

Cross-Cultural Advancements in Positive Psychology 12  
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Radosveta Dimitrova *Editor*

# Well-Being of Youth and Emerging Adults across Cultures

Novel Approaches and Findings from  
Europe, Asia, Africa and America

 Springer

# **Cross-Cultural Advancements in Positive Psychology**

Volume 12

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Asia, Africa and America



Springer

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*To Corrado, Claudia, and Cristina Fumis*

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# Overall and Contextually-Bound Well-Being: Life Satisfaction of Romanian Migrant Emerging Adults as the Outcome of a Mediated Association Acculturation-Adaptation

Adrian Stanciu

**Abstract** In addition to developmental challenges, migration during emerging adulthood can pose unique obstacles to individuals' positive well-being. This chapter proposes distinguishing between two types of migrant emerging adults' (MEAs) well-being (overall and contextually-bound) as one way to examine the influences of these interferences. A brief review of the literature and empirical support is provided for this claim among samples of Romanian MEAs in Europe ( $N = 215$ ), an ethnic group that is under-represented in the literature. The overall well-being of MEAs can be studied as a result of an association between acculturation orientation and adaptation (as contextually-bound well-being and sociocultural), two variables especially relevant for MEAs living in culturally distant host societies. The findings suggest there may be different templates of well-being depending on whether migrants live in similar or distant host cultures compared to their home cultures. Furthermore, the role of context is discussed in light of the distinction between the two types of well-being that can provide a more accurate insight for practitioners with regards to whether age-related or migration-related issues are problematic to migrants' well-being.

One of the core missions of positive psychology is to improve individuals' well-being, broadly defined as an overall emotional inner-state (Diener, 1984). Research in the context of migration seeks to identify and emphasize factors that contribute to well-being of migrants, and their ability to overcome migration-related life-disruptive events in terms of psychological adaptation (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). Scholars have also proposed that migrants' satisfaction with life is a manifestation of their well-being (Koydemir, 2013). This chapter argues that these

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interchangeable approaches pertain, in fact, to two distinct types of well-being of migrants: life satisfaction pertains to their overall well-being and psychological adaptation pertains to their contextually-bound well-being. Because migration to other countries can be challenging, particularly during emerging adulthood, a developmental stage when individuals begin to gain a sense of control over their own life (Erikson, 1993), the chapter proposes that the disentanglement of the two types of well-being is highly pertinent to migrant emerging adults (MEAs). The chapter argues that contextually-bound well-being acts as a psychological intermediate between MEAs' acculturation orientation and their overall well-being. In other words, life satisfaction of MEAs is an outcome of their acculturation orientation and adaptation. The goal of the chapter is to show how this disentanglement may help identify different "templates" of well-being for MEAs living in distant and similar host cultures and could inform the development of targeted integration policies.

A current challenge in psychological research is to study individuals across societies and cultural contexts in an equitable manner (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). This chapter focuses on Romanians in Europe, an ethnic group that is highly under-represented in the literature. Despite the fact that Romanians represent a majority of migrants in several European countries (Eurostat, 2016) and are among the most negatively perceived groups of migrants, after Africans and South-Americans (EU-MIDIS, 2011), the literature provides only scarce accounts of their well-being (González-Castro & Ubillos, 2011). This chapter also contributes to the literature on well-being of MEAs in general, by applying the distinction between contextually-bound and overall well-being in a study conducted with Romanian MEAs in six European countries.

## MEAs in Culturally Distant Countries

Whether people chose to emigrate because of personal reasons or precarious living conditions in their home societies (Mazzarol & Soutar, 2002), their well-being is influenced by their new living context. For example, migrants have fewer adaptation difficulties in societies where policies encourage the maintenance of home cultural values, aspects that can be beneficial to migrants' satisfaction with life (Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, & Senecal, 1997). Furthermore, migrants' adaptation experiences are influenced by the level of differences between their host and home cultures – i.e., cultural distance (Bar-Yosef, 1968). Migrants who re-locate to culturally distant countries have, on average, more difficulties maintaining a desired well-being (Chirkov, Lynch, & Niwa, 2005) whereas similarities across a variety of indicators, such as language and value climate, pose little interference to migrants' adaptation. The greater the cultural distance between migrants' home and host countries, the more challenging it is for them to adapt (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). However, migrants' adaptation to a host culture is affected only if they *perceive* cultural differences. For example, Geeraert and Demoulin (2013) were unable to show any relations between cultural distance and migrants' distress because, as the authors

argued, they assessed cultural distance via objective indicators like the Human Development Index (HDI). Therefore, migrants have more difficulties in adapting in culturally distant countries (especially when they perceive these differences) and because of this they might have poorer well-being compared to migrants in culturally similar countries.

The relationship between cultural distance and adaptation is perhaps most pertinent to MEAs who experience the challenges of living successfully in two cultures in addition to the developmental challenges that are characteristic of this age group. Emerging adulthood (approximately between ages of 18 and 29) is a defining stage in development (Erikson, 1993) wherein individuals' well-being is most vulnerable because they emerge from parental protection but are not yet fully immersed into the societal structures of adults (Arnett, 2007). For migrants, however, the relocation to other countries adds an extra layer of life-disrupting events. Research is needed to understand how the manner in which MEAs deal with these acculturation-relevant and age characteristic challenges might have lasting effects on their well-being. This chapter proposes disentangling overall and contextually-bound well-being as a step towards achieving this goal.

## Overall and Contextually-Bound Well-Being

In the literature, there are two major approaches to the assessment of migrants' well-being. The first assumes that migrants' self-reported life satisfaction is an indicator of their overall well-being (Koydemir, 2013). Although this may be the case, life satisfaction is mostly an indicator of individuals' self-acceptance (positive evaluations of self and one's past life) which represents only one dimension of overall well-being (Ryff & Keyes, 1995, p. 724). For instance, Safi (2010) used the European Social Survey (ESS) data and showed that the life satisfaction of first and second-generation migrants was equally poor across 13 countries, and that a longer period of stay in the host country was not associated with an improvement in their life satisfaction.

The second approach to the study of migrants' well-being is represented by work on psychological adaptation in which it is assumed that the life-disruptive events associated with migration cause migrants to experience depression and anxiety (Berry, 1992). Well-being of migrants is conceptualized as a lack of depressive symptoms on an assessment (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999) or measured with instruments like the Brief Psychological Adaptation Scale (BPAS) (Demes & Geeraert, 2015a). A recent meta-analysis of 51 studies ( $N = 224,197$ ) showed that immigrant children and youth in Europe have, on average, more psychological distress when compared to their host national counterparts (Dimitrova, Chasiotis, & van de Vijver, 2016). A study conducted with approximately 2500 students in over 50 countries showed that longer periods of stay in host country were associated with increased psychological adaptation, as measured by the BPAS (Demes & Geeraert, 2015b). Together, these studies suggest that immigrants' well-being is more precarious

when compared with their native counterparts, and that a longer period of stay in the host country is not always associated with an improvement in their well-being. Moreover, there is evidence that the concept of well-being is used interchangeably in the literature with other concepts such as life satisfaction, psychological adaptation, and depression, which may lead to confusion about effects of various experiences on well-being.

There is precedence for disentangling the concepts of life satisfaction and psychological adaptation in assessing migrants' well-being. In contrast to the approach whereby life satisfaction is an overall indicator of migrants' well-being, the BPAS was created to provide a contextually-bound assessment of their well-being (Demes & Geeraert, 2015a). Initial studies showed that life satisfaction and psychological adaptation were positively, yet minimally, related. After all, whereas satisfaction with life is a "global assessment of a person's quality of life according to his [her] chosen criteria" (Shin & Johnson, 1978), migrants' psychological adaptation refers to their negative psychological reactions that occur *in* the process of acculturation (Berry, 1992). This distinction may explain why a longer period of stay in the host society is not always associated with an improvement of migrants' well-being. Whereas it may appear that migrants become more psychologically adapted to their host countries over time, their life satisfaction is not necessarily changing. Research that examines how migrants' adaptation to host countries shapes their life satisfaction may prove useful in providing policy makers with valuable insights for developing strategies for improving well-being of migrants.

## **Acculturation Orientation and Adaptation Predict Migrants' Overall Well-Being**

The disentanglement of overall and contextually-bound well-being is relevant to research on adaptation of migrants. For instance, Demes and Geeraert (2015a) found, among 1900 international students in 51 countries, that, in addition to psychosocial adaptation, a higher sociocultural adaptation (i.e., the acquisition of skills necessary to navigate the social life in host countries) was associated with increased life satisfaction. In fact, this corroborates other findings suggesting that life satisfaction is adaptive in nature (Pavot & Diener, 2008). Whereas the baseline is to have a satisfactory life, life-changing events can modify individuals' degree of satisfaction with life (Diener & Lucas, 2006). People who seek social support, in the form of friendships or romantic relations, are more likely to remain happy. In other words, in the context of acculturation, the manner in which migrants maintain an overall satisfactory life is dependent on their ability to adapt psychologically and socio-culturally to the experience of life-disrupting events (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999).

The degree to which migrants adapt to a new culture is also associated with their acculturation orientation. Berry (1992) suggests that, depending on the degree of importance that individuals attribute to their home and host cultures, there can be

four acculturation orientations: integration (both cultures are important), assimilation (host culture is preferred), separation (home culture is preferred), and marginalization (both cultures are unimportant). Some researchers argue that these four acculturation orientations should be measured with independent scales (4-scale method) (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). Other researchers criticize this approach in that acculturation should be examined across a variety of life domains, according to how important migrants consider their home and host cultures (bi-dimensional method) (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2007). Contrasted with the 4-scale method, which uses median split to approximate the four-acculturation styles, and thus discards relevant measurement information (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2007), the bi-dimensional method uses full measurement information, and thus offers a more detailed account of migrants' adaptation. Research using the bi-dimensional approach has shown that greater interest in the host culture is associated with better adaptation whereas a desire to maintain the home culture is associated with a worse adaptation (Demes & Geeraert, 2015a).

This evidence converges to indicate that migrants' acculturation orientations influence their degree of adaptation to the host culture, which, in turn, affects their overall well-being. For instance, in a study on the adaptation of elderly Iranian migrants in Canada, Moztarzadeh and O'Rourke (2015) showed that acculturation orientation was a positive predictor of migrants' life satisfaction, whereas depressive symptoms were a negative predictor. The central proposition of this chapter is that both psychological and sociocultural adaptation explain (i.e., mediate) the association between acculturation orientation and life satisfaction. In line with the bi-dimensional model of acculturation orientation, a desire to maintain the home culture predicts lower contextually-bound well-being and sociocultural adaptation; and both factors predict higher overall well-being. Furthermore, the chapter argues that an interest in the host culture predicts higher contextually-bound well-being and sociocultural adaptation; and both factors predict a higher overall well-being. Especially for migrants in culturally distant host societies, disentangling their contextually-bound and overall well-being could provide insights into how sociocultural adaptation overrides any negative carry over effects that a lack of psychological adaptation may have on overall well-being of migrants.

## **Well-Being of Romanian MEAs in Europe**

Romania is a middle-sized country in South-East Europe. The home of approximately 20 million people (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2011), Romania has a mixed Latin-Communist culture that is unique in the European context. For instance, Romanian language is the only Latin based language among the countries from the former Eastern-European Communist bloc. After the fall of the communist regime in 1989, the Romanian culture has been described as accepting of hierarchical order, highly uncertainty avoidant, collectivistic, highly cynical, favoring caring for others and quality of life values, and endorsing mixed impressions about the past and

future (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkow, 2010). In 2007, Romania became a member of the European Union, which has allowed massive emigration to other European countries. During 2000–2015, Romania had the second largest growth rate of emigration in the world (United Nations, 2016). Between 2007 and 2015, there have been approximately 554,396 Romanian MEAs (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2016) who predominantly chose Italy and Spain as destination countries (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2011).

Overall, there has not been much research on well-being of Romanian migrants in European countries; a few studies report about Romanian youth and adolescents (Hernando, Nunes, Cruz Torres, Lemos, & Valadas, 2013) and some about adults over age 40 (Marcu, 2014). The literature on well-being of Romanian MEAs in Europe is scarce, un-systematic, and centered on two prevailing countries of destination: Italy and Spain. For instance, a study by The Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (2013) indicated that Romanian MEAs in Italy were more likely to settle permanently compared to younger and older co-nationals because of their higher life satisfaction. Sevillano, Basabe, Bobowik, and Aierdi (2014) showed that Romanian MEAs in Spain reported poorer mental health compared to locals. However, Villarroel and Artazcos (2012) revealed that Romanian MEAs in Spain had slightly better mental health compared to migrants from five Latin-American countries and a similar well-being compared to locals. Furthermore, González-Castro and Ubillos (2011) compared Romanian and Ecuadorian MEAs in Spain and showed that Romanians had a considerable improvement in overall well-being compared to when they were still in their home country, which was not the case for Ecuadorians. The authors argued that discrimination (against Ecuadorians) explained the precarious life satisfaction of migrants and not the cultural differences between their host and home countries as expected. The message from this brief overview is thus a straightforward one – systematic research is still needed to achieve a better understanding of how Romanian MEAs in Europe deal with the acculturation experience with a special emphasis on their overall well-being. To meet this challenge, the following sections describe a study about well-being of Romanian MEAs in six European countries.

## **The Current Chapter**

This chapter tested three well-being related hypotheses on Romanian MEAs in similar and distant European host societies. In defining similar versus distant host societies, the Hofstede's cultural dimensions describing the Romanian culture as highly accepting of social inequalities as a societal norm was used. Romanian culture has been classified as similar with the Latin cultures and dissimilar to the Anglo-Saxon cultures (Hofstede et al., 2010). Based on these classifications, France, Italy, and Spain were considered examples of culturally similar societies and England, Germany, and the Netherlands as examples of culturally distant societies.

First, the limited literature on how Romanian migrants are embedded in local communities in the host targeted countries is reviewed. In France, Romanian migrants who feel rejected by locals are less likely to adopt an integration orientation (Badea, Jetten, Iyer, & Er-Rafiy, 2011). In Spain, Romanians were the major immigrant group in 2007 with locals being less prejudiced about Romanians compared to other migrant groups (Rojas, Navas, Sayans-Jimenez, & Cuadrado, 2014). In Italy, locals were more likely to perceive Romanian migrants as immoral compared to their own co-nationals on social issues such as stealing and drug usage (Passini & Villano, 2013). In the UK, the mass media generally portrays Romanians as a threat to the local job market (“EU tries to calm fears” 2014). Surprisingly, Germany, where they are also considered a threat to the local job market (“EU tries to calm fears” 2014), was the preferred destination of approximately 135,416 Romanians in 2013 (Hanganu, Humpert, & Kohls, 2014), whereas the Netherlands represents one of the least preferred destinations for Romanian migrants, the local population and mass media still hold negative views about them (The Netherlands Institute for Social Research, 2015). Overall, across these six countries, Romanians are generally perceived in a negative manner and there is limited evidence about their well-being. This study aims to provide the first empirical evidence about well-being of Romanian MEAs across these contexts, by including both similar and distant host countries.

The first hypothesis (Hypothesis 1) is that there is a small correlation between contextually-bound well-being, as measured by BPAS, and overall well-being, as measured by Satisfaction with Life scale, for MEAs in both culturally similar and distant host countries. The second hypothesis (Hypothesis 2) is that, particularly for MEAs in culturally distant countries, an interest maintaining their home culture will be associated with lower levels of adaptation (contextually-bound well-being and sociocultural), which in turn will predict overall well-being. The third hypothesis (Hypothesis 3) is that for migrants in culturally distant countries, a desire to adopt the host culture will be associated with higher levels of adaptation (contextually-bound well-being and sociocultural) which will predict overall well-being.

## Method

### *Participants and Procedure*

As part of a larger study about Romanian migrants, data were collected during the period October 2014–March 2015. Participants were Romanian nationals living in six European countries ( $N = 215$ ;  $M_{\text{age}} = 31.33$ ,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 8.02$ ; 72% females; 27% students) which were grouped as culturally similar (France, Italy, and Spain) or distant (England, Germany, and the Netherlands). With exception of Italy, where female participants were over-represented, the samples were balanced in terms of female and student proportions (see Table 1). Participants were recruited via mass



**Table 1** Descriptive statistics, separate for culturally distant and similar samples

|                    | <i>n</i>   | %            | %            | Age                 | Duration           |
|--------------------|------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------------|
|                    |            | Female       | Student      | <i>M (SD)</i>       | <i>M (SD)</i>      |
| Culturally distant |            |              |              |                     |                    |
| England            | 27         | 66.67        | 70.40        | 25.37 (6.33)        | 3.39 (3.35)        |
| Germany            | 74         | 65.75        | 12.30        | 32.89 (8.09)        | 4.77 (6.65)        |
| the Netherlands    | 45         | 73.33        | 28.60        | 30.69 (6.50)        | 5.37 (4.07)        |
| Total              | 146        | 68.23        | 28.20        | 30.82 (7.91)        | 4.70 (5.46)        |
| Culturally similar |            |              |              |                     |                    |
| France             | 23         | 65.22        | 30.40        | 31.35 (9.17)        | 6.80 (5.60)        |
| Italy              | 24         | 95.83        | 16.70        | 34.21 (7.49)        | 9.97 (4.86)        |
| Spain              | 22         | 77.27        | 27.30        | 31.50 (7.91)        | 7.49 (4.09)        |
| Total              | 69         | 79.71        | 24.60        | 32.39 (8.21)        | 8.12 (5.02)        |
| <i>Grand total</i> | <i>215</i> | <i>71.96</i> | <i>27.00</i> | <i>31.33 (8.02)</i> | <i>5.80 (5.55)</i> |

*Note:* Culturally distant = countries that are dissimilar compared to Romania; culturally similar = countries that are similar with Romania; duration = length of stay in host country, values are in years

online advertising and recommendations received by the author from members of the Romanian diaspora. The study questionnaire was administered via an online research platform (EFS Survey v.10.4, Unipark).

## **Measures**

Unless indicated otherwise, all study materials were successfully translated into Romanian for the purpose of this research (Hambleton & Zenisky, 2010). First, a total of four bilingual Romanian-English academics (including the author) independently translated the study materials from English. Then, the author reviewed the translated materials and upon full agreement, confirmed a successful translation. The translated materials that were in disagreement were then submitted to a session of discussions wherein each translator explained his/her choice of translation. The materials reported here achieved unanimous agreement. All measurement descriptions are summarized in Table 2.

**Acculturation Orientations** Acculturation orientations were measured using the bi-dimensional model (Galchenko & van de Vijver, 2007). Participants were asked to think about the stay in their host countries and express the degree to which they preferred their home and host cultures in ten different domains of life, such as politics and food. In total, there were 20 items for which answers were given on a 7-point Likert scale (1 *strongly disagree*, 7 *strongly agree*). Of these, ten items measured how much participants liked their home culture and ten items measured how much they liked their host culture. The former ten scores were aggregated to give each participant's preference for home culture maintenance. Examples of items



**Table 2** Scale reliabilities and correlation coefficients for culture distant and similar samples

| Variable                        | Scale reliabilities | <i>M</i>  | <i>SD</i> | 1     | 2      | 3                 | 4     | 5     |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-----------|-----------|-------|--------|-------------------|-------|-------|
| 1 Interest host                 | .61/.79             | 4.79/5.46 | .75/.80   |       | .69**  | .18               | .15   | .13   |
| 2 Maintain home                 | .80/.86             | 5.15/5.29 | .91/.98   | .56** |        | -.22 <sup>1</sup> | -.13  | .10   |
| 3 Contextually-bound well-being | .87/.76             | 4.83/4.97 | 1.19/.95  | .04   | -.46** |                   | .59** | .31*  |
| 4 BSAS                          | .88/.88             | 4.83/5.27 | 1.13/1.00 | .17*  | -.23** | .53**             |       | .48** |
| 5 Overall well-being            | .83/.88             | 4.83/4.83 | 1.17/1.17 | -.12  | .18*   | .38**             | .32** |       |

Note: Left side “/” = values for culture distant sample; right side “/” = values for culture similar sample; left side main diagonal = values for culture distant sample; right side main diagonal = values for culture similar sample; interest host and maintain home anchors, 1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree; contextually-bound well-being = brief psychological adaptation scale, anchors, 1 – never, 7 – always; BSAS Brief Sociocultural Adaptation Scale, anchors, 1 – very difficult, 7 – very easy; overall well-being = satisfaction with life scale, anchors, 1 – strongly disagree, 7 – strongly agree

<sup>1</sup>*p* < .10; \**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .001

include: “I like Romanian food” and “I like to speak Romanian.” The latter ten scores were aggregated to indicate each participant’s interest in the host culture. Example of items include: “I like German food” and “I like to speak German.” Depending on the host country, “German” was replaced with “English,” “Dutch,” “Italian,” “French,” and “Spanish.”

**Contextually-Bound Well-Being** Contextually-bound well-being was measured with the Brief Psychological Adaptation Scale (BPAS) (Demes & Geeraert, 2015a). Participants were asked to think about the stay in their host countries and express how frequently they experienced a number of emotion-like states in the 2 weeks prior to the study. In total, there were seven items evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 – never, 7 – always). For example, participants were asked how often they felt “excited about living in Germany” and “out of place, like you don’t fit into Germany.” The scores were aggregated across items to calculate each participant’s level of psychological adaptation. Depending on the host country, “Germany” was replaced with “England,” “the Netherlands,” “Italy,” “France,” and “Spain.”

**Sociocultural Adaptation** Sociocultural adaptation was measured using the Brief Sociocultural Adaptation Scale (BSAS) (Demes & Geeraert, 2015a). Participants were asked to think about the stay in their host countries and to express how easy or difficult it was for them to adapt to varying social and environmental realities. In total, there were twelve items evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 – very difficult, 7 – very easy). For example, participants were asked to evaluate how easy/difficult it was to adapt to “social environment (size of community, pace of live, noise),” “values and beliefs (what people think about religion and politics, what people think is right or wrong),” and “climate (temperature, rainfall, and humidity).” The scores were aggregated across items to calculate each participant’s level of sociocultural adaptation.

**Overall Well-Being** Overall well-being was measured with the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). The five items composing the scale were evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 – *strongly disagree*, 7 – *strongly agree*). The version of the scale that had previously been adapted into Romanian was used (Lambriu et al., 2012). Item examples are “I am satisfied with my life” and “So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.” The scores were aggregated across items to calculate each participant’s degree of satisfaction with life.

**Perceived Cultural Distance** Perceived cultural distance was assessed with the Perceived Cultural Distance scale (Suanet & van de Vijver, 2009) which consists of fifteen items evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 – *very different*, 7 – *very similar*). Item examples are: “How similar or different do you find the food in Germany compared to Romania?” and “How similar or different do you find the public manners in Germany compared to Romania?” The scores were aggregated across items to calculate each participant’s degree of perceived cultural distance between their home and host cultures. Depending on the host country, “Germany” was replaced with “England,” “the Netherlands,” “Italy,” “France,” and “Spain.”

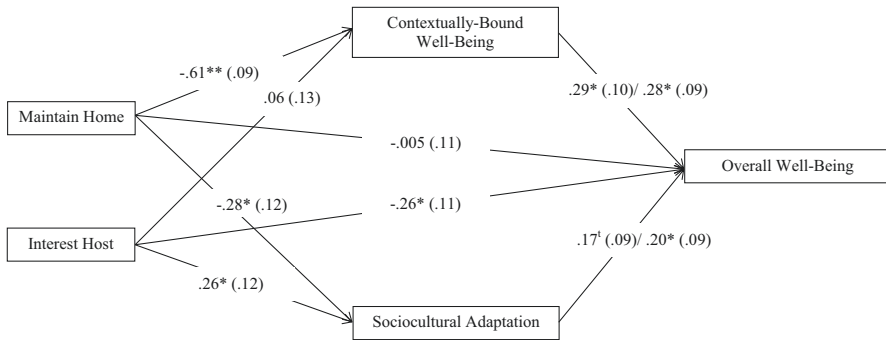
## Results

### *Confirmation of Country Grouping*

The grouping of the host cultures according to the proposed criteria was tested against migrants’ perceptions of cultural distance (scale internal consistency,  $\alpha = .88$ ). Results of an independent *t*-test confirmed that, grouped together, the Latin cultures were seen by participants as more culturally similar to Romania than the Anglo-Saxon cultures,  $M_{\text{Latin}} = 2.96$ ,  $SD = 0.98$  vs.  $M_{\text{Anglo-Saxon}} = 2.49$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ,  $t(213) = 3.78$ ,  $p < .001$ ; the mean difference being highly relevant for these participants, Cohen’s  $d = .53$ . Therefore, the results confirmed the grouping of similar versus distant countries in relation to Romanian migrants.

### *Main Results*

All means and inter-correlations among study variables are presented in Table 2. The study hypotheses were examined by means of mediation analyses using PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013). To correct for any biases that might have occurred due to the inter-relation between the psychological and sociocultural adaptation, parallel mediation analysis was preferred over two ordinary mediation analyses. Importantly, analyses were conducted for interest in host culture and interest in maintaining home culture as predictors separately for participants in similar and



**Fig. 1** Parallel mediation analysis of the effects of acculturation orientations and adaptation types on life satisfaction of Romanian MEAs in culturally distant countries (Note: maintain home and interest host = two dimension of acculturation; overall well-being = life satisfaction; contextually-bound well-being = psychological adaptation; numbers in-between brackets = standard errors; after “/” = values for interest host; the coefficients on the *direct lines* from maintain home and interest host to life satisfaction indicate indirect effects (i.e., effect that remains after the effect of the explanatory factor is ruled out);  $N = 146$ ;  $^{\dagger}p < .10$ ;  $^*p < .05$ ;  $^{**}p < .001$ )

distant countries. There were no mediation effects of adaptation for participants in similar countries.

With regards to Hypothesis 1, the correlation between contextually-bound well-being and overall well-being was below  $r = .39, p < .05$ , in samples from both culturally distant and similar host societies. This indicates that, although there was an association, the two types of well-being as measured by psychological adaptation and life satisfaction refer to distinct psychological concepts within this sample of Romanian migrants.

With regards to Hypothesis 2, adaptation to host culture fully mediated the effects of interest in maintaining home culture on life satisfaction (see Fig. 1). Treating contextually-bound well-being and sociocultural adaptation as mediators led to significant explanatory power for the variance in life satisfaction of migrants,  $R^2 = .16, p < .001$ . The results revealed that maintaining home culture predicted lower contextually-bound well-being ( $F(1, 144) = 39.82, b = -.61, p < .001$ ), and lower sociocultural adaptation,  $F(1, 144) = 7.89, b = -.28, p < .001$ . Together, both factors predicted overall well-being ( $F(3, 142) = 9.34, p < .001$ ), in terms of contextually-bound well-being ( $b = .29, p < .004$ ), and sociocultural adaptation,  $b = .17, p < .07$ .

With regards to Hypothesis 3, there was a partial mediation effect of adaptation for the association between interest in host culture and overall well-being, providing partial support for the hypothesis that contextually-bound well-being explains the association between acculturation and overall-well-being. The model in which contextually-bound well-being and sociocultural adaptation were included as mediators explained a significant proportion of the total variance,  $R^2 = .19, p < .001$ . Findings showed that interest in host culture predicted greater sociocultural adaptation ( $F(1, 144) = 4.38, p < .03$ ), but did not predict contextually-bound well-being,

$F(1, 144) = .20, p = .65$ . In turn, both factors predicted overall well-being ( $F(3, 142) = 11.25, p < .001$ ) in as regards to contextually-bound well-being ( $b = .28, p < .003$ ), and sociocultural adaptation,  $b = .20, p < .03$ .

## Discussion

Previous studies have been limited in measurement of migrants' well-being: some have assessed it as migrants' psychological adaptation (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999), whereas others have assessed life satisfaction (Koydemir, 2013). This chapter proposes that, instead, there may be two different types of well-being: overall and contextually-bound, and that disentangling these two types of well-being is important for investigating migrant emerging adults (MEAs) living in culturally distant host societies. By separating the effects of developmental and migration-related factors for MEAs' well-being, this distinction could potentially contribute to more effective interventions.

### *Context, Context, Context*

The living contexts of migrants affect their well-being. However, this effect is strongly contextually-bound compared to overall well-being. There was a minimal correlation between overall well-being, as measured by life satisfaction scale, and contextually-bound well-being, as measured by a psychological adaptation scale, which suggests migrants' overall and contextually-bound well-being are two distinct concepts. In line with Galchenko and van de Vijver (2007), the results shows that Romanian migrants in similar host cultures reported slightly higher psychological and sociocultural adaptation when compared with Romanian migrants in distant host cultures. In other words, it was easier for Romanian MEAs to adapt to host societies that are similar to their home country than to host societies that are dissimilar. However, as other research has found (González-Castro & Ubillos, 2011), the results suggest that Romanian MEAs in distant and similar cultures were equally satisfied with their life.

Romanian MEAs in similar and distant host cultures were equally satisfied with their life perhaps because of a fit between the value climate in their host countries and their personal values (Schiefer, Möllering, & Daniel, 2012). The hypothesis that there is self-selection in migration (Nakosteen & Zimmer, 1980) – migrants rationally decide on their country of destination depending on their interests – would predict that migrants achieve a satisfactory life when their personal values are in line with the values of the host country.

### ***Different Templates for the Overall Well-Being in Distant and Similar Host Cultures?***

By differentiating two types of well-being, the results identified one possible template for Romanian migrants' life satisfaction. Acculturation orientation influences contextually-bound well-being of migrants which in turn shapes their overall well-being. However, the results support this template only for Romanian migrants in host cultures that are dissimilar to their home cultures. Perhaps for Romanian migrants in host cultures that are similar to their home culture, there is a distinct template for their life satisfaction. Generally speaking, because in similar cultures migrants have fewer significant burdens of adaptation (e.g., learning a local language that is similar to the migrants' mother tongues), there may be other factors more pertinent to overall well-being, such as perceptions of discrimination (González-Castro & Ubillos, 2011) or a lack of accomplishments (Stefenel, 2012). Further research is needed to understand the manner in which the two types of well-being are influenced by societies' contexts of migration and person-relevant factors.

### ***Implications for Research on Well-Being of Romanian MEAs***

Since Romania became a member of the European Union in 2007, there has been a massive out flux of migration with an (under-) estimated number of two million migrants (Institutul Național de Statistică, 2013). During this time, the preferred European destination countries were Italy and Spain (Fundăția pentru o Societate Deschisă, 2006). Perhaps for pragmatic reasons, previous researchers also followed this pattern of migration and focused on studying Romanians in Italy and Spain. Although this research was a reflection of the contemporary social reality, there have been a number of recent social events that could affect, either in a positive or negative manner, well-being of Romanian MEAs in Europe. For example, the work restrictions within the European Union were officially lifted for Romanians (and Bulgarians) on January 1, 2014 ("Romania and Bulgaria restrictions lifted," 2014). On the one hand, this event has allowed Romanian MEAs to seek a better education and economic status in more developed European countries. On the other hand, the event has created a climate of prejudice and potential discrimination ("EU tries to calm fears," 2014) that might harm migrants' satisfaction with life over time. Events like this and factors that are relevant for this migrant group in each European country (e.g., Brexit in the UK) may provide insights into how contextual characteristics affect well-being of Romanian MEAs. To avoid a biased view of well-being of Romanian MEAs, future research should consider the role of contextual factors in a more systematic manner. One approach is to separate contextually-bound

well-being from overall well-being, examine possible discrepancies among the two, and determine the degree to which these discrepancies are caused by migration-related and/or age-related factors.

### ***Implications for Research on the Well-Being of Youth and MEAs***

In the past, researchers have used terms like well-being, psychological adaptation, life satisfaction, as well as depressive symptoms interchangeably to describe well-being of migrants. The literature is at times inconsistent as to whether there is a more or less adjustment of youth migrants' well-being compare to natives (Dimitrova et al., 2016). This chapter provides empirical support for one way to reconcile these inconsistencies by having a more nuanced view of the concept of well-being: differentiating between migrants' overall and contextually-bound well-being. While contextually-bound well-being takes into account the effect of acculturation process on migrants' well-being, overall well-being is a general representation of migrants' satisfaction with life. This distinction provides a more accurate account of which aspect of migrants' well-being is problematic, and may contribute to the development of more focused intervention strategies. For instance, the strategy of facilitating adaptation may be more appropriate for individuals who show signs of poor contextually-bound well-being. Poor well-being among migrants may have nothing to do with acculturation process and instead be the result of depressive symptoms. Some individuals (migrant or not) are more likely to suffer from chronic depression than others (Klein, Kotov, & Bufferd, 2011). Wrongly targeting these individuals with strategies developed to facilitate adaptation to their host societies may not provide the desired effects.

Perhaps the strongest implication of this chapter is the suggestion that migration and age-related factors might have different effects on MEAs' well-being. For example, migration-related factors (e.g., learning a new language) may affect MEAs' contextually-bound well-being, whereas age-related factors (e.g., emerging from the parental protection) may affect their overall well-being. Re-location to other countries at an age when individuals have not reached full maturity can pose additional burdens to their satisfaction with life. One such burden is the need to balance cultural elements from both home and host societies in an attempt to establish an identity, a process highly common among individuals with two cultural affiliations (Dimitrova, Bender, Chasiotis, & van de Vijver, 2013). Therefore, the present chapter suggests distinguishing between factors which contribute to migrants' contextually-bound and overall well-being. As a result, future research could identify which migration and age-related factors should be emphasized in interventions for improving well-being of youth and MEAs.

Although the present study was on one specific group of migrants (Romanian MEAs), the results are also applicable to other ethnic groups. According to positive

psychology assumptions, youth and MEAs should have similar levels of life satisfaction regardless of moving to distant or similar host countries. The present chapter suggests that it is MEAs' contextually-bound well-being and not their overall well-being that is dependent on cultural differences between home and host countries. The finding that adaptation to host culture explains the associations between acculturation orientation and life satisfaction brings insights into how negative effects of migration-related distress may be overcome by learning sociocultural skills of host societies. For instance, migrants can greatly benefit from learning the local language and developing a friendship network including members of the local community (Fowler & Mumford, 1999). At the same time, this separation between contextually-bound and overall well-being provides a more detailed approach to studying migrants' well-being by combining migration and age-related literature.

## Conclusion

The present chapter attempted to reconcile mixed evidence about well-being of migrants during their acculturation process. A distinction between life satisfaction as overall well-being and psychological adaptation as contextually-bound well-being was introduced. In the current study, Romanian migrant-emerging-adults' life satisfaction (overall well-being) was predicted by their acculturation orientation as explained by the degree of adaptation to host societies (contextually-bound well-being and sociocultural adaptation). Moreover, migrant and age-related factors influence MEAs' different types of well-being. Furthermore, the chapter suggests that cultural differences between migrants' host and home countries affect their contextually-bound (but not overall) well-being. However, because the two are associated, it becomes clear that factors influencing contextually-bound well-being could affect migrants' overall well-being as well. A number of theoretical directions were introduced with the hope of developing more specifically tailored intervention strategies for MEAs.

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