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Key Dynamics of Assimilation among First-Generation Turkish Immigrants Residing in Romania

Hasan Aydin

The purpose of this study was to examine the consequences of integration and assimilation of first-generation young adults (over 18 years old) who are Turkish immigrants in Romania. This is a qualitative study with 31 first-generation Turkish immigrants in two different Romanian cities. The participants were interviewed and were asked open-ended questions relating to their culture, religion, and language. The comparative analyses of the two cities indicate that the processes and intensity of assimilation differ widely. The participants' degree of assimilation or integration was related to various things, such as histories prior to migration, reason for relocation, and particular characteristics of their current city of inhabitation. The findings indicate that assimilation and integration do not follow fixed patterns, however must be considered in the wider socioeconomic, political, geographical, and personal contexts in which they occur.

Introduction

It has been almost 40 years since the first large-scale Turkish emigration movement (Acma, 2002). Today, a large number of Turkish people continue to migrate and settle in different societies around the world, including Western and Eastern European countries (Spohn, 2003). Young adults arrive in various countries to study at universities, find jobs, or reunite with family members (Abanat- Unat, 1985; Milikowski, 2000). Over the last 20 years, Romania has been one of the preferred destinations for Turkish guest workers. There are several reasons that the Turks prefer Romania. They can move to Romania without visa restrictions,

open new businesses without taxes, and Romania shares a border with Turkey, thus which facilitating trade between the two countries.

The purpose of this study is to explore the key dynamics of cultural assimilation of first-generation Turkish immigrants in Romania. The study took place in 2008 in two Turkish communities within major cities in Romania: Cluj-Napoca and Bucharest. A total of 31 participants (11 from Cluj- Napoca, 20 from Bucharest) were interviewed about their views on the intersections between Turkish and Romanian cultures, religions, and languages. The comparative analyses of the two cities indicate that the processes and intensity of assimilation differ widely. Histories prior to migration, reasons for relocation, and characteristics of the host cities seem to greatly impact participants' process of integration/assimilation. Factors related to migration from Turkey were associated with political, cultural, and economic status. These are the essential elements for societal integration and cohesion. Implications of these research findings will include the consideration of worldwide Turkish migration.

Immigration and Assimilation

Acma (2002) suggests immigration is a world-wide cultural, economic, and social pattern not exclusive to Turks. According to Castles and Miller (2003), for immigrant students to succeed overseas, there needs to be some continuation of their national cultural norms. This continuation is usually enriched by the incorporation of cultural norms of the host country. Milikowski (2000) looked at how boundaries were defined and maintained by a Turkish minority group abroad. Spohn (2003) analyzed published studies of the effects of immigration on Turkish religion, culture, education, and identity. In line with the findings of others, he found that the more education a Turkish individual achieves, the less likely he is to participate in active religious practices (Mango, 2006). With the drastic population changes all over the world (Gallagher & Pritchard, 2007), the debate is whether to endorse diversity or assimilation of immigrants in the receiving country. By selecting a specific immigrant population group like the Turkish, we can examine, in depth, some of the key elements affecting assimilation. My Turkish nationality enhanced this research study since I had the same language and culture as the interviewees. I feel these similarities allowed the participants to be more open during the interviewing process. In addition, very little research has been published about the Turks and their immigration until this study. Schopflin (1993) writes that there are many different ethnicities in Romania: Roma (Gypsy), Hungarian, German, Bulgarian, and Turkish. However, most research conducted with these groups does not include Turkish immigrants. There was only one article published about Turkish people in this

country in the 1980s entitled "The Turkic Peoples of Romania" (Schopflin, 1993, p. 202). However, the content of this article was very general. It only described the historical background of the Turkish immigration to Romania.

Aronowitz (2002) defines assimilation as the forced or voluntary incorporation into a dominant or majority culture. He also writes that "assimilation concretizes behavior which provides access to the social structure" (p. 241). This is the process where, in this study, Turkish immigrants may surrender the family, social, religious, dietary, or academic practices of their homeland and possibly embody the practices of the majority culture to which they have immigrated.

All immigrants go through a stress-filled transition when establishing themselves as members of a host society. First-generation young adults (over 18 years old), while facing the typical issues of a young adult, also experience a major disruption through geographical relocation in culturally different environments (Rosenthal, White & Bell, 1989). Within most Turkish communities, family is everything (Acma, 2004).

The overall goal of this study is to understand key dynamics of assimilation of a specific group of people: Turkish immigrants in Romania (Milikowski, 2000). Through qualitative reflection of participants, an appreciation for real-life experiences could take place (Spohn, 2003).

Historical Background

The Turkish immigrants in Romania are divided into roughly equalized groups of Turks and Tatars. They are almost solely located in the Dobruja, the area surrounded by the Danube, the Black Sea, and Bulgaria (Schopflin, 1993). The Turks settled there in the 16th century under the Ottoman rule as guardians of a strategically important area. The settlements further encompassed the adjacent coastlines of Bulgaria and Bessarabia (Bainbridge, et al, 1993). Some of these Turks are still in Romania and have become Romanian citizens, and some of the Turks have immigrated to European countries, especially Germany, since the 1960s, beginning with a labor agreement between two governments (Kilic, 2005). In contrast, there were no such large, continuous immigration flows from Turkey to Romania.

However, in 1989, when Ceausescu's regime was overthrown by the army, the new Romanian government opened the door and immigrants were welcomed. After Ceausescu's regime, many Turkish businessmen/women, and laborers entered Romania without visas or other restrictions.

The size of these communities of Turkish immigrants in Romania is shown by previous and current census returns (Table 1). The 1930 figure includes Bulgaria and the Soviet Union. Turkish immigrants formed about 0.03 % of the

total population of Romania.

Table 1: The populations of Turkish immigrants in Romania

Date	1930	1956	1966	1977	1990	
Turkish immigrants	154,772	14,329	18,040	23,107	90,129	180,202

There is a significant number of Turkish minorities in Romania thanks to the legacy of the Ottoman Empire. Since the establishment of an independent Romanian nation-state, the fate of the Turkish-Romanian community changed dramatically (Kucukcan, 1999). As seen in Table 1, the Turkish population in Romania on the eve of gaining independence in 1930 was 154,772. However, many Turks left for Turkey between 1930 and 1956 because of the communist regime. Later, the Turkish speaking populations of Romania drastically increased; specifically after Ceausescu's regime collapsed, many Turks entered Romania during the 1990s. According to the Government Census of Romania (2007), more than 180,000 Turkish immigrants live in Romania, comprising 0.2 % of the population. Nowadays, the majority of Turkish immigrants live in Constance, Bucharest, and Cluj-Napoca.

In addition, according to the Government Census of Europe (2008), there are more than 5 million Turkish immigrants disproportionately scattered throughout the European countries. This huge number of Turkish immigrants greatly influenced the structure of Western and Eastern Europe and has become one of the bargaining points used by the Turkish government to join the European Union. The Turkish immigrants have settled in Europe and have formed their own special communities within the Western societies (Nasreddine, 2004).

Geopolitical Context: Romania—Then and Now

According to Bettocletti & Lawrence (2001), Romania—a country north of the Balkan Peninsula and bordered by the Black Sea—has a very large market. In fact, the Romanian markets the second largest market throughout Eastern and Central Europe. Romania is slightly smaller than Oregon and the Romanian republic is 91,699 square miles (237,500 square kilometers). It is bordered by the Ukraine, Moldova, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. Bucharest is the capital and largest city (Encyclopedia of the Nations, 2007).

According to the Government Census of 2002, Romania has 21.7 million inhabitants: 89.5 % are Romanian, 6.6 % Hungarian, 2.5 % Roma (Gypsy), and 0.3 % German and Ukrainian. More than 180,000 Turkish immigrants live in

Romania, which means approximately 0.2 % of the population (The World Factbook, 2002). The majority of the population speaks Romanian, although there are also minorities speaking Hungarian (8%) and German (2%). Other ethnic groups include Ukrainians, Serbs, Croats, Gypsies, Russians, and Turks. The main religion is the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Reisz (2006), states that Romania was the only Eastern European country that experienced a violent change of regime. In the 1990s, Romania experienced an extreme recession. While domestic product and industrial product fell by 40 and 45 %, respectively, inflation increased by over 1000% (Reisz, 2006).

In the 1990s, the higher education system in Romania was the best-functioning of all civil institutions, as well as the closest civil institution to Western systems (Daxner, 2003). The liberalization of the higher education system, (e.g., curriculum, core values, and training) particularly in the early 1990s, became a focus of public interest and an important challenge for a society undergoing transition and a national government striving to decentralize public institutions and promote autonomy. Reisz (2006) writes that in the 1989–90 academic years, the Romanian higher education system included 164,307 students, while the dynamically reduced teaching staff of 11,696 was smaller than in 1970 (p. 79).

The group, Lumina Foundation for Education, which was affiliated with the Gülen Movement, a Turkish multicultural and education initiative, arrived in Romania in 1996. Fethullah Gulen is a prominent Turkish scholar, and the Gulen movement is a faith-inspired civil society movement often named after. It is mainly comprised by volunteers. The Gülen followers opened a school in Bucharest for education in Romania. At the time, economic strife had reduced Romania's education budgets, leading to a significant decrease in teaching standards in Turkish schools. In addition, unattractive salaries drained the profession of many of its most competent teachers and university professors. With its teams of dedicated Turkish-born teachers and its emphasis on modern technology, the Gülen community has helped local governments overcome this situation. As in Turkey, a strong emphasis on sciences, ethics, and self-discipline characterizes Gülen's schools. Training is given mainly in English, but as well as in Turkish, local languages, and occasionally, Russian and Romanian as well.

The Gülen schools are perceived to be elite schools. They are fee-paying private schools; the students are selected on the basis of academic performance, and the students in the schools tend to score high in terms of academic achievement. The schools generally follow the curriculum of the receiving country, combined with some elements from the Turkish curriculum and the curriculum in other countries. A majority of the subjects are taught in English, and on the secondary level, education is also given in Turkish. In order to bring the students' English

to the necessary standard, the school week is generally longer than in the state schools (Solberg, 2005).

Turks, who were inspired by Gülen's teachings, immigrated to Romania as volunteers. These volunteers altruistically support these Gülen institutions using their own personal resources without expecting any financial return. Those who did not have financial resources contribute to the service-projects through their labor or ideas. According to Gulen (2006), "Altruism is an exalted human feeling, and its source is love. Whoever has the greatest share in this love is the greatest hero of humanity; these people have been able to uproot any feelings of hatred and rancor in themselves" (p. 17). The altruism and the hard work of the volunteers have created trust. This is shared by many people in or out of the Gülen movement, which became a substantial source of benefits for all participants and the movement. The Gülen followers are called *abi* (which means elder brother), *abla* (elder sister), *kardes* (brother or sister), and co-workers, ethnic or occupational groups. In his sermons, Gülen encouraged them to set up schools all over the world, as well as to send Turkish teachers, business-men/women to countries in need (Gulen, 1991).

Historically, there was a close relationship between the Ottoman Empire of Turkey and Romania. However, once Romania joined the European Union in 2007, it proceeded to bring itself into line with Turkey's education system since Turkey is also one of the countries that follow the European Union's education system even though it is not a European Union member. To this end (following EU standards), there is a private Turkish international school with three branches. Each branch has followed a different curriculum in Bucharest, and has 4,000 students of 40 different nationalities. The research for this paper was conducted at one of these branches. These schools are affiliated with the Gülen model of schools to help Romanian education develop.

Specifically, these schools are not owned by Fetullah Gülen himself, but by private companies and institutions that sympathize with him and his thinking. The Gülen community is not a tightly controlled hierarchical organization, but rather a loose network of schools, study centers, foundations, companies, media organizations, and hospitals, etc., some of which are closely affiliated with Gülen himself, and others who merely regard him as a source of inspiration (Solberg, 2005).

Method

Participants

Thirty-one Turkish adult immigrants (13 females and 18 males) aged 18 to 64 years ($M=34.8$) participated in the study. Participants were from two different locations:

Cluj-Napoca and Bucharest. There were two couples and seven singles (two females, 18.2% and nine males, 82.8%) from Cluj-Napoca. Six couples and eight singles (nine females, 45% and 11 males, 55%) were from Bucharest. Fourteen out of the 20 people from Bucharest (70%) were from The International School of Bucharest and the remaining six people (30%) were businessmen and businesswomen who sponsored this school. They constituted a "sample of convenience" (Lonner & Berry, 1986) conducting interviews at various Turkish cultural groups and social events, by visiting the International School of Bucharest, some participants' homes, and coffee shops, restaurants, and business offices operated by Turkish immigrants. In order to have a community representative sample, respondents were selected from different age groups and socioeconomic standings, and had differing lengths of residency in Romania (Ataca & Berry, 2002). Fourteen of the 20 participants from Bucharest were working in Gülen schools.

The Dimensions of Group and Place

Studies about ethnic groups categorize the people in question according to their country of origin (Castles & Miller, 2003). "In former assimilation and integration research the underlying assumption has often been that migrants carry their cultures, languages, and religions as a kind of luggage from their home country of immigration" (Prumm, Sachmann & Schultz, 2003, p.161). The fundamental assumption is typically that migrants resist assimilation, and that is one explanation for Turkish immigrants' close contact with their country of origin. According to some researchers (Sackmann, Peters, & Faist, 2003), the country of origin is seen as a locality that offers migrants a cultural identity as well as a socially determined identity.

In the interviews, the participants were asked the following questions: "How would you identify yourself?", "Would you identify as yourself Turkish, Romanian, Romanian-Turk, or something else?" Table 2 gives an overview of the answers to my questions.

Table 2: Self-Identification

	Turk	Romanian-Turk	Romanian	Other categories or none at all	Total
Identities of Respondents	20 (64.5%)	7 (22.5 %)	3 (9.6 %)	1 (3.2 %)	31 (100%)

Most of the respondents, 20 out of 31, called themselves "Turk," seven of them chose the label "Romanian-Turk," three of them chose "Romanian," and one called himself a "Kurd." Clearly, self-identification as "Turk" was most frequent because they were first-generation migrants (Prumm, Sachmann & Schultz, 2003). But also, a quarter of the participants called themselves "Romanian-Turk," a label chosen by all of the interviewees from Cluj-Napoca. The participant who called himself "Kurd" was from the Cluj-Napoca as well. The participants who considered themselves Romanian-Turk or strictly Romanian were married to Romanians and had become Romanian citizens. The remaining participants were living on visas since Romania has begun to require visas after becoming a European Union member. Immigrants from Turkey were therefore a heterogeneous group that included various ethnicities such as Turkish, Kurdish, and non-Anatolian Turkish immigrants such as Tatars. There were also Turkish immigrants who immigrated to Romania after migrating to Europe.

Procedure

The aim of this study was to focus on the cultural assimilation among first-generation Turkish immigrants who are residing in Romania. In addressing my questions, I had to develop an appropriate methodology that would assist me in better understanding the phenomenon of cultural assimilation (Angelides, Stylianous & Leigh, 2004). When these questions emerged, I was managing a research program which sought to study people who, for various reasons, might be marginalized in a foreign country (Angelides, Stylianou & Leigh, 2004). This is a qualitative study relying on open-ended questions from a semi-structured group interview with audiotape.

All interviewees were assured of confidentiality, the option to decline participation, and the ability to withdraw from the study at any point. Interviews ranged from an hour to three hours and were conducted in person (Lewis & Abdul-Hamid, 2006). All interview questions were addressed to participants in Turkish. Qualitative research has been established as relevant in prior research (Phinney, 1989). Kitzinger (1994, 1995) argues that interaction is the crucial feature of focus groups because the interaction between participants highlights their view of the world, the language they use about an issue, and their values and beliefs about a situation. Interaction also enables participants to ask questions of each other, as well as to re-evaluate and reconsider their own understanding of their specific experiences.

Another benefit is that focus groups elicit information in a way that allows researchers to find out why an issue is significant, as well as what is relevant about it (Morgan, 1988). As a result, the gap between what people say and what

they do can be better understood (Lankshear, 1993). Also Denzin & Lincoln (1994) identified that "If multiple understandings and meanings are revealed by participants, multiple explanations of their behavior and attitudes will be more readily articulated" (p. 365).

Questionnaire

The research questionnaires were written in English, but during the communication with participants, Turkish language was used. Using Turkish language, 19 open-ended questions (see Appendix 1) were asked to assess specific features of Turkish immigrants. A trained Turkish interviewer asked the questions of the immigrants (Sowa et al, 2000). Immigrants included couples, businessmen, college students, and teachers who worked at the International School of Bucharest (including social support). Questions covered characteristics relating to integration and assimilation of Turks in Romania. In addition, there were some questions concerning socio-demographic factors, e.g., age, educational levels, employment status, language, religion, and culture (Murad, Joung, Verhulst, Mackenbach & Crijnen, 2004).

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection for this study consisted of 19 in-depth, open-ended questions for the focus group interviews. Each session began by collecting background information about the participants' experiences in education, and differences or similarities between Turkish and Romanian culture. The questions invoked discussion about participants' access to cultural experiences and knowledge, process and decisions, experiences and attitudes, and identity. Family members, community members, international students, school agents, and others over the age of 18 discussed their perceptions of the opportunities.

Before the interview, I introduced myself as a researcher, and I asked them to divide into groups of three to four participants. In the interview, participants were asked to describe how they viewed themselves ethnically and nationally. In the questionnaires, the participants were asked: "Which community do you feel that you primarily belong to?"

I used a tape recorder during the interviews. The tape recorder was shown to all participants before I set up the interview. I encouraged participants to speak one at a time to avoid garbling the tape. However, Howe and Lewis (1993) suggested that members of the group needed to identify themselves before they spoke and I had each one do this. I also kept a journal in which memos and notes were recorded, as this formed part of the audit trail (Nagy & Viney, 1994). Moreover,

Morgan (1988) suggested that regardless of the method of data collection, the moderator should make field notes after each session to facilitate data analysis.

Guided by Creswell's process for analyzing qualitative data (1998), the interviews were transcribed verbatim (cited in Pooley, Breen, Pike, Cohen & Drew, 2008). This provided a complete record of the discussion and facilitated data analysis. Transcripts were then read carefully by the researcher, during which I noted my biases and reactions from each group participant. Codes were then developed and identified in the transcript by locating key words commonly used by participants, as well as the references to individuals that the participants made most frequently and the broader ideas they expressed (Berg, 2001). After analysis, all transcripts were compared, and common and divergent themes were isolated. These themes were then considered in terms of the exploratory research being conducted (Berg, 2001). According to Denzin & Lincoln (1994), qualitative analysis involves a continual interplay between theory and analysis. In analyzing qualitative data, I sought to discover patterns, such as changes over time or possible causal links between themes.

Findings

Cluj-Napoca

I found that many people from this city would call themselves Romanian-Turk or Romanian, as shown in the Table. Consequently, as shown, 32.1% labeled themselves something other than "Turk." These interviewees felt an affiliation with Romania because many were married to Romanian women, spoke the Romanian language fluently, and had adjusted to Romanian culture. Some of them practiced the Christian religion as well. For example, one of my group interviewees from Cluj-Napoca had arrived early in the 1990s and most of them had married Romanians. The following is a quote from one of my interviews:

We interact with the Romanian religious festivals but sometimes we practice the Christian religion with our families. We go to church with our family on Sundays. We drink a lot to celebrate Romanian culture. Romanian culture and its religion have influenced me. So, I completely assimilated because we do not practice anymore our culture. So, we are losing our original culture. A. Cavus, (personal communication, May 23, 2008)

The problem is usually the incompatibility of immigrants' culture of origin with the host culture, according to popular conviction. From the natives'

perspective, as reflected in the interviewee's quote above, it is the prominence and continuity of the immigrant's original culture that slows down or inhibits assimilations. Though most research on immigration abandoned assimilation as a desired concept, it still dominates popular discourse as a desirable outcome for immigrant incorporation into host societies (Ataca & Berry, 2002; Kilic, 2004; Oudenhoven & Eisses, 1998; & Spohn, 2002).

Living as a minority group or individually in a dominant culture, it is better to assimilate into the dominant group because members of minority groups are usually socio-economically worse off than the majority group. According to De Vos and Suarez-Orozco (1990), "assimilating individuals will develop a positive identity through identification with the high status group, as a consequence of which they will feel treated with more respect by the dominant group" (p. 296).

Assimilation is the strategy chosen by minority members to whom it is not important to maintain their culture and identity and who wish to join the dominant society. On the other hand, "Integration is the strategy used by immigrants who wish to maintain their ethnic identity, but who consider contacts with the dominant society to be of value" (Oudenhoven & Eisses, 1998, p. 294). I confined myself to the strategies of assimilation and integration, since these strategies proved to be the most commonly preferred by my target group (Prins et al, 1995). Naturally, both assimilation and integration require the larger receiving country group to accept both these strategies. Sometimes these strategies are not possible, as in apartheid in South Africa. Sometimes assimilation is clearly encouraged, as it was in the United States until recently (the "melting pot" ideology), and sometimes integration is cherished, like in multicultural Canada. It appears that the strategy chosen by immigrants is dependent upon the dominant society and the kind of policy promoted by that society. I also surmise that it is also dependent on the degree to which immigrants define themselves as belonging to a certain ethnic group. Those with a strong ethnic self-concept will be more inclined to choose an integration strategy; those with a weak ethnic self-concept will be more inclined to assimilate. Integration reflects a desire to maintain key features of the migrant culture, while also adapting to key features of the host society's culture. Assimilation occurs when maintenance of the migrant culture is seen as undesirable, while adaptation of the culture of the majority group is highly important (Arends-Toth & Van De Vijver, 2003).

The majority of Turkish immigrants in Romania live in the capital, Bucharest, the nation of Dobruca, and Constanta (*Köstence*). Only a minority of Turkish immigrants live in the city of Cluj-Napoca. They do not have enough community members; most of the participants that I interviewed complained about not having a community service to get together on special days, such as Eid festivals, Ramadan Festival, Eid al-Adha (*Kurban bayrami*), important religious holidays,

and Turkish national holidays, such as Independence Day. Two of the interview questions were: "How often do you interact with people from Turkey?" and "What language do you use?" (Appendix 1) Two of the participants arrived in Cluj-Napoca during the 1990s as laborers. Orhan was a truck driver and Sehmuz was a mechanic-technician for a furniture factory. Both of them are married to Romanian women and are quoted below.

There are many [Turkish] people in this city; most Turks live in Constanta (Köstence) and Bucharest. I meet with a few Turks in business field here at the mosque on Fridays. Sometimes we do business together. But there are no [regular] activities in the Turkish community here as we are not many people in Cluj-Napoca. I try to speak Turkish with Turks but sometimes I cannot; many Romanian words come out. I feel comfortable speaking Romanian here because it's easier to use, even with Turkish people. D. Murat (personal communication, May 24, 2008).

Usually I spend my spare time with my relatives (brothers and cousins) or my close friends because there are not a lot of Turkish people here and there are not any organizations and any activities between Turkish people in Cluj-Napoca. There is only one place here, a Turkish restaurant and this is the only place we can see each other. So, we do not interact with each other so much. Also, we do not have Turkish television or newspapers. I usually speak Turkish with my Turkish friends. K. Ibrahim (personal communication, May 22, 2008)

When analyzing my data of the participants from Cluj-Napoca, I reached the conclusion that there are some important factors, such as community service, culture, language, and religion that are important in keeping cultural identity and not assimilating immigrants into the dominant culture. Aronowitz (2002) created two scales of assimilation. The first assimilation scale measured behavioral integration and included the following five factors: language skill (speaking and reading), reading newspapers, watching TV, listening to music, and the type of people living in the same house (e.g., Romanian wife, children, friends, and relatives with whom a Turk would share the Romanian language, socio-economic status, and adopted Romanian culture).

The other scale of assimilation, "friends," measured access to the social structure and comprised three themes which, while they did not clearly merge

into one factor, were highly correlated with one another. These items were: friends in school or business, friends in free time, and free-time activities. Factors such as these influenced immigrants to integrate or assimilate into the dominant culture. Turkish immigrants in Cluj-Napoca deal with friends from the host culture and language, which are the highest behavioral assimilations. Overall, I expect that people who integrate, although they do not belong to the socio-economic status group (the dominant group), will therefore evaluate their ethnic identity more positively than individuals who assimilate.

Bucharest

The participants from Bucharest were from The International School of Bucharest (ISB). ISB is a non-profit private international school registered as a subsidiary of Lumina Educational Institutions under Romanian law. The International School of Bucharest was founded in 1996 to serve the Romanian and international communities in Romania. The school, recognized by the Romanian Ministry of Education, registered by the University of Cambridge (UCLES) as a Cambridge International Centre, is an independent, English medium, multinational day school. It provides a British style of education for children aged 3 to 19 years old. More than 75 teachers, coming from different countries such as Romania, Great Britain, United States, Canada, Netherlands, France, Australia, Turkey, and Russia share their broad international teaching experience and extracurricular skills with the ISB community and the approximately 2,000 students from 39 different nationalities.

However, ISB is ideal for all Turkish immigrants who wanted to send their children to this school to maintain their language and culture. The ISB administration and teachers organized the Turkish people and brought them all together to keep their national and cultural identity. There were many activities between Turkish immigrants, such as the cultural heritage festival, fundraising (called *kermes*) which was organized by women, prayers on Friday (there were several mosques which were established by Muslim communities), and soccer competitions for Turkish young males that were held every Friday night.

I asked in the interview: "How often do you interact with people from Turkey?" "What language do you use?" (Appendix 1) One of my groups who worked at ISB (four people), responded as follows:

As teachers at International School of Bucharest, Romania, generally, we feel like in Turkey because there are many Turkish teachers in our school and also many Turkish people live in Bucharest. We usually interact with them in our free time. We

also have a large Turkish community in Bucharest, and many Turkish families; we visit them, we travel and go to picnics together, we have a cooking class and different activities at the weekends such as {kermes} fundraising which is organizing by women, playing soccer every Friday evening, etc. We get together on special days, such as Eid festivals; Ramadan Festival, Eid al-Adha (Kurban bayrami). Also, we have a Turkish TV and watch movie as series for every night. So, we can say we interact with our community members everyday and speak Turkish language with them. Shortly, we are getting together at least once a week. K. Fatma (personal communication, May 26, 2008).

There are several factors helping keep migrants' self-identity, such as a large member community, native language, cultural activities, praying rooms or mosques, and, of course, television with the native language. As Milikowski (2002) mentioned, "Turkish commercial satellite helps Turkish migrants, and, in particular, their children, to liberate themselves from certain outdated and culturally imprisoning notions of Turkishness, which had survived in the isolation of migration" (p. 444). The commercial television performs this role by showing Turkey for what it is: a rapidly modernizing country with a population that is as culturally, politically, and religiously varied as it is large. According to Nasreddine (2004), no Turkish immigrant home lacks satellite dishes configured to receive homeland Turkish channels. There is satellite Channel 7, TRT Int Channel, which addresses the Turkish community abroad, as well as Samanyolu TV (STV). These channels also transmit music and *Sufi Ilahi* (songs in praise of the Prophet Muhammad), in addition to educational and historical serials.

It is noteworthy that even the official Turkish audience-oriented channels from the homeland have changed the types of programs they broadcast to attract more viewers and to cope with the policy of the recent Turkish prime minister's (Erdogan) government. The TV channels also address the annual religious and national occasions, such as the holy month of Ramadan, 'Eids, and the Prophet's birthday, a practice which fills the emptiness the Turkish immigrant communities feel due to their being away from home and from the Turkish culture. Beside TV channels, Turkish daily papers are delivered to most immigrant Turkish doorsteps whether for free or on subscription. Most of these papers are distributed all over Europe, the Zaman daily part of the Gülen media movement.

Zaman Gazatesi is the highest rated newspaper in Turkey. It was founded in 1986 and was the first online Turkish newspaper in 1995 (YAYSAT, 2009). It prints bilingually in English and Turkish. Today's Zaman is one of the two major English language daily newspapers in Turkey. The Zaman newspaper also

prints special international editions for some other countries. In addition to four locations in Turkey, regional editions are printed and distributed in Australia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Germany, Romania, Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Macedonia, Turkmenistan, and the United States.

Samanyolu TV is an international TV station, and it is one of the highest rated TV channels in Turkey (YAYSAT, 2009). It is watched by people of Turkish origin all over the world. Ebru TV is the English version of Samanyolu TV, and is shown in the United States and Canada. These newspapers and TV channels, which have religious roots, are known for being a significant media outlet representing Fethullah Gulen movement.

Other factors in keeping Turkish identity, as I mentioned above, are religion, ethnic/cultural identity, and nationalistic issues. Ethnic identity tends to be the ethnic group in which the individual claims heritage. Also, Phinney (1996) explained that ethnic identity is separate from one's personal identity as an individual, although the two may reciprocally influence each other, such as ethnic awareness (understanding of one's own and other groups), ethnic self-identification (label used for one's own group), ethnic attitudes (feelings about own and other groups), and ethnic behaviors (behavior patterns specific to an ethnic group). I believe that the most important factor in keeping Turkish identity is if all these people come and stay in a specific group. Being all together and having the same composition of other facets of social and cultural background, such as language, age, culture, social class, and generation, inhibits assimilation. This relates to Gülen's idea of always being together and keeping their self-identity against assimilating into the dominant culture.

Gülen drew a sharp line between integration and assimilation. He called on his Turkish followers to learn the native language and to integrate themselves into the main society, but warned against assimilation. However, the Gülen followers do not assimilate because they are successful in their field of business and have a social life to keep their identity. This separate identity also helps the dominant culture because it promotes multiculturalism.

Along the same lines, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's recent visit to Germany in February 2008 was met by a political campaign of intolerance and open xenophobia. The Prime Minister also suggested setting up Turkish elementary and high schools in Germany, as well as sending Turkish teachers to the country. He called on his Turkish compatriots to learn German and to integrate themselves into German society but warned against assimilation.

Both the Gülen movement and Erdogan's government "Justice Development Party" (AKP) are nationalist in their orientation and share dominant nationalist discourse represented by state (Turam, 2007). In contrast, both the Gülen movement and the AKP do not pose a direct challenge to the dominant ideology.

Also, Turam (2007) explains “both the Gülen Movement and Erdogan government appear to respect pluralism as the basis of democratic public discourse” (p. 240). While both organizations are communitarian in their orientation and exhibit authoritarian tendencies within their communal boundaries, they are also very careful to be pluralistic and accommodating in their dealings with the larger Turkish society. Both the Gülen Movement and Erdogan’s government derive their strength from a nation whose roots reach to the Ottoman Empire, which has played a powerful role in the Middle East and Eastern Europe. For more than 400 years, that dominant role is the biggest obstacle to becoming assimilated into a dominant culture.

Conclusion

Focus groups and interviews could be used in a variety of settings and with multiple populations, including the one that was the focus of this paper: Turkish people living in Romania. For this Eastern European population in particular, which places much more importance on oral communication, this kind of research was really the only kind that could produce high quality data. This methodology was able to answer the question at hand: what are the key dynamics of assimilation among adult, first-generation Turkish immigrants residing in Romania?

Moreover, this study gave participants the opportunity to express themselves completely, as opposed to filling in forms or answering questionnaires, and invited them to be active or interactive participants in this unique project. Another reason for using focus groups and interviews with this population is that many were simply not used to participating in research studies in general, and did not want to participate in something where they had to fill in bubbles on a piece of paper without much personal contact. With this particular project, it is important to recall that the researcher’s Turkish nationality enhances this research study, given that culturally and linguistically there were commonalities with the interviewees. Although the researcher’s gender and different experiences abroad may limit the quality of the information that was received from certain groups of participants (such as women), it was believed that the multiple elements of identification with the participants will result in rich data.

Given this, as the researcher, I hypothesized that the Turkish community in Romania would be integrated into the local culture, religion, and language, but that they may not be completely assimilated with this Eastern European nation. This paper has examined the population dynamics of a country using two different locations but the same ethnic groups, a majority and a minority. This study reveals that small minorities were likely to assimilate, whereas large groups were not, but were still integrated into the dominant culture. In addition, we

find that there was a middle ground where both outcomes (and various others in between) could occur, depending on the self-fulfilling expectations of minority members.

The long-run stability of immigrants is efficient in many cases, although in the case of multiple equilibriums, the “wrong” one might be selected. The transition path to full assimilation—if that was the efficient steady state—was, however, not optimal. In particular, assimilation was too slow because minority members did not take into account the positive external effect of their decision to assimilate on the majority. The paper then proceeded to examine an important question, that of the choice between a multicultural and a melting-pot society. If cultural (but not physical) distance could be overcome by learning, for large minority groups, it was optimal to be bilingual, but not to assimilate. The choices between the two outcomes (assimilate or integrate) also depended on the costs of interaction. It was shown that cultural convergence between the two groups (the majority and minority groups) can actually halt the assimilation of the minority. This could be explained by the recent strengthening of identity in many minority groups.

Appendix 1: Research in Romania (RIR)

Date:

Age:

Age of arrival in Romania:

Sex: M/F

Occupation in Turkey:

Occupation in Romania:

Education in Turkey:

Education in Romania:

1. Why did you choose to live in Romania?
2. How many members are in your household? Who are they? *Please do not say their names. Just describe their role/relationship with you.*
3. Are there any Romanians in your household? YES, NO
4. How did you learn Romanian?

5. Are you studying Romanian currently? Where?
What language do you speak at home?
6. How often do you interact with people from Turkey? What language do you use?
7. If any family members have attended school in Romania, what was it like? Was it different than Turkey? If so, in which ways?
8. How many people live in a neighborhood where the majority of the people are Turkish?
 - a. more than 20
 - b. more than 10
 - c. more than 5
 - d. only family members
9. What is your religion? How do you practice it?
10. How well do you think Christians and Muslims interact in Romania?
11. Which do you consider your home country?
12. How would you identify yourself? Would you identify as yourself a Turkish, a Romanian-Turk or something else?
13. What kind of differences do you notice between Romanian & Turkish Culture?
14. What kind of similarities do you notice between Romanian & Turkish Culture?
15. Do you have any additional comments you would like to tell me?

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