

# Ethnic Stereotypes and Dimensions of Identity. Cross-Cultural Investigation

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## Abstract:

A stereotype is a complex mechanism, through which social connotations of personal and business qualities are passed on from generation to generation, and even more than that. In fact, it contains some filters which allow us to highlight the defining characteristics of the subject, on the basis of which we can draw the image of the person representing the ethnic group. In this context, the logic of the research is based on the principle of value judgment, which allowed us to answer the following questions: *How is the person representing the ethnic group perceived today? What are his/her distinctive features? Can living environment and context have an impact on value judgment?*. Questions to which we tried to answer through the social representations of Moldovan adolescents who are immigrants in Italy and Moldovan adolescents who live in the Republic of Moldova.

**Keywords:** Moldovan immigrant adolescents in Italy, ethnic group representation, stereotypical image, social context, migration

## Introduction

Stereotype is defined by psychologists as a preconceived opinion about a class of individuals, groups, or objects that reproduce schematic forms of perception and judgment or common beliefs about the personal attributes of a human group in general, such as personality traits and behavior (Lippman, 1946).

From a linguistic point of view, analyzing the etymology of the word *stereotype*, we see that *stereo* derives from Greek and means *rigid, firm, fixed, stable*, and *type* means *model* (Billig, Tajfel, 1973: 27-52). There are two forms of stereotyping:

1. Dynamic stereotype, which is a relatively stable system of conditioned human reactions and reflexes to common stimuli.
2. Social stereotype, which is a schematic, standardized, universally significant image, an emotional image, a stable idea of a particular phenomenon or object, expressing the ordinary attitude of

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people toward other people, formed under the influence of the conditions of existence and their previous experience.

In this sense, the social stereotype is considered as a complex formation, in which there is an inseparable unity of its three components:

- cognitive (informational);
- affective (evaluative);
- social (behavioral).

The cognitive aspect of stereotyping is that social stereotypes own the underdevelopment of cognitive content, containing social attitudes (clear regulators of group behavior). Such information contained in a stereotype, as a rule, is merely an extract or a “collection” of the characteristics of an event, phenomenon or person, which falls within the existing “baggage” of personal experience and is significant for the development and stable functioning of society (Mazzara, 1996: 124). The rest of the information is thrown away, having no influence in relation to the event or stereotyped person, because of its irreducibility to previous experience or lack of opportunity and time to know them more deeply.

Therefore, on the basis of this superficial information, a false judgment can be formed, which often leads to the conclusion that the stereotype is loaded with an erroneous component and contains information which does not correspond to the real state of things.

In the same context, social stereotypes are characterized by lack of ambiguity, which means that a judgment cannot simultaneously have two contradictory meanings. As a result, the stereotype is a rigid and specific fixation, which manifests itself in a variety of situations and it is stable over a long period of time. This is why social stereotypes successfully put up resistance against any information about their change.

The affective aspect of stereotyping refers to a person's evaluation processes, which goes through *color phases* (Mazzara, 1993: 192). For this reason, the affective component is subjective and sets the direction for people's thinking and actions. Social stereotypes are therefore often characterized by a high degree of evaluative attitude with the intensity of emotional response, both verbally and behaviorally. Emotions (most often negative) clearly testify to the explicit evaluative expression of stereotypes in people's minds and behavior.

The most important function of stereotypes is to simplify the world according to the established cultural modality and fulfilling the defensive function with the aim of maintaining forms of social organization.

Along the same lines, H. Tajfel (1984: 118) points out that stereotype, as preferential thinking, can be both positive and negative. It derives from selection or exaggeration processes, which may or may not have correspondence with reality: *The perception of the world is conditioned by people's values, attitudes and goals and is based on the correlation between the individual level, social and cultural dynamics, which in turn are based on the axiological systems.*

### **Literature review**

The etymological origin of the term *stereotype* can be traced back to typographical art, which identifies a reproduction process of the 18<sup>th</sup> century that utilizes fixed, unchanging plates for printing. Thus, the transition from the literary to the metaphorical meaning of the term is evident in many works in French literature from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, where the aspect of rigidity and repetitiveness has been used metaphorically to describe verbal and nonverbal behavior. In the social sciences, the term *stereotype* first appeared as a *model* or *image* in the 20<sup>th</sup> century thanks to W. Lippman's 1922 study *The world outside and the pictures in our heads*.

The concept of stereotype is closely related to that of prejudice and often, they are even used synonymously. The researcher Mazzara (1996: 124) defines the stereotype as the cognitive core of prejudice, a set of information and beliefs about a particular category of objects, re-elaborated in coherent and tangential stable images, capable of supporting and reproducing a prejudice against the object. According to the author, prejudice is defined according to the level of generality taken. If it reaches its highest point, it corresponds to the etymological meaning, which is derived from the Latin term *praejudicium*, which is a judgment made prior to experience or without empirical data. It is a judgment that is more or less incorrect, oriented in a favorable or unfavorable way, referring both to facts and individuals or groups. If a more specific degree of analysis is adopted, it may be defined as a tendency to consider people belonging to a particular group as unfairly unfavorable.

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century studies on the extent and nature of differences between large human groups played a major role in understanding the evolution of stereotype concept. These subjects were considered of interest in so-called *race psychology* (Leyen, Yzerbyt, Schadron, 1994). This is a theoretical construct based on the belief that psychological characteristics, like physical characteristics, are encoded in the genetic heritage and are transmissible to the descendants. Ethnicity, the concept of "race" and the presumed existence of a biological link to individual abilities and psychological characteristics were the main themes addressed in this regard.

*Race psychology* was criticized for its focus on individual prejudices and for failing to recognize the socio-political dynamics behind discrimination. Therefore, *the transition from the perspective of race psychology to that of prejudice is one of the moments of the strongest discontinuity in psycho-social studies of group relations, marking the focus on cultural determinants and a new awareness of socio-political implications.*

*The adoption of the term “ethnic group” instead of “race” is for instance a first sign of a change in theoretical and empirical perspective.*

In Lippmann's view, stereotypes would have a predominantly social origin, essentially deriving from the cultural context and performing an important function in explaining existing social behavior and organization. However, although Lippman's ideas remain somewhat vague from a theoretical point of view, they do anticipate some essential points Lippman (1946):

- a) the stereotype is based on a simplification process;
- b) this simplification takes place in culturally determined ways;
- c) the stereotype performs a defensive function to maintain culture and forms of social organization;
- d) the stereotype is responsible for *conducting research and evaluating data based on experience.*

In the same context, Allport (1973: 123) states that prejudice can only be understood by starting from an analysis of the community, the thought processes that characterize the functioning of the mind and imply the following:

- a) the mechanisms for simplifying and organizing knowledge, which are essential for dealing with an excessively complex and differentiated reality;
- b) the fundamental categorization process which involves grouping stimuli and events in a homogenous manner in order to quickly organize new events into a coherent system of interpretations and behaviors.
- c) the process of generalization, defined as the constant tendency of the human mind to extend observations made on a few available events to large series of events.

Another interesting perspective takes into account the level of “social judgment” of the stereotype, starting from the premise that traditional stereotype approaches are limited to considering aspects of good or bad functioning of the cognitive system. Social judgments are not determined by logical procedures, but rather by the need to assign meaning to the world in line with social codes. Stereotypes in this sense can be conceived as social explanations whose functionality needs to be



explored in relation to a specific context of intergroup relations (Bochmann, 2001: 93-102).

The processes of causal attribution are therefore profoundly altered by cultural dynamics. Hewston and Ward (1985: 614-622) pointed out that the fundamental effect of *attributional favoritism* towards a group is by no means universal, but tends to reflect the state of relations between ethnic groups, as well as the predominant ways of socio-political definition of the relationship between the majority and the minority.

Similarly, Newcomb (1952: 37), interprets prejudice and conflict between ethno-religious groups in terms of group norms, which prescribe a certain relationship to be maintained with out-group members. His studies on multiple and marginal belonging, as well as strategies for solving tensions that emphasize differences in favor of one's own group, are of particular interest. More specifically, the author highlights the importance of communication processes as a bridge for building and sharing group norms and as a key element for structuring relationships. He believes that communication is a means of sharing information among groups and collectively defining meaningful memories and experiences, in order to establish positive and negative attitudes towards other groups, as well as fostering common social norms. The identification of *language as one of the main tools for creating and transmitting stereotypes* was based on the identification of its fundamental role in the processes of cognitive coding and decoding.

In this way, from the perspective of the constructivist matrix, stereotypes and prejudices are the constant product of a collective process of assigning meaning to reality (Tajfel, Forgas, 1982:113-140). Thus, the dynamics of social identity and relationships between groups create a collective memory that each individual can use to make sense of things. In this context, thinking stereotypically or through prejudice is a common method of functioning in popular thought, which is also known as *common sense*.

### **Methodology**

*The aim* of this work is to uncover ethnic stereotypes towards the person representing the ethnic group in the case of Moldovan adolescents who are immigrants in Italy and Moldovan adolescents who live in the Republic of Moldova.

*Research hypothesis:* Ethnic identity of Moldovan adolescents is determined by status and place of living.

#### *Participants*

Considering the factors involved in the process of ethnic identity construction, several variables-characteristics of Moldovan adolescents were taken into account such as: age, residence according to place of

living, migration experience (in the case of Moldovan adolescents from the diaspora), non-migration experience (in the case of Moldovan adolescents from the Republic of Moldova), current status, gender and citizenship of the Republic of Moldova.

The investigation involved 215 adolescents: 105 Moldovan adolescents (62 boys and 43 girls), holders of Moldovan citizenship, who are legally residing in Italy, from the regions of Lombardia, Emilia-Romagna, Liguria, Liguria, and Veneto; with school status, enrolled in 14 educational institutions; with an average age of 16.2; average time of stay on the territory of the Italian Republic – 7.4 years and 110 Moldovan adolescents (43 boys and 67 girls), holders of citizenship of the Republic of Moldova, legally residing in the Republic of Moldova; with school status, enrolled in 4 educational institutions: 2 – from Chişinău and 2 – from Floreşti; with an average age of 15.8.

The research took place between December 2018 and October 2019. The research sample consisted of 215 adolescents (in the 14-20 years age): 110 of them were from Moldova (Chişinău and Floreşti) and 105 of them were from Italy (Lombardia, Emilia-Romagna, Liguria and Veneto).

### **Instrument**

In order to study ethnic stereotypes, in the case of Moldovan adolescents who are immigrants in Italy and in the case of Moldovan adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova, we used *The Semantic Differential Scale*, which was created by T. G. Stefanenko and it was applied to adolescents of different ethnic groups (Polish, Russian, and Belarusian). The given method was designed to diagnose ethnic stereotypes and measures affective attitudes towards the person representing the ethnic group. The procedure consists in assessing 16 pairs of qualities which have positive and negative meaning, related to different spheres of human activity. According to researcher T. Stefanenko (1999) these qualities were divided into eight pairs of business qualities and eight pairs of personal qualities.

Therefore, respondents were asked to assess the degree of accentuation of qualities, using a seven-point scale. As a result, the mean value (M) for each scale and the standard deviation were calculated.

Subsequently, the procedure for comparing empirical data regarding ethnic stereotypes towards the person representing the ethnic group among Moldovan adolescents in Italy and Moldovan adolescents in the Republic of Moldova was carried out. For this purpose, *Student's t-test* was applied to both groups of adolescents.

**Results**

The results of the analysis are listed below (Table 1):

*Table 1: Comparing Moldovan business qualities based on the opinions of Moldovan adolescents in Italy and in the Republic of Moldova*

Qualities	The mean of Moldovan adolescents in the Republic of Moldova +/- The Standard Deviation	The mean of Moldovan adolescents in Italy +/- The Standard Deviation	t-test
Indecision - Determination	4,76 +/- 1,93	5,48 +/- 1,41	-3,108
Organization-Disorganization	3,45 +/- 1,89	5,98 +/- 1,13	-11,991
Spirit of initiative- Lack of initiative	4,68 +/- 1,81	2,38 +/- 1,34	10,619
Bad household management-Good household management	5,07 +/- 1,65	5,07 +/- 1,44	0,029
Diligence- Laziness	2,60 +/- 1,48	4,22 +/- 1,94	-6,867
Flexibility - Rigidity	5,43 +/- 1,37	2,59 +/- 1,51	14,396
Predisposition to lead- - Predisposition to obey	4,74 +/- 1,71	5,84 +/- 1,08	-5,652
Passivity - Activism	3,00 +/- 1,68	3,70 +/- 1,78	-2,990

As shown in Table 1, in terms of business qualities, Moldovan adolescents in Italy consider Moldovans to have both positive and less positive traits.

Additionally, as a stereotypical image, Moldovans are seen as having *good household management* (M = 5.07). This mean value applies both to Moldovan adolescents living in Italy and to Moldovan adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova. The given quality is strengthened even more in the context of migration, as a prerequisite for the integration into the labor market of the host country.

Considering *determination*, we see that this is an accentuated feature according to the mean value (M = 5.48), which is confirmed both by the decision of the adolescents' parents who decided to emigrate and by the decision of many of their compatriots who go abroad to overcome the social condition experienced in the Republic of Moldova, having the motivation for a better life.

As for *flexibility*, we see that it is present with a slight tendency toward rigidity (M = 2.59), which is less visible, but certainly played through physical and mental capacities. Anyway, this allows Moldovans to face the trials and difficulties of life together with the ability to

appreciate “this journey”, which is sometimes quite complex and complicated.

Flexibility among Moldovans, no matter how weak, makes them more open to new unpredictable circumstances. This allows them to adapt to the dynamic of life, which is constantly changing, especially on the background of migration.

Also, it follows that *good household management, determination and flexibility* are for Moldovan adolescents in Italy, the pillar of *the spirit of initiative*, which according to the results is a less highlighted quality ( $M = 2.38$ ). In our opinion, this choice depends on how adolescents value themselves in relation to their ethnic group, in other words, to the people of the host country. However, Moldovans’ spirit of initiative, regardless of intensity, gives them the possibility to identify new opportunities from a professional, social or familial perspective and all this through planning, management, communication, evaluation and negotiation of all the chances in order to master the strengths and weaknesses, including taking a certain risk. In this sense, Moldovans’ spirit of initiative demonstrates the ability to anticipate some events by taking responsibility for their actions.

In the same vein, if we look at the *passivity-activism* dyad ( $M = 3.70$ ), we see how difficult it is for Moldovan adolescents living in Italy to choose one of these qualities. It gives us the impression of a certain level of passivity, uncertainty and latent activism of the Moldovan people, which cannot be fully expressed, probably because of the bureaucratic barriers existing both in the Republic of Moldova and in Italy. Then on top of that, we should mention the disadvantaged social position they have in the host country, too.

Further, Moldovan adolescents from Italy see the Moldovan people *predisposed to organization* ( $M = 5.98$ ). Due to this fact, Moldovans’ life seems to include a well thought-out plan that allows them to achieve all their goals.

Surprisingly, in the same context, the Moldovan people are presented with a slight tendency toward *diligence* ( $M = 4.22$ ). Referring to the multicultural environment of the host country, it makes us understand that adolescents in the diaspora see the Moldovan people as being less qualified to perform some jobs according to certain standards and less willing to learn to do it. Moreover, it may be the case of the Moldovans who are satisfied with the things they have or with the basic social assistance they get. Consequently, they do not want to work.

Regarding the *predisposition to lead* ( $M = 5.84$ ), in the opinion of adolescents from the diaspora, we can notice that Moldovans are considered to have a dominant personality, being pushed by the



competition to have a better life and to change things, of course, this is within the limits of the migration context.

When it comes to adolescents in the Republic of Moldova, in terms of business qualities, the image of the Moldovan people is rather contrasted.

In the stereotypical perception of Moldovan adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova, the Moldovan people have *good household management* ( $M = 5.07$ ), which is probably due to the expression handed down from generation to generation "to be a good householder". It reflects the feeling of self-worth of the Moldovans and it is valid for any citizen of the Republic of Moldova, regardless of status, profession or function, which is translated by the care for the goods that Moldovan people have and the prudence they show in gathering them during their lives.

In the case of *determination*, we see that there is a slight tendency towards this quality ( $M = 4.76$ ), which is an indicator of will power and the ability to be aware of what the Moldovan people want.

To our surprise, the Moldovan people also seem to be oriented towards *laziness* ( $M = 2.60$ ). This suggests that contemporary adolescents probably value laziness in other aspects: being in line with technological trends, keeping up with fashion, etc.

In the same context, based on the mean value ( $M = 3.45$ ), Moldovan adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova seem to oscillate between perceiving Moldovans as *organized* or *disorganized*. In our opinion, this is fuelled by the difficulty of drawing an axis of priorities according to which they can live their lives as they really want to.

Adolescents relate, in this regard, to the reality which is a matter of not getting enough physical activity, skipping meals, postponing things, self-neglect and the Moldovan inability to rest properly.

Equally, on the background of the above-mentioned characteristics, the Moldovan people don't seem to have a lot of *initiative* ( $M = 4.68$ ). We explain this aspect by the fact that Moldovans have not been taught to manage their life on their own, by the lack of self-confidence and by the lack of optimism to seize life's opportunities. This behavior is also generated by some stereotypes created by society, especially by those based on popular beliefs such as *if you are a sheep without a shepherd, you will be ruined*. This fact is in contrast to Moldovan's *flexibility* ( $M = 5.43$ ), which is the most emphasized feature in relation to others and it is translated by facing the unknown and openness to change.

Thus, in the amalgamation of these traits, we also notice a slight *tendency to lead* ( $M = 4.74$ ), which gives us the hope that this quality is still significant for Moldovans.

In the same context, Moldovans are perceived as passive people ( $M = 3.00$ ). This trait is also justified by the saying *to give up*, which is rooted in the tendency of the Moldovan people to stop trying to achieve something and accept failure in the fight for meritocracy, by choosing to disrespect their rights and always wanting to appear “good”. As a result, Moldovans often resign themselves to something quite easily.

In order to highlight statistically significant differences between the groups participating in the investigation, we applied the t-test. Therefore, after comparing the means with the studied variables, which express business qualities, we observed some significant differences, apart from *good household management* (5.07;  $T = -6.867$ ,  $p = 0.977$ ), a quality which is predominantly attributed to the Moldovan people by the adolescents of both groups.

However, referring to the stereotypical perception of adolescents in terms of business qualities, we notice that Moldovan adolescents in Italy, compared to those in the Republic of Moldova, consider the Moldovan people being much more *determined* (5.48;  $T = -3.108$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), much more *organized* (5.98;  $T = -11.991$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and much more *predisposed to lead* (5.84;  $T = -5.652$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). In other words, in the representation of Moldovan adolescents in Italy, the image of the Moldovan people is much more positive compared to that of adolescents in the Republic of Moldova. Of course, in part, this may be justified by idealizing the person that represents the ethnic group, but also we cannot exclude the fact that Moldovans have developed these qualities in order to adapt as effectively as possible to the new conditions of the host country on the background of migration.

Consequently, when we refer to business qualities, we conclude that Moldovan adolescents living in Italy have a rather positive image of the person representing their ethnic group, as they have chosen the following qualities: *determination*, *organization*, *good household management* and *predisposition to lead*. On the contrary, *diligence* is also a quality with a positive trend, even if it is not very well highlighted. At the same time, in the stereotypical perception of Moldovan adolescents living in Italy, the Moldovan people are seen as *lacking in initiative* and *rigid*. We can see here that these traits are predominant over *spirit of initiative* and *flexibility*.

Concerning the “passivity-activism” dyad, we note that Moldovan adolescents had some difficulty in determining the intensity of one of these traits, probably due to their minority position in Italy, fuelled by the need for psychological adaptation to the different cultural living environment, intrinsically comparing themselves with the dominant group (Italian adolescents).

On the whole, therefore, we observe that the stereotypical image of the Moldovan people is quite generous in positive qualities, which decorates their image positively. In our opinion, it is an important basis for self-identification for these adolescents, especially in a foreign cultural space, by maintaining social and personal identity.

At the same time, Moldovan adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova have a negative image of the person representing their ethnic group, being quite critical in this regard. In their view, the most highlighted qualities of the Moldovans are: *flexibility* and *good household management*. Similarly, according to them, Moldovans are seen as *determined people*, having *initiative* and being *predisposed to lead*. These qualities remain at a low level, probably because of the need to be confirmed by the socio-cultural environment in which adolescents live every day.

Comparisons between ethnic autostereotypes generated by Moldovan adolescents in Italy and Moldovan adolescents in the Republic of Moldova revealed the fact that both groups have a positive image of the Moldovan people. However, the autostereotype of Moldovan adolescents living in Italy is much clearer when referring to the qualities: *determination*, *organization*, *good household management* and *predisposition to lead*, which are more evident ( $p < 0.001$ ) than in the case of adolescents in the Republic of Moldova. In the same way, explicit differences were identified between the autostereotypes of adolescents of both groups in the case of *organization-disorganization* dyad, where adolescents from the Republic of Moldova had the difficulty in choosing the degree of intensity of the following trait: *organization*. Concerning *good household management* instead, we see that both groups expressed themselves identical here, because they see it as a significant quality for Moldovans. This leads us to assume that, in terms of ethnic group representation, good management of the household is the defining quality of Moldovans. Therefore, regarding the business qualities, in the case of Moldovan adolescents in Italy, the positive orientation of the heterostereotype is more pronounced.

Table 2: Comparing Moldovan personal qualities based on the opinions of Moldovan adolescents in Italy and in the Republic of Moldova

Qualities	The mean of Moldovan adolescents in the Republic of Moldova +/- The Standard Deviation	The mean of Moldovan adolescents in Italy +/- The Standard Deviation	T-test
Openness - Reservation	2,88 +/- 1,66	4,76 +/- 1,75	-8,100
Aggression -	2,77 +/- 1,72	4,97 +/- 1,75	-9,310

Peace-loving			
Kindness - Wickedness	3,10 +/- 1,63	2,70 +/- 1,63	1,777
Honesty - Falsity	4,55 +/- 1,78	5,01 +/- 1,73	-1,900
Hospitality - Lack of hospitality	1,72 +/- 0,91	4,11 +/- 1,9	-11,715
Cunning - Sincerity	3,55 +/- 1,82	2,81 +/- 1,55	3,200
Delicacy, finesse - Arrogance, uneducatedness	4,58 +/- 1,77	4,60 +/- 1,74	-0,076
Receptivity - Insensitivity	2,42 +/- 1,36	4,76 +/- 1,72	-11,022

Table 2 highlights the following stereotypical picture of the Moldovan people:

Thus, referring to personal qualities, adolescents from the diaspora see the Moldovans as *peace-loving people* ( $M = 4.97$ ), a quality rendered by adapting to the world around them (new people, culture and traditions), being quite tolerant and respectful, with a quiet personality, sometimes neutral in stressful situations or when it comes to making decisions, presenting themselves as peaceful people, with the ability to control themselves, which also emerges from the interview conducted in the context of the research.

However, based on the research results, the pacifist character of Moldovan people appears to be challenged by a weak tendency towards *wickedness* ( $M = 2.70$ ), a fact that makes us believe that this trait, being latent, would disclose some dissatisfactions and personal unfulfillments of Moldovans, especially in the context of migration.

At the same time, in the case of personal qualities, Moldovan adolescents in Italy present the Moldovan people with a tendency towards *honesty* ( $M = 5.01$ ), which gives us the impression that they are genuine and make less use of those social masks, which, in our opinion would help them to integrate and adapt better to the new social realities.

Further, Moldovan people are appreciated as being reserved, with a slight predisposition to *openness* ( $M = 4.76$ ), which tells us about a more isolated character, which probably derives from the conviction of inferiority, a feeling felt more acutely in the context of migration, where the lack of friends or social life „like at home” manifests its effects through fear of non-acceptance or rejection, as a defense mechanisms adopted to avoid this suffering. Alternatively, all these difficulties encourage the Moldovan people to be more open to new circumstances and lifestyle, in order to adapt and integrate more easily to the offers and requirements of the hospitable country.

In this case, the Moldovan's solitary character also leaves its mark on *hospitality*, which according to the obtained value ( $M = 4.11$ ), it

does not represent a predominant quality, to our surprise (as we are used to hearing), which would mean that diaspora adolescents do not see this trait related only to the traditional custom of welcoming guests and eating meals, but along with them, they value the social sharing of emotions, which seems to not exist, especially in a society increasingly sick of individualism, where the fundamental value of the community is less recognized and it invades the sphere of social relations

Another less honorable trait for Moldovans, in contrast to honesty, is their tendency towards *cunning* ( $M = 2.81$ ). In our opinion, Moldovans are “forced” to activate it to take advantage of someone/something, otherwise they risk losing some opportunities that life offers them.

However, this disguise they choose can have a negative connotation when means of manipulation and exploitation of others, including lies, are utilized. Even if the saying “the end justifies the means” seems less valid here, when *cunning* is too far from fair schemes, risks are dangerous here.

Moreover, the Moldovan people are perceived as being prone to *receptivity* ( $M = 4.76$ ). In our view, this feature emphasizes sensitivity, helpfulness and understanding, which are confirmed by the Moldovan tendency towards openness.

As in the case of adolescents in the Republic of Moldova, adolescents in the diaspora consider Moldovans to be inclined towards *delicacy* and *finesse* ( $M = 4.60$ ), a typical representation, which also corresponds to the idea of Moldovans in general. The person representing the ethnic group of Moldovans is also seen in this way, consistently compared with the person representing the majority group (Italians).

In terms of personal qualities, adolescents in the Republic of Moldova see the Moldovans as people with weak tendency towards *reservation* ( $M = 2.88$ ). We assume that this fact can be explained by moderate mental openness of Moldovans when they interact with other people which is expressed by some fears to be themselves to show their vulnerabilities or by some hesitation to accept new ideas and experiences.

In the same vein, it is with great perplexity that we note that contemporary adolescents in the Republic of Moldova no longer consider Moldovans to have a *brand of hospitality* ( $M = 1.72$ ), as illustrated by D. Cantemir (1909) in *A Description of Moldova*: “...the face with which Moldovans receive foreign guests is worthy of the highest praise...”. In this way, hospitality is no longer perceived by them as the basis for Moldovan culture, a trait which has probably faded over time. Anyway, in our opinion, a more detailed study is needed in this case.

Similarly, it was surprising for us to see that Moldovans are perceived as *insensitive people* ( $M = 2.42$ ), an attitude probably derived from social egoism, which is increasingly fueled by the survival instinct. Additionally, if we speak about Moldovan's *kindness* ( $M = 3.10$ ), we see that it also has a rather chameleonic character, being close to *wickedness*, which would mean that the Moldovan people are sometimes inauthentic and they probably seek benefit from their own kindness.

According to the research results, this fact is reinforced by *sincerity* ( $M = 3.55$ ), which is ambiguous and there is no certainty about it as adolescents had difficulty choosing between *cunning* and *sincerity*. It is still complemented by the tendency of Moldovan people towards *honesty* ( $M = 4.55$ ). This feature has a high degree of similarity, which leads us to believe that Moldovan adolescents in the Republic of Moldova, basically perceive the Moldovan as an integrated and coherent personality.

As in the case of Moldovan adolescents in Italy, adolescents in the Republic of Moldova perceive the representative of our ethnic group as prone to *delicacy* and *finesse* ( $M = 4.58$ ). However, we want to mention that in the case of adolescents in the Republic of Moldova, this trait is contrasted with the weak tendency towards *aggression* ( $M = 2.77$ ). In our view, it is determined by the life of the Moldovan people between the limits of hope and hopelessness, which is currently aggravated by the social and political situation in the Republic of Moldova.

Thus, as an ethnic stereotypical representation of the ethnic group, adolescents in the Republic of Moldova view the Moldovans as *honest, delicate and hospitable people*, which is different from our expectations (in the case of this last trait we observe the lowest dispersion index  $\sigma = 0.91$ ), a result which requires, as mentioned above, additional research, in order to clarify this aspect and have a more certain answer to the question: *Is the moderate degree of hospitality of Moldovans only a critical representation specific to adolescents or does it represent a stable, well-formed idea about the person representing the ethnic group?* In the same context, adolescents in the Republic of Moldova consider Moldovans to be *aggressive, less receptive and reserved people* (even if these are estimated at a low level), having also the difficulty of choosing between *cunning* and *sincerity*. Therefore, we observe that adolescents are quite critical of both personal and business qualities of the person representing the ethnic group, but the latter are defined more positively.

As a result, we are able to conclude the following:

The autostereotype with reference to personal qualities of the Moldovans, in the case of Moldovan adolescents in Italy, is dominated by positive qualities, but it is less clear compared to its image in terms of business qualities, where the most highlighted quality is *honesty*. At the same time, in the perception of Moldovan adolescents in Italy, the person representing the ethnic group is seen as a *peace-loving person*, endowed with *openness*, *delicacy*, *finesse* and *receptivity*, although these qualities remain at a low level. However, in our opinion, these qualities can be strengthened by the adolescents who are currently immigrants in Italy, through direct experience, once they return to the Republic of Moldova, as well as by expanding contacts and experience with their compatriots (people representing their ethnic group). In this context, the positive orientation of adolescents with reference to the autostereotype of the person representing the ethnic group is essential.

The autostereotype regarding personal qualities of Moldovan adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova can be characterized as diffuse and equivocal, which somewhat surprised us, as we assumed that in the case of adolescents from the Republic of Moldova the representation of Moldovan people would be perceived more positively and it would be more clearly defined. Therefore, the most pronounced personal qualities of Moldovan people, in the perception of adolescents, are: *honesty*, *delicacy* and *finesse*. In the same context, adolescents in the Republic of Moldova, perceive Moldovans as *aggressive*, *reserved* and *insensitive* people. Although these characteristics are estimated at a low level, they underline the process of ethnic identity formation, especially when the image of the person representing the ethnic group is contradictory. Similarly, *hospitality* is estimated at an average level, which again does not correspond to traditional ideas about Moldovans, a result which challenges us to look for factors or processes which determine the formation of such an attitude about the representative of one's own ethnic group.

At the same time, if we compare the autostereotype related to the perception of Moldovans in both groups of adolescents, we observe that the image of the person representing the ethnic group among Moldovan adolescents in Italy, with reference to personal qualities, is more positive, even if it is not expressed very clearly, as in the case of business qualities. In other words, in the perception of Moldovan adolescents in Italy, the image of Moldovans is more positive and contradictory, but in the case of adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova, it is diffuse. At the same time, the traits where no differences are attested are: *honesty*, *delicacy*, *finesse* and *wickedness* – qualities which are estimated identically in both groups of adolescents. This suggests that *honesty*, *delicacy* and *finesse* are the defining qualities of the person representing the ethnic group. In the same context, *wickedness* is estimated at a low



level. In our opinion, this calls for further investigation, whereas we can only assume that behind the choice of this trait lies adolescent maximalism and a specific desire to stand out, even if the trait has a less positive connotation. In a similar manner, we admit that we were surprised by the fact that the image of the Moldovan people with reference to personal qualities is poorly expressed and inconsistent in both groups, especially in the case of Moldovan adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova.

Consistently, the comparison of autostereotype generated by Moldovan adolescents in Italy and in the Republic of Moldova, with reference to business and personal qualities, revealed that in the case of Moldovan immigrant adolescents in Italy, the image of the person representing the ethnic group, with regard to both business and personal qualities, is more positive than in the case of adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova. As we can see, the problem lies in the orientation of the qualities at a personal level, so in the division of the image of the Moldovan people, both positively and critically. Therefore, such a “split” identity of Moldovan adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova could indicate that the processes of identification reflect the inconsistency and contradiction of the socio-cultural context of the current society.

Moldovan adolescents in Italy present a more positive image of the person representing their ethnic group, both in terms of personal and business qualities. But, with regard to business qualities, the autostereotype is more pronounced and positive here. In our opinion, this is not surprising as these qualities are *the fulcrum* of self-realization and self-affirmation in a different socio-cultural environment.

*Table 3: Comparing Moldovan business qualities based on the opinions of Moldovan male adolescents in Italy and in the Republic of Moldova*

Qualities	The mean of Moldovan male adolescents in the Republic of Moldova +/- The Standard Deviation	The mean of Moldovan male adolescents in Italy +/- The Standard Deviation	T-test
Indecision - Determination	4,70 +/- 1,95	5,31 +/- 1,29	-1,797
Organization- Disorganization	3,53 +/- 1,99	5,97 +/- 1,10	-7,274
Spirit of initiative- Lack of initiative	4,30 +/- 1,99	2,40 +/- 1,26	5,525
Bad household management- Good household management	5,19 +/- 1,65	5,15 +/- 1,39	0,137
Diligence- Laziness	2,44 +/- 1,28	3,79 +/- 1,93	-4,300



Flexibility - Rigidity	5,56 +/- 1,35	2,58 +/- 1,57	10,09 1
Predisposition to lead- Predisposition to obey	4,72 +/- 1,80	5,76 +/- 1,16	-3,327
Passivity - Activism	3,02 +/- 1,67	3,92 +/- 1,77	-2,613

According to the stereotypical perception of adolescent boys in both groups with reference to business qualities, Table 3 highlights the following profile of the Moldovan:

In the case of Moldovan male adolescents from the diaspora, the Moldovan is perceived as *determined* ( $M = 5.31$ ), with a tendency toward *organization* ( $M = 5.97$ ) and *good household management* ( $M = 5.15$ ). We also observe the tendency toward *initiative* ( $M = 2.40$ ), even if it is estimated at a low level and the *predisposition to lead* ( $M = 5.76$ ). In the same context, according to the perception of Moldovan male adolescents in Italy, the Moldovans are also seen as *rigid* people ( $M = 2.58$ ). They also have a noticeable difficulty in expressing themselves in the case of the following dyads: *diligence-laziness* ( $M = 3.79$ ), *passivity-activism* ( $M = 3.92$ ). Referring to the same qualities, in the case of Moldovan male adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova, we see that the Moldovan people seem to be oriented towards *good management household* ( $M = 5.19$ ), *flexibility* ( $M = 5.56$ ) which is the most highlighted quality, even if it is estimated at an average level and *determination* ( $M = 4.70$ ). In the same vein, the person representing their ethnic group seems to have a tendency toward *initiative* ( $M = 4.30$ ) and *predisposition to lead* ( $M = 4.72$ ), both traits are estimated at a low level. To our surprise, there is also a slight tendency toward *laziness* ( $M = 2.44$ ). Similarly, in the case of male adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova, we note their difficulty in expressing themselves in terms of *passivity* and *activism*. ( $M = 3.02$ ).

In conclusion, in conformity to the data reported in Table 1.3, in the case of Moldovan male adolescents living in Italy, we mention that the ethnic stereotype of the person representing the ethnic group includes the qualities: *organization*, *determination* and *spirit of initiative*, which are more accentuated, compared to the autostereotype generated by male adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova. Correspondingly, we note the lack of statistically significant differences in terms of the following qualities: *determination* and *good household management*. Therefore, these are the fundamental traits of the person representing the ethnic group.

Regarding male adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova, we observe that the most pronounced quality in the ethnic stereotype is *flexibility*, which in the representation of Moldovan male adolescents in Italy contrasts with the rigidity of the Moldovan people. In our opinion, this is because of the constant comparison with the majority group

(Italians), which would give the impression that Moldovans are lacking in flexibility and leadership.

In the same context, both male adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova and in Italy have a clear difficulty in expressing themselves in relation to the *passivity-activism* dyad.

Thus, in the perception of both Moldovan male adolescents living in Italy and in the Republic of Moldova, the image of the person representing their ethnic group was characterized by: *good household management* and *determination*. However, in the case of Moldovan male adolescents living in Italy, the image of business qualities of the Moldovans is more positive and more emphasized than that of Moldovan male adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova.

*Table 4: Comparing Moldovan personal qualities based on the opinions of Moldovan male adolescents in Italy and in the Republic of Moldova*

Qualities	The mean of Moldovan male adolescents in the Republic of Moldova +/- The Standard Deviation	The mean of Moldovan male adolescents in Italy +/- The Standard Deviation	t-test
Openness - Reservation	2,70 +/- 1,64	4,95 +/- 1,81	-6,526
Aggression - Peace-loving	2,58 +/- 1,50	5,06 +/- 1,72	-7,669
Kindness - Wickedness	3,14 +/- 1,70	2,82 +/- 1,56	0,986
Honesty - Falsity	4,65 +/- 1,77	5,08 +/- 1,66	-1,285
Hospitality - Lack of hospitality	1,70 +/- 0,91	4,03 +/- 1,93	-8,298
Cunning - Sincerity	3,28 +/- 1,75	2,94 +/- 1,64	1,028
Delicacy, finesse - Arrogance, uneducatedness	4,58 +/- 1,83	4,19 +/- 1,76	1,092
Receptivity - Insensitivity	2,47 +/- 1,39	4,71 +/- 1,77	-6,967

Regarding the perception of personal qualities of Moldovans, Table 4 shows the following:

In the case of Moldovan male adolescents in Italy, the qualities which highlight the ethnic stereotype of Moldovans are: *the tendency to be peace-loving people* (M = 5.06), *honesty* (M = 5.08) and *openness* (M = 4.95). In the same context, the image of the person representing their ethnic group also includes qualities such as *hospitality* (M = 4.03), *delicacy, finesse* (M = 4.19) and *receptivity* (M = 4.71), even if these

characteristics remain at a low level. At the same time, contradictory to them, the Moldovans are perceived as people prone to *cunning* (M = 2.94) and *wickedness* (M = 2.82). In our opinion, *cunning* has a positive connotation in their real life. At the same time, it is surprising that the same quality is expressed almost to the same extent by male adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova. For this reason, generalizing the perception of Moldovan male adolescents in Italy, we conclude that the image of the person representing their ethnic group with reference to personal qualities is quite satisfactory.

With reference to the same qualities, in the case of male adolescents in the Republic of Moldova, the most pronounced traits of the Moldovan are: *honesty* (M = 4.65), *delicacy* and *finesse* (M = 4.58). However, the image of the person representing their ethnic group is defined, as a whole, by the following characteristics: *reservation* (M = 2.70), *aggression* (M = 2.58), *insensitivity* (M = 2.47) and *lack of hospitality* (M = 1.70). Although they remain at a low level, based on these results, we can deplore the stereotypical attitudes of adolescents. For this reason, the image of the Moldovan with regard to personal qualities among male adolescents in the Republic of Moldova can be classified as “controversial”.

If we compare the perception of the person representing the ethnic group, in both groups of adolescents, we observe that in the case of Moldovan male adolescents in Italy, it is more positive than that in the case of male adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova. In the same context, in the perception of both groups, the following qualities: *honesty*, *delicacy*, *finesse*, *cunning* and *wickedness* are represented equally. Also, *honesty* seems to be the most emphasized trait here, being cataloged as defining the Moldovan people. At the same time, given the current social and economic conditions, *cunning*, as mentioned later, can have positive connotations.

Table 5: Comparing Moldovan business qualities based on the opinions of Moldovan female adolescents in Italy and in the Republic of Moldova

Qualities	The mean of Moldovan female adolescents in the Republic of Moldova +/- The Standard Deviation	The mean of Moldovan female adolescents in Italy +/- The Standard Deviation	t-test
Indecision - Determination	4,81 +/- 1,93	5,72 +/- 1,55	-2,746
Organization- Disorganization	3,39 +/- 1,84	6,00 +/- 1,18	-9,080
Spirit of initiative- Lack of initiative	4,93 +/- 1,65	2,35 +/- 1,46	8,333

Bad household management- Good household management	5,00 +/- 1,66	4,95 +/- 1,51	0,148
Diligence- Laziness	2,70 +/- 1,60	4,84 +/- 1,79	-6,537
Flexibility - Rigidity	5,34 +/- 1,39	2,60 +/- 1,45	9,925
Predisposition to lead- - Predisposition to obey	4,75 +/- 1,67	5,95 +/- 0,98	-4,777
Passivity - Activism	2,99 +/- 1,70	3,40 +/- 1,76	-1,217

Table 5 highlights the following aspects:

In the perception of Moldovan female adolescents in Italy, the most pronounced business qualities of the person representing his/her ethnic group are: *organization* (M = 6.00), *predisposition to lead* (M = 5.95) and *determination* (M = 5.72). Similarly, we observe some tendencies towards the following traits: *diligence* (M = 4.84) and *good household management* (M = 4.95), which remain at a low level. More specifically, for Moldovan female adolescents in Italy, the Moldovan people, in terms of business qualities, are: *organized*, *inclined to lead*, *determined*, *diligent* and prone to *good household management*. Thus, from the above mentioned, it is obvious that the image of the person representing the ethnic group is predominantly “drawn” with positive qualities. At the same time, they perceive the person representing their ethnic group as *lacking in initiative* (M = 3.35), which apparently contrasts with *determination* and *rigidity* (M = 2.60), which remain at a low level. In the same vein, we note how difficult it is for adolescents to determine themselves in the case of *passivity-activism* dyad. (M = 3.40). On the whole, therefore, the autostereotype regarding the business qualities of the person representing his/her ethnic group appears to be quite positive.

In the case of female adolescents in the Republic of Moldova, the most highlighted business qualities of the person representing the ethnic group are: *good household management* (M = 5.00) and *flexibility* (M = 5.34). At the same time, from the obtained results, we note that no statistically significant differences were noted with regard to *good household management* in both groups of adolescents, which means that this is the defining quality of Moldovan people, both in the perception of Moldovan female adolescents in Italy and the Republic of Moldova. In the same way, we also observe that there is a slight tendency to include *the spirit of initiative* (M = 4.93), *predisposition to lead* (M = 4.75) and *determination* (M = 4.81) in the representation of Moldovan people, which again remain at a low level. In the same context, we also note the girls’ difficulty in choosing between *organization* and *disorganization* (M = 3.39). But on the whole, in the perception of female adolescents in

the Republic of Moldova, a positive representation of their ethnic group prevails, although it is not as clear as we expected it to be, considering the fact that in adolescence a clear image of the person representing the ethnic group is already formed.

The comparative analysis of the autostereotypes regarding Moldovan business qualities in the case of Moldovan female adolescent in Italy and in the Republic of Moldova allows us to conclude the following:

a) As *good household management* is evaluated identically in both groups, we can assume that this quality is a defining characteristic and it is a basic trait of the Moldovan people.

b) In both groups of adolescents, the difficulty in making a choice between *passivity* and *activism* was noted, where there were no statistically significant differences (Table 1.5.).

c) The difference regarding the image of the person representing the ethnic group with reference to business qualities is noticeable in the case of the other pairs of qualities.

As a result, according to Moldovan female adolescents living in Italy, Moldovan people are characterized by *determination, organization, diligence* and *predisposition to lead*, while female adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova mention only *flexibility* and *initiative*. Therefore, the differences in the choices of female adolescents can be explained by their location in different contexts and by different assumed statuses. In other words, female adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova and being part of the majority group, consider themselves *flexible* and *predisposed do lead* (which depends on the majority group and its position in society), while for an effective integration as a minority group (immigrant group), they see themselves as *open, determined, organized, diligent* and *inclined to lead*.

Table 6: Comparing Moldovan personal qualities based on the opinions of Moldovan female adolescents in Italy and in the Republic of Moldova

Qualities	The mean of Moldovan adolescents in the Republic of Moldova +/- The Standard Deviation	The mean of Moldovan adolescents in Italy +/- The Standard Deviation	t-test
Openness - Reservation	3,00 +/- 1,67	4,49 +/- 1,64	-4,595
Aggression - Peace-loving	2,90 +/- 1,84	4,84 +/- 1,80	-5,442
Kindness - Wickedness	3,07 +/- 1,60	2,53 +/- 1,72	1,676
Honesty - Falsity	4,49 +/- 1,83	4,91 +/- 1,84	-1,158
Hospitality - Lack of hospitality	1,73 +/- 0,91	4,23 +/- 1,88	-8,148
Cunning - Sincerity	3,72 +/- 1,85	2,63 +/- 1,42	3,485

Delicacy, finesse - Arrogance, uneducatedness	4,58 +/- 1,75	5,19 +/- 1,53	-1,852
Receptivity - Insensitivity	2,39 +/- 1,36	4,84 +/- 1,68	-8,412

Analyzing the results of the comparison of the personal qualities of the person representing the ethnic group (Table 6), the following scenario is presented:

In the perception of Moldovan female adolescents in Italy, the most highlighted personal qualities of the Moldovan people are: *openness* (M = 4.49), *the tendency to be peace-loving people* (M = 4.84), *honesty* (M = 4.91), *hospitality* (M = 4.23), *delicacy, finesse* (M = 5.19) and *receptivity* (M = 4.84). Thus, on the basis of these qualities, although they are at a moderate level, with the exception of delicacy, finesse (which remains at a low level), the positive autostereotype of the ethnic group representation is summarized. At the same time, in the representation of Moldovan female adolescents living in Italy, *cunning* (M = 2.63) and *wickedness* (M = 2.53) – which are at a low level, but which deserve particular attention and consideration when it comes to immigrant adolescents – are also highlighted. Consequently, the positive and poorly exteriorized image of Moldovans can be explained by the adolescents' stay in a foreign cultural space and the lack of real ethical practices (which should be implemented in the family and in the circle of relatives at least in the moments of return to their home country).

In the case of adolescent girls from the Republic of Moldova, the image of the person representing the ethnic group, with reference to personal qualities, contains the following qualities: *honesty* (M = 4.49) and *delicacy, finesse* (M = 4.58), which are the most accentuated compared to the others. At the same time, to our surprise, Moldovan female adolescents perceive Moldovans as *insensitive* (M = 2.39) and *lacking in hospitality* (M = 1.73). The choice of given traits, in our opinion, is nothing more than a projection of their reality to the immediate environment. For this reason, we allow ourselves to conclude that the image of the person representing their ethnic group, with regard to personal qualities, is quite "scattered" and confused. The comparative analysis of the image of the Moldovan people, in terms of personal qualities, in the case of Moldovan female adolescents living in Italy and those living in the Republic of Moldova, highlights the common traits of the person representing their ethnic group: *wickedness, honesty, delicacy* and *finesse*, which are expressed almost identically in both groups of female adolescents (Table 6.1). However, if in the perception of female adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova, Moldovans are lacking in

hospitality, then in the case of female adolescents living in Italy, the Moldovan people are endowed with this quality. Analogically, we observe the same thing in the case of the following pairs: *receptivity-insensitivity*, where for Moldovan female adolescents in Italy, the Moldovans are seen as *receptive* and *insensitive*, but for female adolescents in the Republic of Moldova – the Moldovans are only *insensitive*, although these traits are estimated at a low level in both cases. In the same context, probably due to the current socio-economic situation in which we live, *cunning* does not seem to have negative connotations for both groups of female adolescents. Therefore, the image of the person representing their ethnic group in the case of Moldovan female adolescents in Italy is more positive compared to the image of female adolescents in the Republic of Moldova.

### Conclusions

1. Moldovan adolescents living in Italy have a positive image of the person representing their ethnic group with regard to business qualities. Therefore, the autostereotype with reference to business qualities incorporates *determination, organization, good household management* and *predisposition to lead*. However, as the adolescents are quite critical, they also highlight some less positive traits: *lack of initiative* and *rigidity*, which are part of the overall picture of the Moldovan people, although they remain at a low level. In the case of Moldovan adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova, the perception of the person representing the ethnic group is equally positive, except that, in terms of assessing the qualities, they are inferior to their colleagues in Italy. Therefore, in their perception, the image of the person representing their ethnic group is dominated by *flexibility* and *spirit of initiative*.

2. Moldovan adolescents, with reference to the stereotype of the business qualities of the person representing the ethnic group, show both similarities and differences. Thus, in the case of both groups, *good household management* is highlighted- a characteristic which reflects the agricultural character of the Republic of Moldova. However, referring to Moldovan adolescents living in Italy, *good household management* reflects that resource of integration in a foreign cultural environment, through the maintenance of the social image, which is a fundamental support point in their integration in the host country.

3. The autostereotype with reference to personal qualities in the case of Moldovan adolescents living in Italy, is dominated by positive traits, but is less clear compared to the autostereotype with regard to business qualities. At the same time, in addition to *honesty*, which has a higher prevalence, the person representing the ethnic group is also “controlled” by *openness, delicacy, finesse, receptivity* and *the tendency*



*to be a peace-loving person.* In the same context, the autostereotype on personal qualities generated by adolescents from the Republic of Moldova can be characterized by confusion and contradiction, as adolescents highlight positive traits such as *honesty, delicacy, finesse*, “combined” with less positive traits such as *aggression, reservation* and *insensitivity*.

4. The comparative analysis of autostereotypes with regard to personal qualities of the person representing the ethnic group, in the case of Moldovan adolescents living in Italy and in the Republic of Moldova, points out that the autostereotype is more positive and less controversial in the case of Moldovan adolescents living in Italy compared to Moldovan adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova, where it is confusing and contradictory. Consequently, the qualities for which there are no differences are *honesty, delicacy, finesse* and *wickedness*, which are estimated equally in both groups. Similarly, we observe that *honesty, delicacy* and *finesse* are the basic features of the stereotype of the person representing the ethnic group.

*5. Moldovan adolescents living in Italy have a positive image of the person who represents the ethnic group, both in terms of personal and business qualities. However, in the case of business qualities, the autostereotype is more pronounced and positive, which is not surprising, as the above mentioned qualities represent a strong foundation for the inclusion and integration of adolescents in the host country.*

6. Gender-based comparative analysis revealed in both groups of adolescents the following features of the person representing the ethnic group:

6.1 On the whole, in the case of Moldovan male adolescents who are immigrants in Italy, with regard to personal qualities, the person representing the ethnic group has a positive image which is expressed through the following qualities: *hospitality, delicacy, finesse* and *receptivity*. At the same time, the image of the Moldovan people, in terms of personal qualities, in the case of male adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova, is dominated by *honesty, delicacy, finesse* and by traits with negative connotations such as *reservation, aggression, insensitivity* and *lack of hospitality*, although these qualities remain at a low level. Therefore, the autostereotype of male adolescents living in Italy, with reference to personal qualities of the person representing the ethnic group, is more positive, compared to that of male adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova.

6.2 With regard to business qualities, in the case of Moldovan male adolescents living in Italy, the positive stereotype prevails, being represented by the following qualities: *organization, determination* and



*predisposition to lead*. In a similar manner, the comparative analysis of autostereotypes with regard to business qualities for male adolescents in Italy and those in the Republic of Moldova, highlighted the fact that in the case of male adolescents living in Italy the autostereotype reflects the characteristics and requirements of the socio-cultural environment in the hospitable country, which implicitly “requires” them to be organized, determined and prone to leadership.

6.3 In the case of Moldovan female adolescents in Italy, the autostereotype referring to personal qualities of the person representing the ethnic group is positive, but poorly expressed. This aspect can be explained by the foreign cultural context in which they live and the lack of real interactions with their family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins). In the same context, in the case of female adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova, the autostereotype regarding personal qualities of the Moldovan people can be categorized as confusing and contradictory. For the most part, Moldovan female adolescents living in Italy have a more positive image of the person representing the ethnic group, compared to Moldovan female adolescents in the Republic of Moldova.

6.4 For Moldovan female adolescents living in Italy, in terms of business qualities, the person representing the ethnic group is equipped with *organization, predisposition to lead, determination, diligence* and *good household management*, which outlines a positive image of the Moldovan people. At the same time, the comparative analysis of autostereotypes with reference to business qualities of the person representing the ethnic group among Moldovan female adolescents in Italy and in the Republic of Moldova, allows us to conclude the existence of a pronounced common quality -*good household management*, as well as some differences in the case of the following traits: *flexibility* and *spirit of initiative*, which are more pronounced in the case of female adolescents in the Republic of Moldova. This fact reflects some particularities related to Moldovan female adolescents living in different socio-cultural environments and the difference in their status (majority-minority).

*General conclusion:*

The image of the person representing the Moldovan ethnic group, based on the opinions of Moldovan adolescents who are immigrants in Italy and Moldovan adolescents living in the Republic of Moldova, reveals both common and distinctive qualities. Therefore, in the perception of Moldovan adolescents living in Italy and in the Republic of Moldova, the person representing their ethnic group stands out by the common feature – *good household management*, which is an essential business quality, regardless of status, gender or place of living. In the same sense (not taking into account the same criteria: status,

gender, place of living), the evaluation of personal qualities of Moldovan people highlights the following characteristics: *delicacy, finesse, honesty*, but also *wickedness* (although they are estimated at a low level). Consequently, based on these results, it seems that the mentioned qualities are basic in the perception of adolescents of both groups. For this reason, it is necessary to carry out further investigations on other groups of Moldovan adolescents who emigrated to other countries.

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