

Integration processes of a Romanian group in a Huelva village through family life stories

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the integration of Romanian immigrants in Lucena del Puerto (Huelva, Spain) through the life stories of two families of Romanian origin. The experiences of the groups presented in this study were analyzed. Both families were in the town for work, to grow and harvest strawberries. We observed a contrast between idealistic views of integration and actual problems of coexistence and integration of the Romanian group with other groups such as Moroccan immigrants. Here we focus on the integration process of the Romanian population in the Andalusian village. The main groups studied were two families of Romanian-origin residents in the village. In short, this paper aims to reflect the concerns and integrative resources needed to promote a harmonious coexistence with immigrants.

KEYWORDS: SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION, LIFE STORIES, IMMIGRATION, SOCIAL INTEGRATION, INTERCULTURALITY

1 INTRODUCTION

The objective of this study is the process of integration –at a social and educational level– of the Romanian population in Lucena del Puerto (Huelva) through the integration of two families and their members. Two families of Romanian origin were studied. They settled with their children and other family members to live in this town for work. The group under study is the largest in the village.

Interviews and observations of life stories were drawn up for the study, in order to reach meaningful conclusions as to the coexistence between migrated populations. Moreover, although citizens can hardly distinguish between terms such as “integration”, “multiculturalism”, and “interculturalism”, as noted in the interviews, this confusion of terms is typical amongst politicians and education professionals in a context of educational commitments towards an integrative educational model reflected in various laws and directives of the regional government of Andalusia.

Because of this, research tools have been used to determine life history. Arjona (1998) notes, “Social Research is currently leaning toward qualitative studies, largely in order to overcome direct and unambiguous relationships (...). Among the various

techniques of knowledge of reality from a qualitative approach, life histories allow reproductions of the spoken word, testimonies that are part of the present and have a great importance for the future (...), precisely because there are authors who question the scientific nature of this technique and its results. What we mean is that once we overcome extreme positivism and objectivity, life stories are a good technique for giving scientific support to a qualitative approach, without complex methodologies”. In understanding migration processes, life stories allow us to provide “data difficult to achieve using other techniques” (Arjona & Czech, 1998). As Pujadas (1992) points out, the story of life “is an autobiographical account, obtained by the researcher through successive interviews in which the objective is to show the subjective testimony of a person, in which both events and assessments that the person makes of his own existence are collected”. Through interviews with the mayor, teachers and neighbors, we can understand how these Romanian immigrants experience integration through the stories of the two families: the trauma of living in a different society, their adaptation process...

2 CONTEXT

The municipality under study, Lucena del Puerto, is located in the province of Huelva (Spain) –a strategic location in the Condado region. Over the last two decades of economic growth (1990-2010), demographic change has been entirely conditioned by the arrival of hundreds of immigrants –especially those of Romanian origin. This was caused by the need for agricultural labor in the growing of strawberries and raspberries, in which Lucena, located in the province of Huelva, was a pioneer. Between 2001-07, the population grew by 20%, from 2,175 to 2,624 inhabitants; in a single year, between 2006 and 2007, the population grew by 449 inhabitants (20%). This is undoubtedly due to the regularization process of immigrants in 2005. Pajares notes (2005) that “data on people who could regularize their residency and employment status have been available since early 2006 but were not definitively published until the end of the year when the Immigration Statistical Yearbook 2005 was issued”. Additionally, although there were restrictions to being employed outside Romanian borders, the population of Romanian immigrants grew as legal residents in Europe in 2007. However, we must keep in mind that as Pajares (2009) also points out, “progress toward higher percentages of legality began to be truncated by difficulties in the renewal of permits and, because

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of this the proportion of the immigrant population began to grow with the difficulty of providing a minimum livelihood”.

According to the Institute of Statistics and Cartography of Andalusia, in 2013 the number of foreigners registered in Lucena del Puerto was 657 (i.e. 25.11% of the total municipality’s population), of which 54.64% were Romanians.

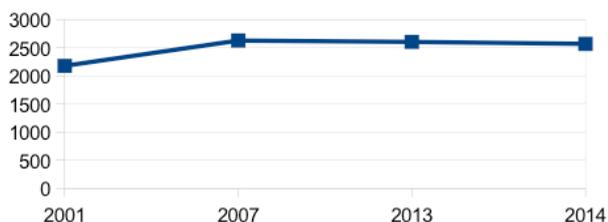


Figure 1. Population Evolution from 2001 to 2014. Lucena del Puerto. Prepared by the authors based on statistics from the INE

3 OBJECT UNDER STUDY

Numerous studies concentrate on causes of migration, especially focusing on factors that influence the decision to leave the country of origin (poverty, lack of opportunities, poor quality of life, etc.) and the destination country’s attractiveness for immigrants (ease of access to work, higher pay, better quality of life, etc.). Scientific literature also describes the importance of family and social networks, not only in providing information, but also in the reception and support needed while integrating into the destination country. Aparicio and Torres (2008) indicate that the existence of social networks serves “to support migration decisions with information, financial resources and emotional support”.

The integration of the Romanian population in Spain is marked by the high number of Romanians living in the country. Roesler (2007) affirms that Romanian immigrants have been consolidated in the country as a group with its own identity, with recognition in many cases by participating in the social life of the new community. However, it is also suggested that ignorance (or poor language skill) of the host country’s language, in this case, Spanish, and disuse of the native Romanian language poses great difficulties to immigrants. In the first case, social contacts are limited to family and friends who speak the native Romanian language. The second case generates a difficulty in finding and defining one’s own Romanian-Spanish identity, a fact that may be crucial for integration into the host country’s society.

According to Uta-Burcea (2010), “in recent years, the constant influx of Romanian immigrants in Spain has led Romanians that live and work here to feel they have shaped a big community, with its own cultural identity”. In Spain, it is possible for Romanians to preserve their culture and the Romanian language, because language, by its function as a communication system, is part of the framework that contributes to maintaining a culture. When discussing integration, we cannot forget the role of prejudice from within the host society because, as noted by Gonzalez and Romero (2011), “it seems clear that prejudices and stereotypes toward immigrant families inside and outside school can become one of the elements that hinder the effective participation and inclusion thereof in the community”.

Schools also play an essential role towards integration, and teachers in particular. As Fernández-Bonilla (2007) states, “multiculturalism as a phenomenon caused by immigration

–booming in recent years– has caused knowledge of other cultures to go from being an option for people interested in the knowledge of other societies to being indispensable. Therefore, a good teacher trained in the knowledge of different cultures is needed to respond properly and adequately to the demands of immigrant students. Objectives should be to achieve coexistence based on dialogue, respect and equality, and to have a close relationship with people involved in the education of children –whether from other cultures or one’s own culture– in order to transmit a coherent, communal and effective message. In short it is, as Booth and Ainscow (2010) note, “to pay more attention to the barriers and participation that the school itself provides to everyone in the educational community (including immigrant families) and to primarily analyze the effects of the conceptions and images previously mentioned to the relationship of its members and the inclusive capacity of the community to which they belong”.

4 AIM

The aim of this study is to understand the integration of Romanian immigrants through the stories and experiences of two families A and B, the causes that provoked the decision to migrate, the trauma of living in a different society and adapting to it. We seek to bring the situation experienced by these Romanian families to light, as well as to understand the views on integration (obtained through interviews) from other members in the society, and to compare viewpoints between different family members on the integration process. Finally, the article aims at understanding the opinion of native residents (the mayor, school tutors, etc.) on the integration process in comparison with families’ visions.

5 METHODOLOGY

Interviews and observation records for constituting life histories were made. As Charriez (2012) notes, “life stories form a phenomenological perspective, displaying both human behavior –what people say and do– as well as the product of the definition of their world”. Taylor and Bogdan (1984) point out that life stories “are interested in the understanding of social phenomenon from the actor’s perspective”.

The samples were two families (designated A and B). In studies of life history, the sample number is not as important as the information collected since, as Veras (2010) indicates, “although the sociologist records only a life story, the goal is to capture the group, the society of which one is a part, seeking to find collectivity from the individual”. Even a case study can shed light on a wider class of cases (Gerring, 2014). In addition, according to Yin (2009), a case is a real life phenomenon (individuals, small groups, organizations, communities, nations, decisions on a subject, etc.) and not an abstraction as a topic, an argument or hypothesis would be.

The two families are of the same nationality but have very different characteristics: different education levels and different ethnic groups within the same nationality (one family is a Hungarian minority and the other a Romany minority).

Semi-structured interviews were focused on collecting life stories. After recording and transcription, interviews were analyzed to establish different categories of analysis and the relationships between them; we obtained significant knowledge of these relationships from thorough and detailed analysis: description of situations, experiences and evolution of coexistence and integration processes. Thereafter classification

criteria were developed. For our study, as noted by Pujadas (1992), we have not transcribed life stories but opted to extract “all the added information that allows us to reconstruct the most comprehensive and objective story as possible” from spoken word.

The recognition of the uniqueness and individuality of the subjects does not imply ignorance of a more global and general dimension (Escartín & Pines, 2005). These life stories –on the integration of Romanian immigrants who arrived in Lucena– not only seek to find commonalities, but also allow us to compare the integration processes experienced by the two families, determining the guiding principles most important to them.

This type of qualitative research allows us to approach the life journeys of the two families involved in the research more closely in order to build a qualitative understanding of Romanian migration, as well as the experiences and known motivations, causes, satisfaction, difficulties and integration of the two families in the town.

Barreto-Gama (2010) notes that life stories help us to know: 1) Everyday life in words, gestures, symbols, anecdotes, stories, and an expression of the constant interaction between personal history and social history; 2) The cultural context of people with whom they work, to understand their subjectivity and to orient their actions; 3) To the extent that social work ventures into the field of social research, life history allows the systematic recording of processes involved in the formation of groups and community building and invites the search of explanations.

For Cornejo (2006), the method of using life stories is presented as an interesting tool for apprehension and comprehension of psychological and social phenomena. It provides social realities from the individuals themselves and from the stories they tell.

These steps have been followed to protect the rights of minors: specifically, requesting and obtaining permission from the families and, in general, thanking them for their time and voluntary participation (Heath, Brooks, Cleaver & Ireland, 2009).

6 RESULTS

6.1 Integration of Romanian immigrant families

Due to the perspectives of everyone interviewed in this study, (neighbors, teachers and members of the Romanian families) we can designate immigrants in two, more or less, compact blocks: the easily-integrated and the problematic. In this village, the Romanian community would be in the first category, while the Moroccan population would belong to the second. Commenting on whether immigrant families integrate in schools, neighbors indicate: “I consider that the Romanians have and the Moroccans have not”. Teachers also believe that the Romanian population is the most easily integrated. One tutor expresses his opinion: “I must say that it is the majority in the institution and it favors integration”. It seems that being a part of the largest number of immigrants of a particular nationality makes the integration of an immigrant of that nationality easier in the receiving society.

According to the mayor of the municipality, main problems of coexistence with immigrants “occur mainly in the Moroccan community”. He feels the integration of the Romanian group is simpler “first, because it is the majority in this town and secondly, because many men and women marry Romanian natives, which greatly facilitates the integration of their families

and Romanian friends”. The mayor's response when asked whether there were problems of racism in the town are enlightening: “There is clear racism toward Moroccans, but not toward South Americans. A clear difference is therefore established by natives regarding viewpoints on immigration: neighborly relations with the Romanians are established, people help them with blankets and food, etc.; people treat Moroccans largely with indifference”.

When Romanian children are questioned about how they feel at school, the eldest daughter of family A states “the teacher treats us all the same, in my class there is no difference—other than nobody wants to choose the Moroccan child when we work in groups”. As we can deduce from the interviews, the Romanian group is better accepted and causes fewer problems than the Moroccan immigrants.

However, results from the interviews on the discrimination amongst the Moroccan-origin population and European-origin (Romanian) –or even Hispanic– can be explained partly through “cultural similarity of the first with respect to Spanish culture” (Carrasco, 2012). “Common sense would tell us that, by geographic proximity, shared history, even similarities in customs and religion, the opposite should occur. Therefore, cultural stereotypes play a crucial role and come to determine, against common sense, who may be “integrated” and who may not”.

Thus, based on personal interviews, we can establish that for Lucena Del Puerto's society, the ideal immigrant is male, married, a good worker and neighbor, and of European origin. In the case of women, even with those that are married, there is always a “doubt” and a curious fact to analyze is that the main criticisms of immigrant women come from native women.

6.2 The vision of the Romanian immigrant child in school

After analyzing personal interviews, two conflicting versions emerged. The first is an idyllic version, not without complaints about the lack of resources, from the tutors who work with the Romanian children. The second is a realistic and sometimes disappointing version from the children of families A and B. Teachers, however, express high levels of understanding and decisions to promote intercultural education as a form of coexistence.

Bernabe-Villodre (2012) notes that “intercultural education aims to promote dialogue between different cultures that share a territory; so that interculturality can designate communication between its members (...) interculturality can be considered the ideal state of coexistence of all multicultural societies”. It should also be noted, as Gimenez (2003) states, that the importance of an intercultural approach, as we define it, lies in having a tool to: a) work for educational unity in diversity (institutionally), join the pedagogy of educational unity in diversity (institutionally), b) connect the teaching of freedom with the pedagogy of equality and solidarity (didactically) and enrich the educational practice and personal development of the educator (professionally)”.

Some authors also introduce the concept of cosmopolitanism and modernity (Chandler, 2009), noting the positive assessment of their differences, where the main principles are tolerance, democratic legitimacy and effectiveness. Furthermore, unlike universalism, nationalism and multiculturalism in their essences reside in the recognition of difference. The key principle of cosmopolitanism is not “or this or that”; it is “not only but also”.

Having said that, in this process of intercultural education, tutors indicate that it is generated more by the willpower of teachers than by the amount of materials and supplementary training. The children’s tutors from the two families agree “we do not have sufficient human and material resources. We are flooded each year with high numbers of immigrant students, unsure of how to adequately attend to them in order to achieve better and faster integration”. In interviews with tutors, methodological differences were observed. For example, while tutors of the children in family A indicate that extracurricular activities are equal for everyone, tutors of family B explain that there are activities aimed at learning about the different cultures from which different students come.

Tutors of both families’ children agree that the association of students is positive in regard to better and faster integration. As the tutor of the eldest daughter of family A states, “if there is someone in the classroom of one’s own country, it becomes easier to communicate with the rest of group”, which in part reflects the views of the other teachers interviewed. This summarizes ideas from Slavin (1984) who states “the evidence available today reflects that cooperation in heterogeneous groups is the most effective way to develop tolerance in a school environment”. Along these lines, Del-Olmo (2010) notes that education conceived from the perspective of homogeneity produces a model of the ideal student and judges students based on their ability to adjust to it and casts aside the etiquette of academic failure, which keeps a distance from the model, and makes it impossible to distinguish in regular classes or even in combination with specifically-determined or support classes.

The contrast is an education that recognizes and promotes a perspective that values diversity and students on an individual basis, appreciating specific capabilities within the group and solving the problems and difficulties that arise in the teaching-learning process.

One must recognize, however, tutor merits, as Bravo (2009) points out, the majority of teachers have been prepared to deal with homogeneous classrooms and have struggled to adapt to these new situations in classrooms.

In Spain, as pointed out by Cohen (2009), over school years between 1995-96 and 2005-06, students of foreign nationalities, at non-university levels, rose from 50,000 to over half a million (almost a 4/5 distribution between kindergarten, primary and secondary levels). Education authorities have had to adopt educational policies in one decade that other countries have carried out over about half a century.

The problem of school integration is reflected most clearly in the distinction of socializing behaviors in the classroom and outside the classroom, i.e. in recreational moments, as reflected by the tutor of the eldest daughter of family A: “Normally coexistence works well, although sometimes, and especially during recreational breaks, some conflicts occur between natives and immigrants but it is not anything that we have to worry about too much.”

According to the tutor of the youngest child of family B, “coexistence is good in the classroom but it is observed that different cliques, grouped by nationalities, are in different areas of the playground. It is when they are brought together that some small conflicts are generated, which teachers try to avoid with games and group activities. Younger students do play together but the majority remains in subgroups talking in a given area of the playground”.

Yet it remains true that in Spain the debate on the desirability and interest in intercultural education is very recent, produced by

the “boom” of immigration during the 90s and early 2000s. However, Oikonomidou (2011) states that an intercultural education in school is not enough, as demonstrated in the United States, because intergroup education advocates peaceful coexistence and interracial acceptance, but it disregards institutionalized racism and structural inequality.

In our case study of the two Romanian families, there is only one case (the youngest daughter of family B) that discusses discrimination: “Sometimes Spanish children tell us ‘shut up, go to your house’, and things like that, and when a new child comes to class, to school, older children insult him or her and fight with him or her after school”.

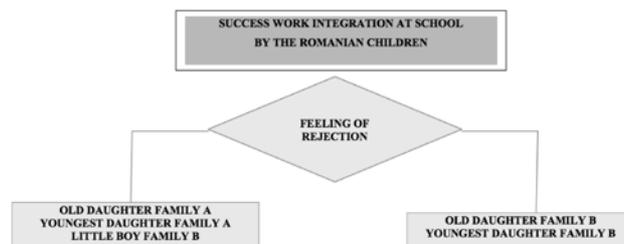


Figure 2. Success of integration at school according to Romanian children

The graph shows that the feelings of rejection are not univocal and do not affect all family members. For instance, the B family's little boy feels more integrated at the school than his two sisters. Although the sample is small, there are certainly factors dealing with the acceptance or integration of the students studied that transcend the purely academic aspect. This data reveals that the educational actions of teachers and schools do not always promote intercultural processes; they only serve to supplement integral actions made by the family and the society. For example, it is noted that the younger son of family B feels upset at school, not by his nationality, but because he is overweight, “sometimes the kids in my class call me fat, and I don’t like it. I get angry and don’t want to eat ... but I am very hungry”.

In a sense, we can say that school, as the first social element since childhood, is not enough to combat discrimination and promote an intercultural society. Education requires actions and activities outside of school. Civil society has to intervene so that immigrants and natives stop viewing immigrants as “the outsiders”, who only come to work and now, in times of crisis, “who take our work”.

Escalante, Fernandez and Gaete (2013) indicate that teachers face structural constraints in their work: work overload, difficulty in speaking with parents, poor teaching resources and methodologies, and limited protocols and guidelines to address these populations. For example, the tutor of the eldest daughter of family A says: “I believe that education is a task that should be shared not only by the educational community, but also by all of society for the benefit of the country. It should promote humanitarian and integrative education, in which to educate oneself is considered an inherent freedom, without disadvantages. Education, from my point of view, is a right that belongs to every human being, regardless of one’s social and economic place in society; it should be a duty for every human being, or rather for all of society, to aid the self-fulfillment of other human beings”.

Some tutors say that often students and parents complain that the class progresses little in content due to the excessive attention given to foreign students; however, this view is not

widespread as the other teachers –as well as the youngest child’s tutor from family B– indicate that the existence of immigrant students and their influence on school performance is not “positive or negative. I would say it is irrelevant; i.e. I have an immigrant student who is very bright and thus understands the posed content very successfully; I have others who find it hard to understand the content and are below average, but that is something common to all nationalities and all natives. Each class is different in and of itself, and better or worse academic performance depends on many factors, but I do not think that an immigrant child is a determining factor”.

Leiva (2011), after investigating the relationships between immigrant families and schools, tells us that “in the case of immigrant families, the labor issue is an even more important situation, since the families come primarily to work and, as a result, their workday daily occupies them, preventing many families from participating effectively in school due to schedule conflicts or the fatigue brought on by a long workday”. However, we cannot forget that “the lack of involvement of immigrant families in schools also tells us that we must consider a closed or unfavorable mentality towards participation, that is to say, perhaps due to fear or ignorance, many families do not effectively participate in the educational community, only coming to school to ask about the academic performance of their children and little else (...). Finally, Leiva (2011) does not rule out that communication difficulties are, in part, due to the fact that “many immigrant families come from countries where an educational tradition exists of being closed to democratic and active participation by families at school (...), where the traditional conception of the school is one in which the teacher is in charge of all actions and decisions dealing with education”.

Nevertheless, while it is difficult to promote intercultural education in school, schools must participate in building a multicultural society, regardless of the teacher-student-family triangle (Taylor & Zwaan, 2009; Evans & Levinson, 2009).

Immigrant children indicate that they like going to school and playing with Spanish children – even though we can deduce discriminatory attitudes from their statements. For instance, the youngest daughter in Family B states “I would like to have Spanish friends, but they don’t want to play with us. They remain apart in the playground and don’t want to interact with us”. In the case of the older daughter, despite indicating that she doesn’t feel discriminated against, she says “We all chat and play together in the playground. However, when it comes to picking teams for a game, I’m always chosen last”.

6.3 Romanian immigrant women in Lucena del Puerto

The mothers from family A and family B reflect common characteristics: they feel they have been welcomed and well-integrated; they are extremely protective of their children and they barely have any free time because, after work, they have to do housework and take care of their children.

The main causes of discrimination against these Romanian women come from native women. As two married mothers, who don’t seem to have problems with their husbands, they are nevertheless victims of a stereotype (which affects the rest of immigrant women) of coming to look for a husband: “Another thing I’ve seen in this town is that they insult us and tell us we are shameless because we’ve snatched up husbands, and children hear at home that Romanian women are bad, that they have snatched their fathers because the mothers have influenced them, that their friend has snatched the husband of another – and children listen and learn everything. For the two or three that do that, it involves all Romanian women, and the same happens with theft by any Romanian. However, in general, I can say that I feel good and I can relate to everyone – Lucenians as much as Romanians, except for some episodes of discrimination that I have suffered personally”.

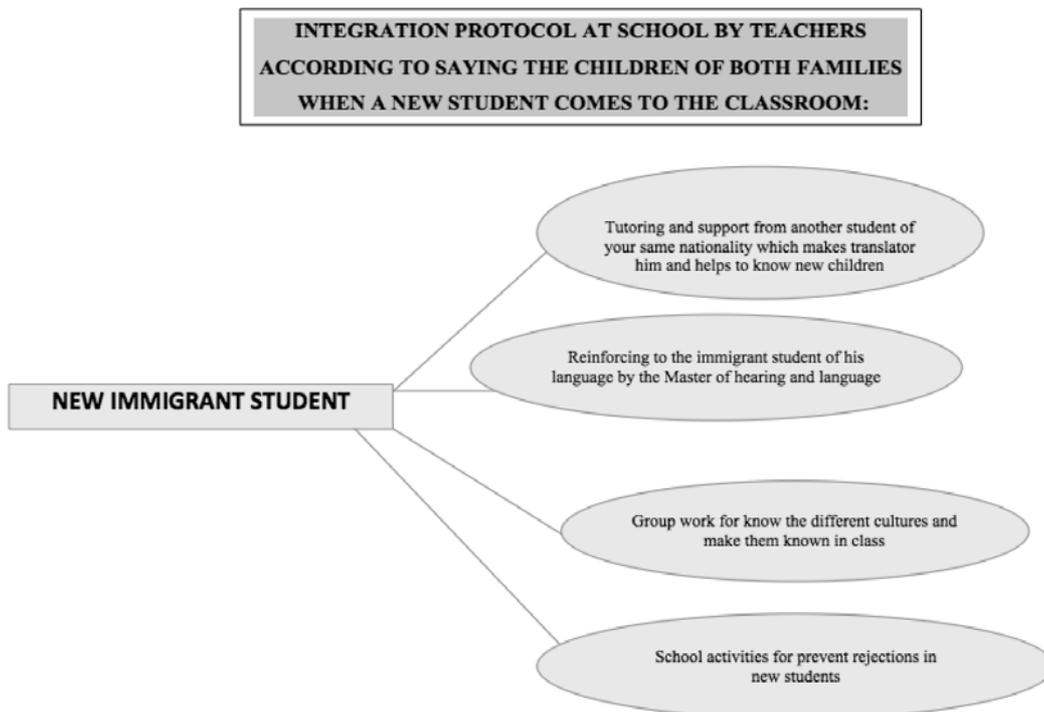


Figure 3. Integration protocol at school by teachers

As Gordo and Garcia (2009) point out, this criticism from immigrant women and its reminiscence in Romanian female workers –although they arrive already married– carries a component of myth and legend. This coincides with what a female neighbor woman says: “At first it caused a great stir amongst the immigrant girls who came and had a lot to say about having relationships with men from here. But today things are more normal. I have many acquaintances who are married or living with these women and have had children who attend the same school as my child” (Gordo & Garcia, 2009). We must recognize that the media’s influence, through sensationalist shows on television, contributes to the created reputation of immigrant women.

Mothers from the two families share the same desire to return to Romania. They recognize that it has been difficult to adapt to life in the town, but it does not bother them that their children want to stay and live here because they feel that their efforts have paid off as they have not only improved their living standards, but are also convinced that their children will have a higher standard of living than they had.

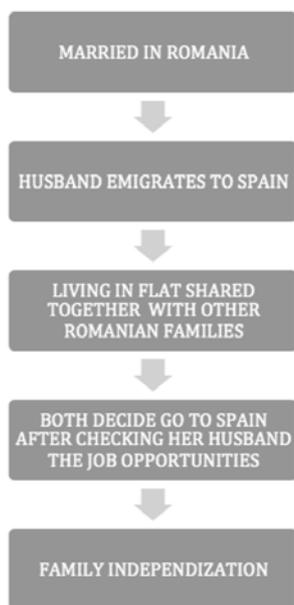


Figure 4. Common characteristics Romanian immigrant women from family A and family B

6.4 The vision of Romanian immigrant parents

Parents from both families have a more positive view, even the mothers, although both acknowledge that their arrival and adaptation was difficult, with tiresome work; both point out that they have felt understood and supported, including having been successful in their jobs thanks to their merits, external support and efforts; they have earned recognition by employers, although they are aware of the stereotypes linked to Romanian immigrants. The father from family B says: “I’ve heard nasty comments regarding Romanians –not personal remarks but generalizations– saying we came here to steal their work, we wanted to take away everything, and we were bad people, thieves.... At work, my boss has always treated me like other work colleagues – whether or not they were Romanians. We all work the same hours, do the same job; I see no differentiating treatment. The only thing is that the boss’s son allocates himself

the role of telling us what we have to do”. It is symptomatic that this father points out that those comments are not against him and thus sees no such discriminatory statements in them. The important thing is that their bosses treat them well.

In the case of the mothers, their desire is to build a future in Romania, to have a house and to retire there. Yet, they maintain that work and being well-regarded by their bosses is more important than the discriminatory or derogatory comments that they hear, and they even accept them as normal, provided that the comments are not aimed at them personally.

Despite the difference in work of the father in family A and the father in family B, (one was a mechanic, the other collected watermelons) the arrival and integration process in society is similar in practice. In addition, the father in family A has achieved a promotion at work and is no longer a mere collector but also the manager, while the father in family B has remained, despite the years, as a collector. This would confirm the theory that the possibility of promotion to a higher status in the workplace depends on the attitude of immigrants and their grasp of the language, as Ahonen et al. (2009) point out, because those immigrants assume the worst jobs due to difficulty with the native language and problems with the recognition of their work. However, the father in family B does not feel discriminated against at work; in fact, he is happy because, as stated in his interviews, he works less and earns more money here in Spain. Neither of the men expresses problems in their treatment at and outside of work, nor do they appear too worried about participating in Lucena del Puerto’s social life. However, the father in family B did feel sad to see that his daughters had not integrated well. Moreover all this occurs in a context where many Spanish workers view immigrants as those responsible for a decline in wages and reduction in workers’ rights.

7 CONCLUSIONS

From personal stories in this study, told in first person by both families, we can say that the children of the Romanian immigrant families aspire, despite some discriminatory problems, to feel part of Spain and this Huelvan town. Their aspiration is to settle here and live like Spaniards, and to enjoy full rights and freedoms. Above all, their desire is to remove the label of “immigrants” for the new generation already born in Spain, such as the youngest daughter from family A or the youngest son from family B who arrived in Spain at a very young age. In these cases, schools play a central role in creating identity, since, as Feliciano (2009) points out, they help to combine old and new identities, i.e. assimilating, without forgetting where they came from.

The town’s school, and all of their representatives and professionals, with scarce resources, try to create the foundations of a tolerant society, both for the Romanian group and Moroccan immigrants.

However, the role of social inclusion is not exclusively that of the school. The role of immigrant families is crucial (Deaton, 2009) and, above all, it helps to create a study environment in their homes that reconciles their customs with those of the new nationality. Society and its embodiment through neighbor relations, and within a neighborhood, town and country must encourage better integration with the creation of more services, as stated in a report on the social dimension of the Europe of 2020 by the European Union (2011). Experiences in countries with greater emigration tradition like France or England, suggest that, alongside learning the language, a flow of information to

immigrants is also necessary (Orrenius & Zavodny, 2009). This information should cover all levels of education. Such measures have been introduced, recently dating from 2007 or, in some countries (Finland and Iceland) 2008. In about half of the countries, national education authorities are responsible for this. In Luxembourg, apart from the publication of documents in French and German (official languages) as well as in Portuguese (mother tongue of 20% of pupils) by the Ministry of Education, invitations and/or informative circular letters sent to parents are translated, at the request of those interested, into other languages. Those responsible for these translations are intercultural mediators and translators working in the education service for foreign students in the Ministry of Education (Heckmann, 2008). This is done in collaboration with municipal associations and unions, strengthening a network of volunteers to assist in the greater inclusion of immigrants and to remove existing prejudices towards them. The purpose is not only to improve immigrants' rights and their social and labor inclusion but also to avoid extra health service costs (Giuntella, 2014).

It's not enough to weave a network of volunteers, as the problem of discrimination can be accentuated in times of economic crises, as occurs in many European countries from Greece to Sweden (Kalogeraki, 2012). Hence, social policies and the fight against discrimination by public authorities is very important (Agudelo et al., 2011).

On the other hand, it has been found that a large number of immigrants only seek to work, to save and to return to their own country (48% of immigrants just want to achieve these expectations and return home). One must question, in these cases, if immigrants seek social inclusion or just temporary coexistence. In fact, as stated by Escandell and Ceobamu (2009), many immigrants only interact with natives at work, hence the workplace acquires a special importance as a place of exchange between local and immigrant populations.

Returning, however, is seen more as an aspiration than a reality. Gibson & McKenzie (2011) point out that the return of skilled migrants in general tends to be higher than that of unskilled immigrants, and, generally, it is determined not only or primarily by job opportunities but also by the vital cycle that migration produces and preferences regarding the migrants' lifestyles. Another key factor is family reunification and, above all, if the children wanting to live or to build a family in the country to which they emigrated is a part of it.

"Prosperity" is seen more as a material state than a cultural one. It should, therefore, be questioned whether immigration will also be considered a guarantee for the future in times of economic crisis. In this respect, it is interesting to note in the Transatlantic Trends survey that immigrants take jobs that natives don't want (2009); these are seen as essential. However, the problem arises when the native population feels that immigrants hold jobs that "theoretically" would have been held by natives. Available data indicates that the deterioration of the economic situation, and particularly the increase in unemployment, often has a negative influence on the perception of migration and its critical effects. In Andalusia, people may be more critical than in other communities where they have lower unemployment rates. According to a report by the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2010) these posts are occupied by people that, in their country, are specialists in their professions and, in Spain, do not get to exercise them (in the case of family A) because migration is selective. As Beauchemin and Gonzalez (2010) note, emigration

is a difficult and expensive bet on all types of capital (economic, cultural, relational, social, etc.). The potentially most qualified immigrants are better prepared to deal with these costs. This implies that, although a particular immigrant group may be determined, if they have a relatively low level of education compared to the native population of the host society, a selection of the most trained immigrants may work in their place.

Town members interviewed said that immigrants should not abandon their origins; however, they claim that in order to achieve true integration, it is necessary to achieve mutual understanding; the elimination of prejudice on the part of the native population and high rates of adaptation to new customs and standards of living by the immigrant population. Nevertheless, as demonstrated in the interviews with the Romanian children and mothers, some discriminatory treatment continues to exist.

On the other hand, Banks (2008) says "much of the research conducted in Spain and the European Union has been, in short, quantitative and statistical, and has revealed itself to be insufficient to acquire a deep understanding of intercultural educational reality". Therefore, life histories and qualitative methods in general allow global study. They comprehensively study the immigration problem, their realities and their implications for all (social, cultural, educational...), in a way that helps us to understand this social phenomenon from protagonists' viewpoints. In the educational field, and especially on the issue of education, within intercultural contexts, Levia (2011) says "despite being a topic widely expressed in different studies and research, from our perspective, it is interesting to explore and deepen the perspective of teachers facing intercultural coexistence; it is an inescapable reality and the present and future scenario of our classrooms and schools will be intercultural".

During the decade between 2001-10, Spain had one of the highest immigration rates in the world – three to four times higher than the average rate of immigration in the United States between 2000 and 2008 (Amuedo & Clear). Many foreign scholars have considered Spain as a "laboratory" with which to test theories on migration.

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