrants in Canada has been linked to the extent they preserve their ethnic heritage, manifested either in its linguistic, or religious, or other cultural components, or in all of them. The conclusion is that

> *individuals in the more traditional ethnoreligious groups, who exhibit their greater ethnic commitment or connectedness through greater use of their ethnic language in the home, tend to report lower levels of educational and economic-status attainment than those who are less ethnically connected by virtue of their identity with the more Canadian churches or no church at all* (Kalbach & Kalbach, 2000: 198).

A number of studies in Canada have also centred on how ethnic identity manifests and what influences it has on the inter-group behaviour within larger society. Driedger (1976) studied ethnic self-affirmation, ethnic denial, and marginality among seven major ethnic groups in Canada, and he consequently classified them into three categories: majority assimilators (the English and Scandinavians), ethnic identifiers (the French and the Jews), and cultural marginals (the Germans, Ukrainians, and Poles).

In another study, Driedger (1975) focussed on the ways in which ethnic groups try to preserve separate identities in the face of the pressures to assimilate. He found out that the most significant cultural identity factors centre on language use, religion, endogamy, parochial education, choice of in-group friends, and ethnic organizations (including ethnic media).

A new approach to the study of immigrants' integration within Canadian society is proposed by Breton, Isajiw, Kalbach, and Reitz (1990) in their analysis of ethnic identity and equality. They question the perspective according to which successful incorporation into society supposes "loss of ethnic social and cultural attachments" (Breton et al., 1990: 3). For them, "ethnicity can be critical, totally insignificant, or have a whole range of effects in between" (Breton et al., 1990: 6). They approach ethnicity in its symbolic and psychological dimension, reaching the conclusion that ethnic identity may be both a facilitator and a barrier in social incorporation.

In my study I am considering the most relevant aspects of the Romanian ethnic identity and the role it plays during the process of integration, what transformations it suffers, and how it may be constructed or dissolved by the Romanian immigrants for various purposes in different circumstances. I am addressing issues related to the preservation, promotion, or loss of religion, language, traditions, friendship and socializing patterns as they relate to the way they cope with the social reality as Romanian individuals, as an ethnic community or as ethnic communities, or as an ethnic group or as ethnic groups.

My proposal for a psycho-sociological approach to the process of integration comes from my belief that people who experience social and cultural change are likely to feel a strong psychological discomfort, which has consequences for all their social, economic, and cultural actions within the host society. As Akhtar (1999) notices, "immigration is a complex psychosocial process with significant and lasting effects on an individual's identity. Leaving one's country involves profound losses. (...) However, alongside these losses is a renewed opportunity for psychic growth and alteration" (Akhtar, 1999: 5). It is on this basis that, in this paper, integration is mainly seen as a process of re-constructing previous identities, resulting in

the immigrants' learning how to manage the emerging hybrid situational identity/-ies so as to feel comfortable in the new social setting.

Another question that has been raised when dealing with integration in Canadian society is whether age at immigration has any consequences on the immigrants' social and economic mobility in this country. Boyd's research led to the conclusion that foreign-born males who came to Canada when younger than 17 exhibited an educational and occupational advantage over those who were older when emigrating to Canada (Boyd at al., 1985). The same relation in terms of education and income has been found by Kalbach and Richard (1985).

From an economic point of view, research in this field has also revealed that many recent immigrants experience a critical transition to the Canadian labour market, living "on the margin of the labour market for some period of time after their arrival in Canada. Part time jobs generally offer fewer hours and few, if any, benefits" (Ruddick, 2003: 17). Hum and Simpson (2003) differentiate between the experiences on the labour market of immigrant women and those of their male counterparts or Canadian-born women. They conclude that, upon entry, female immigrants appear to work fewer hours at less secure jobs and for lower wages compared to the Canadian-born women. At the same time, "women in two-immigrant marriages appear to work high initial hours in dead-end jobs, possibly to finance human capital investment activities by their husbands" (Hum and Simpson, 2000: 427-441). In the present study, the economic issues are approached as strictly linked to the degree of social comfort experienced by the Romanian immigrants, the level of income being left out as a variable in the analysis.

By reviewing the literature in the field, I came to the conclusion that research on the way Romanian immigrants integrate into Canadian society is scarce. Florin Oncescu (2003) is one of the few who dealt with the way they cope with Canadian society as a whole and/or with the consequences that living in a new social, cultural, and economic environment has on them. His

work is a collection of reality-based short-prose on the Romanian immigrants that cannot find their way, either economically, or emotionally, in Canada and return to Romania. The author, himself an immigrant in Canadian society, manages to capture the torment of those immigrants in Montreal who, partly because of the economic insuccess on the North American land, partly because of the differences in culture and lifestyles, experience feelings of not belonging here and decide to go back to Romania; but their inner struggle intensifies when they get there, as they realise that they cannot feel 'at home' in Romania either, so they are permanently oscillating in between two worlds, in between two identities and are ultimately looking for a place that does not exist, that of *the* 'home country'.

Taking on a socio-geographic perspective, Alexis Messmer (2004) approached the history of Romanian immigration to Montreal, focussing on residential patterns and ways of spatial settlement (p.c. February, 2006).

The literature in the field of immigrants' integration into Canadian society indicates that coping with a new social, cultural, economic, and political environment is a complex process that poses problems related to ethnicity, identity, gender, and 'race'. In the present study, it is ethnicity and identity, in all their multi-levelled manifestations, on which I am expanding as the variables that constitute both cause and effect in the integration process, suffering alterations, re-constructions, de-constructions, and re-interpretations, and setting up the way each individual deals with the social reality.

Integration may be theoretically or empirically approached from a variety of perspectives – demographic, economic, cultural, political, psychological, social, linguistic, to name just a few. Each of these perspectives involves knowledge, concepts, and research methods that get a particular interpretation, according to the specific goals for which the integration process is put

under the lens of analysis. As a consequence, it has most often been associated with issues related to changes in the population composition, economic structure, ethnicity, political participation, mental health, social mobility, language retention and diffusion.

I propose a holistic and interdisciplinary approach to addressing the integration challenges faced by the Romanian immigrants in Canada. This view impedes the precise classification of the matters to be discussed and makes different themes, concepts, terminology, and perspectives overlap, mingle, reinforce each other in an analysis governed by the principle that social interaction is both cause and effect in the integration process. The conceptualisation of the main terms used in this paper is offered in Appendix 1. It is to be considered only as a reference frame, since I am thoroughly expanding on the complex issues related to such concepts as integration, ethnicity, and identity subsequently.

2 *THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON INTEGRATION*

2.1 DEFINING INTEGRATION

International migration and concern about the way (im)migrants should be socially

incorporated is not a new phenomenon on the global stage. People have always migrated for

various reasons and the receiving countries – if not always, at least since the formal recognition

of their borders – have tried to figure out the best way to deal with (im)migrants' accommodation

within their new environment, whether that meant developing incorporation strategies like

Anglo-conformity, assimilation, melting pot, cultural pluralism, or multiculturalism. These

incorporation strategies resulted from the acknowledgement that (im)migrants' accommodation

within a different social, cultural, economic, and political stage is a matter of social interaction,

where social roles are assumed by both the *host society* and the *newcomers*. They represent the

actors involved in the integration process (Pennix, 2005).

The way the process is managed and evolves at the national level depends on both the

influence of the host society on immigrants and the influence of the immigrants on the societal

structure, by virtue of their changing the demographic composition from a numerical and

qualitative point of view (Bastenier, 2001: 64). But, such influences are dictated by the pre-

established social order and thus by the power rapports that come to be shaped with the arrival of

the immigrants. Among the influences that the newcomers bring are "increased ethnic, linguistic

and cultural diversity, contrasting religious and ethical understandings, varied family practices,

differing gender and generational sensitivities and class heterogeneity" (Abu-Laban et al., 1998:

2). In the circumstances, the social interaction becomes the governing phenomenon that shapes

the form which the immigrants' accommodation takes.

In the social interaction, "issues of adaptation and integration become salient at several levels: societal, group, familial, and individual" (Abu-Laban et al., 1998: 2). Yet, I point out the fact that in this thesis, I make a distinction between the terms *adaptation* and *integration*. **Adaptation** is to be understood as the personal way of coping with and participating in the new social environment, which requires some individual *behaviour* and *attitudinal* adjustments so as to best fit in the social order of the host society (Taft, 1973: 227). **Integration** is to be viewed as a more complex process, through which the elements represented by both the host society and the immigrants (attitudinal, behavioural, instrumental) are progressively linked and harmonised while reciprocal social contacts are made and, through negotiation of values, norms, practices and beliefs, acceptance – not merely tolerance – of the attitudinal, behavioural, and instrumental (material) representations is reached at both levels: that of the host society and the immigrants. So, in my opinion, adaptation is framed by the individual's abilities and skills to mould his/her behaviour (not necessarily the attitudes and the inner self) to the already existing social stage, while integration requires efforts from both the receiving society and the newcomers to *reciprocally* accommodate their needs.

'Integration' as a process of *reciprocal adaptation* on the part of both the immigrants and the host society (Bastenier, 2001: 67) is a view embraced by Canada as well, at least at a discursive level. The practical terms of such an approach are highly complicated by the way the social identities are perceived by both the immigrants and the population of the host society. The reaction of the mainstream society towards the immigrants is induced by the fact that "newcomers in a given society are often perceived as the classic 'other': one who does not belong there" (Penninx, 2005: 11). This otherising process, based on either the legal status, physical appearance, class position, or/and cultural (perceived) differences, or any other combination of

these, manifests not only at the inter-personal level, but also at the collective level, leading to the setting up of limited identity spaces: in-groups and out-groups. The social interaction between these collective units may be framed by discriminatory practices that "lead to deteriorating inter-ethnic relations and a weakening of the social cohesion in communities, cities and states" (Penninx, 2005: 11).

While power relations played out in the process of integration are something to take into account when analysing the way the newcomers enjoy substantive citizenship in the host societies, it is equally important to acknowledge the fact that immigrants themselves are not mere passive social actors in this process. In the social exchange, the immigrants also assign themselves certain social and cultural identities, according to the way they experience integration. The immigrants' attitude against the prescribed and ascribed social roles during the integration process may be dictated by the inner desire to construct a 'positive social identity' (Tajfel, 1972). In this respect, they are agents in the construction of their status as immigrants through the way they individually represent the values related to their ethnicity. Their attitude towards the confining social roles may be also enhanced by the collective action, in which case they may be said to construct the "resistance identities", which work to shape the "project identities" (Castells, 1997). The 'project identities' are in fact an attempt to counterattack the pre-established social determination by re-structuring the symbolic representation in the host society, which in turn would enhance them the substantive belonging. This may be achieved through the articulation of a legitimised status that is mediated by and played out at the ethno-cultural institutional level.

In the circumstances, in this paper, 'integration' is conceptualised as the *process* through which the immigrants become active social 'actors' within the host society at an integrative level. So, my approach of integration refers to the way that immigrants get to: i) *have* access to various services and resources society provides to all its members; ii) *are able to* fully participate as

members in the social, economic, political, and cultural life of the host society; iii) *enjoy* social

recognition as full members in the host society (Taylor, 1992; Zani & Palmonari, 2003; Resch,

2001; Hutnik, 1991; Li, 1999; Penninx, 2005). Defined as such, integration is framed as a

process, not as a final outcome, highlighting the potential transformations that the newcomers

undergo in order to be able to use and produce the material and symbolic resources needed for

life in Canada. The three conditions have been worded so as to emphasise the standpoint that is

going to be taken in the present study, that is the immigrants' perspective. Their access to various

services and resources depends on the capacity of the society to offer those resources to them, but

also on their willingness to access them. Their full participation in all the life aspects in the new

setting is dependent on the receiving structures, but also on their readiness to participate. Their

recognition as full participants within the host society is influenced by the mainstream attitudes

and behaviours towards them, but also on the way they themselves perceive that the others

identify them, on their motivation and possibility to change the (perceived) attitudes and

behaviours, and on the way they themselves operate changes at the level of their identities in

order to become "an accepted part of that society" (Penninx, 2005: 11).

2.2 DIMENSIONS OF INTEGRATION

Taking into account the actors involved in the process of integration, I postulate that

integration acquires **two main dimensions**: it can be perceived as a *social phenomenon* and/or as

an *individual/group phenomenon*. As a social phenomenon, it can be considered in economic,

cultural, and legal terms (*economic integration, cultural integration, legal/political integration*).

In this case, it is often the perspective of the host society that is taken on when assessing

immigrants' integration: the degree of immigrants' participation in the above mentioned spheres

of activity is measured through a binary opposition to non-immigrants, which leads to

benchmarking (Wilkinson, 2003). Yet, it is important to mention that this perspective is not entirely rendered flawed, as it could emphasize the discourse-reality gap regarding the immigrants' situation, particularly in Canada: while they are officially recognised as valuable contributors to Canadian society, they are often practically rendered 'deviant' from the 'norm' in terms of economic achievement, cultural expression, and political involvement, by simply not being offered equitable premises for their participation in these spheres of activity.

It is also equally important to mention that the immigrants themselves may lack the motivation to participate in the cultural and political spheres of activity, being focused on the economic achievement. The lack of motivation may be induced by the individual perceptions of the social reality (a feeling of inability to have a say on the cultural and political scene) and/or by what I call the symbolic dimension of integration, that is each individual has his/her own personal measure for what integration means. I venture into considering this stance of integration a perceptional phenomenon. This would count as an intermediary dimension of integration, mediating and making the link between the social phenomenon and the personal/individual phenomenon.

As an individual/group phenomenon, integration is to be approached as a process through which immigrants re-identify themselves, either individually or as an ethnic group, as a journey to self-discovery and "self-invention" (Bissoondath, 2005) within a new social environment. In this process, they may need to re-construct, change, alter, and re-interpret their previous identities in order to 'fit in' the present social contexts.

It has been argued that social integration is a "nested process", that is immigrants integrate first into a family or extended family, into a sub-group of their ethnic group, into a broader communal group, and finally into Canadian society (Weinfeld, 2005: 4). Yet, in this

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paper, integration is not to be approached as a 'recipe' that has to be followed by immigrants, in this case Romanian immigrants, in order to be considered 'integrated', but as an open-ended process that individuals evaluate on their own, depending on how the three dimensions that I have previously mentioned – social, perceptional, personal – gain relevance for them.

2.2.1 INTEGRATION – SOCIAL PHENOMENON

As a social phenomenon, integration is generally perceived as a static, finite result, as a purpose in itself, and the view of the host society is considered in its cultural, economic, and legal/political terms (Penninx, 2005). This is rather an instrumentalised dimension that immigrants' integration acquires, as the newcomers are reduced to mere social tools that have to work together a certain way in order for the social organism as a whole to consider them integrated from a cultural, economic, and legal/political perspective.

2.2.1.1 Cultural integration

When coming to a new country, the immigrants are the repositories of a *cultural background*, with certain values, norms, beliefs and practices, as for example church affiliation, cuisine, dress-code, family structure, living arrangements, folklore, sports, shortly put, a certain life-style. In other words, they bring with them the imprint of the society they left behind and they may find new cultural patterns in the receiving society.

The first *theoretical models* describing the immigrants' experience of a new culture dealt mainly with the unpleasant aspects of the cultural feedbacks. Stonequist (1937) considered the immigrants as people trapped between two cultures, feeling at home in none of them. Coelho (1958) launched the theory of the U-curve adjustment, saying that immigrants – in the process of integration – experience three stages of adaptation: an initial stage of excitement and optimism, a

second stage of frustration, confusion, and depression, and a third stage characterized by a gradually increasing confidence and satisfaction to develop their activities in the new society. In 1960, Oberg came up with the notion of cultural shock, designating the confusing and disorienting state which the immigrants experience when they take contact with a new culture.

Lewin (1948) points out the immigrants' need for a clear sense of identification with an ethnic or majority culture in order to find a secure basis for a sense of well-being. There have been identified four possible styles of dealing with the new cultural setting for which the immigrants could opt in their integration within the host society (Hutnik, 1991; Taft, 1973; Lewin, 1948).

-- *The dissociative style*, when the immigrants choose to preserve a high degree of "ethnic connectedness" (Kalbach & Kalbach, 2000). I would say that such an attitude from the immigrants is rather encountered when, upon immigrating, they find an already well-defined and strong ethnic community in that society, with a certain degree of institutional completeness, and a visible discrepancy between their ethnic culture and the culture of the mainstream society, so that their incorporation is produced rather at the level of the ethnic group.

-- *The assimilative* style, when the immigrants choose to take on the cultural norms and practices of the majority group(s), rejecting the culture of their origin. Such a situation, I would argue, is more likely to happen when the immigrants perceive their cultural manifestations as a drawback in their economic performance, or in the way they are received in the host society, or were received in other societies, and they generalise the public opinions on them. A potential 'scenario' in such a case would be that they choose to have an assimilative behaviour in practical terms, but remain attached to their cultural background in symbolic terms.

-- *The acculturative style*, when the immigrants perceive the norms and practices of both cultures as being salient and make a synthesis out of the two. They may resort to giving up some of their

old cultural norms and/or practices, so as to diminish the visible differences in behaviour (for example a certain dress-code, mother tongue used in public places, living arrangements) for the sake of 'fitting in', while still keeping those cultural characteristics that satisfy their psychological need of belonging to their ethnic group (for example church affiliation, mother tongue use at home, cuisine etc.). Even the second and third generation immigrants are said to strongly feel the sense of belonging to the ethnic group, while their behaviour is fully anchored within the common social and cultural practices.

-- *The marginal style*, when the immigrants are unable to identify with any of the two groups, because the norms of both cultures are considered important, but inexplicably incompatible. The individuals adopting such an attitude are tormented with confused identities and a general state of discomfort impedes them from achieving what they wish for. It is my belief that such a situation is likely to be encountered when the immigrants have constructed certain expectations of the society where they are immigrating, but once they are there, they realise that the host society cannot meet their expectations, but neither can the left society, since they made their decision to leave. It is also my assumption that the 'marginal' immigrants manifest little cultural sociability and personal flexibility to different circumstances, finding themselves stuck with an imaginary society that would ideally represent a combination of the cultural characteristics of both the society they left behind and the host society, or a combination of the cultural characteristics of one of them and the economic characteristics of the other one.

There are many factors that may influence the way the immigrants accommodate themselves to the new culture. Some of them depend on the conditions offered by the host society (for example, public openness to different cultures, institutional cultural accommodation, official policy etc.) while some others are linked to the immigrants' personality and/or socio-demographic characteristics.

Though widely accepted as an indicator and method of assimilation (Kalbach, 2000: 111), *intermarriage* may well represent a step towards cultural integration. Ethnic minority individuals who succeed in going beyond the ethnic preconceived ideas and choose to get married outside their ethnic group prove not only an openness to the cultural background of the spouse, but also an openness to cultural integration in general, by not only tolerating, but also by accepting, taking on, blending the cultural norms and practices of the partner and consequently of the ethnic or mainstream group s/he comes from.

Intergroup relations may also be considered a facilitator for acculturation (Kymlicka, 1998). Contact with people from other ethnic minority groups or majority group(s) can be viewed not only as enriching the ethnic individuals' intercultural knowledge, which is essential for the social interaction in a multicultural society, but also as a way to expand the social networks, which may help them in their economic integration.

Acquisition of majority language is also one of the criteria that speeds up the cultural integration (Kymlicka, 1998; Hutnik, 1991; Kalbach & Kalbach, 2000). Mother tongue is often considered the most significant component of ethnicity and that is why many immigrants consciously choose to preserve it as a marker of who they are. Of course, the case may be different with the immigrants' children who quickly take on the official language(s), given the fact that they spend most of their time in school, where they are socialized in the majority language(s). Immigrants may be determined to acquire the majority language, because they link it to economic achievement. Thus, linguistic integration is often seen not only as a premise for cultural integration, but also (or rather) as a pre-requisite for economic integration (Kalbach & Kalbach, 2000). Speaking the common language in wider society may be also desired for not being considered 'different' any more. Yet, at home, most immigrants, especially first generation, tend to communicate in their mother-tongue, either for practical reasons, or as means of

preserving their ethnic identity.

Religion is basically related to the spiritual and/or psychological needs of the ethnic minority individuals. It is not very much linked to practical economic purposes and, consequently, religious integration is not considered one of the premises for a 'successful' cultural integration (Kymlicka, 1998). Kymlicka (1998: 26) argues that a liberal democratic state does not seek to promote religious integration. Yet, church-affiliation may sometimes be perceived by the immigrants themselves as an inhibitor for socio-economic achievement and, consequently, some of them prefer having no religious affiliation at all, or resort to the majority church affiliation in order to get a higher socio-economic status. In such circumstances, religion and church become instrumentalised and cultural adaptation is taken as a tool in the process of economic integration.

2.2.1.2 Economic integration

From an official perspective, it is the economic dimension that is most often considered *the* main indicator when assessing immigrants' integration into the host society. I would argue that this is because it is usually the economic purposes that a country seeks to attain by promoting immigration as a state policy for its population increase. In Canada's case, each year, more than 200,000 people come here as landed immigrants. In 2004, out of 235,824 permanent residents admitted to Canada, 133,746 immigrants belonged to the economic class category. The percentage of the economic class kept close to the family class or was exceeded by the latter till 1995; ever since 1995, the economic class has ranked as the main immigration class for Canada, ranging from 50.1 % in 1995 to a highest in 2001, that is 62.1%, and 56.7% in 2004 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2006).

Canada's immigration policy was revised several times, most notably through the 1953 Act, the 1962 and 1967 regulations, the 1976 Immigration Act, and the new 2002 Immigration

and Refugee Protection Act, the stipulations of which are now in force. Of these, the most significant changes were made to the economic immigrants' selection criteria, particularly those admitted under the *Skilled Worker Class*, who outnumber all the other categories. As defined in the immigration policy, this class comprises those applicants "who may become permanent residents on the basis of their ability to become economically established in Canada" (Tolley, 2003: 25). Thus, although the Government of Canada stated that the goals of Canada's Immigration Program are "...to pursue the maximum social, cultural, and economic benefits of immigration; to enrich and strengthen the social and cultural fabric of Canada ..." (Biles & Burstein, 2003: 13), it is obvious that the economic interests of Canadian labour market prevail.

Mark Davidson, former Director, Economic Policy and Programs for Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), Selection Branch, argued that "human capital is much more than just the educational and language skills of an applicant; it is the whole collection of an individual's abilities that allows them to function in a society. So, it's not only their paper qualifications, in other words their education and work experience, but it's also the other capabilities that they have" (Hagopian, 2003: 4). The points system does not value any of the informal foreign education and/or work experience of the applicants, be they females or males. That means that the immigrants' much praised human capital is restricted to the formal skills, and does not include abilities or capabilities. The only exception is the ability to speak one or both of the Canadian official languages. The Conference Board of Canada stated that the recognition of skills not formally acquired would result in an average personal income gain between $8,000 and $12,000 annually (Kligman, 2003: 2).

Immigrants' academic credentials and work experience are often "heavily discounted compared to Canadian credentials and experience" (MacKenzie, 2003: 6), in spite of all the evidence that there is shortage of professionals in some economic sectors. This practice, some

argue, has been taken as a way to exclude new arrivals from the work force and as "a barrier to labour market integration among immigrants" (Lock Kunz, 2003: 33). This is indeed a problem that many immigrants face, especially those that do not come from Western and Northern Europe. The issue of foreign credentials may be approached at both the formal and informal level; it is either "overtly, through outright non-recognition, or covertly, through discrimination" (Tolley, 2003: 26) that most immigrants do find themselves cast into a lower social economic class. As a consequence, they often opt for re-training and upgrading courses at huge costs.

There is a close interrelationship between (non-)recognition of foreign credentials and work experience and access to the Canadian labour market, and consequently level of income: "How important is early access to the labour market for the long run economic prospects of immigrants? If immigrants are not able to make use of their credentials, what is the risk of erosion in the value of those credentials over time? Is it only a lack of credential recognition which keeps immigrants from achieving economic outcomes comparable to their similarly educated Canadian counterparts? Or have we underestimated the importance of language and communication skills in English or French in allowing immigrants to make use of their credentials in the Canadian environment?" (Ruddick, 2003: 17).

Research in the field of labour market / economic integration has revealed that many recent immigrants experience a critical transition to the Canadian labour market, living "on the margin of the labour market for some period of time after their arrival in Canada. Part time jobs generally offer fewer hours and few, if any, benefits" (Ruddick, 2003:17). There is a so-called 'entrance effect' regarding the wages, but this wage gap between the newcomers and the native born is said to disappear in time, as immigrants acquire Canadian experience (Bloom & Gunderson, 1991). In general, such studies come to the conclusion that, despite coming from higher social status origins and attaining on average higher levels of schooling, immigrants are

not as able as the Canadian-born to convert these advantages into higher levels of occupational status" (Wanner, 1998: 29). As mentioned before, immigrants' economic integration is assessed by opposing them, as a target essentialised category, to the native-born. Theorists have argued that this is just another way of succumbing to benchmarking, because, through such binary opposition, there is implicitly created a comparison between the 'abnormal' and the 'normal', which perpetuates the negative public attitude towards newcomers and puts pressure on them to conform to the general practices in order to become more like the 'norm' (Wilkinson, 2003). While such an interpretation is valid in its point that immigrants are different in terms of ethnicity, religion, gender, 'race' etc. and they experience exclusion or inclusion in different ways, I argue that it is also worthwhile from a research point of view, as it emphasizes the immigrant status as an identity marker that has negative consequences on the way newcomers are economically integrating in Canadian society. Li (2003) makes clear in his analysis of immigrants' integration into Canadian society that

> *It is immigrants and not Canadian society or institutions that are seen as needing change. In fact, social changes in metropolitan centers that are attributed to immigration are generally not interpreted as desirable as they are often viewed as urban problems brought about by increases in the immigrant population beyond the "absorptive capacity" of Canada* (Li, 2003: 52).

2.2.1.3 Legal / political integration

Legal / political integration may be regarded as the official recognition of the immigrants as "fully fledged members of the political community" (Penninx, 2005: 6). Besides the symbolic value, getting the citizenship of a certain country may well be desired for practical reasons, such as a set of civic rights, otherwise unattainable for immigrants.

In Canada formal national citizenship may be relatively 'easy' to acquire for immigrants, since there is no need for a link between the political community and common ancestry, and complete cultural assimilation is not a pre-condition for integrating into the political community

(Kymlicka, 1998). Substantive citizenship, on the other hand, is something that newcomers usually struggle to get during their integration period, which sometimes – depending on the intersection of their identity markers ('race', ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender etc.) – may last for generations. Citizenship should mean something more than a passport or the right to vote; it should mean enjoying social, economic, cultural, and political equity in practical terms, not only in discursive terms. "Inclusion in the legal/political domain turns out to be a vital, but not a sufficient condition for attaining equality" (Penninx, 2005:8).

As it is often the case with the multicultural societies, immigrants may be mere tools in a highly politicized discourse on the building of the host society. Their contribution generally remains acknowledged only at the discursive level, without relevance in their struggle to overcome the daily structural barriers and the potential negative public opinion that gets shaped as a reverse of the discursive coin. So, the right to exercise the vote, as an application of citizenship and expression of the legal integration, may also remain irrelevant for them, as it is often the case with people that do not have the feeling that the political institutions are representative of their interests.

It is my opinion that formal citizenship can be considered in its instrumental purpose from a different perspective as well. Immigrants themselves can instrumentalise it, too in their desire to get it for specific purposes. It can be wanted not so much in order to have a voice on the political scene, but to get visibility on the social setting within, as well as outside, the naturalising country. This may apply to immigrants that perceive their ethnicity as holding them back on the social and economic scene both in the host society and outside its borders. So, formal citizenship may be viewed as the tool that would secure them positive social perceptions, which in turn would lead to economic betterment.

2.2.2 INTEGRATION – INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP PHENOMENON

2.2.2.1 Identity vs. identification: relevance for integration

Emigration / immigration is a conscious decision inducing complex individual transformations which may not always be conscious and controlled. These transformations begin before actually emigrating, continue while the action itself is carried out, and crystallise in "a plurality of identities operative within a particular cultural and/or societal context" (Rummens, 2003: 11) well after the act itself has finished. In this respect, the act of emigrating / immigrating may be said to call upon individuals "to reconstruct themselves in a new society as key to their integration" (Hébert, 2001: 156).

Perceived as a process of re-identification within a new social, cultural, political, and economic setting, integration acquires an individual dimension and/or a group dimension that manifest(s) dynamically to *create* fluid, overlapping, and intertwining identities that are *assumed* by immigrants, *(re-)constructed*, and *(re-)negotiated* by means of social interaction, so as to reflect the personal and/or group way of coping with the new reality. It is this continuous social feedback among individuals and groups that sets up the background for the developing of a framework of identities, both at an individual and at a collective level. The operational forces involved in this process are triggered by, and founded on, an "initial determination of whether the Self is like Other or whether it is different from Other in an important way" (Rummens, 2003: 11). Thus, the inter-individual, inter-group, and intra-group comparisons represent the main mechanisms that inform the immigrants' (self) re-identification process during their adjustment to a new lifestyle. This process is to be seen as a coping strategy to meet integration challenges. It contributes to constructing a certain self-image and sense of well-being, by placing the immigrants, either individually or as a group, within the larger social context.

Immigration is by all means a process of up-rooting from both the familiar place and the

familiar people; once in a new country, the immigrants begin searching for a sense of belonging to enhance them the social, psychological, and economic comfort. "They have to acquire *a place* in the new society, both in the physical sense (a house, a job and income, access to educational and health facilities, etc.), but also in the social and cultural sense" (Penninx, 2005: 11). I am exploring the possibility that the immigrants manage to *create* a place for themselves in the host society through operating changes at the level of their identities and by flexibly activating and re-constructing individual and group symbolic resources, so that they feel 'at ease' with the different circumstances within the new social setting.

A distinction should be made between the concepts of identity and identification. *Identity* is to be understood as "the distinctive character belonging to any given individual, or shared by all members of a particular social category or group" (Rummens, 2003: 12). I add that the specificity of 'distinctiveness' is highly perceptional in nature – hence, subjective – and may be interpreted differently by the individual as opposed to his/her peers. Since the etymology of the term goes back to the Latin 'idem', which means 'the same', the concept is essentially based on a comparative understanding and emphasizes "the sharing of a degree of sameness or oneness with others of a particular characteristic or on a given point" (Rummens, 2003: 12). It designates a final outcome which feeds itself by opposing and intersecting views and interpretations of a certain state. The process through which those different opposing and intersecting (self) views come to take shape represents an interplay of roles and subjectivities taken by the social actors in their everyday social interaction and designates what *identification* refers to in this paper.

Rummens (2003) considers that the arch of the identification process includes three main interrelated processes that an individual experiences during the social interaction in his/her development as a social actor: identity formation, identity construction, and identity negotiation. Although Rummens deals with these identification processes as "intertwined and mutually

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reinforcing" (Rummens, 2003: 21), they are still considered "distinct", a perspective that I do not embrace in the present paper. It is my belief that the three dimensions cannot be separated either at an ideological, or at an empirical level, since they are inherently dynamic and do not only intertwine, but also overlap in their manifestations. I approach the process of identification as a permanently fluid and changing phenomenon, as social influence exerts its power on it at all times and in different forms, may it be parental influence, peers' influence, ideological influence, cultural influence, or any other form of developmental and interactional instances. As a consequence, there is a whole array of identities that an individual may experience at different times and in different places in his/her life, depending as well on the other social actors with whom s/he comes in contact. This is particularly valid with immigrants, since they experience not only different places and people, but also different ideologies. Moreover, "in pluralist countries, such as Canada, multiple identities represent a new social form" (Hébert, 2001: 158).

Immigrants find themselves in the circumstances to negotiate the identities that existed prior to re-settlement in ways that are complex and dynamic over time and space. This requires a multiplicity of identifications and attachments, as well as the manifestation of different social, psychological, and cultural daily dimensions (Pile & Thrift, 1995). So, the various identities that they embody and perform are reflective of the interaction between space, time, and other social actors. In other words, the social context is the key to de-coding the mechanisms of the identification process and the background that sets up the premises for each and every type of identity experienced by immigrants.

Most often, the type of identity that is acted out depends on the way the expected social roles are perceived at an individual and/or group level. In this respect, I consider that the point made by Tew (2002) and Gilroy (2000) that identity has to be perceived as a dynamic notion, as an entity that encompasses different subjectivities induced by the exertion of power in different

social contexts is a valid one. Body is no longer seen as a biological given for identity, but as the location at which power or empowerment may operate. The above mentioned scholars argue that there are several levels through which the notion of 'identity' can be dealt with: individual identity, collective identity, cultural identity, social identity, ethnic identity, 'racial' identity etc. All these are but perspectives from which the concept of 'identity' itself could be debated. It is my opinion that they could be also considered as components of the same unique 'identity' every individual manifests with a higher or a lower intensity, depending on the situation in which s/he finds himself/herself. I would argue that this is a **situational identity**, which depends on both psychological and sociological factors, that is it suffers changes according to whom the person is talking to, what position s/he wants to adopt towards that someone, and where that person is located. In this process, language and discourse become the tools for creating the subject positions (subjectivities) taken by both the addressor and the addressed, which are generally driven by the 'desire' to subordinate the Other. There are thus created systems of power, to which the individual willingly submits, Tew argues, in order to enter the social mainstream and "to create the appearance of coherence that is required for social participation within modernity" (Tew, 2002: 123). In other words, Tew hints at the idea of collective identity, acknowledging the possibility of an existing internal conflict, which comes from the incompatibility between the individual set-up and the 'values' of the collective mainstream, governed by the 'institution' of power. In my opinion, the possibility of an internal conflict is of great importance, as it may be the starting point for identity negotiation, which may – at least theoretically – determine a potential liberation of the individual from the subjugating systems of oppression.

The incompatibility between the assignment and assertion of identity is considered as the site where "identities are built, rebuilt, and dismantled over time" (Hébert, 2001: 157). The above-mentioned incompatibility leads to conflict and competition, enhancing ethnic boundary

maintenance (Cornell & Hartmann, 1998). I am also borrowing from this approach in my focus on the collective identity and on the perceived social position of the group.

As a conclusion, considering both identity and identification as key concepts for the integration process makes it approachable from the immigrants' perspective, as one can gain insight into the way various identity markers and their perceived asserted and assigned meanings intersect, overlap, are constructed and reconstructed, negotiated and dismantled in different social contexts, to create experiences that inform the way immigrants cope with the social, economic, and cultural reality and the power relations within the host society. In this paper, it is only the individual, collective, and social identities on which I will focus in my analysis of the background against which the (Romanian) immigrants (in Canada) undergo a dynamic identification process in their integration into the host society. Although they are going to be dealt with separately, for reasons of theoretical structure, I re-state the point that I consider them all (and the forms under which they manifest – ethnic, cultural, religious) as intertwining and overlapping, exerting influence upon each other within the social interaction.

2.2.2.2 Individual or individualised identities?

When speaking about 'identity', Taylor (1992) uses the term as designating "something like a person's understanding" of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being" (Taylor, 1992: 25). The notion of "individualized identity, one that is particular to me, and that I discover in myself (...) arises along with an ideal, that of being true to myself and my own particular way of being" (Taylor, 1992: 28). From this perspective, the reference for identity is not externally, but internally determined; the individual has to adopt an inward view in order to discover the depth of his/her self, which is the very core of his/her identity. The promoter of such reasoning is Herder who advanced the theory according to which "each of us has an original way of being human: each person has his or her own measure" (Taylor, 1992: 30).

While I generally and theoretically agree to this perspective regarding the inner voice that shapes the individual identity, I oppose it in that it is dictated by the inherent desire to be true to oneself and his/her own particular way of being, which is profoundly Romantic in its approach and leaves out the social reality; this would be valid in an environment where no influence would be exerted from the outside. But, social influence in shaping that 'particular way of being' has to be acknowledged, and it is especially in the case of immigrants that this can be noticed. They come to the host society with their 'own way of being', be it social and/or familial, the way it was framed by the set of norms in the society they left behind. I strongly believe that the way of thinking is influenced by the dominant social and cultural ideologies and environments, and this manifests, sometimes openly, other times subconsciously, in how people react and construct their opinions about themselves and the others. In this respect, the individual identity is rather 'individualised', but not in the sense that Taylor defines it. It gets individualised in the sense that each individual makes sense of himself/herself in his/her own way, but keeping in terms with the frames dictated by the general social contexts. Consequently, there is a plurality of individualised identities.

I partially borrow from Herder's perspective (Taylor, 1992: 30) on the existence of an individual "measure" when I apply this concept to integration. Immigrants may have their own mode of measuring the integration process, one that best fits their interests, and hence the variations in the ways they approach it, the variations in the way they perceive and construct their identities according to the social contexts, and in the way they adapt their previous identities to the current situation in the host society. Yet, their particular approach is equally dependent on the way their own identities are assigned meanings in the society they emigrate to. In other words, they may display individualised situated identities.

2.2.2.3 Social or socialised identities?

The socially derived identification is a phenomenon that induces class categorisation and becomes the focal axis when it comes to inter-group and intra-group comparisons. People are socialised into aiming at a certain social status, according to the social rules of the system.

Most often, the social identity is linked to the sense of belonging to a certain group with a "putatively shared objective or shared socio-economic condition" (Hum & Simpson, 2003: 59). Tajfel (1972) defines the concept of social identity as referring to "the individual's knowledge that he belongs to certain social group(s) together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership" (Tajfel, 1972: 292). The group may have particular perceived or real "barriers and restraints" (Hum and Simpson, 2003: 58) imposed by society itself as a consequence of the intersection of the in-group members' identity markers, which thus become the very core of the social comparison and hence the axis on which social identity is built. The individuals are then naturally in constant seeking for a favourable self-image, which is tied to their perceived or assigned social identity. According to Turner (1974), the process through which individuals look for a positive social identity "is inextricably a matter of mutual comparisons between groups ... It could be said that there is a process of competition for positive identity, for each group's actions are attempts not at some absolute degree of value, but a positively valued differentiation" (Turner, 1974: 10).

In the case of immigrants, the social identification may be said to prevail over the other types of identification, since they come to a socially pre-established order – symbolic and empirical – and they find themselves in the position to negotiate their place as full members in that society. It is first at an empirical level, through getting involved in everyday activities, that they try to participate in the receiving society. It is less likely that they could succeed in gaining substantive membership at the symbolic level too, as social (symbolic) hierarchies are imposed

by virtue of previously appropriated territorial, social, cultural, and political (symbolic) spaces. Time is not so much a variable in the establishment of these hierarchies, as it is the (perceived) ethno-cultural differences, which are assigned meanings of inferior status based on the hegemonic interpretation of the mainstream society. "The production of the symbolic order and its transformations entail, almost inevitably, an allocation or re-allocation of social status or recognition among various segments of the society" (Breton, 1984: 124). In this respect, the social identities – as representative of a particular assigned social status – actually become socialised identities.

2.2.2.4 Collective or collectivised identities?

Collective identity is a concept most often used to designate "who we are as a people" (Breton, 1984: 125). But the term 'people' should be considered as comprising both the micro-dimension and the macro-dimension of a collectivity, be it a group or a people. Even if the members of a certain collectivity are not territorially bound, there are inwardly generated ties, symbolic in nature, which induce the feeling of belonging to that collectivity (Taylor, 1992; Anderson, 1991).

In his explanation of the process through which collective identity comes into being, Breton (1984: 15) argues that the very roots are in the "construction of a symbolic order" within society, which entails the framing of the communal spirit through the articulation of a "system of ideas" that can mobilise the individuals' "intellectual and emotional energies". From this perspective, the collective identity is basically symbolic, as it "is represented in the multiplicity of symbols surrounding the rituals of public life, the functioning of institutions, and the public celebration of events, groups, and individuals" (Breton, 1984: 15). Such events, even if unimportant at first glance, when organized and attended in a public way, can activate the individuals' perceptions of a commonality of expectations and goals. Through the symbolic

representation and the public mediation of the symbolic resources, in the form of stories and images, there is created a collective memory space, as well as a cultural space, that transcend the territorial borders and serve to shape "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1991). It is through this constructively-oriented lens that the collective identity can be considered a collectivised identity: the respective stories and images may be reflective and promotional of certain ideologies and cultural prospects aimed at reinforcing the symbolic power order and social hierarchies.

For Breton (1984), the public institutions represent the anchors of collective identity. They are seen as a kind of link between the individual and the collective identity: "Individuals expect the public institutions to represent them and some consistency between their private identities and the symbolic contents upheld by public authorities" (Breton, 1984: 125). This view finds plenty of background in the way immigrants may feel within the host society, which may in turn affect how the integration process develops. They may perceive the public social institutions in the host society as not representative of their material and/or symbolic needs (it is more likely that the their needs should not be met at the symbolic level). They may choose then to found alternative collective institutions and/or to actively become part of their already existing ethnic community. This may bring them the comfort of a sense of belonging. From this perspective, the ethnic identity is just a form of collective (or collectivised) identity.

The collective identity should also be considered in its multiplicity and plurality of . dimensions and interpretations. Referring to the multiple group identifications, Weinrech (1983) makes a distinction between emphatic identification and reference group identification. The former designates that the individual identifies himself/herself with a certain group on the basis of the common experience and culture between the self and the other members of the group. The latter refers to the individual's wish to emulate a positive reference group and aspire to the life style and values it stands for. As a consequence, there may be cases when a person is

emphatically identified with one group, or identifies himself/herself with one group, while wishing to emulate another group for the social status it offers. Thus, one individual may display two (or more) collective – or group – identities, where one of them may become instrumentalised because of the potentially collectivised character of the other one. This may often be the case with the immigrants in their integration process: they may choose to publicly identify themselves with a certain group, in order to attain the social status of that privileged collectivity, which is needed for the functional recognition within society at large (instrumentalised collective identity). At the same time, they may psychologically identify themselves with their ethnic group or they may be identified with their ethnic group or another group that has in turn been assigned a certain symbolic identity (collectivised identity), inferior in status to the mainstream group(s).

The **ethno-cultural identity** may be analysed as just a form of *collective identity* – it could be self-determined or outwardly labelled as such (*collectivised identity*). Taking into account the premise from which I start this study, that ethnicity and the ethno-cultural identification is of an utmost importance during the immigrants' integration process, I will deal with it separately, keeping in mind though that it is basically one of the manifestations of the collective identity, drawing on the basic human need to belong and to feel included. I have opted for the term 'ethno-cultural identity', because it is my belief that what makes people differentiate as an 'ethnic group' is their culture and ancestry, in (either) the symbolic/psychological and(or) behavioural dimension. When approaching this kind of identity, **culture** is to be understood as designating *all the forms in which distinctiveness at a collective level may manifest, including language, religion, traditions, customs, values* (certain beliefs with which one grows up regarding the 'right' way to think), *norms* (the specific way of acting out the moral values), *dress code, food, leisure activities, residence patters, history etc.*

2.3 ETHNICITY IN THE INTEGRATION PROCESS

2.3.1 ETHNO-CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION AND THE INTER-GROUP POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE

The newcomers in a given society are often perceived as a threat to (either) the economic and social cohesion of the country, and(or) to the cultural identity of the mainstream (Penninx, 2005; Ricci, 2001). They may be consequently rendered 'outsiders' by virtue of their identity markers in different intersection patterns in the very society that they chose to be their home. If one also takes into account that there is a basic human need to belong and to be accepted into a collectivity, meaning that the collective sense of attachment also comes with being recognised as belonging to that collectivity or group, then Barth's observation that the ethnic identification is in fact triggered by the feelings of difference is entirely valid (Barth, 1969). Immigrants' ethnicity and culture gain an utmost importance during the integration process, as they are two intertwined variables that may be perceived as differentiating the newcomers from the mainstream. This perception may be experienced on both sides: the immigrants are aware of their difference from the rest (either because it is 'visible' and/or because the attitudinal and/or verbal behaviour of the 'others' towards them creates the feeling of difference), while the dominant group(s) members perceive the immigrants' certain identity markers as fundamentally different from theirs. These perceptions and attitudes are most often constructed and reinforced by means of the dominant discourse and media.

In the circumstances, the ethno-cultural group identification becomes an issue of inter-group comparison. Group boundaries are automatically constructed in this process and maintained through cultural difference evaluations, which, in turn, have consequences on the way social status is interpreted. Symbolic territories appropriated through cultural and social pre-

established hegemony impose the frameworks for collective perceptions, which are most visibly reflected in the economic situation that the immigrants fight to achieve upon their arrival and for many years afterwards.

The ethnic minority groups are usually constructed as inferior status groups in relation to the majority group(s) (Penninx, 2005). It is most probably because of the above-mentioned inferior status ascribed to the ethno-cultural identity of the minority groups that the members of such groups may experience an interior conflict regarding the retention and practice of their distinctive ethno-cultural markers in public social situations during their integration period. Ethno-cultural identity becomes social identity the moment it is recognised as such in relation to the mainstream group(s) identity(-ies). As a consequence, it is only at the *symbolic*, psychological, cognitive, and emotional level that the affiliation to the ethnic group may produce. This is an alternative to the behavioural ethno-cultural identity, which the members of the respective ethnic minority group may perceive as socially disadvantaging.

Behavioural/instrumental ethnic identity designates the outward expression of ethnicity, as for example command of the heritage language, practice of endogamy and other forms of heritage culture, choice of friends on ethnic grounds, participation in ethnic or/and religious associations, organizations of one's group etc. (Kalin & Berry, 1994). Language seems to be the most significant component of the behavioural ethnic identity, as well as the tendency to marry within the group and the ethnic institutions (Hiller, 1996). Other items included in the "external/cultural dimension" of the ethnic identity are the preference for ethnic food and ethnic media (Li, 2001: 136).

Yet, the increasing social mobility, induced by the international migration, which favours the cultural exchanges, leads to the hybridisation of the once fixed ethnic forms of identity and makes the once rigid ethno-cultural group boundaries slowly dissipate. As Li puts it, "(...)

destination societies have seen hybrids of ethnic identities emerge, often reflecting the exigencies of contemporary life and only nominally the endurance of cultural traditions" (Li, 2001: 135).

2.3.2 ETHNO-CULTURAL IDENTITY TRANSFORMATIONS DURING INTEGRATION

The immigrants' previous locations – which contributed to the shaping and construction of their previous identities (individual, social, collective) – change with the act of immigration. They may experience a variety of contradictory decisions regarding how to act so as to feel that they belong and to be recognised as belonging. The (new) shifting identities the newcomers may display in the host society – alternating in between the ethno-cultural, social, individual, collective dimensions according to the contexts – may not always represent economic or social interests, but also their confused state of mind during the process of integration. This condition may come from the conflict between the "cognitive dimension" and the "cultural and normative dimensions" of individual behaviour (Penninx, 2005: 15). Adaptation in the cognitive dimension is relatively fast achieved by adult immigrants, as "it is both pragmatic and pays off rather quickly if you learn how things are done, by whom etc." (Pennix, 2005: 15). Adaptation in the cultural and normative dimension is rather difficult though, as "knowledge may change, but feelings and preferences, and moral evaluations are quite persistent during an individual's lifetime" (Pennix, 2005: 15). At a personal, psychological level, the cognitive and the cultural / normative dimensions do not manifest separately, but overlap, resulting in conflicting identity demands in the case there is a practical contradiction or impossibility between the two.

Tajfel (1978) analysed the complexity of the conscious or subconscious transformations that the immigrants operate at the level of their ethno-cultural identification during the process of integration. He considers that the ethno-cultural minority individuals manifest tendencies to

assimilate into the majority group(s), because of feelings of social inferior status associated to their ethno-cultural identity. While I agree that this may generally be the case, as I also adopt the approach that ethno-cultural identities are socially constructed and collectivised into minority status, I acknowledge the possibility that the situation should suffer variations according to how attractive the ethnic group is to the immigrant in offering him/her the material and symbolic resources necessary to achieving a social status satisfactory at an individual level.

In multicultural societies, the immigrants enjoy a legal framework that stands for the preservation of their cultural practices in private life, so they are encouraged to maintain their ethno-cultural identity. Yet, economic achievement is often (perceived as) related to the degree of similarity to the majority. In this case, a 'hyphanated identity' may represent the personal way to deal with such psychological identity crisis resulting from this kind of social context (Feminella, 1973).

The loss of ethno-cultural identity is assumed to appear with the second and third generations (Isajiw, 1990). It develops gradually, with the acquisition of regional or national identity (Kallen & Berry, 2000). The new identities the second generation create are a mixture of those of their parents and those of their peers born to indigenous parents (Liebkind, 1989). On the one hand, they may be raised within the familial culture of the society their parents/grandparents left behind or within their ethno-cultural community and, thus, they gain attachment to those values and/or practices. On the other hand, through social contacts in the neighbourhood and participation in the public institutions of the host society, mainly educational institutions, the second and third generation immigrants take on the language and societal culture of the settlement society. It is this way that "the second generation develops a way of life and lifestyle in which they combine the roles, identities and loyalties of both these different worlds" (Penninx, 2005: 16).

Loss of ethno-cultural identity with the second and third generations depends on the ethnic connectedness of the first generation and on how the second and third generation individuals are motivated to follow their parents' tradition (Kalbach & Kalbach, 2000), which in turn depends on the social-economic conditions of the host society. An additional criterion has to be taken into account: the institutional representation and organisation of the ethnic community and its capacity to keep its members (no matter the generation) connected to that particular ethno-culture within the larger social context of the receiving country. In this respect, Driedger enumerates the following factors that contribute to maintaining ethnic identity: institutions, territory, culture, historic consciousness, ideology to reinforce that consciousness, and charismatic leaders committed to ethnic values (Ontario Educational Communications, 1985). But I would argue that, while culture, historic consciousness, and ideology (including religion) are definitely important in the perpetuation of the *individual ethno-cultural identity*, institutions (including church), charismatic leaders, and – to a less extent – territory, if taking into account Anderson's theory of 'imagined communities' (1991), are vital in the shaping of a *collective ethno-cultural identity*.

2.3.3 ETHNIC COMMUNITY ORGANISATION AND DYNAMICS

2.3.3.1 Ethno-cultural institutional representation

The ethnic community organisation and dynamics (including ethno-cultural institutions) reflect the fluid collective ethno-cultural identity. Jedwab (2001) believes that the formation of such an identity depends on the "rootedness of the community, the patterns or waves of immigration of the group, its pre-existing mode and degree of organisation upon arrival, the size of the community, its degree of unity or stability and the diversity or mixing of its membership" (Jedwab, 2001: 7). But, I would argue that the founding of ethno-cultural institutions and the pre-

existence of the ethnic community are two interrelated and interdependent factors. One could state that the ethno-cultural institutions cannot be founded unless the ethnic community has a well-defined collective identity and commonality of purposes, so a certain cohesiveness and unity. Yet, the counterargument would be that the ethno-cultural institutions may be said to serve exactly the purpose of bringing together various ethnic interests which may manifest within the same ethnic group and which may impede the formation of a community; in such circumstances, the ethno-cultural institutions may represent the basis on which an ethnic community develops. I am not talking here about 'institutional completeness' (Breton, 1964), which may be a characteristic of a segregated ethnic community and may entail mainly utilitarian and material aspects, but about ethno-cultural institutions that promote the culture of the ethnic group in an organised form and at a symbolic level.

Taking on Breton's perspective (1984) on the official institutions in the host society as representative and constructive of the symbolic order – both instrumental and cultural – of that particular society, I am applying the same concept to the ethno-cultural institutions of an ethnic community. They reinforce the cultural values and practices of the ethnic group and the feeling of sharing a particular ethno-cultural identity. At the same time, the ethno-cultural institutions contribute to the building of a sense of collective legitimisation and 'official' representation that the immigrants may not find in the official public institutions of the host society. In this case, "disruptions of one's symbolic world of identity" produce and "meanings with a resulted sense of alienation" (Breton, 1984: 126) are attributed to those public institutions. So, the immigrant institutions and organisations (churches, schools, community centres, media, trade unions, leisure organisations etc.), as an alternative to the official public institutions, may reflect how culturally and institutionally 'estranged' the members of that group feel in the receiving society. Yet, the ethno-cultural institutions and organisations may well be representative of a very strong

attachment to the ethno-cultural values and practices, without necessarily mirroring the level of

immigrants' estrangement from the culture and the official institutions (as supporting that

culture) of the host society; their founding may be linked to the need to enhance the transition to

a new cultural, social, political, and economic setting. As Penninx (2005) puts it, "organisations

of immigrants are the expression of mobilised resources and ambitions, and may become an

accepted part of civil society (and a potential partner for integration policies), or they may isolate

themselves and get excluded by the society of settlement" (Penninx, 2005: 13).

To the extent that the ethno-cultural institutions and/or organisations of a certain ethnic

group, just like the official institutions in a certain host society, are considered to promote and

maintain ethnic culture at a symbolic level, I would paraphrase Breton and say that periodic

symbolic activities put together by the ethno-cultural institutions "serve to unify the community

as a whole and have an integrative function (...) and to link the present to the past and assure the

continuity of the community into the future" (Breton, 1984: 127).

So, the ethno-cultural institutions of a particular ethnic group help to lay the foundations

of the respective ethnic community, just as much as the pre-existence of a well-established ethnic

community fosters the founding of ethno-cultural institutions.

Institutional completeness has often been taken as a manifestation or a sign of ethnic

residential segregation, that is "the tendency of the ethnic minority individuals to live together in

a specific area, apart from the others" (Balakrishnan, 2000: 121). This is considered to have

negative consequences on the immigrants' social integration into wider society (Balakrishnan,

2000). There have been outlined three major causes of the ethnic residential segregation. One

would be the *social class difference* among the ethnic groups. Lower economic status may lead

the immigrants to first settle in the poorer areas of the cities, so as to have easy access to the

labour market, but low rents to pay (Balakrishnan, 2000). Another possible cause for the ethnic

segregation would be the *social distances* among the ethnic groups, that is the cultural

incompatibilities or affinities. The greater the social distance is, the more likely that the

residential segregation should appear (Balakrishnan, 2000). The third hypothesis to explain this

phenomenon is the *ethnic identity hypothesis*. Driedger and Church (1974) support the idea that

ethnic minority individuals choose to live in close proximity to each other in order to be able to

maintain their ethno-cultural identity by means of intense in-group interactions and sometimes

own social and economic institutions: ethnic clubs, churches, banks, language newspapers, stores,

language schools etc.

From this perspective, ethnicity – through its institutional completeness and residential

segregation as ethnic community forms of manifestations – may be interpreted as an issue of

maintaining and reinforcing group boundaries, impeding inter-group dynamics and the

development of complex social networks outside the ethnic group, which has a restraining effect

on the immigrants' wider social integration.

2.3.3.2 Intra-ethnic group politics of identity and recognition: institutional leadership, governance, power conflict, and the search for status

As already mentioned, the ethno-cultural institutions both reflect and build the ethnic

community identity framework. They undergo a continuous process of transformation and

adaptation to the community needs and interests, which may be as diverse as the ethnic members'

identity markers or socio-demographic variables (age, time of arrival, occupational pattern,

religious orientation, educational background, gender, class, status etc.). Consequently, the ethno-

cultural institutions are permanently re-invented and re-constructed to serve the (sometimes

conflicting) interests – cultural and/or utilitarian – that different members within the same ethnic

group may put forward for various reasons. In other words, it is a multiplicity of ethno-cultural

identities that the institutions both represent and shape within the same ethnic group. The

existence of a pan-institutional framework for the respective ethnic group may be rendered futile by the very socio-demographics and context-situated identities of the in-group members.

When talking about the *ethnic group socio-demographics* influencing the overall identity and organisation of the ethnic community/-ies, Jedwab (2001: 9) mentions the degree of ethnic mixture within the group, which is in its turn influenced by the length of time spent in the host society. This has consequences on the degree of cultural retention, as the more time is spent within the receiving society, the lower the degree of cultural retention is and the more likely it is that the members should display mixed ethnic origins or that the leaders should be able to mobilise the members of the group into a community around the ethno-cultural identification. There may be as well instances when "loss of language of origin and/or receding ethnic attachment may be of less concern among recent immigrants than among those persons that have resided for longer periods of time in the host society" (Jedwab, 2001: 9). The *cohesion* of the ethnic group, which I think stands as the very roots for the formation of the ethnic community, springs not only from sharing a certain ethno-cultural background, but also a background of interests (e.g. reason for immigrating), or an axis of interests/needs that have developed in common in the host society, as a result of living in the same socio-cultural and economic environment. Jedwab (2001) also hints at this idea that common interests should be an important variable to take into account when analysing the institutional framework of an ethnic community, as "more recently arrived ethnocultural groups do not necessarily share sufficient interests to permit effective mobilisation" (Jedwab, 2001: 9). So, I would conclude that all the premises are offered for the formation of ethno-cultural institutions and an ethnic community when there is a commonality of *both* ethno-cultural background and interests/needs among the in-group members. The relation between the two variables may, or may not, be an interdependent one.

In the case there are different and antagonistic interests articulated within the same ethnic

group, it takes *leaders* to make their input into the group's capacity for concerted action (adapted from Breton, 1991). "Leadership can thus significantly influence identity formation and the vitality of the community" (Jedwab, 2001: 5).

It is my belief that the relation between the leaders and the ethno-cultural institutions presents the same degree of interdependence and reciprocal reinforcement as the relation between the ethno-cultural institutions and the ethnic community. On the one hand, the leaders – through their dynamic efforts – lay the basis for "coalition building" (Jedwab, 2001: 5) among the in-group members, which favours the founding of certain ethno-cultural institutions to serve the purposes and interests of that coalition. On the other hand, the existence of ethno-cultural institutions may foster certain in-group members to take action towards gaining representativity and legitimacy as the leaders of those institutions within that particular ethnic community. Intra-communal conflicts may arise in case there are competing in-group interests at stake in the leadership building process and more than one community within the ethnic group may take shape. According to Breton (1991), the competition among the leaders of the same ethnic group is caused by the struggle to command resources that are not available to them within the community that they lead. These resources are needed for carrying out particular goals that sometimes do not to benefit the community itself if there is lack of communication between the members and the leaders concerned rather with keeping the power relations and pursuing of status than with the general well-being of the community they run.

Jedwab (2001) draws attention that it is often assumed that the leaders are the representatives of the whole community, when it may not be the case. There is an issue of legitimisation at stake here, since "much depends on the level of confidence that is vested in the leadership by the constituents" (Jedwab, 2001: 8). This opinion reinforces my belief that the inter-group/inter-community leadership recognition and status attainment – as a form of "ethnic

expression of identity" (Breton, 1984: 136) – has to be doubled by the intra-group/intra-community recognition and attribution of validity. Internal legitimisation is a pre-requisite for external legitimisation and inter-group status search is preceded and doubled by the struggle for an acknowledgement of intra-group individual status and/or leadership. In this respect, March and Olsen (1976) make the observation that in organisations "most people (...) are most of the time less concerned with the content of the decision than they are with eliciting acknowledgement of their importance in community; (that) participation in the process is a conspicuous certification of status" (March & Olsen, 1976: 201).

A potential explanation for this permanent desire for intra-group status attainment could be offered if considering the immigrants' previous locations in the sending society. I was talking earlier in this paper about an 'identity crisis' that the immigrants might experience when finding themselves within a new social, cultural, economic, and political environment. I link their struggle for the intra-group status attainment to a need to have 'a favourable self-image' (Breton, 1984) and a 'positive social identity' (Tajfel, 1972), which they might not otherwise acquire within the host society at large. So, they may focus their energies towards attaining that status within the collectivity that is familiar to them first, because they already know what the 'community standards' (Breton, 1984) are and how they could meet them. Of course, a positive status within the community and to the community standards may or may not be rewarding from an utilitarian and material point of view, but it would offer them the comfort of being recognised as 'valuable'. It is my assumption that this intra-group status will be looked for especially by those immigrants that enjoyed this kind of social position in the society of origin but somehow are unable to acquire it within the receiving society or they perceive it as unattainable within the host environment.

2.4 FACTORS INFLUENCING INTEGRATION

The present study takes into account the factors influencing immigrants' integration within the host society, particularly Canada, under the following categories: *socio-demographic variables*, *situational variables*, *salient variables* (internal to the individual), and *independent variables* (external to the individual).

2.4.1 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

Age at immigration. It is my belief that age at immigration exerts a powerful influence on how 'easily' immigrants manage to adjust to the host society. This is because most often newcomers may have to perform changes in their behaviour to a certain extent in order to 'fit in'. Consequently, if immigration takes place at a late age, the individual's personality, way of thinking, system of values and beliefs are well-defined and have been exercised for a long time. Hence, s/he is more likely to encounter difficulties when trying to operate changes at this level.

It was revealed that an early age at immigration has positive effects on the immigrants' educational and occupational attainments in the host society, as they are longer exposed to the socialization experiences of the social systems in the country of arrival (Boyd et al., 1985; Kalbach & Kalbach, 2000). Thus, immigrants' children will develop as adults within a new social environment and will most probably take on the social practices and beliefs of the host society, even though at home they may be in contact with the culture of origin through their parents. It is mainly through education within the public system and media exposure that they will assimilate into the mainstream. In this respect, Breton (1984) makes the remark that the educational system and the media constitute "the main agencies of symbolic control and socialisation" (Breton, 1984: 128).

Gender. Gender is a variable that has been generally neglected when trying to predict and explain the immigrants' adjustment behaviour. The personal theory, otherwise unsubstantiated, is that the difference in adjustment between the males and the females may be given by the social roles each has been assigned in the society they left behind. If the women have generally played domestic roles in their country of origin, then I believe it is more likely that they should experience hard times in coping with the social and economic reality in a Western society. They may find themselves isolated at home, since one way of socialising and building social networks – which enhance the transition to a new cultural, social, economic, and political setting – is through the work place. Yet, gender – as a variable in the adjustment behaviour – should not be considered separately, but in close relation with the other identity markers and variables, including age at immigration, previous educational attainment, personality factors, since they intersect in a multitude of instances to shape particular circumstances and situations.

Marital status. Single immigrants may be more prone to emigrating than their married counter-parts, because of the lack of commitments in the sending society, but on the other hand they might be more likely to become marginalized if they do not benefit from social, emotional, and material support in the host society. Yet, personality and context-related factors intervene in this 'equation' and shape the immigrant's adjustment behaviour in a variety of ways. Married couples without children may have enhanced integration experiences, since they benefit from the mutual emotional support and there are fewer home commitments, which allows them to dedicate more time to socialising and/or to working. Consequently they may also enjoy the opportunity to build communal networks to help them to cope with various circumstances.

Ethno-religions affiliation. Immigrants' ethno-religious affiliation is most visible within their ethnic collectivity. The ethnic community or group are familiar sites to practice beliefs and to live by the norms of the culture of origin; they constitute microenvironments where the

collective memory created in the sending society is experienced and acted out in re-constructed frameworks, according to the larger context. It is believed that living within an enclosed ethnic community leads to a pronounced ethnic identity, which might impede the immigrants to take full participation in the mainstream, especially if they develop daily activities in an ethnic organization (Hiller, 1996: 202-206). Immigrants may manifest the tendency to group themselves in certain areas of a neighbourhood, based on networking, familiar common activities and patterns of spending the free time, residential cost reasons etc., which might draw the majority members' reluctance to interact with them.

Besides the size of the ethnic group and endogamy as variables in inverse ratio to the degree of adjustment to the host society (Kalbach & Kalbach, 2000), retention of the ethnic language counts as one of the most important factors that influence the process of immigrants' integration (Hiller, 1996: 205). Language is the main instrument in the socialization process and in the transmission of cultural values, which makes it a sensitive indicator of social adjustment. A good command of the official language provides immigrants more opportunities for both educational attainment and socio-economic achievement (Kalbach & Kalbach, 2000).

Educational and occupational background. I believe that immigrants' education and occupational history have a strong influence on the *reason to emigrate*, which in turn may set up the individual approach and measure to the integration process. The intersection of these three variables has also a definite role to play in the creation of a set of expectations, which influences the way each individual perceives the social, cultural, economic, and political reality in the host society.

2.4.2 SITUATIONAL VARIABLES

Social support and *network of relations*. Immigrants' adjustment behaviour is highly dependent on the social support systems, which take the form of reciprocal help and exchange of resources within the social networks in which the individual participates (Zani & Palmonari, 2003). Taking into account the source of the help, Sgarro (1988) classifies the social support systems into two categories: the informal system (friends, relatives, colleagues, persons who share the same values, norms, beliefs, and interests) and the formal system (social institutions and professional categories providing care). Besides the material advantages, the social support and network of relations have a great influence on the immigrants' psychological state of mind, enabling them to transcend the stress caused by a new environment and to get involved into society with a positive attitude (Zani & Palmonari, 2003).

The instrumental, informational, and emotional support provided by the network of relations is doubled by the symbolic support, based on esteem and appraisal that immigrants may be craving in an unfamiliar environment (recognition of their value as active citizens, where 'citizen' is to be taken as 'individual in society', not as 'holder of citizenship'). All these dimensions influence the way they perceive and evaluate the quality of their life in the host society and how 'successful' integration is. The idea that others are ready to offer help is not only comforting, but also diminishes the perceived difficulty of the problem and redefines it in cognitive terms, so that it seems less threatening. It may also convince the individual of his/her abilities to cope with the situation (Cohen & Willis, 1985). The behaviour of the individual who is the beneficiary of the social support depends on how the others perceive him/her to need help: s/he may be considered as lacking in coping abilities, which in turn may determine the beneficiary perceive the help as a threat to his/her self-esteem, or as a confirmation of his/her own incapacity of dealing with the problems (Zani & Palmonari, 2003).

2.4.3 SALIENT VARIABLES

Personality. There are scholars that focussed their integration research on the influence personality has on the individual's ability to adapt to a new culture. Berry and Annis (1974) came to the conclusion that acculturative stress is lower for the individuals who display a great deal of independence. Seelye and Brewer (1970) state that personality disposition has a lower impact on adaptation than the length and extent of contact with the foreign culture, especially if it is associated with a high sense of security within the culture and low commitment to the original in-group.

It is my opinion that pre-disposition to being optimistic may enhance newcomers to overcome hardships and approach life situations with a positive attitude. On the contrary, people inclined to pessimism may encounter difficulties with getting over 'failures' in different circumstances, which may have negative consequences on their self-esteem and general state of mind. In its effects on the immigrants' degree of adjustment to the new social setting, personality is closely interrelated with their coping and resilience abilities, which in turn may be influenced by prior inter-cultural encounters, as well as by their specific aptitudes and skills.

Aptitudes, abilities, skills, expectations. Rutter (1990) argues that individuals' resilience can be purposively strengthened when they activate their capacity to depict the new circumstances, to anticipate them, and to attribute them different significances. Following this line of reasoning, I am arguing that the immigrants' openness to new relational and social experiences during the process of integration is influenced by the degree to which they anticipated those circumstances. In this respect, it has been argued that the level of satisfaction that they appreciate would not reflect the evaluation of the objective circumstances, but it would be the result of a confrontation between their *expectations* and the way they perceive their actual situation (Zani & Palmonari, 1996). There have been proposed various theoretical models

regarding the reference standards for such an evaluation, among which Brickman's theory of the adaptation level, according to which the standards would be the individuals' own past, other significant persons in their life, own expectations, or complex standards (Brickman, 1982).

It is my assumption that emigrants' expectations of the life in Canada are generally very high. Their decision to emigrate may have different causes, but I strongly believe that one of the motifs informing their decisions is shaped by the general discourse on Canada as the land of opportunities and good life. My assumption is based on the general 'branding Canada' phenomenon abroad, which is achieved through intensively promoting the official policies of multiculturalism, immigration, and the 'values' that encompass a unique 'Canadian Way' (Vail, 2000) – constructed around such notions like diversity, equality, and just society.

While still being in their countries of origin, potential emigrants may buy into Canada's idealised image and consequently construct their own set of expectations. Canada's strategy to sell diversity (Abu Laban & Gabriel, 2002) and export its values, centred on tolerance and respect for diversity, as well as economic self-sufficiency and opportunities to reach this ideal, leaves out the aspect of substantive equality – hindered by the intersection of such identity markers like ethnicity, immigrant status, 'race', religion, accent etc.

The conclusion is that Canada's politics abroad may have a huge impact on the way people form perceptions about this society and on how they shape their expectations about living here, which in turn influence the manner they deal with the complexity of the integration challenges once they take contact with the reality in the territory.

2.4.4 INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Natural environment. Of all the components of the natural environment, I believe that the most significant one when it comes to the way immigrants succeed in adjusting to the nature of a new country is the climate – through its main elements: temperature, humidity, atmospheric pressure, rain, and wind. Territorial mobility can be restricted by the atmospheric conditions and great distances, which may have a strong impact on the immigrants that do not enjoy the necessary financial resources to buy their own means of transportation, but need to travel intensively for reasons of job searching or purchasing the goods for a new home.

Social structure and *organisation.* The characteristics of both societies involved in the emigration / immigration process are extremely important for immigrants' integration. The features of the society of origin shape the general social development of the individual as an adult, with a certain acquired set of norms, beliefs, and values, and consequently determine his/her initial behaviour in the recipient country. On the other hand, the host society influences the immigrants' integration experiences through its capacity to support them from a material and informational point of view and to offer them not only the legislation framework to be socially included, but also the behavioural and attitudinal environment to feel substantively accepted as full social members. The relation between the articulation of the policy framework and perceptions towards immigrants is an interdependent one, where language and terminology underpin public attitudes and reactions (Hall, 1996a). It is through the interaction of public policy and mass media that official discourses are articulated and public attitudes shaped, which has an impact on the way immigrants are perceived and received in the host society, an aspect that greatly influences their integration in all its dimensions.

3 *RESEARCH ISSUES AND FINDINGS*

3.1 METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

I approached the research from a *qualitative* point of view, using participant observation and intensive interviewing as the main methods to collect details about the participants' lives in Canada, particularly Ottawa and Montreal. I was concerned with the acknowledgement of their experiences the way they were perceived at that very moment, their opinions and representations the manner they were induced by the very circumstances in which they found themselves. Thus, I was able to discover their motivations and expectations, as well as identify individual and group symbols and explore their way(s) of coping with the Canadian social reality.

On the one hand, I am offering pictorial information about the participants' experiences, emotions, feelings, and opinions, as well as a representation of their interaction with other individuals belonging to the same or other ethnic or mainstream group(s). On the other hand, I am interpreting their experiences through the lens of the theories related to integration, ethnicity, and identity that are framing the thesis. The emphasis is going to fall on the interviewees' particularity, on their social construct that rests on the interaction between their motivations, expectations, individual symbols, perceptions, internalised reasoning, and social reality.

I had the opportunity to explore the Romanian immigrants' lives in Ottawa and Montreal as an insider. While this *research location* is an advantage, as I myself am able to experience Canadian life in its complexity and observe the participants in different circumstances, I am well aware of my own biases as a Romanian, with certain knowledge that has been contextually acquired and situationally applied. Yet, I consider participant observation an asset in this type of study. In this respect, I mention that the interpretation relies not only on the data provided by the participants in the study, but also on the information supplied to me by different other Romanian

immigrants and ethnic group 'leaders' (who immigrated to Canada both after 1989 and before 1989) to whom I talked in my social interaction within the ethnic group.

The complexity of integration-related issues that I wanted to explore made me approach a synthesis of research methods: *participant observation*, which enabled me to observe my participants in some of their every day activities (family life, church attendance, socializing episodes) and intensive *semi-structured* and *non-structured interview* to support "focussed life history" (Given, p.c.).

By using the intensive individual interview, I had the advantage to develop an interactive communication relationship with my respondents, and thus observe their 'small behaviour' (micro-linguistic behaviour), which, at times, told more than words alone. I could notice which questions the participants were reluctant to answer, for which topics they manifested interest, or on which information they insisted and why. For example, it happened that one interviewee strongly insisted on the type of work that he had done in Romania, the problems that he had run into at different workplaces, providing accurate details – names, locations, specific behaviours, figures, projects carried out – seemingly in an attempt to emphasize the hard times that he had from a professional point of view, in spite of his strong education, also stressed with a lot of pieces of information. This may indicate the professional frustrations that he had in Romania, still ·resonating with him at the time of the interview. It may ·be equally relevant the fact that the same person also insisted, to a less extent though, on his project to set up a business of his own in Canada and on the importance this fact has for him, demonstrating, the way he put it, the positive trend in his integration process "after *only* two years here" (2m) (italics to reflect the interviewee's emphasis). Other participants tended to insist a lot on their experiences in other European countries, before emigrating to Canada, taking them as a permanent reference for their present situation here. These examples may be interpreted as a form of self-awareness and self-

evaluation in the process of adjustment; the participants 'assess' the state of their 'well-being' or lack of comfort in Canadian society through comparisons to the past, individually rapported to their perceptions in those circumstances, which in turn may set up the framework for their personal measure of integration.

Employing the exhaustive individual semi-structured interview contributed to the progress of the research, as I could grasp what type of inquiries seemed to make the respondents as uncomfortable as to avoid answering them. This called upon me offering them certain pieces of information (obtained in the field or provided to me by other participants) in order to see how specifically they reacted to that and to challenge them to have an opinion on the respective topic. It is this way that they made available to me details revealing their acknowledgement and/or experiencing of the situation in question, otherwise avoided in the conversation. For example, it happened that some participants shunned telling me what they were doing for a living in Canada at the moment of the interview, or what workplaces they had had before that, or what their source of income was, but later on in the conversation they disclosed the fact that they were either working in the shadow economy or that they had done that, or that they were the beneficiaries of the social aid.

The interviews took place in different public or private locations, most often at the respondents' places, over a cup of coffee or dinner, which enabled me to also notice patterns of house decoration, type of neighbourhood, intra-familial behaviours, cooking habits, all of these mirroring the (non-)retention or preservation of Romanian ethnicity in various forms of expression. The fact that the interviews were for the most part conducted at the participants' places, at their suggestion, may be seen as a need to talk about the respective issues (I had previously informed them about the type of inquiries) in a familiar environment, which they may have perceived as offering them the security they needed in order to feel comfortable. Yet, it may

also be interpreted as a preservation of the Romanian hospitality when it comes to having guests over, since in almost all the instances I was invited to dinner or lunch, although they did not know me very well.

The familial behavioural patterns that I noticed seem to indicate a perpetuation of the patriarchal archetypes, with the women preparing the food and setting up the table, and shared responsibilities towards the children, yet with the father having more authority over them. The home decoration style also mirror an upholding of the Romanian motifs and patterns, most often with traditional objects brought from back home, for example hand made table clothes or little wooden statues. I observed the religious connection in several instances, since there were also put on view glass or wood painted icons, very well-known in Romania, which may point out the preservation of some form of religious identity. In two cases, the Romanian flag was displayed in visible places. While in Romania the religious icons and the traditional table clothes or statues are common home decorations, the existence of the flag in the homes is something extremely rare and even mocked at, even on Romania's National Day, unless on more 'popular' special occasions, as for example a resonating success of the national football team. The fact that in Canada it is displayed in visible places and all the time in the homes reflects how a different location creates awareness of, and reinforces, ethnic identity, how perceptions on what is important and relevant in identity affiliation change according to physical space and constraints of circumstances. While in the two above mentioned cases the participants have been in Canada for a relatively short time (six months, respectively two years), so the Romanian national 'loyalty' and connectedness can be interpreted as still prevalent in their identification, the religious icons and traditional decorative objects were observed with both those that left Romania not too long ago and those that immigrated more than five-ten years ago.

I opted for the intensive semi-structured interview as the main research instrument, because it is my belief that, in order to better understand why an individual, be s/he part of a minority or a majority group, has acted a certain way, there is a need to see the things from his/her perspective, which gives the researcher the possibility to explore the implications of the social interactions for the respondents in depth. The participants were given the opportunity to talk about their interaction with the others, about their ethnic identity, economic achievement, social participation, civic and social recognition etc. The way I conducted the interviews depended on what answers the participants provided and how they interpreted the meaning of the questions. Yet, I mention that there was a set of common themes in the questions that I asked all the participants, which enabled the comparative view (e.g. social, economic, cultural, and family life in Romania; decisional and support factors leading to their coming to Canada; family, social, economic, cultural, school life and support in Canada; inter-personal and inter-/intra-group relations and perceptions within Canadian society; past and future plans and expectations etc.).

The themes addressed in the questions (see Appendix 2) were prompted by my observations in the field, both in Romania and in Canada, related to what aspects presented importance for the Romanian emigrants / immigrants in their social, cultural, economic, and political experiences. Informal discussions during the social interaction with potential participants or other Romanian immigrants informed both the research approach and the type of questions to be subsequently asked. The form of the interviews was thus adequate to what I perceived to be the participants' perspective. It was not an easy task to get consistent answers to open-ended questions. In that, I made use of empathy, trying to put myself in their place and see the world through their eyes. I often posed supplementary questions, made different comments, approached topics in such a way that some unpleasant experiences were elicited from the respondents without making them feel uncomfortable. They revealed various opinions, shared

striking feelings, recollected past memories, and discussed past and future expectations. From this point of view, the interviews also acquired an *intensive approach*. I was interested in exploring the participants' lives in Canada – partly rapported to their situation in Romania – aiming not so much at obtaining pictorial information, but rather at deciphering the rationales of their actions, at discovering their motivations, or lack thereof, and the system of values that they embrace.

The challenge that I encountered was the fact that, in the circumstances of the face-to-face interview and tape recording, some of the interlocutors' way of thinking and discourse was often analytical, self-conscious, or critical, as rather as they had been informed of the purpose of the research and almost all of them have higher education, most often in Humanities, which favoured the development of a sharp critical thinking. It was my impression as a researcher that in a couple of instances, the participants chose to 'interpret' a certain set of roles and norms that seemed to distort reality, that is they tried to 'improve' the situations they (had) experienced, or, on the contrary, depicted them so as to give me the kind of pictorial information that they assumed I would like, for any of the following reasons: high self-esteem, low self-esteem, need to be comforted and/or supported etc. Most often I was not concerned with how 'honest' my respondents were in their life-focussed histories, whether the information they provided was 'true' or 'false' as opposed to 'reality', but I considered it as the expression of their own cultural and symbolic representations and practices (Iluţ, 1997: 88). Beyond how much 'truth' their affirmations held, they were reflective of a certain attitude and reading that they adopted in those circumstances. Such a perspective facilitated my exploring of the 'where', 'when', 'how', and 'why' of those circumstances during the individual interviews and my subsequent interpreting of these variables.

Depending on the available logistics, I had had a series of contacts with most of the participants before the 'official' interview took place. These preceding meetings with them in an informal setting – over a cup of coffee for example – aimed at establishing a mutual confidence and respect feeling, at creating a friendly environment favourable to the developing of the subsequent intensive interviews. This also made it possible for me to make certain that my informants fully understood the nature of the research in which they agreed to participate, which at times worked against the very purpose of the research, because of the self-awareness that the interviewees manifested while talking to me.

During the interviews, I expressed myself in a familiar, friendly manner, adapting to the different characters of the participants, so as to have them behave as naturally as possible. It is what J. Douglas (in Iluț, 1997: 91) called *creative interview*. The information thus provided allowed me to infer the distinct perspective of each respondent, which often times was different from that inferred by the researcher. The interviews gave the participant the liberty to reflect on the moments s/he considered crucial in his/her life trajectory. The experiences lived by immigrants may be considered events that have de-structured and re-structured their past experiences and will determine their future. It is my opinion that emigration / immigration itself is such an 'epiphany' (term used by James Joyce and mentioned in Iluț, 1997: 92).

Research participants' recruitment and sample characteristics. I chose 16 first generation immigrants, from both the English and French provinces – Ontario (Ottawa) and Quebec (Montreal), who were willing to talk not only about their Canadian experiences in descriptive terms, but also (or especially) about their psychological and behavioural implications: impulses, outbursts, enthusiasm, frustrations, deceptions, hopes, troubles, disappointments, satisfactions, a whole range of thoughts, feelings, and perceptions that sometimes cannot be expressed in words,

or their 'holders' are reluctant to share them with the researcher. One has to be really close to the person in question for him/her to acknowledge having experienced such emotions and to try to depict them. Consequently, I appealed to my friends, relatives, colleagues, and acquaintances to put me in contact with their friends, family members, ex-colleagues etc. who have been in Canada for several years.

Snow-ball sampling posed problems of representation, but, depending on the resources, I tried to keep the proportion between males and females, as well as between the respondents from Ottawa and those from Montreal: 5 males and 3 females in Ottawa, 4 males and 4 females in Montreal. With one exception, all the participants emigrated to Canada after the collapse of Communism in Romania (1989). The participants' age varies between 21 years and 50 years, most of them in their 30s. The reason why I also chose a participant that came to Canada when the Communist regime was still in power is the fact that his experiences are representative for what Romanians dealt with at that time and how they perceived Canada and the Occident in general, which is relevant for the social psychology of the Romanian people in general and for the different motivations to emigrate, according to generation. As mentioned before, I start from the premise that the Romanians' perceptions and evaluations of Canadian society and the process of integration are influenced by their past experiences in the country. It is my assumption that these experiences, although not lived for the most part during the Communist years – in the case of those that emigrated to Canada in their 20s and/or 30s (who make up most of my participants) – carry the imprint of a certain way of thinking that was formed, and education that was received, during the totalitarian period. The social psychology thus shaped may help to explain the Romanian immigrants' general unwillingness to participate in the project, as well as their individualism and spirit of competition.

The immigrants in Ottawa seemed to be more reluctant to get engaged into the project than those in Montreal. The reason could be provided if considering the socio-demographic composition of the Romanian ethnic group in Ottawa. People that establish in this city are slightly older than those in Montreal or have been in Canada for longer; they mainly come to the capital when they have already had a job confirmation or a relatively stable situation. So, they may not feel the need to talk about their adjustment experiences any more, partly because they may want to forget about them and/or because they find themselves very busy with their present life, and/or because they perceive the 'community' as being very small and they are over cautious when it comes to the others' potential realisation that it was them who provided particular information. Generally, in Ottawa there was manifested a tendency to remain as 'incognito' as possible and hence, many refusals to be interviewed, especially in the case of older people (in their 50s now). The participants in Montreal were more prone to collaborating in the project, which I explain through the socialising connections that we had had before, their age (similar to that of the researcher), and/or their need to speak out about their experiences and perceptions, since they are still struggling to start a life in Canada according to their expectations, even if they have been here for already 2 years.

Before analysing the extent to which the participants succeeded in integrating within Canadian society, I will first cast an overview on their specific social-demographic characteristics (see Appendix 3), which must have been linked to their decision to emigrate and are now shaping their abilities to cope with certain situations within the host society. For the sake of anonymity, number codes associated with the letter 'm' or 'f' to differentiate their gender are used.

I consider that age at immigration, immigration category, period spent in Canada, education / occupation in Romania and in Canada, and marital status are particularly important in the present study. On the one hand, these variables may have a significant effect on the

immigrants' adjustment in the host society, by contributing to the formation of their expectations and consequently to the way they perceive the degree to which social reality in Canada meets their expectations, or the way they get socialised on the North-American continent. On the other hand, they may also make the difference between the two groups taken into consideration (Ottawa and Montreal).

While the average age is about the same in the two cities, the period spent in Canada is considerably longer for the participants in Ottawa than for the interviewees in Montreal, mainly because of age at immigration. I am exploring the possibility that age at immigration – which was proved to exert a positive effect on the immigrants' educational and occupational achievements in the host society (Boyd et al., 1985, Kalbach & Kalbach, 2000) – corroborated with longer time spent in Canada increase the likelihood that the self-evaluation of the integration process and social interaction should be also positive. The work profile of the participants in Ottawa indeed indicates a greater professional stability and 'success' than it is the case with the participants in Montreal, in spite of the high education that most of them (regardless of the city) have. The findings of the research, as it will be later documented, suggest that this has a definite say in their general well-being, both psychological and material. This situation may well be the direct consequence of their spending more time in Canada and hence their getting Canadian education and/or work experience – an aspect that the research also revealed to be most important in the hiring practices in both cities. Two of the participants in Ottawa came to this city from Montreal and Toronto after they had had the confirmation of a job in their field of specialisation (13m and respectively 16m).

It is a fact that most Romanian immigrants choose Montreal or Toronto as their main destination in Canada (Romanian Embassy in Canada, March, 2005, p.c.) partly because of the social networks, partly because of the perceived more numerous economic opportunities. In this

respect, Ottawa is more restrictive, through its economic structure – mainly governmental and administrative jobs, requiring fluent bilingualism. As a consequence, the immigrants that get here do so mainly upon well-established living and working plans, after having overcome the critical period at the beginning of their staying in Canada. As one of the participants who experienced both cities admits, Montreal seems like "a receiving mouth and a filter at the same time, and consequently there are left a lot of things that shouldn't be. In Ottawa... things are different. In Ottawa the Romanian community is almost exclusively made up of intellectuals. It's another way that problems are raised, answers and solutions are found, discussions are led..." (13m).

Another differentiating characteristic of the two city samples is the marital status: with the participants in Ottawa, it can be noticed that most of them are married or emigrated to Canada when being married, together with their spouses, as opposed to those in Montreal – most of them single – which influences the way social and economic hardships in the new society are endured and dealt with. The partner's emotional support and, not in the least case, financial contribution to home expenses are factors acknowledged by participants as essential in the way they experience Canadian reality: "it was my husband who supported me emotionally and I supported him in my turn" (15f); "it was pretty nasty for me here at the beginning, because I didn't know anybody... I have been living alone... In Belgium there were three-four of us living in the same apartment, sharing the expenses, while here... I have to pay $450 for rent, plus the other expenses, electricity, telephone, TV... It is like 3 times more than in Belgium" (5m); "we supported each other, when one was down... the other one encouraged him/her and vice-versa...We managed to get over the hardships..." (13m).

As far as the immigration category is concerned, it is the skilled worker category that prevails in both cities. In the case when the participants immigrated as children or young adults,

children or young adults, their parents opted for the same category when coming to Canada. On the one hand, this means that the participants have, at least theoretically, the necessary education, work experience, language skills, and financial resources – to name just a few of the criteria – so, the human capital to qualify under the points system now in force both in Quebec and in Ontario. On the other hand, it means that the economic purposes prevailed in the participants' motivation to emigrate, as stated by most participants themselves, too, which must have implicitly created expectations regarding the economic setting that they thought they would find in Canada: "In Romania it's pretty difficult: even if you have a high salary, the possibility to be successful materially and professionally is low enough" (16m); "I was motivated to succeed and earn a better living" (14m); "I needed to leave Romania as soon as possible, because I knew I could do nothing with the salary there and the opportunities which were almost inexistent" (8f); "After 2 faculties and years of work, I hadn't succeeded *anything* from a material point of view" (2m).

Of the socio-demographic factors, gender does not necessarily make the difference between the two samples, in the sense that both in Montreal and in Ottawa, there are female participants that came to Canada with their families, either as children – at a rather early age – or as spouses. In one case though (4f), she came to Canada as a sponsored spouse, after her husband had been living here for 13 years: "I got married in Romania and then decided to follow him here. We had been school colleagues, but we hadn't kept in touch. We discussed about the possibility that he should move back to Romania, but it was more difficult with his job... not impossible, but more difficult. It wasn't difficult for me to decide to follow him, but afterwards... it was. « Why did I leave? »" (4f). Her second thoughts about following her husband in Canada are linked to the professional situation that she is experiencing here, as it will be later documented. In the other case that the female respondent came as a spouse (15f), the decision to emigrate was taken by

both partners, due to "the bad situation in the country" (15f). In one instance (13m), the 'traditional' gender roles – with the male as the main applicant and the female as a spouse – have been reversed, since it is the male interviewee who came to Canada as a spouse. The reason was the fact that his wife had more chances to sum up the necessary points to qualify for permanent residency in Canada, due to her work specialisation and language skills.

The socio-demographic characteristics indicate a more stable sample in Ottawa, in terms of time spent in Canada and work profile. As mentioned before, it seems that Ottawa is such a centre that attracts immigrants when they have already had a stable situation confirmed. Three of the Ottawa participants (13m, 15f, 16m) had applied for Quebec, since the time to process the immigration file is a lot shorter than for the English provinces and the financial requirements (both application charges and resources to be considered for the points system) are lower, but they moved to Ottawa once they or their spouses received a job offer according to the Romanian field of specialisation. Likewise, 10f and 11f came to Ottawa when one of their parents had a secure job in this city. Hence, the perceptions on the experiences they have here will probably be different from the sample in Montreal, where the socio-demographic characteristics indicate uncertainties about a workplace and an economic situation that is not stable.

3.2 ETHICS CONCERNS

The interviews were recorded, after having the participants' *oral consent* on tape. The reason why I opted for an oral consent was my belief that the participants would have felt reluctant to answer the questions if I had asked for a written consent. The explanation lies in the historical background: for more than forty years, during the totalitarian Communist regime, Romanians feared to sign any paper, lest there should be consequences restraining their

individual freedom, including jail and/or emotional and/or physical torture. They were afraid to talk about the injustices of the system, even to their own family, nonetheless there should be a written proof to point at them as the 'traitors' of the country. That is why, I strongly believe that the participants felt much more comfortable with the oral consent.

The respondents were informed about the possibility to withdraw from the project at any time and that I promised to destroy the information they would have provided at the moment they might decide to end their participation in the research. Yet, no case of this kind was registered. The participants were also given the opportunity to review their interview data and modify information to which they had contributed, if they had changed their mind about revealing specific information. There were a few cases when the respondents wanted to add something several days after the interview had been taken, as they remembered they should have told me about some instances in their lives, reflective of a certain question that I had asked them, but none of them wanted to listen to their interviews in order to take out any piece of information.

It happened that in two instances, not considered as participant case studies in the present research, the people to whom I talked did not agree to being tape recorded, since they considered that the information that they were going to provide to me would have negative consequences on their situation in the city and respective 'communities'. And indeed their experiences revealed power conflicts within the Romanian ethnic groups in Ottawa and Montreal, emphasizing either personal interests in a certain social position and status within the ethnic group, or more in-depth power struggle ramifications at the level of certain Romanian political groupings both in Canada and Romania. I mention that the details thus provided will be used as general research data, the interlocutors being informed about this fact. I will not make specific references to the people involved in this kind of power struggles or their political and group affiliation, in order to protect the informants' anonymity and to respect their wish not to do so.

The *anonymity* of all participants is ensured by using number codes for their names – associated with the letter 'm' or 'f', according to their gender – and by not disclosing any information regarding their specific work place or/and school, or any other piece of information that might lead to their identification in Canada or Romania. Yet, the participants were also informed that full anonymity could not be guaranteed, since they had been recruited through the snowball sampling method.

The interviews were conducted in the *Romanian language*, in which I am fluent. I made the translation and interpretation, ensuring that the meaning stayed the same. In four cases, the interviews were conducted in *English* (see Appendix 3); it was the participants who chose to speak about their experiences in this language, since three of them – who have been in Canada for about 10 years and emigrated at a very young age – motivated it was "easier" for them that way, while the fourth one – who has been in Canada for 2 years – thought it would be "easier" for me as a researcher, since he had a very good command of the English language and he was "very comfortable" with both the mother tongue and English.

Security of data was ensured by keeping all the gathered information into my personal computer in a passworded file. The respondents were not paid for their participation in the interviews. Yet, I offered to pay for the drinks or deserts that we had if the interview was taken in a public space. I mention that this is the custom in Romania when an invitation is made for someone to join one anywhere in a public space. In the case of the interviews conducted in the participants' private homes, I brought small 'attentions' in the form of sweets or drinks for the members of the family, which is as well a common habit in Romania. The motivation, besides keeping in line with the Romanian tradition, was to reduce the potential social distance between me, as a researcher, and them, as participants in the project.

Dissemination of the research findings and results. The findings may constitute the basis

for further more elaborate research on the specific needs of the Romanian immigrants in Ottawa

and Montreal.

3.3 DATA PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION

3.3.1 DECISIONS, PLANS, AND EXPECTATIONS: "Canada is somewhere a step lower than

Heaven" (13m)

With one exception, the participants emigrated after 1989. As young adults, they went

through the period of social and economic transition at its fullest extent in Romania, which was

mainly the cause of their decision to leave for Canada. They experienced deep feelings of

frustration because they could not live a life according to their wishes or expectations, from both

an economic and a social point of view. Even though the financial well-being was satisfactory

enough in some instances, they could not enjoy a psychological comfort, too, because of the

general social-economic circumstances in the country: "From a material point of view, I cannot

say we lived hard. It's also true that, is spite of all these, it was not enough to meet our needs...

But, at one moment, you are beginning to wish for that something else that we couldn't find

there, but we did find it here... that freedom. There is freedom in Romania as well, but it seems

to me that it is not full, so as for one to actually feel it! (...) In Romania... the hierarchy of values

was set up differently... Well, here it's not so much more different either, but still... Freedom...

as a daily living I mean. In Romania things got so far, that non-value was taken for value and this

thing bothered us... All these added up and made us take this decision..." (13m).

The 'hierarchy of values' or 'non-values' is invoked by other participants, too, as they

talk about the corruption at the professional level, which made it almost impossible to succeed on

their own, in spite of their high education and professional skills. The general feeling was that of lack of perspectives, which triggered their considering of emigration: "My parents hated the so-called democratic regime, no hope for the future!" (1f); "I wanted to escape, it seemed to me that in Romania I had no perspectives" (3m); "I decided to stay here, because I felt there were more opportunities in Canada" (10f). The relatively 'accessible' process to emigrate, in terms of time and required financial resources, also enhanced the interviewees' decision to opt for Canada: "I chose Canada because it is easier to emigrate and there is not so much money required" (6f). This is particularly valid with those that applied for Quebec.

Although granted the entrance to Canada through applying for the French province, many Romanian immigrants choose Ontario as landing destination, particularly Toronto, for the perceived more economic opportunities and /or language motifs. It is also the case of 15f and 16m in the present study. In one instance in the present research, the above-mentioned situation was reversed though, since 1f reveals that she and her family "were supposed to go to Toronto, but chose Montreal at the airport, a premeditated 'crime' on the part of (her) parents" (1f). The reason was the existence of relatives in Montreal. The social networks prove to be an important criterion to consider for the landing destination (also the case of 16m), since the immigrants tried to make some connections since before leaving for Canada. This can be interpreted as an attempt to secure themselves a space less threatening from a social point of view.

As mentioned before, there are Romanians that choose the short work migration in Europe over the more 'problematic' legal emigration to the well-known immigrant-receiving countries, such as Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America, or Canada. It is perceived as 'problematic' by taking into account the distance from the country of origin and implicitly the lack of physical contact with the loved ones in Romania, the demanding financial

and time investment in such a process, and, not in the least case, the cultural differences and the feeling of total unknown. It is also the case with two of the participants in the present study (5m, 7m). Before deciding to emigrate to Canada, they went to Europe – Belgium, respectively Portugal and France – and tried to earn their living there for a while; they only succeeded in working in the shadow economy and outside their field of specialisation, in positions such as workers in constructions, food branch, or agriculture. But that did not seem to bother them, as they had expected to happen so since before leaving Romania (it is a fact that young people with medium and high education in Romania go and seasonally work in such positions in Europe). Yet, they disclose that what made them re-consider their options, in spite of their meeting their financial expectations to a certain extent, was the general public attitude towards immigrants in Europe, particularly in the above-mentioned countries, and the lack of perspectives to work legally: "The French are nationalists... extreme nationalists when they find out you want to work there. (...) If I talked to a person that I know is coming from a poorer country, I wouldn't treat him/her inferiorly in any way; I would just talk to him/her and then emit opinions, not like that... from the very beginning" (7m); "I spent two years in Belgium, but there was no chance for me to get legal papers. That's why I wanted to emigrate to Canada: it seemed to me that it was good to work legally, because in the shadow economy you cannot work on a regular basis" (5m). It is in this kind of experiences that one can see the conventional discourse at work. As Penninx (2005) puts it, for the last three decades Western European countries have been confronted with work migration, especially from the ex-Communist countries, but their policies in this respect had an "ad-hoc, reactive and controlled character", as opposed to the "more explicit and pro-active policies of countries such as Canada, Australia and the United States" (Penninx, 2005: 4). Consequently, in spite of the debates on the merits of immigration in these "classic immigration countries", the changing discourse on migration, and its "factual development", "the basic

acceptance has not been fundamentally challenged" (Penninx, 2005: 4). In contrast, the common reactions and view of Europe is one of "basic non-acceptance of immigration" (Penninx, 2005: 4). Thus, public perceptions are shaped and attitudes of rejection towards immigrants reinforced, with consequences on "what place they are attributed in society in general" (Penninx, 2005: 4). If, at a first stage, Romanian work migrants choose to ignore these attitudes in Europe for the sake of the financial aspects, on a long term they turn to such countries as Canada, which are promoted as sites of social and economic opportunities.

The image of Canada in Romania is one of the main factors contributing to the creation of expectations regarding the life that immigrants are supposed to have here. This represents an important aspect that informed most of the participants' decision to leave Romania for a better life in Canada. The 'selling' of Canada in Romania is made not only through the public media images – reflective of the public discourse on multiculturalism and economic opportunities taken by 'successful' immigrants that enjoy a life without worries here – but also through the private discourse of the Romanian permanent residents in Canada. One participant acknowledges that "most of the time, the information that got to us, and generally to Romania, is not true. I don't know why people perceive that they have to be in a permanent competition and then, they cannot tell those at home that, after leaving Romania and succeeding in breaking this 'chain', they got to a place where they may be living a little worse than in the country. Then, the image of Canada in Romania, an image that I also had, is that Canada is somewhere a step lower than Heaven. The only worry we would have had would have been to live, nothing else. Well…it's not true, as here there are people that live hard… Of course, you don't have to worry about the next day in terms of food, but you do worry in terms of bills, debts etc. So… hardships are everywhere" (13m). Likewise, another interviewee tells how, upon coming to Canada, he realised that "there were 2

worlds completely different. We were used to what we had seen on TV, with skyscrapers... And we got in that village near Ottawa and we were like: « Oh, my God... It's like a movie with John Wayne! » I expected here to be much more advanced socially than in Romania" (9m). 4f also states that she did not expect anybody to wait for her "with the red carpet", but that she did expect a certain urban landscape, a certain physical space, the way it had been painted in the TV shows and movies, particularly with "skyscrapers". Although only 16 years old when coming to Canada, 1f remembers that she "thought it would be easy to earn a living here", but she soon saw her parents struggling with the daily life and how they "were running out of money very fast" (1f).

Making up one's mind about leaving the country of origin for the rest of the life is a demanding process, from both a psychological, and a financial point of view. Familiar places and people are left behind and memories and hopes are the only thing, besides a couple of suitcases, that are carried by those making the decision to emigrate. As opposed to the relative 'easiness' with which the immigration process is depicted in mass media, the participants acknowledge that the whole process is very consuming from a financial and time point of view: once the decision to emigrate is taken, official papers from different institutions must be obtained (a process not made easy by the overarching bureaucracy), translations and legal certifications must be done, forms filled in, medical tests run, all these involving not only expenses that most often exceed the approximated costs, but also stress and time that lead to psychological exhaustion: "I received the 2nd set of forms within a month, but I just kept looking at them for another 4 months, because I didn't have the necessary money. (...) It was unbelievably difficult for me... I landed in Canada with *one suitcase, one suitcase*, nothing more, and $2,300, all of it borrowed" (2m). The financial investment in the process of emigration is one that may leave scars in case the expectations fail to

be met in the receiving society. Therefore, the permanent residents in Canada who may not enjoy a life according to the hopes they made in Romania manifest the reluctance to admit that the money was not invested wisely; they reinforce the public discourse through the private 'selling' of an idealised image of Canada. As most of the participants in this study point out, they or their parents had to sell their apartments and/or the cars, or to borrow the money in order to have the required financial resources to be granted the permanent residency: "Our apartment was the amount of money that we had to have in the bank account for emigrating, while the car was the plane tickets" (13m); "My parents sold their apartment and they gave me the money ... $6,000" (8f). Others chose to work hard in Europe for a while, most often in the shadow economy, to save the money that they knew they would need for the emigration process (5m, 7m, 16m).

In these circumstances, documentation about life in Canada is a step that may cast light on the challenges that are to be met across the ocean. The information means available to the potential emigrants in Romania are rather reduced and confusing. Most of the participants say that they got the affective and material support for their decision to emigrate from their families, while the informational support was provided either by acquaintances and/or friends that were about to leave for Canada and had done some research, or were already here and could tell them about their own experiences. A very common site of information picking and social networking proves to be the internet, through the so-called on-line 'chat forums'. Yet, the interviewees generally mention coming across contradictory pieces of information, which made them not fully rely on either the positive, or negative opinions displayed on the websites. This may indicate that integration is a perceptional phenomenon, with each Romanian resident in Canada making his/her own personal evaluation of how 'successful' his/her life is: "there are so many totally contradictory opinions there (on the forum website)! Now, it depends for what specific purpose

each came, how each perceives life here, what s/he thought s/he could do here, what s/he can actually do here, how easily each gets desperate, what personality each has..." (7m).

Adopting a positive attitude towards what was going to be found in Canada represents a form of self-motivation that contributed the creation of a balance in the psychological comfort of the Romanian people who had already got involved in the process of emigrating. It is either that they chose to ignore the negative signals from the people already in Canada, or they took those signals as just an instance of weakness or personality features, even if the respective opinions came from their relatives or friends. In this respect, it could be evaluated that the official image of Canada, the way it is mediated and promoted abroad, has prevalence over the unfavourable terms in which this country is depicted by those that 'dare' communicate such images under the sake of anonymity on the chat forums: "I showed dad what the people on the chat forum were saying about life here. He had a crisis of pessimism and said: « Maybe you shouldn't leave, maybe you should stay at home and we'll get into the European Union and everything will be all right. » But I didn't think that it would be worse, I thought that it would be better. I was afraid that it may be bad, I still am. I know it may be bad… there are Canadians that don't manage, lose their jobs, have too many debts, but I go forward" (3m).

The economic purposes were not the only reason why the participants chose to leave Romania. They were doubled by social grounds and, in one case, by marriage arrangements: "I wasn't too interested in what I was to find here. I came here for my husband", 4f says, although she admits that later on, she came to regret her decision to a certain extent, because of the harsh reality that she faces in Montreal.

A particular life-focussed story, representative of what the immigrants that came to Canada during the totalitarian Communist regime were determined to endure in order to seek

their freedom abroad, is revealed by 9m. His immigration experience seems to be shared, for most of its part, by other Romanian residents in Canada (who did not wish to be taped) that took the chance to emigrate before 1989. I felt their stories far more loaded with feelings of attachment to Romania and the people there, probably because they perceived their emigration as something that they "had to do", as "*the* only possible way" for them to enjoy a better living; they felt trapped within an oppressive regime and saw no other means to secure themselves a free living. Their longing for freedom gave them the "courage" to try to escape Communism and made them take the "huge risk" not to come back in the country once they happened to have the opportunity to be abroad for a particular reason: "that was a risk and took a lot of courage (i.e. leaving Romania).... To do that thing during Communism... It was like that...if you had the chance to go abroad...lots would say: « you would be stupid if you came back! » Only 2 people in 8 got political asylum though. When you are young...you have great dreams... When you have such an opportunity, you don't think to come back any more. It was the period when you would have tickets for bread in Romania... You are kind of not realising the situation... We didn't have the concept of jail... We stayed for a year in Austria, slept on the benches in a park, then spent 10 days in quarantine in the camp... I don't think I will ever drink worse coffee than there! It was as if somebody had washed dishes with it!" (9m). Their families at home would suffer the consequences of their leaving the country illegally, with the Communist secret services searching and monitoring their homes and their parents paying for the vocational schools that they had attended. But, their expectations of Canada were different from those of the participants that immigrated after 1989. They were different because the reference was made to what they had lived before: "There was that notion of freedom.... to do what you wanted... even to buy what you wanted. In Romania... you couldn't buy what you wanted; you only bought what there was and what they wanted to give you... There was that fear to come back, knowing what was

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waiting for me... It was easier for us not to think of going back, because we hadn't got to make a

situation for us back home... People come here and then tell those at home things that are not real

and that's why there are families that emigrate and then see what there is here and say: « Wait a

minute...if I had known it was like that from the very beginning... »" (9m). As a consequence,

they did not consider their coping with the reality in Canada as "difficult" as the participants who

emigrated after 1989 perceive it.

The Romanian immigrants that enjoyed a material situation comfortable enough in

Romania are prone to experiencing tormenting feelings to return, and some do take the decision

to go back, in spite of the 'shame' that returning immigrants are subject to in Romania. In the

present study, it is the case of 14m, who after 2 years in Canada, bought his one-way plane ticket

for Romania, as he believes he can do better professionally there. Although he stresses the fact

that he does not have "high first impressions, no matter where he would go" (14m), the general

state of disappointment that he has experienced in Canada may be said to come from his previous

experiences in Romania and abroad, which were not financially pressing, but rather comforting.

The extent to which the participants' expectations are confirmed by the social and

economic environment in Canada is the main factor that influences their psychological comfort,

which in turn determines their behaviour within wider society and the self-evaluation of the

degree of 'success' on the North American continent.

There is a general assumption in Romania that people would emigrate to Canada, United

States, or even to New Zealand, for the purpose of getting the citizenship, after which they would

come back somewhere in Europe or even Romania and invest the money they would have made.

The roots of such an assumption reside in the association of citizenship with the freedom of

movement. For more than 40 years, during the Communist era, Romanians' were denied a basic

human right, the liberty of movement. The country had become a confining space, where fear

dominated the whole social environment. The physical space was (perceived as) the site of social

and economic oppression, confining the individual in restricted identities. The desire to escape

such a space was thought to diminish after the removal of Communism, when hopes for a free

life motivated many Romanians not to leave the country any more. But the continuous political,

economic, and social transition imposed again travelling restrictions within the European space,

which re-motivated many of my co-nationals to try to find a better life elsewhere through illegal

work migration. As already mentioned, their experiences with the public attitudes and legal

authorities in Europe made them perceive Romanian citizenship as inferior. Although physically

present within the European geographical space as Romanian citizens, they found themselves

treated as not socially belonging, as outsiders, as second class citizens. In these circumstances,

getting another citizenship, in this case Canadian citizenship, becomes the means to remove

social shame and disadvantage within that space. "Initial plan was to stay as long as necessary to

gather some amount of money, get the citizenship, and then return home after a while", admits

14m. In another conversation, 5m also discloses his plans when leaving Romania: "I came to get

Canadian citizenship… Then, I'll see. I came because Canada gave legal papers. After I get

Canadian citizenship, maybe I'll go back to Europe… I don't know, this depends on what future

holds for me. I don't like Canada first of all because it's very far away from Romania" (5m).

Even though the plans were made to stay in Canada, some participants remain open to

possibilities, which yet exclude to a certain extent returning to Romania before getting

citizenship: "I came to Canada thinking to stay in Canada. I opted for this country because of my

job in forestry. I thought that Canada was my only chance to leave and work in my field. But I

didn't leave thinking not to ever come back to Romania. But I did leave thinking to stay here for

at least 5 years; within these 5 years…citizenship – not necessarily though, because it's not what

matters the most – but to work and see whether within these 5 years I'll be able to have a

professional career, or a job to fully satisfy me and, if I get to the conclusion that I like here a lot, maybe I'll stay here for all my life..." (7m). When asked what Canadian citizenship represented for him, he answered: "Freedom at this moment! That means that I can stay, I can leave whenever I want, anywhere in this world" (7m). In the case of 9m, Canadian citizenship also represented his "ticket for Romania", in the sense that once he got it, he "could go home" with no fear of Communist repercussions. What can be inferred is that this perception of Canadian citizenship as an instrument to secure freedom of movement within the geographical space and, to a less extent, social 'dignity', is experienced preponderantly by those that had contact with the Western European world, where they would have liked to find their way, but felt the social exclusion on ethnic grounds.

A different perception on the Canadian citizenship is revealed by 10f and 11f who have been in Canada for 10 years and came here as children: "Canadian citizenship represents something I feel very proud of having. Romanian citizenship doesn't have that much value to me. It wouldn't really matter to me if I no longer had Romanian citizenship" (10f); "Canadian citizenship gives me a sense of belonging, of this being truly a home and my new life" (11f). These statements seem to indicate the importance of age at immigration on the perceptions that are being formed; it is according to how the participants have been socialised that they evaluate the reality within the host society. Getting socialised in a certain social environment since an early age creates the sense of attachment to that particular environment and shapes a system of symbols that is reflective of that sense of belonging. Canadian citizenship is one of those symbols the interpretation of which mirrors the development in different socialisation systems and speaks for itself regarding the hierarchy of belonging preferences. For those that have developed as adults in Romania, it rather has an instrumental value, it is something that will enhance them to change external perceptions on their inner identity, which ultimately stays the same. For those

that grew up in Canada, it becomes part of their inner self and reverberates at that level with the significance of something that belongs to them, just as much as they belong to it.

To conclude regarding the long term plans when leaving Romania, most participants admit that they wanted to establish themselves in Canada for the rest of their lives, even though they left all the possibilities open, as rather as they were well-aware of the emotional and financial investement they had made: "we hardly left Romania and that moment I didn't think that I was going to be a passer-by through Canada. The fact that we didn't leave anything material in the country didn't bind us to those places any more, made us not be with the soul there and the body here. So, we thought: « if we go back, we would have to take everything from ground zero there, too »" (13m). The same logical inference regarding a potential returning to Europe after getting Canadian citizenship also makes 7m acknowledge that, while theoretically it is a valid choice, practically it is doomed to failure, since Canadian citizenship does not mean anything more than any other Western European citizenship in case one has no social connections: "after so many years in Canada… when you know how much you will have worked here to get a good job and to have a situation… you don't feel like going to Europe for nothing and get it started all over again. So what if you have Canadian citizenship there? With a job transfer from here… yeah… I wouldn't have 2nd thoughts at all, but to start there from ground zero again… no way!" (7m).

3.3.2 SETTLING IN AND TAKING CONTACT WITH THE ECONOMIC REALITY: "I felt a strong impulse to go back. I felt I was suffocating!" (2m)

The participants' thoughts upon landing in Canada, although generally dominated by the idea of a new beginning, were also marked by a feeling of insecurity and restlessness, unknown and worry. It was particularly the case of 9m who had no information about Canada in 1983 when he came here: "we were extremely nervous. We didn't know where we had come to... We didn't know what to expect... Everything was new, unknown, as if blindfolded" (9m). But information and documentation was not enough for the other participants to prevent them to experience the same kind of feelings either, as rather as they were carrying the 'load' of the financial constraints and the emotional attachment to the people they had left behind: "I felt miserable... I was very stressed, I was wondering what I was doing here...I knew why I had come here, but I felt bad... I was already homesick...to leave home...mother, father, child... I was terrified that I wouldn't be able to manage here...what kind of people I was to find... the "jungle"... a mean, capitalist world... So, it was a sensitive moment, although rationally nothing had changed" (3m).

Personal experiences at the customs may increase the feeling of insecurity and loneliness, influencing the way the immigrants perceive their place in the new society. Their managing of the paper bureaucracy both in the country of origin, as well as in Canada may point out their motivation to succeed, but also for their state of exhaustion and extreme tiredness that sometimes is taken advantage of. One of the participants recollects the moments when he landed in Canada: "When I got here I was so tired... but I was thinking again of the bureaucracy that I would have to manage at the customs... I had the misfortune to come across a sort of 'Nazi' at the customs who told me: « Sign here for this amount of money to declare that you came to Canada with,

died just the night before I left... I didn't know where the luggage was... and I was thinking that that was everything I had with me here in Canada: 2 suitcases..." (7m).

It is the previous acquaintances, old friends, or family members, already established in Canada, that released the participants' stress to a certain extent, by offering them assistance in finding accommodation, or by hosting them for a while when they first arrived, by introducing them in the urban landscape, and by coaching them with the steps to be followed regarding having the necessary papers issued. All interviewees knew before leaving Romania where they were going to stay upon landing in Canada. An important instrument in social network building for those that did not have any family members or friends already in Canada was the internet – the Romanian on-line 'chat forums' – through which they found available lodging and/or potential roommates with whom to share the living expenses. And although some of them moved out afterwards, either because of personal problems, or because the rent was too high, or because the area was not satisfactory, the fact that they knew where they were going to put up at from the very beginning was but an advantage at their first contact with the Canadian society: "We knew a family that received us in Montreal and hosted us for 2 months. We later came to the conclusion that the help that they provided was *huge*. We heard of people whose close relatives didn't want to host them for more than 2 weeks or so..." (13m). It was the case of 5m for example, who experienced feelings of emptiness and solitude, being left on his own very soon after his arrival: "I stayed 3 days at a neighbour of my cousin and then he brought me here, in this apartment, which was empty. He gave me a mattress and I was like... « Oh, my God, what am I doing here? » I wanted to go back then..." (5m).

The accommodating period is reported by most of the interviewees as having been a time of feeling uncomfortable, alone, uncertain, and frustrated. A child (12 years old) when her

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parents immigrated to Canada, 1f remembers the 'shock' of "having bought most things second hand, having lost all the stuff back in Bucharest, being surrounded by strangers, the insecurities of day to day life (unemployment and being underpaid) and, worst of all, no immediate family and friends" (1f). The impulse to return during this accommodating period has been experienced by most participants; they saw themselves overwhelmed by the difficulty to deal with the harsh reality of being all by themselves in an unfamiliar environment: "I had a moment of desperation the first 2-3 weeks, when I simply didn't know what to do. I felt a strong impulse to go back. I felt I was suffocating! I had very little money, that money was borrowed, too. I didn't know what to do, what to start doing first. It's as if you had a lot of assignments at the same time; you cannot categorise them, you cannot say which one is more important, because all of them are equally important at that moment. You have to do *everything*: to find a job, to open accounts at different companies, to buy a phone, a PC, to learn the language fast, to give the borrowed money back. All the problems come like that, they invade you and you don't know which one to get first. It is *terribly* difficult" (2m).

The hardships of finding a "proper job" and the "inability to support high expenses" almost made 14m return to Romania within the first three months as well. Yet, he decided to keep insisting and "eventually succeeded in breaking through, but still below expectations" (14m). As 13m recollects, too, at the beginning "almost everything" made him want to go back: "I think any newcomer experiences this. At least, all the people I have talked to admitted having experienced this (...). Before finding out that I was going to have a job in Ottawa, everything was black, we didn't think we would come out of it. To tell you the truth, if somebody had given me 3 tickets for Romania, I wouldn't have had second thoughts about taking this step" (13m).

The contact with the Canadian labour market proves to be (have been) the most frustrating aspect of the participants' integration experiences. There are few cases when they succeeded in finding a job according to their education and training. Those that did either had international experience in the respective field, or were educated and trained in that particular specialisation in Canada, or were employed within the ethnic institutions, or got hired in the same broad field, but far below their qualifications.

As most interviewees put it, their studies have been recognized "theoretically" or when applying for school, but not necessarily for jobs. The pressing financial needs make / made them embrace the newcomers' 'theory' according to which "at the beginning you do anything that you can and find" (9m). They generally expected not to work in the field of their specialisation, but they hoped for a faster improvement of their professional situation or for the possibility that they could find more opportunities once settled in the respective city, or that they should be contacted by at least several employers upon their applying for so many positions. In this respect, 4f points out the effect such a situation has on her psychological well-being: "When I decided to come here, I expected to have to do other jobs outside my field, which I am presently doing anyway, but I am not too satisfied with this. When you have a University degree... this fact gets in conflict with your self-esteem. Ok... maybe at the beginning, it's something new... but afterwards... there is no motivation any more" (4f).

Generally, it is both the women and the men that took jobs not only under their qualifications, but also in a totally different economic branch. With the males in Montreal though, there can be noticed a certain pattern of workplaces (see Appendix 3), which may indicate a system of networks that is functioning specifically for the immigrants in the above-mentioned city. As a matter of fact, they admit having almost exclusively newcomers as work colleagues in such positions as clothes/CD packer, construction worker, furniture assembler etc.

They found out about those jobs through other immigrants, mainly Romanians, or by appealing to the so-called Arabic 'work-placement agencies', which arrange for them to get paid according to the initial agreement, most often the minimum salary per hour, but in the shadow economy.

It is interesting to notice how most respondents have been quite reluctant to admit the fact that they are working in the shadow economy (in Montreal) or that they are the beneficiaries of social aid. Any form of support is known to have a great influence on the immigrants' psychological state of mind, enabling them to overcome the psychological stress caused by a new environment (Zani & Palmonari, 2003; Sgarro, 1988; Rutter, 1990). On the one hand, most participants acknowledged the emotional and informational support they got from their friends or family, but, on the other hand, they could hardly admit the official instrumental support, or they avoided telling me what particular positions they had or still have at work. I had to challenge them in a way for them to admit that. A possible explanation is that they were probably afraid that the interviewer should 'label' them as lacking in coping abilities, which would have been a threat to their self-esteem. As a matter of fact, a personal way to cope with the situation of working far below their qualification and training is the attitude of not being "ashamed" or frustrated with what they were or are still doing. This is the case with the males in Montreal (who have done such work in Europe before), as opposed though to 4f in Montreal or 15f in Ottawa, who reveal that, even if expected, working as a shop assistant, when having high education back home, is "frustrating" and "unsatisfying" (15f).

It is also to be noticed the participants' overemphasis on the desire to work legally and not to be dependant on the social aid, which can hardly cover the basic needs. The fact that some immigrants rely solely on the social financial support is to be blamed in their opinion. Social aid is not seen as a solution; it is not easily admitted as a form of support and is quickly dropped in the conversations: "I want to work legally. I have been on social aid for a month, but I am not

thinking of staying like this. On the black market...everything is temporary. I want to do something that I like" (7m).

All these aspects lead me to the conclusion that, where the case is, official material support, besides its pure instrumental function, is not perceived as a comforting psychological factor; on the contrary, it is seen as a possible source for the others to acknowledge the participants' inability to manage on their own or to face the stressing events efficiently.

My informants are aware of the fact that their inability to speak the language (either French or English) "properly" is a factor that impedes their integration on the labour market according to their training: "Until I have a good command of language, I cannot do much" (15f). There are cases though, as for example 6f, when the poor command of the French language is denied as a problem in the hiring process. Moreover, attitudes of rejecting to speak French, even though being aware that it is needed for the creation of empathy and for socialisation reasons, impede the formation of connections, hence no work opportunities and consequently a total lack of satisfaction with the job market in Montreal. This kind of attitude is determined by a sort of superiority over the others, particularly Canadians, that the participant in question (6f) perceives. The cause may be her high self-esteem, as a consequence of her working only in one relatively good, safe position in Romania for many years, which leads to a lack of flexibility on the job market in Canada. She experiences frustrations, as she is confronted with the situation to be all by herself, without the support (both emotional and financial) of her family which she always enjoyed in Romania. In spite of her obvious poor command of French (not recognised though), she does not accept any job compromises, because that would apparently lead to a lower esteem from other in-group members with whom she usually socialises.

Similar cases to 6f, when Romanian immigrants display an unfounded superior attitude that impedes them to accept their own minuses in the new society and makes them unwilling to work to overcome them (in this particular case, language) have been mentioned in other interviews as well. A participant casts a pertinent view on this issue: "I think Romanians' biggest frustrations, when they come here (i.e. Canada), is that, of course, nobody recognises their great 'qualities' (sarcastic), which unfortunately... they don't prove in the country (i.e. Romania) either...That's the drama... I think the biggest frustration is though linked to the language. Most Romanians don't admit that they don't have a good command of the language and that, for a while on, they won't either. To my opinion... language is the hardest barrier for an immigrant. I am now referring especially to the Romanian immigrants: they *do not* admit it, they wouldn't admit it for many more years, and it's because of this that they feel terribly frustrated – that Canadian society doesn't recognise their 'merits'. But when you don't know the language, you cannot integrate on the job market, you cannot hold a conversation in a store to buy something, you cannot hold a phone interview and so on..." (2m).

It is not only the language that is taken into account by those that 'get used to the idea' of working under their qualifications, but also the financial and time constraints to do school in Canada, or to pass examinations for which they also have to pay in order to join different professional orders: "I knew my Medical credentials wouldn't be recognised 100%, but I thought I would be able to work somehow in this field. But when I found out here about the Order of Physicians, I got used to the idea... I signed that paper that I didn't have expectations to work as a physician, and I didn't have any expectations related to this, but I did expect to be able to enter this field a little bit faster. BUT when I saw what amounts of money I have to have for that and what exams I have to pass, of which the language exam is eliminating... I realised I wouldn't be able to enter this field too soon. I would have to stay here for at least 3 more years to practise as a

nurse or so... in order to be able to manage talking to the patients. The problem is when the patient speaks Quebecois, not French.... 80% of this job is interaction with the patient... so, good command of language is essential" (8f).

The support offered by the Canadian government in assisting immigrants with free language courses proves to meet their needs only on a limited extent. The participants in the present study acknowledge the utility of such courses – in terms of both linguistic skills and opportunity to socialise with their colleagues – but complain of being scheduled to take these classes after more than 2-3 months since their arrival. During this interval, they need to manage conversational French and/or English in order to get a job and it is a reality that after that period of time they are likely to have already found a job or two (most often in the shadow economy), which require(s) them to work prolonged hours and therefore they are unable to attend the classes any more.

The rules of the Canadian labour market are learned fast: Canadian education and work experience, plus an extended social network, seem to be pre-requisites for getting a good job. All of the participants know about the fact that "some sort of Canadian education is needed in order to integrate professionally" (2m). As a consequence, most of them plan on taking specialisation courses, or they are already taking them, or they have registered for graduate studies, since they generally aim at working as closely as possible to the position they had in Romania. They are aware of the financial sacrifices that they (will have to) make, but this is viewed as an investment in their future and as a price to pay to integrate: "I took the decision to apply for an MA, because I thought it would give me the possibility to do what I was doing at home, but better. Then, there was the economic perspective as well: I will do a school here and I'll have a better position on the work market. I knew that these are the conditions, so I am

was the economic perspective as well: I will do a school here and I'll have a better position on the work market. I knew that these are the conditions, so I am playing by their rules" (3m); "It is frustrating to know that by doing school here, you get debts of several thousands of dollars, but on a long run, it can be a very good option" (2m).

Making a system of connections to enhance work placement opportunities and professional achievement is difficult during the accommodating period. The immigrants mainly rely on their acquaintances in Canada, immigrants in their turn, who have been living here not for long enough to enjoy credibility for the potential employers, or to be able to recommend the newcomers for different higher positions. The work opportunities about which the participants found out came from other Romanian immigrants, friends or acquaintances of theirs, and, in several cases, it was those references that enhanced their hiring. Yet, the nature of the positions was as such to only allow the newcomers to have a strict budget. Generally, those with whom I spoke were surprised, or even "shocked", to realise "how hard it is to get along in society without proper contacts" (14m): "More contacts and a larger network would have helped me to get a better job and go through life much easier, as I see it happening with other Canadians" (14m).

If the language criterion is generally acknowledged as an important aspect that is worth conditioning their integration on the labour market, and the Canadian education is accepted as a "rational" practice (3m) and internalised as an immigration cost, the requirement to have Canadian work experience is rather perceived in negative terms by almost all participants – some of them say that it is "important but not essential in most of the fields" (15f). In this respect, 5m makes a pertinent point: "I sent my resume as an economist, but nobody called and I don't think they will ever call me, because I don't have any education here, so there is pretty much no chance for me. And with the Canadian experience... let's face it: if I want to get hired as an economist, but I have experience in packing coffee, do you think that they will take that into account? The

thing with the Canadian experience is a stupidity! Just another reason not to take a look at you!!!! They are asking for Canadian experience, just not to tell you that you have no place in their company" (5m).

The respondents that are still struggling to enter the labour market, or even the education system, perceive various hiring practices and registration conditions as restricting their participation, feeling thus subject to a sort of "subtle discrimination" (2m) because of their immigrant status: "I had unpleasant surprises", 2m confesses. "I changed my name in the resume and I made it sound like a Quebecois name and immediately after sending the CV I got several answers, which hadn't happened when I had sent the CV with the Romanian name" (2m). The way Romanian immigrants succeed in 'getting over' such experiences is by adopting a rational attitude, meant to explain the discriminatory practices in a way that leads them to the conclusion that it is a price for them to pay for their own choice to have emigrated to Canada, since "any change takes sacrifices" (15f). As a consequence, they are aware that they "have to adapt" (6f) and that this kind of practices is after all something that they cannot impede and they all have to "deal with it until they succeed" (6f). The professional frustrations and the economic hardships experienced in Romania makes 2m (and probably many others) overlook the instances of "subtle discrimination towards immigrants in general, since any society defends its identity and this is a form of identity defence. If I think that I was discriminated against in my own country, I don't see why I would bother about small discrimination here, in a country that received me and where I am hoping to make a better life for myself" (2m). The permanent reference to the past experiences is obvious in almost all the interviews. The participants' past seems to gain prevalence over their expectations when it comes to evaluating the quality of their life in Canada; past experiences become the measure for the individual assessment of their comfort within Canadian society (see Zani & Palmonari, 2003; Brickman, 1982 – Subchapter 2.4.2).

The economic aspect may be said to have a strong impact on most of the participants in this study; it is the main reason why they emigrated, but they are generally still confronted with the difficult situation to manage on a strict budget, which makes them focus on the financial burdens in their evaluation of their lives in Canada. The fact that they insisted on this aspect in the interviews, even though the questions seemed to point to different topics is a reason enough to consider the economic issues as dominant in the way they frame their measure of integration.

3.3.3 SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INTERACTION: "Everybody minds their own business here!" (10f)

The way the participants in this study perceived and experienced the initial social and cultural interactions in the host society seems to have been (or still be) mainly influenced by the age at immigration, reflective of the socialising background and upbringing environment, so implicitly by the time they have spent in Canada. The prior intercultural exposure also has a say in this, determining some of the interviewees to adopt an openness towards a variety of cultural manifestations and to accept, and sometimes embrace, the cultural practices different from the Romanian ones. Their coping with the social and cultural reality after the initial contact suffered (or is still under) the impact of their economic achievement or lack thereof, since the financial aspect has a role to play on the psychological comfort and hence on their evaluation of the inter-individual and inter-group cultural encounters and socialising practices.

Oberg's theory (1960), according to which the immigrants suffer a cultural shock within their new society (see Subchapter 2.2.1.1), is only partly supported. If 'culture' is interpreted in broad terms, as the particular way in which the society is functioning (culturally, socially, economically), then the 'shock' upon landing in Canada was diminished to a certain extent in the case of those that emigrated as adults by the access to information, not only from mass-media,

but also from close friends or relatives who had warned them that "emigration to Canada is a real lottery" (16m). The element of disappointment came when realising the gap between the images promoted by the public discourse and those communicated through the personal experiences of those who dared admitting the economic difficulties in Canada (see Subchapters 2.4.3 & 2.4.4). Thus, the economic aspect overshadowed the strictly cultural perceptions, especially in the case of the immigrants in Montreal.

The 'shock' was (or still is) generally linked not necessarily to the cultural landscape, but to the urban physical space (both Ottawa and Montreal), to the demographic composition (Montreal), and to the social and work behaviours and the way society is structured (both Ottawa and Montreal). Yet, it is few instances that the participants perceive these aspects in negative terms; they rather interpret the 'shock' positively. The wide geography, with the huge distances between the main economic objectives, and the fact that mobility is difficult without a personal car, especially since at the beginning there are many errands to do (shopping, documents to be issued, classes to be attended etc.) is one of the things that overwhelmed most of the participants during their first weeks / months in Canada. The immigrants in Montreal, and to a less extent those in Ottawa, brought up the topic of how frustrating and tiresome it is to be dependent on the public transportation schedule. Most of the times, they have to work at night and at weekends, in factories that are located at the periphery of the city, where the buses get extremely rarely: "I thought I would die then… I waited for 2 hours in a bus stop in an industrial area! Oh, my God, I thought I was going to die there! It was winter, terribly cold, the wind was cutting through my bones and there was no shelter or anything else that could protect me… And I was alone there, at night…" (7m).

It was interesting for me to discover how the Romanian newcomers generally perceive the cultural diversity in Montreal, not necessarily as an expression of different lifestyles, but mainly

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in terms of demographic composition. They were (or still are) at least surprised, if not struck, by the fact that Europeans seem to be a numerical minority in this city. It is those that have been in Canada for a short time that manifest this slightly European-centred view: "I really thought that in Quebec I would find a European culture on the North American continent. But I came here and I saw that it's not at all like that. Europeans here means Italians, Portuguese, and Greeks who came a long time ago ... and us, Ukrainians, and Russians who have come lately. But I have never thought that I would see here so many Indians, Pakistani or black people... I expected a European combination... I expected to see more Canadians, at least in Montreal! I haven't been anywhere else (i.e. in Canada). But that's America! I have a friend in New York and he's telling me that it's the same with the Spanish speaking people there" (7m). But, it is few of them that acknowledged being 'bothered' by, or 'surprised' at, this fact during the interviews, in the conditions that they knew they were taped. Generally, they manifested such opinions while socialising and it is only those that considered me close enough that spoke them out... Yet, I mention that the meaning conveyed by the statements is one rather of surprise at the high percentages of non-Europeans in the city's demographics than lack of behavioural tolerance or acceptance of the respective cultures or lifestyles.

There is one instance though among the interviewees in Montreal (but many others among the Romanian immigrants with whom I have been interacting for two years) when the personal discourse about non-Europeans (excluding South-Americans, seen as repositories of Latin culture) was reflective of embedded negative stereotypes. As one participant puts it, "I have noticed that there are Romanians who manifest attitudinal animosities towards blacks, who are labelled 'uncivilised', 'dirty', towards Chinese, because of their food and language, towards Indians, who are considered 'uncivilised', 'gypsy-like', 'not keeping their word', 'unworthy of

trust', so there are these stereotypes... Romanians are not ready to deal with cultural variety. But

I didn't see hatred. Practically they don't discriminate against them, it's just the mentality. It may

be interpreted as a statement of our 'superiority' (sarcastic)" (3m). It is also my perception as an

observant researcher that such stereotypes remain at the level of individual ideology and do not

find reflection in the behaviour towards non-Europeans; on the contrary, if they are in contact

with them (at school or work), the Romanian immigrants do not avoid socialising with them.

The participants that show appreciation for the demographic composition in Montreal,

and respect for most of the cultural beliefs and practices of other ethnic groups – as long as they

are not imposed on them – venture into explaining cases of other Romanians' embracing the

above-mentioned negative stereotypes by mentioning the social environment in which they

developed as adults. "Mentalities from back home" (8f) are blamed for this kind of verbal

behaviour and labelling, a way of thinking that many try to abandon, since they are aware of the

different social and cultural setting where they freely chose to live the rest of their lives:

"Generally, Romanians tend to label people. I have given up all the negativities from back home

and I have a positive attitude, because I want to *evolve*... I am trying to cut off all the links with

Romania. I am not trying to forget about Romania, but I want to remember only the nice things"

(8f). The same interviewee though realises how she succumbs to the incriminated labelling verbal

behaviour later on in our conversation, admitting that she is still the repository of certain

mentalities originating in her experiences in Romania, but that she is trying "to get rid of them".

This is not to be interpreted as a denial of the Romanian ethnic identity, as it will be shown later

in this chapter.

A positive aspect related to the social interaction as an expression of the difference in

'culture' between Canada and Romania – identified by all the newcomers participant in this study

– pertains to the work or school relations and behaviour. The culture at the workplace or school in Canada is perceived as set up on different premises than in Romania, beginning with the dress code (much more "relaxed" in Canada than in Romania) and ending up with the general principles that guide the work and/or studying process: "It seems to me that they have another type of culture. For example at work, they rather cooperate than compete. They have this idea about doing their duty and if cooperation is one of their duties, then they help you. Romanians are more towards competition, conflict, struggle, than cooperation. I have noticed that the Romanians here are a little bit different from those in the country, although they are still a little bit envious... There is still that feeling: « well...I'll get him/her! » But at the same time, Romanians are warmer, they ask you directly why you are upset, as opposed to Canadians... I cannot say that ones are bad and the others are good, they are just different" (3m). The strictly professional behaviour, with the work colleagues willing to help and be polite, and the professors at school manifesting understanding towards the linguistic difficulties encountered by the Romanian students, is acknowledged and appreciated by all participants. Yet, the inability to develop friendships with 'Canadians' (perceived as the people who were born and raised in Canada), due to their distant behaviour, "shallowness and disinterest" (14m) when it comes to this aspect – in spite of their apparently friendly behaviour – is also highlighted by the interviewees that have been in Canada for a short time (up to 3 years).

The participants that immigrated as children or young adults (1f, 10f, 11f, to a less extent 12m) seem to have a different perspective on the social and cultural interaction with both the out-group members and the in-group members. The initial social and cultural contact experiences are reported to have been governed by the same struggle "to find a place" (11f) for themselves. But, if for the adult immigrants that means first economic stability – hence, the stress that comes with

not finding an appropriate job and the worries of the daily life in an environment that is strange to them in social practices – for those that immigrated at a young age it meant securing a socialising setting at school – hence, the stress that came with trying to "fit in" (10f) and to be accepted by their colleagues. 'Fitting in' was understood as "getting along with everyone, being similar to them, not appearing like an outsider" (10f). Feelings of inferiority from an academic point of view were also induced at the beginning, since "everything seemed different regarding the setup of classes, the subjects..." (11f).

The experiences that the Romanian immigrant children had when they first took contact with their main socialising place, the school, seem to be duplicated – at another level, that is society at large – by the experiences the Romanian adult immigrants lived or have been still living for a good period of time after landing in Canada. In the case immigration produced at an early age, the experiences translated into a lack of immediate friends; when immigration took place later in life, they translate into a lack of social contacts to favour a better professional positioning, and into limited social interaction with mainstream society. They are reflective of the isolation to which immigrants in general are exposed upon initial contact with a new social and cultural setting. During this accommodating period, they mainly hang out with in-group members or other ethnic group immigrants, out of a commonality of predicament, language, displayed behaviours, way of thinking etc., or because of sharing the same workplace or school: "It's at the language courses that I made friends... Romanians, other immigrants... And these language classes were indeed useful, because when you go to the University for example, people already have their friends, you cannot interfere like that... While there... since we were all kind of fallen from the sky, we were all newcomers... we didn't have a circle of friends..." (4f). 11f also recollects how in school, when being only 14, she first got along with other immigrant children,

because "these people were familiar with what I was struggling, given that they had gone through the same thing before me" (11f).

With more time spent in Canada come different perceptions and another perspective on the social interactions, since the initial way of thinking – with the implicit frustrations linked to language and feelings of social isolation – seems to change over time, especially in the case immigration happened at an early age: "When I first came here, I found myself isolated at school, alone, 'cause I didn't belong to any groups. When there was a one-hour break, I would stay alone. So, I had become a loner. It was awful. I hated that place! Even now, when I pass by that place, I hate it! But that changed when I went to the English school and then to the University..." (1f). The circle of friends widens up, as the social interactions with mainstream society increase as well, and the once isolated immigrant children come to perceive the 'cultural' characteristics of Romanians and Canadians as inclining the balance in the favour of the later when it comes to the choice of friends. The general feeling is that "we have a lot in common: Canadians are definitely more distant, but at the same time they are open to new ideas, concepts. They are more easy-going, do not judge, everyone minds their own business, everyone is treated equally" (10f). Having developed into adults in Canadian society, the once self-perceived "outsiders" (10f) in schools come to consider themselves at ease with Canadian fellows, who are now viewed as "more than happy to help you and let you in once you prove yourself worth it" (11f). The self-location in Canadian society, from an outsider to an insider, has changed, once the individuals in question have suffered the socialising effects of being educated and living within the Canadian environment for more than 10 years, even though at home their families are still emotionally and behaviourally connected to the ethnic values and practices.

The degree to which the participants perceive the novelty of the cultural landscape in Canada and their openness to social interaction and intercultural exchanges seems to also be

dependent on their prior intercultural encounters. Thus, the persons that had contacts with other cultures before coming to Canada say either that there was nothing in particular to strike them at first sight, or that they have had "pleasant experiences in Canada, just like with the Belgians or the English" (3m) or any other ethnicities with whom they previously interacted. Moreover, the permanent reference to the more discriminatory attitudes against the immigrants in Europe makes them appreciate the Canadians' politeness and apparently fair treatment. They are not profoundly dissatisfied with their life in Canada, even if they find themselves in the situation to work below their education and work training (in Ottawa) or in he shadow economy (in Montreal). This fact only reinforces the view according to which immigrants evaluate the quality of their life in the host society not only according to their expectations, but also according to their past experiences. Those who did not experience intercultural exposure before emigrating to Canada were (or still are) generally impressed with the civilisation level, but also with the politeness and kindness of the people around: "people say hi and smile at you here!" (8f). Some of them also point to the Canadians' openness to different cultures or sexual preferences, an aspect that in Romania, they say, still provokes stereotypical behaviours and attitudes. Yet, as already mentioned, there are cases among the Romanian immigrants at large when the racial and/or homophobic stereotypes are embraced, but only verbally (they do not act out those stereotypes).

3.3.4 ETHNIC EXPRESSIONS AND COMMUNAL MANIFESTATIONS

It has been argued that ethnic connectedness represents an inhibiting factor for the individual's capacity to adjust to the social-economic scene of the host society (Kalbach & Kalbach, 2000) or, on the contrary, that it offers both a symbolic and an instrumental space for enhancing the transition to the new society (Breton et al., 1990). I will now consider Romanian

immigrants' degree of ethnic affiliation, and see if it has consequences on their motivation to integrate within Canadian society.

Residential location and grouping on ethnic grounds may be considered one of the most obvious markers of ethnic affiliation (see Subchapter 2.3.3.1). There is no indicator in the participants' statements to point to the existence of, or a trend towards, Romanian ethnic residential segregation. They are generally dispersed within territory both in Montreal and in Ottawa. Yet, in Montreal there can be identified a certain urban area which seems to be preferred by the Romanian immigrants: Cote-des-Neiges and the immediate surroundings.

It is mainly in the above-mentioned neighbourhoods that I came across apartment buildings inhabited almost exclusively by Romanians. But the fact that other Romanians were already living in those buildings is not reported to have constituted a criterion that the participants took into consideration on purpose when looking for a place to live. It is rather that the grouping is induced by the compromise that they want to make between living in an area with a good transportation infrastructure and the daily expenses, since most of them share an apartment with a roommate, preferably a Romanian, for practical reasons (language seems to be the main one): "I preferred to live with a Romanian from the very beginning, because I didn't know anything around here, so I looked for a roommate on the chat forum ever since I was in Romania. I felt more secure to come and live with a Romanian. How can one live with someone that might not understand him/her? Now... after being here for a while... I would post an add and I would live with a person of any other race... I wouldn't be bothered..." (8f). So, the daily expenses make them choose to live with a roommate, but these initial living constraints may lead to marriage arrangements as well: the roommates often end up in founding a family together, since "to succeed in Canada as an immigrant" (i.e. own a house, have a car, afford travelling) is

considered difficult when one is single and has to cover all the living expenses on his/her own (5m).

In Ottawa, the residential patterns are different: most of the Romanian immigrants that come here generally do so as a couple or as a family, with a relatively stable economic situation. As a consequence, the financial needs do not find expression in residential grouping, either in apartment buildings or in certain neighbourhoods.

Ethnic endogamy has been also interpreted as an inhibitor for social integration and as a prominent marker of ethnic connectedness (Kalbach & Kalbach, 2000 – see Subchapter 2.2.1.1). A pattern could be identified with the Romanian immigrants in the two cities, in that the older people have partners of the same ethnicity, while the younger ones display openness to inter-ethnic marriages. Most of the interviewees believe that marriage should not depend on ethnicity, 'race' (i.e. skin colour), or religion, but they consider that "integration may be easier if the partners have the same beliefs and life-style" (15f). As a consequence, even if they theoretically married anybody as long as they got along well, they reveal a general reluctance to found a family with somebody of a different 'race' or of another religion. They expect at least "marriage troubles" with a person of a "profoundly different way of thinking or religion (i.e. from India, Arabic and Asian countries)" (3m). Four participants manifested a desire to marry within the ethnic group, as "they (i.e. Romanians) can easily understand you" (2m).

The definite option for ethnic exogamy was made known by all the female participants who emigrated to Canada at an early age, since "Romanian people are too stuck on their way of perceiving life and culture and they are not very good at change" (11f). Chit-chats with the representatives of church in both cities who officiated numerous wedding ceremonies confirmed the gender dimension of the inter-ethnic marriages: it seems that Romanian women prefer getting

married to a Canadian partner, while Romanian men tend to choose their life partners among the in-group members. The explanation is provided by a female interviewee, who, although married to a Romanian, believes that "the Canadian way of seeing things related to a couple is much more open than the Romanian one, in the sense that they acknowledge the importance of women... not only at home, in the kitchen, or with the children" (4f).

The choice of friends (see Driedger, 1975) is another indicator pointing to the effects socialisation in Canada has on the participants that immigrated as children, since they all manifest a tendency or desire to "blend in" (10f). The more time they spent in Canada, the more "Canadians and other nationalities" (11f) they have as friends. The period of time in the host society is in inverse proportion with their need or wish that their friends have the same ethnicity. Moreover, they tend to report "to feel more at ease" (10 f) with those that are not Romanian, because of the commonality of interests.

In the case of 9m, with more time spent in Canada came the expanding of his social networks and circle of friends within the ethnic group, as well as a stronger connection to the ethnic values, as opposed to what the other participants in the project seem to be experiencing. The reason is that more than 20 years ago, when Communism was at its repressive peak in the country, Romanians abroad would be distant to their co-nationals and would persistently inquire the newcomers about their private life, convinced and panick stricken that they were Communist informers. As a consequence, 9m had "more Canadian friends than Romanian, because they were not interested in your life... Very, very few Romanian friends... But there was also the age factor, as the Romanians that we knew were old..." (9m). A reversed situation is experienced by all the other participants, who have been in Canada for up to 3 years; they report having more, if not exclusively, Romanian friends, as rather as they make a difference between 'friends' and 'acquintances' or 'colleagues'. They mainly socialise within their circle of friends, invoking as

reasons the common way of thinking, the common language, the degree to which these understand them, the existence of an 'ethnic' social network before coming to Canada, and the living circumstances. Yet, most of them are open to the interaction with other ethnicities (those that have been in Canada for more than one year do socialise with other ethnicities, rarely with Anglophones and Quebecois though) motivating their rather in-group present situation as a product of circumstances: "At the beginning I was a little bit tense, I wanted to be close to other Romanians, but now... I don't mind their absence or presence" (2m).

It results that the period spent in Canada, associated with the time of arrival, age at immigration, and the commonality of interests – partly induced by age, which also sets up the framework of the way of thinking, according to past experiences – has its say in the socialisation behaviour and on the degree to which Romanian immigrants feel the need to connect to their ethnic peers.

Part of the private ethnic expressions is the cuisine, dress code, leisure activities, connection with the events and people in Romania, and language spoken at home (see details Subchapter 2.3.2). Of these, food habits and dress code seem to be the most prominent ethnic marker. All participants generally eat and cook Romanian food, especially when there are specific Romanian religious holidays. They even go to the Romanian restaurants in Montreal (there is none in Ottawa), but they are also open to, or they have already tried, various other cuisines. Fast food is generally rejected and only rarely appealed to because of time constraints. The dressing style has remained more or less the same as in Romania. Yet, the more casual dress code at work has been adopted, after the respondents' noticing that what they used to wear at the workplace in Romania was here considered a statement of a higher position. I mention though that all participants attending school point out their colleagues' "revealing careless dressing style" (10f), which they do not approve of, even after 10 years spent in Canada. In this respect,

there can be noticed the prevalence of the more rigid respect for institutions instilled during years of Communist education and socialisation, where school was seen as one of the most important agents of authority (and control).

The pattern of leisure activities seems to suffer the influence of the length of time spent in Canada associated with age at immigration, to which the financial constraints add. Those that have been in Canada for a short time (less than 3 years) generally spend their free time with other Romanians, paying visits to each other *at home*, or having Romanian-styled parties. They may as well simply take the time to relax or perform home duties, since the work responsibilities prevent them from doing that during the weekdays. Those that immigrated to Canada as children have taken on the Canadian socialising habits, going *out* for coffee or tea, mainly with their friends, other than Romanians.

As for the connection with the people and events in Romania, most participants keep in contact with their friends and family there, either by phone or by the internet, regularly – beginning with every day to once a month. The frequency decreases with more time spent in Canada and with the realisation that the friends have now their own life there. Missing those "at home" and experiencing "moments of soul ache" (3m) are overshadowed by the economic concerns and are therefore seen as a price to pay for a "better life in the future" (3m). A sort of self-imposed communication distance to those in Romania is motivated by feelings of insuccess in Canada. This is because most participants in the project are well-aware of the image of wellness that the Romanians in Romania associate to emigrants: "I do keep in touch with them, but not so often. They ask you what you are doing... but until I have a good job to be satisfied with when I tell them what I am doing, I won't call so often. Because people talk... « Well... he left for Canada... and he's doing so bad there... » I have avoided contact with friends back home so far, because it's a difficult period now, at the beginning, and I don't feel like talking about it.

But I think it's a normal thing at the beginning! Work didn't kill anybody... If you like it, ok...
if you don', you can leave... it's not slavery..." (7m).

The interest in the events in the country is generally low and is met by reading the
newspapers online or by having the close relatives in Romania keep them posted in this respect.
Technology makes it possible that territorial distance should not equal affective distance to the
people left behind, which enhances the emotional integration into Canadian society. Awareness
of the fact that Romania is only the place loaded with memories and friendships that now may
not have the same relevance for those there is also generally manifested when the participants
cast an introspective view on what binds them to the country. The visits to Romania are
generally restricted by financial and time constraints in the case of those that have been in
Canada for a short time, and by a lack of interest or fear of "developing nostalgias" (1f) shown by
those that immigrated as children. This may indicate the latter's emotional estrangement from the
country of origin. Yet, a common characteristic among the Romanians in general is the fact that
they bring the grandparents to Canada to help them raise the children, which automatically means
that the Romanian language is passed on to the kids.

The findings of the research point to the fact that retention of the ethnic language and its
speaking at home is also conditioned by age at immigration. All the participants that immigrated
as adults speak it at home and in the streets and would like their children to be able to speak not
only Romanian, but also both English and French. They consider Romanian as a social asset, a
tool to maintain the connection between the children and the grandparents, and an enhancer for
the preservation of the Romanian traditions, also desired to be passed on to the next generation:
"If I had children and I were still here, yeah... I would teach them Romanian, and I would like
them to know about Romania. I wouldn't like them to forget that they are Romanians" (7m).
English and French are both desired for economic purposes (see Li, 2001), since it is noticed that

"the well-paid jobs require that you speak both English and French fluently" (2m). The perceptions on the importance or usefulness of the Romanian language change when it comes to the participants that developed as adults in Canadian society. In two out of three cases, they report speaking English with their brothers or sisters, as it is "easier", but Romanian with their parents who are not fluent in English or French (10f, 11f). Moreover, the conversations with the few Romanian friends that they have, in the case they too immigrated to Canada at an early age, are held in English as well (1f). Teaching their children Romanian is not seen as a purpose in itself and, in one case, it is not desired at all: "I will not speak Romanian with them in my house because given that we leave in Canada and we do not plan on moving back to Romania, there would not be a reason for it" (11f).

All the interviewees that experienced life in Montreal report having noticed or heard of other Romanian immigrants' reluctance to speak the mother tongue in the streets when other co-nationals (in a few cases, the participants themselves) happened to be around. They generally explain this phenomenon – whereby the Romanian ethnic origin is avoided to be publicly displayed – as a mark of engrained frustrations of shame to be a Romanian, or as a way to prevent the newcomers to potentially ask for their help. Moreover, the initiative of some representatives of church or community leaders to found Romanian Sunday schools for the Romanian immigrants' children to learn the language has been met with attitudes of rejection and disinterest. It is reported that most of the Romanian parents (who are now in their 30s / 40s) do not see the usefulness of the Romanian language for their children in Canadian society, or complain of lack of free time to allow them to bring their offspring to attend such classes. The case is reinforced by the statements of the three participants in this study who immigrated at an early age and are now in their 20s; they will not encourage their children to attend such a school, for any of the above-mentioned reasons, as well. It could be thus concluded that the issue of

passing on the Romanian language to the (potential) children is rather a matter of personal

evaluations and perceptions of what makes one 'successful' in Canada. In this respect, the

economic purposes seem to prevail and, consequently, the ethnic language may be perceived as a

barrier in achieving a good economic and, implicitly, a respectable social status.

The ethnic expressions remain appreciated and performed rather on a private, individual

level; the communal manifestations in an organised form do not find support among the

Romanian immigrants either in Ottawa, or in Montreal. There is only one Romanian Sunday

school in each city, but they are rather symbolic in their functions, since the number of students

attending the classes does not motivate their existence.

The organised events and the existence of ethnic institutions to support such events and to

legitimise them as ethnic manifestations representative of a Romanian community seem to be

sporadic in nature, respectively torn by different in-group personal interests, feelings of

suspicion, misperceptions, and a general lack of cohesiveness (see Subchapter 2.3.3). The lack of

cohesiveness of the Romanian 'communities' in the two cities is also perceived by all the

participants in the project and generally by many other in-group members. When asked whether

they thought there was a Romanian community in the city where they lived, most of them

answered affirmatively, but they rather defined the term 'community' from a numerical point of

view and they associated it with the existence of churches, several newspapers, and some cultural

activities on which they could not expand. It is only that they heard about *some* cultural activities

and, to a less extent, about few cultural organisations, but they do not participate, or they do not

feel part of that perceived community, for various reasons: the newcomers invoke the lack of

information, time, and money to do so, while those that immigrated as children "feel like an

outsider when associating with Romanians" (10f), because of the age gap or because "they seem

to want to hold on to the Romanian background too much and I just do not believe that is

possible if you expect to fit within the Canadian community" (11f). All the participants have a vague idea about 'a Romanian community' in their city, but they perceive it as torn by individual struggles for power and by conflicts of personal or group interests (see Subchapter 2.3.3.2): "I understood that there is... I haven't got in contact with it yet. But I don't know how united and well organised it is and whether it represents the interests of the community, if there is a community. I understood that it's not so united, that there are all sorts of people as leaders that have their own interests... that do not help you with anything..." (7m).

The disunity of the Romanian communities in the two cities and the existence of various interests that the 'leaders' promote within the ethnic group at large, which leads to the formation of several sub-groups, is particularly mirrored by respondents – mainly those in Montreal – by bringing into discussion the situation of the Orthodox Romanian churches. Church, besides the place to meet the spiritual needs, is also theoretically considered an institutional pillar that should foster the shaping of a "solid and cohesive community" (4f). Yet, practically, the interviewees – preponderantly those in Montreal – generally see it as a site that preserves old social and political attitudes, not necessarily valid or relevant any more, but somehow passed on and promoted by those trapped in past ideologies, out of a spirit of unexplainable competition and for financial reasons: "It's a little bit surprising for me... Ok... there are about 50,000 Romanians in Montreal, we don't need 9 churches... I attended the Easter mass at one of these churches and I was totally disgusted. The priest began denigrating the other churches, that we shouldn't go to the other churches, since one is Communist, the other is Legionary..." (4f). There is only one case when a participant actually experienced the manifestation of such stands from a church leader, but all the others have heard of the division within the Romanian church community on political criteria, which is then believed to have led to a division within the Romanian 'community' at large. The apparent 'political' reasons are doubled, in the participants' opinion, rather by financial interests

to attract parishioners in order for the church, as an institution, to survive and for the priests –
who practice as self-employed – to be able to support their families in Canada: "the truth is that
here everything is business, you have to get it done all by yourself, otherwise you don't survive"
(7m).

In Ottawa, the number of churches is considerably lower: there are only 2 churches, also
labelled as Communist and Legionary by the Romanian immigrants at large. But, as it is the case
of Montreal as well, the respondents do not find such labels as relevant any more. Their choice to
go to one or the other is based mainly on social networks and on the location of the church. There
are cases though when the internal church conflicts were mediated in the ethnic mass-media,
leading thus to an estrangement of some newcomers from the supposed ethnic 'community' and
from the religious practices: "I only went to church once. I read in the Romanian media here that
there are conflicts… that they argue… a certain priest with another one… that some Romanians
want A, not B, and that A got upset and left and made a church in another place… Then… X
writes about Y that s/he is a Communist and then Y answers back that it's not true. In Montreal
there are discussions that there are still Communists… like old people… that are trying to make
people despise each other… I can see what the Romanians around me talk about each other…that
they do not help each other… Why? I am thinking that it must be something like a mentality
inheritance that you have to avoid the people that can do you bad, that Romanians want bad to
each other…" (3m).

The existence of the labels Communist and Legionary (anti-Communist) attributed to the
Romanian Orthodox churches in Canada has its roots in the separation of the Romanian Orthodox
religious episcopates in North America. The church representatives that escaped Communism
when the oppressive regime was only beginning to take shape in Romania, in the 1940s-1950s,

founded churches on the territory of Canada; they were canonised by the American Orthodox Church, since the Romanian Orthodox Church, as a religious institution, was believed to be under the authority of the Communist regime, and consequently to serve the political interests of the time. Consequently, they labelled themselves as Legionary, ideologically fighting against the totalitarian regime. There were religious representatives that succeeded in immigrating to Canada later on, during Communism, too, but they were thought to be Communist informers by those that had come to Canada long time before. They founded churches in their turn, which were canonised by the Romanian Orthodox Church, and consequently they were labelled Communist. The respective canonising authorities are still in force today.

The division of the Romanian Orthodox church on the North American continent and the inheritance of a certain mentality, that one has to be overcautious with his/her co-nationals, may constitute potential explanations for the lack of in-group cohesiveness and for an accentuated individualism and overtly suspicious attitudes. This fact leads to the crystallisation of small 'communities' around particular churches, or sub-group associations based on a commonality of interests that are questioned and subverted by all the others that do not belong to those associations (see Subchapter 2.3.3). This is generally the ethnic environment that the newcomers find upon landing in Canada, a rather fractured and tormented group, which motivates their reluctance to join a supposedly existing 'community'. The newcomers are preponderantly young and they do not necessarily share the overcautious attitudes of those that immigrated during Communism and still take people as Communist and Legionary; their interests are mainly linked to material success, of which they have been deprived in Romania, as a consequence of the post-Communist economic transition.

The few representatives of the younger generation that can afford allotting time and money to the 'community life' are trying to penetrate the closed structures of the few ethnic organisations, such as Asociatia Romana din Canada (Romanian Association in Canada), but they experience resistance from the older generation who have appropriated the cultural space, both symbolic and territorial, and who have personal material interests to maintain the existent in-group power structures. Even if they manage to break in the boundaries of such ethnic organisations, they lack the institutional internal support to implement new approaches to the 'community' life. Their efforts to lay the basis of new cultural organisations to represent them are rendered futile, since their 'interests' are questioned by all the other older in-group factions at the official level – reflective of the overall suspicious attitudes rooted in the Communist oppressive system – and they cannot rely on the support and active involvement of the younger generation – who are struggling with the economic challenges of a new beginning in the host society. Timid initiatives to legitimise the existence of a new 'wave' within the ethnic groups in Ottawa and Montreal result in the presence of ethnic media (the newspapers "Capitala" in Ottawa and "Pagini Romanesti", "Zig-Zag", and "Actualitatea Canadiana" in Montreal; weekly radio broadcasts in both cities), as well as in annual cultural fairs or festivals (the Romanians' Festival for the first time in Ottawa in 2005 and the Valdavid cultural fair in Montreal for several years now). Other cultural activities only manifest as small sub-group leisure activities, for example picnics, or comedy shows organised by particular churches for their common parishioners.

It is interesting to notice that all participants perceive church as having been transformed in its functions, from its strictly religious to social purposes. The perception of the church role within personal life is influenced by the personal experiences as immigrant within the larger Canadian context: some interviewees do not embrace the socialising character of the religious

site, since they prefer going to church only to meet their spiritual needs; others – who find themselves completely alone – approve of the opportunity that the church may offer to the newcomers to enlarge their social networks, to find out about potential job availabilities, since they enjoyed this advantage.

The boundaries of the ethnic collective identity are obvious in how Romanians activate their religious identity in both cities, especially on the big religious holidays when the churches become full of people of all ages, anxious to continue the 'home' tradition. Most of them do not go to the Greek Orthodox churches for example, even if these display the more familiar exterior and interior architectural patterns. This may indicate that they feel the desire to have a specific space where they can freely manifest their particularity as Romanians; they seem to need to completely identify themselves with the people within that common space and to feel the religious experience in the Romanian language.

When coming to Canada, Romanians are the repositories of a certain religious identity: they bring with them familiar ritual practices, the image of an Orthodox church – most often – and the memories of a historic religious past, in other words, a culturally constructed religious identity. But the fact that the Romanian immigrants in Ottawa and Montreal go to churches that contradict the religious architectural norms in the country they lived not long before and where they built their representation of, and attitude towards, the Orthodox church indicates that the Romanian religious collective identity in Canada is being transformed, constructed, re-interpreted, so as to accommodate the spiritual needs with the local resources available to their status as immigrants (most of the churches are rented from other congregations for the Sunday masses). What makes these people attend a non-Orthodox church if not the feeling that they can enjoy both the mass and their peers within an own space? The church has become a place that transcends the borders of religion and/or religious dogmas in order to shape a need for collective

identity, which Romanians do not socially enjoy in their host society. Through attending the weekly masses, they renew the ties of the communal identity they left behind when making the decision to emigrate. These ties are reinforced through the religious practices, at both a representational physical level (e.g. holding hands during the mass), and a psychological level (e.g. offering help and support in moments of life crisis or celebrations). Yet, the collectivities in Montreal and Ottawa based on religious representations appear to be in flux. The religious symbols and practices have been adapted to the existing social space, mirroring how the ethno-religious community identity is being re-shaped and acquires a 'hybrid' valence.

As a conclusion, Romanian immigrants in Montreal and Ottawa do not form compact communities yet, partially because of the institutional failure to represent their interests, partially because their own attitudes of distrust and suspicion towards each other and lack of active involvement in the few existing ethnic organisations. The scarce ethnic institutions lack the unanimous in-group legitimisation, becoming sites of authority contestation and affirmation of individual interests.

3.3.5 IDENTIFICATION DURING INTEGRATION – INTERMINGLING DIMENSIONS, SELF-PERCEPTIONS, AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE

If analysing identification in Taylor's terms (1992), the degree to which the immigrants feel a certain way about themselves is greatly induced by the others' perceived opinion about them. Based on the findings in this study, I would add that the self-perception is also induced by how the immigrants evaluate their own status in Canadian society, based on the economic achievement. Thus, those that have come to enjoy a relatively good material standing, even if for a short time in Canada, identify themselves as Romanian-Canadians, in spite of their lifestyle and beliefs that stand as proof for their connectedness to the ethnic identity. They also believe that the

others perceive them as having a hyphenated identity, although it is my opinion that in doing so they only take into account the opinions of the significant others in their lives. To consider oneself Canadian is seen almost as a status reflective of the material situation, which makes 7m admit that he views himself as a "Romanian with Canadian perspectives", hoping that he will professionally find his way in Canada. Most respondents, since they are still struggling with an uncertain material condition and have not found a secure professional standing yet, identify themselves as immigrants and they believe that the others perceive them as immigrants as well, "first of all because of the accent and way of speaking" (15f).

The participants' self-perception generally as immigrants could be easily explained if taking into account their previous statements according to which they encountered various manifestations of "small prejudices or very subtle discrimination" (2m), mainly in the form of slightly distant attitudes on the part of the Canadians, either because their language level was not good enough, or simply because they were immigrants, not necessarily Romanians: "an immigrant will always stay an immigrant for Canadians" (6f). Their awareness of the foreign origin, which carries the imprint of the socialisation process, is also a cause in this self-perception: "I think we stay immigrants all our lives if we are in a foreign country. It's unavoidable...It's probably our children, or grandchildren that will feel like being Canadians. We stay immigrants, because we left at an age when we are already formed... At 30 years of age, you cannot uproot yourself to that extent to suddenly consider yourself a Canadian. You cannot... you cannot forget your Romanian background, pleasant or unpleasant... I have met here people that have been here for 30 years and yet have nostalgias.... They have developed businesses, but they still feel Romanian" (2m).

The ethnic dimension acquires a valence that finds resonance within their inwardly-shaped identity, as they mention the fact that they are *Romanian* immigrants, or immigrants of a

Romanian origin, or they point to the fact that maybe in the future they will be able to call themselves Canadians, but only in relation to people of other ethnicities; the self-reference will always remain the Romanian background. It is also the case of 9m, who – after 23 years in Canada – does not think he will ever be able to call himself a Canadian: "For me…that means that one has to be born here. When somebody asks me what I am, the first impulse is to say 'Romanian'" (9m). His and his family connectedness to the ethnic identity is manifested in explicit behavioural terms, by getting involved in the 'community' life and by preserving the ethnic values and norms as such at home; his child, although born in Canada, speaks Romanian fluently. His wife gets emotional when she comments on their son's identification at school: "Till he grew up a little bit to understand, he would say he was a Canadian, maybe because all the other children would say so too. But at school, in Social Sciences, he showed that he was from Romania. Now they changed… before they would ask 'what are you?', now it's 'where are you from?' And I think our son believes he is born there."

It was my perception as an insider researcher that the Romanian immigrants that came to Canada during Communism are much more connected to the ethnic identity and express their ethnic affiliation not only in symbolic terms, but also in empirical instances, trying to pass on to their children the subjective ethnic sense of identification, since the social influence is acknowledged to ultimately have its say on the younger generations' sense of belonging. This fact could bear explanations linked both to the political circumstances at the time of emigration and to the economic grounds, since the newcomers find themselves too absorbed in the struggle to make a way for themselves in Canada to 'objectively' manifest their inner sense of identity in ethnic activities. As one of the participants puts it, "I am trying to keep my identity, but also to fast integrate here" (2m).

The desire to 'integrate' quickly is manifested by all the participants in the study. They have had this purpose established ever since they left Romania. The meaning they assign to the process of integration relates more to assimilative trends; there is no exception in the way they all put an emphasis on the effort they have to make to *adapt*. It is a conscious effort, they are aware of the differences in mentality and way to approach social situations: "It was hard to adapt, but I did it... I became more working... And in the relations with people... I knew that it was better to be cooperative, so I tried to open a lot. That was a rational attitude. I *proposed* to do that... to pay more attention to people, to be very polite" (3m). They consider the integration process a learning experience, one that takes time to complete, as "it seems that this society has its own rhythm, a slow one" (2m), but through which they "develop" as social actors (8f), they "enrich their interpersonal skills and grow" (7m).

No matter how fast they would like to achieve the integration process, they realise even faster that rules have to be learnt and respected, behaviours copied and ways of thinking adopted in order to be able to 'succeed': "this world has many rules which are different from the world we lived in, from the common meetings to a certain type of behaviour linked to distances" (2m). It is a period of adjustment, when their system of values and norms is not a stable one; they still preserve the Romanian ethnicity, on a private level, but they acknowledge the social necessity to take on the rules of the system in order for them to be able to integrate. They would like to have a 'normal' life here, but they are finding out that what they thought of as 'normal' when they left Romania has to suffer changes within the new environment. There are situations when they manifest shifting identities, they 'adapt' their behaviour according to the circumstances and take on self-constructed identities to 'fit in' for the sake of 'success': "I have noticed that everybody here lives with the luggage ready at the door, that is if tomorrow there is a job opportunity somewhere else, they go. For me, it's not something normal, but I have to adapt" (8f).

Experiencing this period of adjustment, with the afferent economic uncertainty and the professional difficulties, is seen as something that goes hand in hand with the process of immigration. They do not expect 'understanding' from those born in Canada. They are aware that they are rather 'tolerated', since the feeling of not being "one of theirs" (3m) is always there, but this is again something perceived as a risk to be assumed when emigrating: "For those that have been here for a long time…it's rather tolerance…they don't care about you. The system takes you, the system integrates you…it's none of their business to help you… After all it's you who came to us, not vice versa" (7m).

Language is acknowledged as one of the main barriers for their integration, seen rather in its economic dimension. But the ability to have a secure job, according to their training, is also dependent on the unwritten social rules that they are learning during this process and they slowly come to terms with the conditions, displaying an awareness of their place in society as immigrants (see Penninx, 2005): "I generally believe that the Canadian Government didn't want immigrants to have intellectual workforce, but physical workforce… And they want immigrants with higher education, so as for their children to have a higher level as well. In the end…you do that Canadian school, but you get to be satisfied with something as closest as possible to what you once were. It's highly unlikely that one should exceed the level of what s/he was before. But you still have the education from back home so that you could teach your children to aim that high…" (4f).

The participants generally consider that the minuses in integration – induced by the linguistic dimension – will be overcome by the younger generations, who will thus enjoy the possibility to take advantage of all the economic opportunities that Canadian society, as a whole, has to offer and will be able to feel "100% integrated" (2m). This prediction can be noticed in the

present study in the way the immigrants that came to Canada at an early age identify themselves. They perceive themselves either as "Romanian-Canadian" (1f), or "almost Canadian" (11f), or "definitely Canadian" (10f). They may preserve some of the symbolic ethnic markers, but their sense of belonging has been influenced by their development and socialisation as adults in the Canadian society: "I feel that I grew up here in Canada. To me, Canada is my home. I know Canada better than I know Romania. I have blended in now, I act and speak like other Canadian-born people" (10f). For those that have been in Canada for a short time, the sense of belonging is shown to be infuenced by the economic achievement as well. Those that have succeeded in securing themselves a relatively stable material situation, "feel at home here" (8f), while those that have not experienced the material comfort yet, still feel attached to Romania in their sense of belonging, although they are constantly seeking their place on the Canadian stage and do not exclude the possibility that one day they may consider Canada their home: "I haven't found my place in this society yet, I know I can have more" (15f).

Besides the economic dimension, they relate their perception of Canada as home, and implicitly their 'full integration', to the ability to feel comfortable from an emotional, psychological point of view: "I can't say Canada is my country... Maybe... sometime... when I feel at ease and the frustrations disappear, I will... from this point of view... of the comfort: « yes, I feel good, I have integrated »...one day..." (2m); "Emotionally, I am not integrated yet. I am a Romanian that is trying to make his way here. I don't think I will ever feel less Romanian, but more Canadian" (3m). This indicates that integration is mainly a perceptional phenomenon: immigrants evaluate it according to their own measure of comfort, be it material, spiritual, or psychological.

4 *CONCLUSIONS*

The present paper proposed to deal with the integration of the Romanian immigrants in Montreal and Ottawa, by approaching it not in its fixed economic, social, and political dimensions, but rather as a fluid process of re-identification within a new economic, social, and political environment. In doing so, it was shown how the Romanians in recent waves of immigration are experiencing a period of adjustment, trying to gradually come to terms with their new identities, partly shaped by the inherent power relations that govern their status as immigrants, partly constructed by their own perceptions and interpretations of this status and of the situations in which they find themselves. The findings of the research indicate that their interpretation is highly influenced by the economic achievement, since the economic purposes prevailed in their decision to emigrate; they left Romania with certain expectations, but they are fast learning that the image of Canada abroad does not necessarily reflect the social and economic reality that they are experiencing.

The importance of ethnicity during the process of integration is rendered by the whole array of ethnic manifestations, either symbolic or behavioural, that the respondents adopt, and by the way they identify themselves. Romanian immigrants define themselves as ethnics (Romanian) in relation to one another and as immigrants in relation to the majority group(s). This is a testimony of the relevance identification acquires for them within the process of integration: they emotionally perceive themselves as Romanians, on an individual level, while they see themselves as immigrants in relation to mainstream society, and think of themselves as being perceived as immigrants by the majority groups peers, on a collective level. This collective identification as immigrants comes from the social disadvantage that they are subject to as members of this essentialised 'category'. They are struggling to create a synthesis between their

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own culture and that of the majority groups. Since¹ They do not feel 'trapped' in between the two, but consciously and rationally try to 'adapt', as the dominant societal culture is seen as the legitimising way to integration. They are rather emotionally, symbolically, and psychologically linked to their ethnicity, performing it only when they do not feel the threat of being disadvantaged by it. In that, they generally act according to the larger social expectations to conform to the social and cultural practices of the mainstream society for material and functional recognition reasons.

Their identity entails a lot of variations, which are induced by the very circumstances they encounter: they activate the identity that best fits the micro- or macro-social context of the moment, be it the ethnic identity within their family environment, or the expected social identity within a larger context. To the extent that integration is understood as the individuals' ability to adapt and make use of the available resources, it can be argued that the Romanian immigrants integrate well, as they rather seem to take on the individual dimension of the integration process. Their option for such an approach may be explained by making reference to Tew's perspective that there are pre-established systems of power to which the individual willingly submits in order to enter the social mainstream (Tew, 2002: 123). Romanian immigrants in Canada may be said to be the repositories of an internal conflict: on the one hand, they perceive themselves as Romanians, so ethnicity acquires a definite importance, mainly at an emotional level, which may yet be seen as acknowledging the symbolic collectivity; on the other hand, they think they are identified as immigrants by mainstream society, which makes them adopt different individual social identities that fit the daily social situations, which would allow them to achieve the desired economic level and hence, the functional recognition of their social status as Canadian citizens (i.e. members of Canadian society). What matters for them is not how many ethno-cultural features they could generally display, but what kind of such features they could select in different

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social contexts to best fit their interests in the host society. From this perspective, ethnicity may be considered as a sort of resource enabling them to better adjust to various circumstances during their integration period; it may be performed only on occasions, according to the needs required by that specific context, while still being preserved at the symbolic level, through emotional and cognitive affiliation to the ethnic group. This is the *situational* expression of the ethno-cultural identity, which thus becomes negotiated within the larger social contexts.

It is through this dynamic process of re-negotiation, de-construction, and re-construction of their ethnicity that Romanian immigrants come to reconcile their emotional yearning for the sense of collectivity as ethnics with the social perception on them as collectively representing immigrants. In this respect, they may be said to challenge the view that social integration is a 'nested process', that is immigrants integrate first into a family or extended family, into a sub-group of their ethnic group, into broader communal group, and finally into Canadian society (Weinfeld, 2005: 4). It was my perception as a researcher that Romanian immigrants do integrate first into their families or extended families, but then they aim at transforming the social perception on them as 'second class citizens', by striving to achieve the appropriate economic status that would enable the mainstream society to recognize them as valuable actors on Canadian social and economic stage. It is only after securing a comfortable economic ground that they afford to actively and publicly manifest their ethnicity, most often by participating into the disparate ethnic activities organized by the few Romanian organizations and/or institutions in Canada.

During the first stage of their social integration, they seem to overlap the social perception on them as immigrants with the self-perception as ethnics. Their participation in Canadian society as an ethnic collectivity is much diminished by the institutional failure to build a Romanian community. The findings of the research suggest that the Romanian ethnicity is not a

manifestation of institutional features, but rather of a symbolic sense of belonging, related to place of origin and a collective memory of the past, about which some participants are trying to forget. These criteria change though with age at immigration and time of arrival. The existing ethnic institutions, theoretically aimed at reinforcing the sense of ethnic affiliation and legitimise it within the territory, are rendered flawed and futile in their purposes by power struggles and internal interests to acquire a certain in-group status. The age gap between generations of immigrants is a factor at play in the lack of commonality of interests to shape an attractive community for the newcomers.

Under the circumstances, the Romanian immigrants in recent waves of immigration (after 1989) mainly turn to an individual approach to their journey to integration. There might be as well individual reasons linked to competitiveness, potentially originating in the historical background.

Although proclaimed and constructed as a collective ideology, Communism rendered Romania of the 1970s and 1980s highly individualistic through the social constraints that made its members strive for their individual economic survival and their family's political security. The state applied a whole range of devices, like marches, mass meetings, party rallies, involving a large number of people in ritualized performances, celebrating the supposed collective identity and the leader of the national community, while millions of other people were passively engaged in such publicly-performed rituals through mass media. The aim was to seed and reinforce particular emotions and beliefs supporting the national ideology that fostered people to see themselves as part of a collectivity with shared objectives. The reverse of the coin was that people realized the instrumental dimension of this collective identity; they gained what Hiller (1996) called "a sense of group awareness" that the collective identity was used as a tool to subordinate and control them. Once Communism collapsed, they liked to believe that they won

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the individual freedom that they had craved for, but continuous economic constraints made them want to escape that geographical and social space and manifest their freedom elsewhere; some of them chose Canada. It is these historic circumstances that may as well constitute a possible explanation why Romanian immigrants in Canada are so reluctant to adopt and manifest a collective ethnic identity – they simply want to achieve an economic status that would allow them to manifest their individual identity free of any kind of constraints, including the institutional constraints. And if the achievement of this economic well-being supposes a detachment from their ethnic peers, by virtue of the symbolic connotations the ethnic association gains in their mind within the inter-group comparisons process, then, they choose not to get involved into the collective performance of this identity dimension.

The ethnic institutional framework, which may theoretically be interpreted as enhancing ethnic identity affirmation as a collectivity, gets complicated in both Montreal and Ottawa with the variations within the ethnic group. There are several micro-ethnic 'communities' that crystallise around churches in both cities. One of the reasons for such a situation is the fact that specific ethno-cultural institutions, including churches, are not recognised by all members of the ethnic group as having 'value' and/or 'validity' (terms used by Penninx, 2005). The way these two variables are perceived depend on a system of individual values and/or interests, which in turn depend on age at immigration, educational background, time of arrival, occupational pattern, and/or other circumstantial factors linked to utilitarian and material aspects, as well as in-group symbolic order. Consequently, divisions within the Romanian ethnic groups in Ottawa and Montreal (most obviously the latter) produce and each resultant sub-group gains the shape and substance of an ethnic association, rather than 'community'. The churches or other (scarce and divided) ethno-cultural institutions polarise the ethno-cultural identity of those individuals that "voluntarily choose to belong to them" (Penninx, 2005: 14) by 'feeding' their specific interests

the way they expect it, or the way they themselves have constructed that institution (or those institutions) to do so.

As already mentioned, the failure of the ethnic institutions to reproduce, reiterate, and nurture a cohesive collective memory is a determinant factor in the way Romanian immigrants in Canada are living and experiencing their ethnic identity. Paraphrasing Bramadat (2002), I would say that the putative values of Romanians are not offered the symbolic space that would allow them to be reinforced as a collective identity. There is little or no cultivation on a public level of the collective memory of a shared history or of the specific traditions or customs that could be acted out in symbolically loaded spaces, like churches or other institutional places, for example community centres. Churches are material constructions, but they evoke specific meanings and serve as special coordinates for collective identity; they become "reflexive sites of identity formation" (Bramadat 2002: 44). Likewise, the regular public performances of ethnic identity could represent crucial means of perpetuating or recreating a particular collective identity. But as long as Romanian immigrants do not feel that their ethnic identity is *the* cause of their social status in Canada in the first years of their coming here, but the general perception on them as immigrants, they opt for an individually negotiated memory of their ethnicity and history; consequently, they do not manifest a geography of collective ethnic identity during their social integration. They rather perceive integration in assimilative terms, which requires of them to re-identify themselves within the already existing social and economic structures.

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APPENDIX 1: CONCEPTS

Immigrant. Kymlicka (2001) designates this sociological category as referring to

people who arrive (i.e. in a foreign country) under an immigration policy which gives them the right to become citizens after a relatively short period of time – say, 3-5 years – subject only to minimal conditions (e.g. learning the official language, and knowing something about the country's history and political institutions) (Kymlicka, 2001: 153).

This is a definition seen from the Canadian perspective. The general perception of the term is a foreign-born person who is settling in a country different from that of his/her origin and who will get the citizenship of the country of arrival at a certain moment in his/her life. Yet, there are cases when people are perceived as 'immigrants', even though they were born and have lived in the country where their ancestors previously arrived. They are called second/third etc. generation immigrants. In Canada's case, the children born in Canada to immigrant parents were considered to be non-immigrants in the 2001 census (Statistics Canada, 2006). But, the definition of the immigrant population in the same census is left unclear, since the term refers to "people who are, or have been, landed immigrants in Canada. A landed immigrant is a person who has been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Some immigrants have resided in Canada for a number of years, while others have arrived recently. Most immigrants are born outside Canada, but *a small number were born in Canada*" (Statistics Canada, 2006, emphasis mine). Thus, the term 'immigrant' – which in the social interaction gets negative connotations – is also officially attributed to people that are already Canadian citizens or, socially, to people that were born in Canada, but whose parents or ancestors once came here as immigrants.

For the purposes of the present study, the term 'immigrant' designates those people that immigrated to Canada at some point in their lives (including individuals that now have

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citizenship – yet, no negative connotations are to be attributed to the term). For 'technical'

purposes as well, in order not to create discrepancies with the literature in the field, the

immigrants' offspring are called second or third generation immigrants, depending on the case in

question.

Emigrant. The concept refers to the same above-mentioned category when the

perspective is taken from the country they leave behind. Accordingly, **to emigrate** means to

leave the country of origin, while **to immigrate** means to get into the receiving country.

Ethnicity. The concept has often been defined in collective terms, as structured by the

common place of origin, historical background, and cultural pattern of a certain group of people,

which make the difference from other immediate groups (Hutnik, 1991: 18). Gordon (1964)

refers to ethnicity as a sense of peoplehood created by common 'race', religion, national origin,

history, or some combination of these. A broader view on what ethnicity means is offered by

Hiller (1996) who defines the concept as

> *an amalgam of objective factors relating to place of birth, citizenship, mother tongue, and customs and*
> *traditions which are transmitted through a person's heritage and characterize that individual. But ethnicity*
> *does not only involve these objective traits such as language and customs; it also involves a subjective*
> *element pertaining to how people view themselves, i.e. their ethnic identity* (Hiller, 1996: 196).

In the present paper, I am taking on Hiller's perspective, considering ethnicity in both its

'objective' dimension, as rendered by a set of characteristics linked to lifestyle, language,

religion, traditions, customs – which, in most cases, come from collectively sharing the same

place of origin and national history – and its 'subjective' dimension, as given by the symbolic,

psychological, situationally negotiated representations of those characteristics at an individual

level.

Ethnic group. Canadian Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism states that

> *What counts more in our concept of an "ethnic group" is not one's ethnic origin or even one's mother*

tongue, but one's sense of belonging to a group, and the group's collective will to exist. Ethnic origin, be it French, British, German, Italian or any other category implies only a biological affiliation and ancestry; an individual's loyalty to a group should ... depend for more on his personal identification with it. To chess ethnic origin as a basic principle for shaping society would create closed groups based on accidents of birth. (1969: 7).

While agreeing with the fact that the members of an ethnic group share fundamental cultural values and traditions and they distinguish themselves from the members of other groups in society by virtue of their own ethnicity, I strongly believe that unity, communication, and interaction do not constitute characteristics of an ethnic group, but they are qualities of an ethnic community. The perspective provided by the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism pinpoints the fact that biological affiliation and ancestry are not pre-requisites for the existence of an ethnic group either. The group may include members with no common ethnic origin, but that later became part of that group through different relationships, not necessarily on a biological basis. Likewise, the affiliation may be based on a personal sense of belonging to that group, although in this case I would argue that recognition from the other members of the group is needed for a sort of legitimisation of that belonging. The "collective will to exist" is again a notion that I am challenging when it comes to an ethnic group. In the present paper, a sense of collectivity is associated to 'community', when binding relationships exist based on various principles, values, lifestyles, interests etc.

So, in my perspective, an 'ethnic group' is framed by a collection of individuals that belong to that group on various inwardly-shaped or outwardly-shaped ethnic criteria – where the former could exist independently of the latter, but the latter has to find support in the former – without involving a sense of cohesiveness, but to the level of micro-associations. These micro-associations could form on the same principles as any other social, cultural, economic, or political micro-association (most often commonality of interests).

Ethnic community. The term may be easily taken for 'ethnic group'. The difference lies in the fact that an ethnic community not only disposes a common set of values, beliefs, norms performed at an individual level, but it is created from the very social interaction of the individuals that develop their lives on common ties. The geographical criterion (i.e. a well-delimited geographical space) has been argued not to represent a pre-requisite for the existence of a community (Anderson, 1991). Non-local feedbacks may be the very engine for the sense of ethnic distinctiveness and communal ties by supplying needed resources, both material and symbolic (e.g. marriage partners, financing, jobs, loans etc). The non-local feedbacks may be determined by an emotional attachment that goes beyond the territorial space as a legitimising frame and gives rise to a symbolic space for the inwardly-shaped ethnic identity, which thus becomes the personal legitimisation of belonging. The emotional and psychological components reinforce the ethnic community. What constitutes the core of an ethnic community is the network of ties that transcends the geographical place and helps to create a symbolic identity space. The geographical limits may represent only the physical support for the social interaction between members, but they are not a pre-condition for the community to develop.

Besides the symbolic dimension of the ethnic community (emotional attachment, personal affiliation), there is also the instrumental dimension, given by the ethnic institutional framework. Again, the former can exist independently of the latter (in which case there would be just an example of an 'ethnic association'), while the latter has to be supported by the former – if not, there would be a problem of internal representativity. Ethnic institutions give materiality to an ethnic community, bring cohesiveness, and guide a commonality of purposes and interests. They enhance the community's visibility on a social, economic, cultural, and/or political stage. This, in turn, will lead to the outwardly-shaped legitimisation of that particular ethnic community, which constitutes a process of empowerment and the means to acquire representation at an official level.

Ethnic identity. The concept partly designates the sense of belonging to and personal identification with an ethnic group (Hutnik, 1991: 19). This is an inwardly generated (symbolic / psychological) ethnic identity, when the individual casts the ethnic self-perspective and feels emotionally connected to a certain ethnicity, even if s/he does not show it in behavioural terms, that is through displaying certain identifiable markers – dress, language, life-style, set of practices guided by certain values and norms – or through involvement in the life of the ethnic community. The above-mentioned ethnic markers (Hutnik, 1991) constitute the basis for the outwardly-shaped ethnic identity that sometimes transforms into an inferior social status, by virtue of mis-recognition, or mis-interpretation from the others that are not 'alike' (Taylor, 1992). This may be one of the causes why some, if not all, ethnic markers are altered / erased, within the process of integration. Yet, the person in question (i.e. the immigrant) could still preserve the mental affiliation to a specific group.

In the present study, ethnic identity refers to both its 'material' / 'objective' dimension (adoption of a certain dress code, language, religion, life-style, set of values and practices etc.), and its 'psychological' / 'symbolic' dimension.

Minority / Majority. In the present study, 'minority' is framed by both the numerical and the social inferiority criteria, the latter being induced either by the members' ethnicity, 'race', language, religion, or any identifiable marker that is not shared by other members of that society, including the absence of citizenship.

When defining 'majority', I take on the conceptual framework offered by Karrer and Lutz (1989), designating the members of the numerically highest group(s) of individuals within the state or nation, who, most often, are also wielding the greatest social, cultural, economic, and political power. 'Majority', as defined above, will be also referred to as **'mainstream society'**.

Ethnic minority. The term designates a minority group whose sense of social, cultural,

political and/or economic inferiority is given by the (perceived) association of those disadvantages with the ethnic characteristics (Hutnik, 1991: 22). The ethnic minority cohesiveness is most often, not necessarily always, rendered by collective action guided by a common set of cultural values, beliefs, principles and/or cultural, social, economic, political interests. It may also be reinforced by the degree of in-group perceived 'unfairness' or 'injustice' within that particular society (Tajfel, 1978: 312).

Ethnic origin. The term refers to the ethnic group to which the individual perceives that s/he belongs to. It may be the case that an individual's ancestors should have belonged to a different ethnic group than the ethnic group with which the individual in question (in this case the immigrant) identifies, or feels part of. That is why, I avoid considering ancestry as a variable in determining the ethnic origin, preferring the self-identification of the individual in question. The ethnic origin would be nothing but an imposed category on individuals, if it did not find response in the individual's self-perception.

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Socio-demographic characteristics : present age, location in Canada, marital status, job in Canada, and position.

2. Education and age when leaving Romania. When did you leave Romania?

4. What were you doing for a living before leaving Romania? Had you been abroad before you decided to come to Canada?

5. When and how did you decide to leave Romania? What motivated you (your parents) to apply for Quebec / Ontario?

6. Were you offered support (material, emotional, informational) in your decision to leave ? Who supported you with this decision? How?

7. What was your first reaction/first thought when you landed in Canada?

8. Did you notice any differences in thinking, in beviour? Any reactions different from those of the Romanians in similar circumstances?

9. What were your thoughts when you left Romania? (prompt if necessary: to adapt, to mingle, to forget about home, to come back after a while, to get citizenship etc.). What does Canadian citizenship represent for you?

10. Was there anybody waiting for you in Canada? Any friends, relatives, acquintances, relationships you had before leaving Romania?

11. Did you know before leaving where you were going to establish? Any living arrangements? How did you find a place to live? Did anybody help you? Were there any problems? Did you encounter any difficulties? If yes, what kind?

12. Was there anything that shocked you for a while, during the adaptation period, or even afterwards (positevely or/and negatively)?

13. Was there anything that bothered you so much that you wanted to come back to Romania right that moment? What made you not give up/change your mind ?

14. Did you think of establishing yourself in Canada for good ? If not, why not ?

15. What was your first impression when you met a 'Canadian'? How would you characterize them now? Are they different from Romanians? How ?

16. Have your Romanian credentials been recognized? Have you taken any courses here? Are the Canadian academic and professional systems different from the Romanian ones?

17. How did you get hired ? Have you had more than one job so far? Do you consider that you have lost any of your professional abilities or you have enriched them?

18. How did you adjust to the work market / school requirements in Canada? How do the professional/academic standards here seem to you?

19. Did you get any help/assistance (material/informational) from the Canadian state regarding the employment, finding a place to live, studies to take?

20. How would you characterize your work / school relations? How are / were your colleagues? Were they born in Canada, or are they of other nationalities? How did they receive you? Any statements or particular behaviour that bothered you?

21. How would you perceive yourself now? (prompt if necessary : Canadian, immigrant, foreigner, Romanian, Romanian-Canadian) Why? How do you think the others perceive you? Why?

22. Have you ever wished to have been born in Canada? Why? Why not?

23.Have you been subject to any behaviour that seemed 'unfair' to you? Have you performed any changes on your behaviour to be considered a 'Canadian'? Why? Why not? Did it seem 'normal' to you?

24. Do you think there is a Romanian community in the city where you live? What is your understanding of 'community'? If so, how do they manifest? Do you take participation in their activities? If not, why do you think that is?

In the building where you are living now…are there any Romanians? If not, what nationalities are they? How do you get along with them? If you happen to run into any difficulties, whom do you call first?

25. Do you know of any Romanian cultural activities? Do you celebrate the Romanian holidays and events? Or the Canadian ones, or both? How do you spend your free time? With whom do you socialize? What are the frequent topics?

26. At home, do you speak Romanian/English/French ? Why ? Why not ? What about in the streets ? What kind of food do you eat? What TV channels do you watch? Internet? Do you keep in touch with those in Romania? Are you interested in the social/political/cultural events in Romania/Canada?

27. If you have children, what school / kindergarden do they attend ? English/French /Romanian? Why? Why not? What were the reasons for which you opted for that educational institution? (if it is not your case, take the questions for a potential situation)

28. Do you feel 'trapped' between two cultures?

29. Do you go to church? What kind of church? Is it on a regular basis that you go? Do you go there alone, with other Romanians, Canadians? Did you use to go to church in Romania? Now, is it for the same/different reasons that you go or don't go any more? What do you think of the statement that church is the main socializing place for the Romanians in Canada (do you think Romanians go there for spiritual or socialising needs)? Why is it that you go to a particular church? (prompt if necessary : because of the priest's personality, because your friends/relatives go there, because it is close to your house etc). What do you think of the labels attributed to the Romanian churches : Communist / anti-Communist (Legionary)? Do these labels have any relevance to you? Do you think they present importance for the other people? Why? Why not?

30. Would you rather marry a Romanian or another nationality? Why? (if it is not the case for you any more, take it as a potential situation). Does race/religion/ethnicity have relevance for you in this respect? If already married to a person of a different ethnicity, how does your marriage go along? Any 'conflicts' because of different cultural approaches, ways of thinking? If the case may be, did you have the wedding in Canada / Romania? Why? Did you follow the Romanian/ Canadian/ other traditions in this respect?

31. Do you have close Canadian friends, or are they only Romanians, or other nationalities? With whom do you get along the best? With whom do you feel most at ease? How do you socialize?

32. Would you like to move from the city where you are living? Why? Why not? Have you travelled to other cities here in Canada? Was there anything in particular that drew your attention about those places ? Different people? Different behaviours?

33. Do you consider Canada an 'open'/'multicultural' society? Expand…(what is your understanding of 'multicultural' / 'open')?

34. Since your arrival in Canada, have you advised anyone in Romania to emigrate to Canada? Why? Why not?

35. Do you often visit Romania? Do you keep in touch with your friends/family there? Why? How? What are you talking about when you are in touch with them?

36. How do you find Romania and the people there now? How do you think they perceive you now?

37. Do you perceive yourself as having changed in any way (in attitude, way of thinking, behaviour)? What makes you think that? And why do you think that is?

38. Do you now feel that Canada is your 'home' country, or do you feel that you belong more to Romania? Why?

39. What are your plans on a short/long run?

40. Name 5 things that you like/ don't like about Romania/Canada.

41. Do you think you took a chance when you came here? Was it worth?

42. Do you value maintaining your Romanian cultural identity? Why? Why not? How would you define 'Romanian identity'? If you had children here, would you want them to be able to speak Romanian? Would you teach them the language at home, would you insist on them going to a Romanian Sunday school?

43. Do you value keeping the relationships with other ethnic groups? Why? Why not? Any specific affinities with any ethnic group in particular?

APPENDIX 3: PARTICIPANTS' CHARACTERISTICS

Montreal

- 1f - age at immigration: 16 – immigrated with parents (in Canada for 12 years);
    - single, no children, University Degrees in Canada;
    - student at present, student part-time jobs;
    - interview language – English;

- 2m - age at immigration: 33 – skilled worker category (in Canada for 2 years);
    - single, no children, University Degrees in Romania;
    - several jobs not in the field of specialisation (furniture loader, clothes packer/unpacker), presently unemployed;
    - interview language – Romanian;

- 3m - age at immigration: 35 – skilled worker category (in Canada for 2 years);
    - married at immigration, one child (wife and child in Romania), PhD in Romania;
    - one job not in the field of specialisation (goods receiver in a factory), presently MA student;
    - interview language – Romanian;

- 4f - age at immigration: 24 – sponsored spouse category (in Canada for 2 years);
    - married at immigration, no children, University Degree in Romania;
    - one job not in the field of specialization (shop assistant), presently applying for MA;
    - interview language – Romanian;

- 5m - age at immigration: 33 – skilled worker category (in Canada for 2 years);
    - single, no children, University Degree in Romania;
    - several jobs not in the field of specialisation (furniture loader, clothes packer/unpacker, coffee packer, restaurant waiter);
    - interview language – Romanian;

- 6f - age at immigration: 36 – skilled worker category (in Canada for 7 months);
    - single, no children, vocational school in Romania;
    - no jobs so far, presently unemployed, applying for specialisation courses;
    - interview language – Romanian;

- 7m - age at immigration: 29 – skilled worker category (in Canada for 6 months);
    - single, no children, University Degree in Romania;
    - several jobs not in the field of specialisation (furniture loader, clothes packer/unpacker), presently unemployed;
    - interview language – Romanian;

- 8f - age at immigration: 30 – skilled worker category (in Canada for 6 months);
    - single, no children, University Degree in Romania;

- part-time job in the field of specialisation (1st job in Canada), applying for specialisation courses;
- interview language – Romanian.

Ottawa

- 9m - age at immigration: 18 – sponsored skilled worker (in Canada for 22 years);
  - married to a Romanian, no children at immigration, one child now, vocational school in Romania;
  - few workplaces changed not in the initial field of specialisation, full-time employee;
  - interview language – Romanian;

- 10f - age at immigration: 11 – immigrated with parents (in Canada for 10 years);
  - single, no children, University student in Canada, student part-time jobs;
  - interview language – English;

- 11f - age at immigration: 14 – immigrated with parents (in Canada for 10 years);
  - married to a Canadian, no children, University Degree in Canada;
  - full-time employee not in the field of specialisation, 1st job in Canada;
  - interview language – English;

- 12m - age at immigration: 21 – immigrated with parents (in Canada for 6 years);
  - single at immigration, married to a Romanian in Canada, one child, education in Canada;
  - full-time employee in the field of specialisation, 2 jobs changed;
  - interview language – Romanian;

- 13m - age at immigration: under 30 – skilled worker spouse category (in Canada for 3 years);
  - married at immigration, two children now, University Degree in Romania;
  - full-time employee in the field of specialisation, 1st job in Canada;
  - interview language – Romanian;

- 14m - age at immigration: 27 – skilled worker category (in Canada for 2 years);
  - single, no children, University Degree in Romania, University student at present;
  - several jobs not in the Romanian field of specialisation (telemarketer, sales representative), presently unemployed;
  - interview language – English;

- 15f - age at immigration: 30 – skilled worker spouse category (in Canada for 7 months);
  - married at immigration, no children, University Degree in Romania;
  - full-time employee not in the field of specialisation, applying for a MA;
  - interview language – Romanian;

- 16m - age at immigration: 29 – skilled worker category (in Canada for 7 months);

- married at immigration, no children, University Degree in Romania;
- full-time employee in the field of specialisation;
- interview language – Romanian.