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THE REFLUX OF THE
ROMANIAN LABOR
FORCE –
SPECIFIC PATTERNS

RESEARCH PROJECT

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Abstract

The Romanian Government revealed interesting statistic data referring to the Romanian migration of the labor force. After an intense flux towards the Western Europe consequent to the fall of the Iron Curtain, in the present a reflux of this category of population can be observed. Considering the fact that 20 % of the Romanian labor force activates outside its borders, the Romanian Government is interested in developing a strategy to attract these migrants back, reporting some success in the attempt. With my study I intend to discover what determines that part of them to come back to Romania and enhance the reflux with an adequate strategy, based on the specific patterns of this social category.

My research is to prove that there are significant differences between the Romanian migrating labor force and the Romanian labor force within the national territory considering the cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions of their Social Representations regarding some relevant aspects of personality, background, everyday life and future projects.

Once established the specific patterns of the Romanian migrants, considering the SR Theory principles, I intend to develop a strategy in order to suit the needs of this important category of population and bring it back to “the nest”. It is my intention to continue this research later on with experimental designs, based on quantitative methods.

This project presents high practical value to the Romanian Government and Economy, and also to the European Community, considering the fact that the large number of the Romanian migrants affects us all.

Introduction (relation to earlier work in the area)

This study will address a few questions to be answered during this particular research or the sequences that will follow. “The reflux of the Romanian labor force – specific patterns” is a research project intended to explore the literature on Social Representations and look at it from a different angle. Hence, this study will refer to: SR Theories regarding the **construction** of an SR – the **structure** and its three relevant dimensions: cognitive, affective and behavioral (Abric, 1994a; Flament, 1994a; Moliner, 1986; Guimelli and Rouquette, 1992, 1993, Moscovici, 1976; Jodelet, 1989a; Palacios, 1997, Curelaru, 2003; Giust-Disprairies, 1988; Abric and Guimelli, 2002), the **subject** and the **object** of an SR (Jodelet, 1989a), the **conditions of the SR emergence** (information dispersion, focus and pressure to inference – Moscovici, 1976), **object identification criteria** (Flament and Roquette, 2003; Moliner, 1993b, 1996; Moliner, Rateau and Cohen-Scali, 2002), **fundamental processes of representation** (Moscovici, 1976) and so on.

In the same time, the research will explore the literature on **categorization, stereotyping, social groups** and **inter-individual interaction**. The works on **minorities, uprooting** and **migration** itself will contribute hugely to this study. There will be references to the **Economical literature** and, of course, to the **Romanian National Institute of Statistics**, which will provide the required basic data.

Studies on other **social and cultural patterns** will also be of use in order to construct a solid research on the specific patterns of the migrating Romanian labor force. The theory and the experiments referring to the **influence of a minority** (Moscovici, Lage et Naffrechoux, 1969) and to the **social influence** in general will reveal the changes and interactions that take place within a cultural space that includes different kinds of nations. We will also refer to the delicate process of **attitude change** (Zajonc, 1968; Brehm and Kassin, 1990; Mita et al., 1977; Grush, 1980; Saegert and co., 1973; Perlman and Oskamp, 1971; Kapferer, 1990, and others) which implies **resistance to change** (Strobe and co., 1988; Neculau, 1996) at the individual, group and national level.

Annamaria de Rosa’s work regarding the social cognition (1991) and the problems of coherence between the theoretical definition and procedure of research (1993) brings an important **theoretical** and **practical** contribution to the development of the project that I am proposing.

Considering the major role of **communicational processes** in investigating a cross-cultural pattern, Jean Claude Abric’s book, “Psychologie de la communication: Théorie et Méthodes” is a solid fundament.

My project is in its preliminary stages, and this brings the advantage that it is open to many approaches. On its course to develop, some of the theories will prove themselves more effective than the others and they will prevail. “The reflux of the Romanian labor force – specific patterns” is a field research and, in consequence, it is sensible to the field discoveries and adjustments. In a laboratory project, the research variables would be completely isolated from the parasite ones and their influence would be statistically proven. The experimental laboratory stage will be reached after this particular research is

concluded, definitely not before. As a researcher, I will not shut down incoming possibilities before their time.

Aim and hypotheses

Objective:

The objective of this research is to prove that there are significant differences between the Romanian migrating labor force and the Romanian labor force within the national territory considering the cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions of their Social Representations regarding relevant aspects, which I intend to discover during my research. I will focus on the ones that fulfill the criteria of selection, according to Moliner (1993b, 1996 and 2002 with Rateau and Cohen-Scali): the polymorphism of the object, the connection to a social group, identity and consensus, interaction between groups and the absence of formal rules). Criteria of selection are proposed also by Flament and Rouquette (2003): the socio-cognitive salience, with two levels – the function of concept and presence in communication – and social practices.

Considering the fact that part of the Romanian labor force seems to engage in a reflux, according to Governmental statistics, with my study I intend to discover what determinates that part of the population to come back to Romania and enhance this reflux with an adequate strategy, based on the specific patterns of this social category.

Hypotheses:

- *The general hypothesis:*

There are significant differences between the Romanian migrating labor force and the Romanian labor force within the national territory considering the cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions of their Social Representations regarding the relevant aspects in discussion.

- *Research hypotheses (considering the cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions; the geographical areas; the trade of the migrant, etc):*
 1. The structure of the relevant SR taken into consideration differs significantly from the Romanian labor force inside to the one outside the geographical territory at the cognitive level.
 2. The structure of the relevant SR taken into consideration differs significantly from the Romanian labor force inside to the one outside the geographical territory at the affective level.
 3. The structure of the relevant SR taken into consideration differs significantly from the Romanian labor force inside to the one outside the geographical territory at the behavioral level.

These are the structural hypotheses on which I intend to build my research. It is a project meant to offer a solid base to start, before that, to reveal my intentions for the next three years at the European Doctorate on Social Representations and Communication, if the Committee approves my application.

Research design (research sample, methods, measures, techniques and procedures)

Design: 2x2

Independent variables:

1. **Geographical areas:** Romania, Italy
2. **Trades:** constructors, maids

Dependent variable:

Relevant dimensions: cognitive, affective, behavioral

Research sample

The subjects of the research will be:

- Pre-tests: emigrants, psychologists, journalist, sociologists, Romanian emigrants from Italy or returned to Romania, maids and constructors from both countries (groups of experts and pre-tests of the instruments) – minimum 60 persons
- Interviews and applications of the instruments: Romanian emigrants from Italy or returned to Romania, who are or were working as constructors or maids – minimum 120 persons

The subjects from the pre-tests will differ from the interviewed persons and from the respondents to the questionnaires (my study will require a total number of minimum 180 – 200 persons established on Romanian territory and/or on Italian territory).

Methodology

- *Qualitative methodology*

First step of the research will consist in the investigation of the possible directions to proceed. A *group of experts* (emigrants, psychologists, journalists) will be consulted in order to indicate the relevant aspects in an emigrant's life, focusing on thoughts/beliefs, feelings/emotions, actions/everyday schedule. The answers will be submitted to the *content analysis* and to the *frequency analysis*, resulting the major themes to start from. These themes will be transformed in *items* (questions) – taking into consideration the three dimensions: cognitive, affective, behavioral – and then introduced in an “*interview guide*”, as a base for the interviews.

The second step (once the guidelines of the interview are established) is to *select the population to be interviewed*, according to the relevant criteria above.

The third step implies, of course, the *interviews* (in Romania and in Italy, selecting representative subjects according to their trades). The number of interviews will be minimum 40 (10 interviews for each group, considering the two geographic areas and the two trades).

The fourth step consists in *processing the qualitative data* using, of course, qualitative methods, such as the *content analysis*, in order to identify the major themes and the relationships between these themes – they appear together or not, they exclude each other or not, and in which conditions these facts occur (by this stage the relevant aspects to be measured will be discovered).

The qualitative methods will be based on the SR Theories regarding the **construction** of an SR – the **structure** and its three relevant dimensions: cognitive, affective and behavioral (Abric, 1994a; Flament, 1994a; Moliner, 1986; Guimelli and Rouquette, 1992, 1993, Moscovici, 1976; Jodelet, 1989a; Palacios, 1997, Curelaru, 2003; Giust-disprairies, 1988; Abric and Guimelli, 2002), the **subject** and the **object** of an SR (Jodelet, 1989a), the **conditions of the SR emergence** (information dispersion, focus and pressure to inference – Moscovici, 1976), **object identification criteria** (Flament and Roquette, 2003; Moliner, 1993b, 1996; Moliner, Rateau and Cohen-Scali, 2002), **fundamental processes of representation** (Moscovici, 1976).

I will also be using the **Chi-Square**, the most effective method for non-parametric data, in order to establish the significant differences between the core and the peripheral elements.

- *Quantitative methodology*

The quantitative processing of the data resulting from the interviews will imply the *frequency analysis*.

Once identified the major themes and the relevant aspects to be measured, the next step is to *construct* and *pre-test* the questionnaires. One of the pre-testing will include consulting different groups of experts in order to define the cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects of the concept to be measured, which will be grouped in *factors*. Another pre-testing will focus on construction of the items. The next pre-testing will verify the instrument created by the means of the *consistency analysis* or the *reliability analysis* (**Alpha-Cronbach index**, which should be above .70). If there's "green light", the instrument is ready to be applied on the target population.

Once the instrument is applied (each aspect taken into consideration will be measured with one instrument, focused on the three relevant dimensions: cognitive, affective and behavioral; of course, the number of relevant aspects – objects of SR – will be reduced to the essential ones), the quantitative analysis will focus on *factor analysis* (which will reveal the internal structure), comparisons between groups (*T-Tests* and *ANOVA*), *correlations* and *regressions*, processed by the means of **SPSS**.

These two types of methodology will reveal the specific patterns of the Romanian emigrants compared to the Romanian citizens within the national territory. Therefore the aspects to be enhanced in order to attract the Romanian labor force back home will be revealed. The Social Representations of these groups concerning the relevant aspects in discussion will stand at the base of a strategy of national and international value.

Possible conclusions

My intention is to discover a true pattern of the investigated categories. However, it is possible that some of the relevant aspects do not differ from group to group. If the

pattern of the Romanian emigrant is in some regards similar to the pattern of the Romanian citizen who is not (anymore) an emigrant, such similarity can be the link that I am searching for.

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