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# THE PROCESS OF MIGRATION AND INTEGRATION: A THEORETICAL INQUIRY

Aniella Mihaela VIERIU<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Migration has been in the past and will be in the future a main concern for European societies. This subject is important especially because Romanian migration has exploded in the last decades and our country faces the repercussions of this phenomenon more and more often. That is one of the reasons why in this study we analyze this topic. Migration is linked in complex ways to class, gender, generation, ethnicity and other social cleavages, which are embodied in hierarchies of power and social status, in positions in home and host communities, in work and relationships- all of which may be transformed in the course of migratory process. This article is more than a theoretical inquiry on the process of migration; it is a classification of different approaches in the field of migration theories in an attempt to bring some order to the theoretical space. Several analyses of international migration have resulted in the publishing of numerous studies about integration. This paper analyses the process of migrants' integration relying on several researches from different authors. This article ends with a brief outline of a critical realist approach to migration theory and with a discussion about migrants' integration in host countries.

*Keywords:* migration; migration theories; integration; integration studies;

## Introduction

Migration has been in the past and will be in the future a main concern for European societies. Migration is an important theme for our country especially because Romanian migration has exploded in the last decades, the peak of Romanian temporary migration being documented for the period 2001-2006 (Sandu, 2010). In the second half of the 1980s Romania became one of the major sending countries of the European East-West migration system. In the development of theory and policy, migration has usually been considered separately from other forms of mobility, a focus which continued to the present. Once a critical number of migrants have settled at the destination, migration becomes self-perpetuating

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because it creates the social structures to sustain the process (Hein de Haas, 2010 apud Castels and Miller 2009; Massey 1990; Massey et al.1998). Besides the effect of migration on social stratification, the framework of migration system theory can be extended with a new mechanism: migration – driven forms of cultural change. Migration networks may bring into the community information and ideas that focus discontent, demonstrate that people elsewhere are better off, and show that local change is possible and desirable (Brown, 2002). “A migrant network is a location-specific form of social capital” (Massey et al. 1998). Bourdieu defined social capital as „the aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and re-cognition” ( Bourdieu 1979).

The concept of “culture of migration” refers to the “changes of values and cultural perceptions” determined by previous migratory experiences within a given community that has a considerable migratory history (Hortvan , 2008). Hortvan speaks about the first meaning of the term of *culture of migration*: (1) The first understanding of this concept relates the way that migration becomes a cultural fact in the communities of origin; (2) The second understanding of this concept relates to the system of norms and ideologies that create a framework of interpretation and evaluation for stability or mobility in a given society; (3) The third understanding of „culture of migration” sees migration as acquiring marked symbolic functions in a given society.

## Discussing about Migration Theories

This paper starts by discussing and classifying existing theories on the perpetuation of migration. The social sciences have generated numerous theories to explain various aspects of migration, drawing on different disciplinary perspectives and underlying models. Many theories of migration rest on the assumption that migrants have a significant level of choice in their decisions to move. This article attempts to sketch a few emerging directions on theories of migration. If we admit that migration is a universal human experience, it seems reasonable to look for a level of general theory which makes sense of these patterns and explains the process of migration. The contribution by Thomas Faist (2000) addresses the kinds of change brought about by the transnational activities of migrants. He suggest that we need to build on the growing body of work on the emergence, forms and consequences of such transnational activities and expand this analysis to direct attention to the transformation of institutions in the local, national, and international realms. Faist calls for attention to the connection between macro, meso and micro levels in an analysis of citizenship in the migratory context. Pryor (1981) uses the underlying development model as the means of classification of migration theories: classical - associated with functionalism, conflict - associated with Marxism, and systems – associated with functionalism. Pryor issued a call for the integration of internal and international migration theories. His aim was not to present an overarching metatheory of migration, but to explore the possi-

bility of integrating aspects of existing theories and empirical findings in a new way. Pryor recognized the reality that the study of migration had been fragmented long disciplinary lines - between sociologists, demographers, geographers, economists, anthropologists and psychologists, amongst others. Goss and Lindquist (1995) distinguish functionalist, structuralist and integrative approaches; this last group includes the new economics of labor migration, systems, networks and cumulative causation theories.

Oliver Bakewell (2010) explores the complex relationship between structure and agency and the way it has been incorporated into migration theory. The question is how far do structure and agency shape each other and how does their relationships play out in migration process. He offers a critical realist analysis of the relationship between structure and agency that can provide a much more sophisticated theoretical basis for understanding process of migration and social change. Bakewell has found critical approaches useful in resolving some of the shortcomings of structuration theory, which are applicable in both forced and voluntary migration with the purpose of finding ways to understand the inner workings of structure and agency in the migration process. Helma Lutz takes up themes of social transformation in her exploration of the place of gender in migration and the social change and transformation associated with it. She tracks the ways in which women - and subsequently the question of gender - have struggled to find their place in Migration Studies, and incorporates into her analysis the notion of „intersectionality”, the ways in which division by class, gender, ethnicity and generation may interact, amplify and transform each other.

Massey et al. (1998) speaks about an important divide between theories: the initiation of migration - neoclassical, new economics, dual labor market and world system theory; and the perpetuation of migration once started - network, institutional, cumulative causation and migration system theory but in conclusion he says that no one theory is adequate to explain migration and that we need to choose the most appropriate theoretical approach according to the context in which it is applied. Hein de Hass (2010) suggests that the migration literature has identified various mechanisms to explain why migration tends to become a self-perpetuating party independent of its original drives. The role of networks has been seen as pivotal in this respect. He also suggests that there are three weaknesses in current approaches to the internal dynamics of migration processes: first - by focusing on the role of networks in the perpetuating migration processes, these approaches tend to underplay feedback mechanisms deriving from the wider contexts in both sending and receiving societies; second - they are unable to explain why such network effects do not always occur; third - the argument of migration network theories tend to be circular, since it appears to be assumed that migration goes on indefinitely. In his paper Hein de Hass (2010) shows that existing theories on the internal dynamics of migration processes excel in explaining the expansion of migrant networks and migration systems, but generally fail to explain their initial, selective creation, different trajectories and subsequent breakdown.

## Limits of Existing Theories

According with Hein de Hass (2010) there remains two fundamental theoretical weakness, first that current theories cannot explain why most initial migration moves do not lead to migration networks and migration system formation and second - it seems that circular logic reveals an inability to conceptualize which migration-undermining feedback mechanism may counteract migration facilitating feedback dynamics and which may explain the endogenous decline of established migration system. The concerns laid out connect with Bakewell's contribution. At present, there is no single theory widely accepted by social scientists to account for the emergence and perpetuation of international migration throughout the world, only a fragmented set of theories that have developed largely in isolation from one another, sometimes but not always segmented by disciplinary boundaries (Nicholas Van Hear, 2010 apud Massey et al.1998). The appropriate theoretical approach needs to be chosen according to the particular context in which it is applied (Bakewell, 2010).

## Migrants integration

With increasing migration into and within an already culturally diverse EU, there is an urgent need for more knowledge sharing on the nature and effectiveness of cultural and social integration process (Nesse Network, 2008). In studies of international migration, a massive amount of literature on the subject of immigrant integration (or to use alternative terms, assimilation, acculturation or incorporation) exists; (King & Skeldon 2010) also different interpretational perspectives are taken into consideration. Among the new theories on the analysis the most dominant are: in northern American literature the theory on segmented integration, that sets the question on the concept of integration as a linear process (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). In principle, integration should be a two-way adjustment process whereby immigrants and the host society together create a new culture (Guo, 2010). Heckman (2005) defines integration as: “a long - lasting process of inclusion and acceptance of migrants in the core institution, relations and statuses of the receiving society. For the migrants integration refers to a process of learning a new culture, an acquisition of rights, access to position and statuses, a building of personal relations to members of the receiving society and a formation of feelings of belonging and identification towards the immigration society. Integration is an interactive process between migrants and receiving society, in which, however, the receiving society has much more power and prestige” (King & Skeldon 2010).

The integration process is commonly divided into a number of spheres - economic, social, cultural, political and spatial - that can be organized as follows ( R. King and R. Skeldon apud Heckmann 2005): Structural integration - the acquisition of rights and status within the core institution of the host society: employment, housing, education, health services, political and citizenship rights;

Cultural integration( or acculturation) - the cognitive, behavioral and attitudinal change of immigrants and their descendants in conformity to the norms of the host society; Interactive integration - social intercourse, friendship, marriage and membership of various organizations; Identification integration - feelings of belonging, expressed in terms of allegiance to ethnic, regional, local and national identity. Interculturalism is about explicitly recognizing the value of diversity while doing everything possible to increase interaction, mixing and hybridization between cultural communities. In the ambit of intercultural model, integration can be defined as a multidimensional process aimed at a peaceful living together within a determined social reality among individuals and groups culturally and ethnically different, founded on the respect of diversity with the condition that these do not harm the fundamental rights and democratic institutions (Cesareo, 2004; Besozzi, Colombo, & Santagat, 2009). The integration process of migrants generally lasts for generations and that is one of the reasons for which many programs for integration have been developed. Hippy or „Home Instructions for Parents of Preschool Youngsters” was developed as measure of integration for immigrants to the countries. It has been applied in several European countries. Hippy consists of a home visit program in which parents are motivated to learn themselves and to practice the language of the immigration country with their children each day for about 15 to 20 minutes. Samenspel is a centre based program for migrant children and their mothers. Children are supported to improve both the language of the immigration country and of the migrant family. Two educators, one with a migration background from the same country as the participants, work with the groups (mothers and children) which meet weekly for three to four hours. The mothers receive learning and playing resources which they can use and practice at home and are instructed in how they can exercise and play with their children.

## **Researches in the field of integration**

Further we will illustrate a series of studies in the field of migration. An important aspect about migration is to see how the migrants integrate in the host country. John W. Berry and Collete Sabier’s (2009) research compares samples from two societies that have very different policies and practices with respect to immigration and acculturation: Canada and France. The variables of the study are: acculturation strategies, cultural identity, ethnic behavior, perceived discrimination and adaptation. Adolescents filled out a questionnaire in one-to-one interviews at home with a similar ethnic interviewer. For acculturation attitudes a scale following the procedure of Berry et al.(1098) was used. The first questionnaire had 60 questions with two sets of approximately 20 questions concerning each ethnic and national culture, a third dealt with acculturation to more global culture. The questions for ethnic acculturation were adapted to make items relevant to each specific ethno cultural group. For cultural identity was used one question for national and one for ethnic identity. For ethnic behaviors several questions to evaluate the commitment of adolescents in behaviors related to their

cultural customs or which can sustain their ethnic identity. Also twelve questions with Likert response options (1 not all, to 5 almost always) was used for perceived discrimination, for self - esteem to scales were used, the Rosenberg self – esteem scale and Coopersmith’s self esteem inventory, and for deviance were used 11 questions ranging from minor behavior problems to more serious ones, with responses made on a Likert response scale (1 never to 5 often). Briefly this study addressed three core questions: how do youth acculturate; how well do they adapt; are there any relationships between their acculturation attitudes and strategies, and their level of adaptation? With respect to the first question, immigrant youth hold varying views about how they wish to acculturate and about their cultural identities. Second, there is support for the two forms of adaptation: psychological well being and sociocultural competence are conceptually and empirically distinct among immigrant youth and they have different predictors and finally the pattern of relationships between how youth acculturate and how well they adapt largely replicates the findings with adult immigrants. This set of relationships is stronger and more consistent in Montreal than in Paris. The difference appears to be in policy and public attitudes between the two societies, is more difficult to adapt well when one’s ethnicity is being questioned.

Borja Martinovoc, Frank van Tubergen and Ineke Mass’s (2009) studies provide a dynamic account by distinguishing differences in social integration that develop shortly after immigrants’ arrival in the host country from changes with length of stay. Interethnic contact is a continuous variable recorded on a four point scale with values 0, 1, 2 and 3. It was constructed by taking a sum score of answers on three questions present in all surveys that measure several aspects of social integration. Length of stay and age at migration (independent variables) are continuous variables measured in years. Migration motive consists of four categories: work, study, family. Education in the country of origin was treated as a continuous variable; gender was used as a control variable. In conclusion there seems to be an increase in social integration with length of stay. This study gave a twist to the study of immigrants’ social integration by looking at it from dynamic perspective. In another study about integration, Rina Manuela Contini and Antonio Maturo (2011) are interested in the issue of new generations in the multi-ethnic school and society. For the analysis of data multivariate statistics have been used. The variables used were: the national origin, gender, education level of the family, the help received in the study at home, the time of stay in Italy and the macro of origin. In particular in the study the following have been investigated: relationship with friends and intercultural exchanges, horizontal and vertical relations in the school, the presence or not of behavior addressed at sharing and communicating experiences, the perception of the discriminating attitudes in class. Also the level of „ethnicity” has been dealt with through some questions, like having or not friends with a different citizenship that their own, the priority of meeting friends with the same citizenship and the relationship with their peers. Family practices and the maintenance of culture of origin have been investigated through items referred at the language spoken at home, the music they listen, the traditions of the country of origin they follow. The research of Nicole Shneeweis (2009) is a study on educational integration of students with migration background using data from five international student assessment studies. The Blinder - Oaxana



decompositions was used to allow for a comparison of integration of migrant students across countries and time. Next, integration is related to institutional characteristics of the schooling system. Pooled, country – group and country fixed effects estimations show that time in school and early education are positively related to the integration of students with migration background. Another study of Nick Drydak (2011) investigates the impact on Albanian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Georgian and Russian wages in Greece. Treating ethnic identity as a composite of language, cultural habits, ethnic - self identification, societal interaction, and future citizenship pans, the estimations suggest that assimilation and integration are possibly associated with characteristics. In addition, dramatic wage growth for fully assimilated and integrated immigrants, and vast wage losses for totally separated and marginalized immigrants are estimated.

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that the process of migration requires a detailed analysis especially because our country faces this phenomenon directly and there is a need to fully understand the process of migration an integration of the migrants. We also tried discussing and classifying the existing theories on the perpetuation of migration. One of the purposes of this study was to sketch a few emerging directions on migration theories. We conclude that there is no single theory widely accepted by social scientists to account for the emergence and perpetuation of international migration throughout the world, only a fragmented set of theories that have developed largely in isolation from one another, sometimes but not always segmented by disciplinary boundaries (Nicholas Van Hear, 2010 apud Massey et al.1998). There is probably still little interest for a single theory of migration in the research community. Also with increasing migration into and within an already culturally diverse EU, there is an urgent need for more knowledge sharing on the nature and effectiveness of the cultural and social integration process. Integration into the culture of the immigration country is a major function of society and of schools in immigration countries. In this thesis we present a few programs for integration and conclude with the analysis of several studies in the field of integration.

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