

ETHNIC, RACIAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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Abstract: *This article presents the problems that highly developed countries have had over the years, facing a period of exacerbated migrations. Once immigrants have arrived in highly developed countries, they go through a process of ethnic and cultural transition that can have consequences at the level of individuals' personality, but also at the level of the country. Educating peoples on multiculturalism that promotes and integrates ethnic and racial diversity can be a starting point for homogenizing groups. Educational programs that promote the integration and understanding of ethnic minorities in the majority, through social learning, become the key to the success of the cohesion of unitary groups that present a harmonious development of the individual.*

Key words: *ethnicity, race, multiculturalism, integration, social learning*

1. Introduction

Ethnicity according to the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language is defined as the totality of people who speak the same language and who present a common culture (Gellner, 2023). In the field, ethnicity is an integrated concept and is referred to as ethnic identity, much easier to explain, described and integrated by specialists in complex research. Also, ethnicity most often is confused with humans, which denotes a concise clarification of this concept. Thus, race represents the human biological structure, which can be easily observed through physical appearance.

Racial and ethnic identity become essential parts of the general framework of individual and collective identity (Chávez & Guido-DiBrito, 1999), highlighting themselves in different ways. According to Schwartz and his collaborators (2014) ethnic and racial identity can be defined as a subjective sense of belonging to an ethnic or racial group. There are three components of racial/ethnic identity that are important for both children and adults (Byrd, 2012): awareness, attitudes and identification.

Awareness of cultural identity is one of the most important aspects of integrating and accepting the traditions and customs in which the members of a group have taken part throughout their lives. Also, being a continuous process of change and self-discovery, it can have a positive impact on individual life and on society, but also negative, being guided by people's attitudes. As regards the identification of ethnic identity, it has close

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links with the sense of belonging to the group, which varies from individual to individual, being used for the purpose of celebrating diversity and promoting cultural understanding.

2. Ethnic Diversity and Multiculturalism

According to Castles and Miller (2009) ethnic and cultural diversity is increasing in most Western European countries, with the 21st century referred to as the age of migration. The action of migration caused changes worldwide, establishing a new order, both from the demographic, political, economic, and socio-cultural point of view.

When individuals migrate from one state or culture to another, be it a temporary/permanent residence, for economic, political, or educational reasons, there is every chance that they will, over time, change their culture. (Bhugra, 2005).

Also, the processes through which they can go through, considering the transition from one culture to another and even from one ethnicity to another, can cause certain changes in the behavioural structure of individuals.

Regardless of the reason they have regarding the change of territory, it becomes a starting point of their development as persons, in a society that is constantly evolving. Moreover, the changes related to the nature of the transition that individuals want to achieve by migrating to other much better developed states, at least economically, but also politically, can be temporary or permanent, and it is their duty to manage them as easily as possible.

Depending on the country chosen, but also on the culture they can embrace and accept when they move, some people in terms of ethnic identity will not transform their behaviour, in some contexts, not being affected by the cultural changes they can go through.

In the field, the study on ethnicity was outlined until the 2000s to only three theories referring to human evolution (Glazer, 1989):

- Louis Horowitz ignores the ways in which ethnicity can function as a factor of transnational cohesion, considering that ethnicity is an aspect of the fusion of the status order with the political order.
- Talcott Parsons serves his systemic scaffolding well by integrating the concepts of ethnicity into his own general theory of the evolution of society.
- Martin Kilson deals only with the experience of people of color as an aggregate mass that serves as a model for new Caucasian ethnicities.

In the last decade, but also in the middle of the 20th century, a new consciousness of racial multiplicity emerged, both on the part of people who claimed their multiracial identities and in the minds of monoracial observers (Spickard, 2012). Joining race and ethnicity to any discussion of social trends often reveals new elements or layers of understanding about human behaviour (Coles, 2013).

Ecological models imply the importance of the school context on the perceptions and understanding of race and ethnicity by students during adolescence (Byrd et al., 2022).

Adolescence is a period of transitions from all points of view, especially the perception of everything that surrounds adolescents regarding people, family, social group, school, and in certain contexts and the culture of which they belong. The social-cognitive capacity that they present at this age stage, but also the hunger for sensations can lead

them to accept and become more deeply aware of the ethnic identities with which they come into contact.

Cultural differences can be a starting point for their individual development, but also awareness and identification with one culture at the expense of another. The problems that adolescents experience at this stage determine their capacity for exacerbated introspection regarding themselves, but also the environment in which they operate, namely educational institutions.

Schools could implement a programme of counselling on differences in relation to the communities to which students belong, facilitating their own positioning within society and attitudes about the cultural abundance in which they take part.

Also, according to (Ceccon et al., 2023) the successful adaptation and integration of young immigrants and ethnic minorities is a key challenge, which has become increasingly relevant not only in societies with a long history of migration and multiculturalism, but also in the European context due to globalization and other major sociopolitical events.

Ethnic and racial identity are both claimed by people with different heritage, skin color, social experiences in and outside the family, which suggests a high degree of heterogeneity regarding the meaning of identity (Umana-Taylor et al., 2014). However, some forms of ethnic identity change come in response to structural, institutional, and interpersonal marginalization implemented by certain lower-status groups (Loyd et al., 2023).

Identity develops in contexts and time and is shaped by (Clauss-Ehlers et al., 2019): cultural influences, age, generation, gender, ethnicity, race, religion, language, sexual orientation, social class, education, labor, economic status, nationality, immigration status and history, as well as the current situation of the experience of marginalization.

Identity reflects both individual and collective traits of emotional and cognitive experience and develops within interpersonal and structural contexts (Hicks et al., 2022).

Ethnic identity can be conceptualized as an internal experience that facilitates emotional, behavioral and cognitive experiences, highlighting the real state of individuals or even their attitudes towards the community to which they belongs, and can be called a subjective self-identity.

It is important when addressing the topic of ethnic diversity to mention the evolution of the literature on the topic addressed, this being relevant, in terms of the awareness and identification of individuals to a certain ethnic identity.

In the field, the concept of multiculturalism is often found, which incorporates and presents approaches of social and political, economic, and cultural nature of the interaction of several ethnic groups within society. The notion of multiculturalism was first introduced as a policy by the Government of Canada in 1971 to deal with the consequences of increasing cultural diversity due to immigration (Stogianni et al., 2023).

Multiculturalism promotes ethnic identity and identity culture within a developed society such as Europe, without forcing any individual to give up their different cultural traits. Moreover, in the case of USA, although it can be called "the land of all possibilities", the history of this country proves the opposite both in the previous century and in this one. For example, in China, multiculturalism includes both traditional Chinese culture and foreign culture, therefore, in the multicultural context, we should accept the essence and respect the customs and characteristics of different nationalities (Yuan, 2023).

Multiculturalism is also an ideology that reflects an inclusive view of diversity, supporting the fact that a society is made up of different ethno-cultural groups, who have equal rights, regardless of their size or power (Berry, 1990).

The current problem of multiculturalism is that of integrating different ethnic groups into societies with a cultural capital too rich in historical ideologies, so that the impact that immigrants have in different countries depends both on the political norms by which the country exercises its existence, and on the attitudes and awareness of each member of the country on promoting diversity and cultural inclusion, in order to develop strong states from a geo-political point of view, but also morally.

Multiculturalism (Verkuyten, 2007) is argued in terms of positivity in positive intergroup relations and "productive diversity", arguing that it represents an important national, organizational, or commercial asset, becoming a crucial condition for learning and for the development of cultural competence.

Thus, one of the best approaches to ethnic and racial inclusion is to develop cultural competence. Cultivating cultural competence in a multicultural psychology course could have a significant impact on society at large, considering the importance of social justice as an integral feature of multicultural education (Hicks et al., 2022). Following social psychological theories that emphasize the role of group status and interests in inter-group dynamics, it is more likely that multiculturalism will attract more minority ethnic groups, majority groups most often support less assimilation (Verkuyten, 2007).

Thus, multiculturalism emphasizes the acceptance and respect of ethnic and cultural diversity, while promoting tolerance, understanding and cooperation between different ethnic groups. In many multiculturalist societies, policies and programs are developed to protect and promote cultural diversity and to prevent discrimination or marginalization based on ethnic or cultural origin. This is done through educational programs.

Communication is a first step in exploring multiethnic and understanding communities emerging in highly developed countries. The explanation that multi-ethnicity or ethnic identity is an integral part of multiculturalism is imperative, focusing our attention on the individual ties of individuals belonging to different cultures, implicitly to a different ethnicity and even race.

In our increasingly diverse society, interracial interactions are more common and sometimes difficult to avoid (Plant & Butz, 2006). So, the easiest way to observe the "interweaving" of ethnicities is through inter- and intra-group communication. For example, examinations of relatively brief interracial encounters have revealed that Caucasian individuals often feel anxious, embarrassed, and uncomfortable during interactions with black people (Trawalter, Richeson, & Shelton, 2009). This behavior denotes an insecurity that can be acquired both during the actual interaction with and based on the knowledge gained over time, about the respective race or ethnicity.

One reason that inter-racial interactions are usually more difficult than intra-racial ones is the likelihood of individuals facing the increased threat of social identity in inter-racial contexts (Green, Wout, & Murphy, 2021). Moreover, attitudes towards a person who is not part of the cultural group, can constrain the individual to have a slightly avoidant behavior at the beginning of the communicational act, in certain contexts being affected from the point of emotional security regarding the interaction.

Ethnic groups can often have, like any ordinary group, several norms according to which they coexist in society. Rules that are adapted and influenced by the cultural

aspect of the region in which they live, but also based on social, political, and even religious norms. Most of the time, such ethnic groups retain their homogeneity, protecting the variation from erosion that they could go through following an interethnic interaction. However, according to Bruce and McElreath (2017), such interaction is often frequent and voluntary, suggesting that individuals may be able to reduce their costs strategically by allowing adaptive cultural variation to persist despite interacting with outside groups exhibiting different norms.

3. Conclusion

To promote the interweaving of multiethnic groups in a society that shows syncope in the manifestation of collective empathy, social learning can represent an option regarding the evaluation and integration of norms and experiences at group level, to achieve the success of the personal development of individuals.

Such success-oriented social learning is easily generalized to any norm or any field, in which people want to perform, regardless of whether this action involves group benefits (Bunce & McElreath, 2017).

Also, this type of learning leads to advantages in the personal sphere of the individual, for example, increasing the level of self-esteem or self-image can be a starting point for recalibration of the personality and motivation towards performance.

The correct and equitable inclusion of individuals in their own group modifies interaction strategies and behavioural manifestations, leading them to grow on the social scale, without altering individual ethnic and cultural norms.

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