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A comparative analysis of stereotypes between Romania and the Republic of Moldova

Călin Mariana Floricica¹, Tasețe Tănase², Martinescu Octavian³

¹Ovidius University of Constanta, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences,

²Ovidius University of Constanta, Faculty of Law and Administrative Sciences,

³Independent Researcher

mariana.calin@365.univ-ovidius.ro, tanase.tasente@365.univ-ovidius.ro,
martinescu.octavian4ik@gmail.com

Abstract. One of the current research themes, in the society we are part of, is the theme of stereotypes. Regardless of nationality, gender, faith, age, etc., people tend to judge or categorize those around them. In labeling, we don't think about what long-term effects can occur, in fact we don't think rationally when it comes to "gossip" on someone. Later, some have remorse, others feel nothing, but everything has a double meaning. Today you subject someone to prejudice, tomorrow you can be the main topic of a discussion. We are the generation of the 21st century, the century of movement and agitation. It is well known that we are rapidly modernizing technologically, we have a wider openness to learn things easily, we have the capacity and the necessary resources to create something special, something special. Even if all these things are available to us, we can, however, notice that man adapts more difficult to new changes, even more, he cannot forget old habits. Since we know the more modernized and cultured man, we notice that he is guided in society by certain criteria and false-moderate knowledge from the past. Thus, in this truly amazing era, we humans are subjected to discriminations and stereotypes long forgotten in the history of our formation.

Keywords. gender stereotypes, ambivalent sexism

Introduction

From a classical approach perspective, these concepts represent definitions stored in memory that contain individual properties necessary and collectively sufficient to determine taxonomic membership.

Stereotypes have been a subject of research since the early 1900s, and there are numerous analyzes of this research. Stereotypes are most commonly and consistently defined in the literature as an association between group(s) and the characteristic(s) attributed to those groups. Broad definitions of stereotypes also include that stereotypes are rigid representations in the cognitive processes that are functional for those who use them.

Despite agreement among numerous researchers, the definition of stereotypes still involves inaccuracy, controversy, and at least some irony. An inaccuracy running through the published works on stereotypes concerns the conjugation of the word stereotype. Lippmann has been credited (eg, Dovidio et al. 1996) with introducing the concept of stereotypes into its

modern use as "pictures in our heads" (Lippmann, 1965). However, Lippmann did not invent the word stereotype says Rudmin, in 1989, and had minimal interest in stereotypes (Newman 2009).

Four notable inconsistencies in the definition of stereotypes appear in the literature on stereotypes. These inconsistencies often reflect different theoretical approaches to the study of stereotypes. As a result, a single coherent definition of stereotypes is elusive.

Researchers are conflicted about whether stereotypes have an inherently negative valence and are therefore "bad" (Gardner, 1994). Negatively worded stereotypes (e.g., Jews are stingy) or positively worded stereotypes (e.g., Jews are sly) can be considered negative when they have unintended consequences for those who use them (Hamilton, Sherman & Ruvolo, 1990), or for members of the groups they target (Allport 1954/1979; Bar-Tal et al. 1989; Zanna & Olson, 1994). However, the hypothesis that stereotypes are inherently negative has been rejected by many researchers, especially those who take a cognitive perspective, who believe that stereotypes are neither positive nor negative, but rather neutral (Leyens, 1994).

While a variety of stereotypes are based on real group differences (for example, cultural stereotypes about food preferences), we believe that stereotypes based on relatively durable person characteristics (such as race, religion, and gender) have enormous potential of error. Thus, the second route of stereotype formation occurs when stereotypes are formed about various groups independently of actual group differences. This issue is the focus of this analysis. That is, what are the psychological mechanisms that allow stereotypes to be formed, maintained, and enforced even in the absence of corresponding group differences? To address this issue, we first discuss how stereotypes are represented in the individual's head, as assumptions about representation underlie current understanding of stereotypes and stereotype change.

Representation of stereotypes

The question of how stereotypes are represented is interesting from at least two perspectives. First, different representational models lead to different predictions about how stereotypes are formed, maintained, enforced, and changed. Second, although representational assumptions underlie much recent research on formation, maintenance, application, and change, representational models themselves have received relatively little direct attention (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996).

In the prototype model, which is probably the most often cited, people carry with them neither the set of defining traits that constitute the stereotype nor much information about individual group members. Instead, perceivers store abstract representations of the typical features of a group and judge individual group members based on similarity comparisons between the individual and the prototype (Cantor & Mischel, 1978). In other words, the prototype representation is an "average" representation of the category by many attributes, without any set of group attributes being considered defining. Furthermore, the prototype model assumes that stereotype knowledge is hierarchically organized (Devine & Baker, 1991, Johnston & Hewstone, 1992). Thus, it is possible to speak of "base-level" categories and "subtypes". Indeed, one implication of the prototype model is that stereotype change is achieved through the creation of subtypes (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996).

A second implication of the prototype model is that it predicts that perceivers will often fail to apply stereotypes to individual group members. Because reactions to individual group members are based on a comparison between the prototype and the individual, any traits, even nondiagnostic ones, that reduce the similarity between the individual and the prototype should decrease confidence in the stereotype. Consistent with this aspect of prototype theory, numerous

studies have documented the diluting power of nondiagnostic information, although explanations for this effect differ (Hilton, 2000).

Recently, a number of researchers have proposed an alternative based on the prototype example and other abstraction-based models (Anderson & Cole, 1990, Linville et al., 1989, Smith, 1990, Smith & Zárate, 1992). According to the exemplar model, perceivers do not store abstract representations of groups. Instead, groups are represented by particular, concrete examples. The stereotype of African Americans as athletic, for example, is thought to be stored in the form of specific individuals (eg, Michael Jordan, Carl Lewis). Which exemplars are called to mind when meeting an individual depends on how attention is directed. Because of this characteristic, exemplar models place considerable emphasis on the role that goals and context play in determining the stereotypes that are activated and applied (Smith & Zárate, 1992). Thus, one implication of this model is that a particular stereotype will not always be activated and applied when members of the stereotyped group are encountered, or even when the same member is encountered on different occasions. A second implication is that it should be possible to observe dramatic (if not necessarily permanent) changes in stereotypy following experience with a single counterstereotypical exemplar.

A number of researchers have proposed "mixed" models in which stereotype types are represented as both prototypes and exemplars (Hamilton, Sherman & Ruvolo, 1990). While this extension of the concept captures more data, it also blurs the distinction between abstraction-based and instance-based models (Hamilton & Sherman 1994).

A third model of representation is that of associative networks, in which stereotypes are thought of as networks of attributes linked together (Manis et al., 1988). Different theorists define "attributes" differently (e.g., some view attributes as traits, others as beliefs, and others as behaviors), as well as the connections between them (e.g., some view connections as mere associations, others as causal connections, and others as associations with affective labels). However, despite their differences, these models share the assumption that associations can be automatically activated and thus that stereotypes can operate outside of perceivers' awareness and/or control. Similarly, these models suggest that stereotypes change only slowly and incrementally because the attributes that make up the stereotype are extensively interconnected.

A fourth model proposes that stereotypes are represented as schemas. Although the term "schema" has become a universal term, here we use it simply to refer to Kant's notion of representing knowledge at its most abstract level. Rather than assuming that information is represented as average traits, exemplars, or network attributes, the schematic view views stereotypes as generalized and highly abstract beliefs about groups and their members (Fiske et al., 1991). The stereotype of men, for example, may contain the general belief that they are aggressive, without linking this belief to particular instantiations of aggression, to specific contexts or exemplars, or to particular organizational structures (e.g., prototypes or associative networks). Moreover, because schema-based models assume that information is represented more abstractly than in other models, an implication of the schema-based representation is that the potential for assimilation should be high. That is, because the group representation is devoid of specificities, the possibility of assimilation of even inconsistent individuals should be substantial (Hilton et al., 1996).

Finally, some have argued that stereotypes can be viewed as base rates, although base rates are not representations themselves, but rather a way of thinking about how stereotypes work. Given people's ability to use base rates, two things should follow from this perspective. First, stereotypes should often be ignored when individualizing information is available. Second, greater experience with the stereotype (i.e., base rate) should lead to more adequate

integration of individuating information and base rate. According to McCauley, regarding the first point, although a number of studies have found that stereotypes are often diluted by individualizing information, there is controversy over whether a meaningful distinction can be made between base rate and individualizing information in the context of a stereotype. There has been less research on the second point, although Nelson et al.'s 1988 studies of gender and height estimation suggest that people integrate individuation and base rate information in some situations.

All this leaves a small paradox. On the one hand, assumptions about representation are implicit in almost all recent research on stereotype formation, maintenance, enforcement, and change. On the other hand, there has been little effort directed at specifying the details of the various representation models. Although there are obvious exceptions to this generalization (e.g., Bodenhausen et al., 1995; Linville & Fischer, 1993; Mullen & Johnson, 1995; Park & Hastie, 1987; Park et al., 1991; Sherman, 1994; Smith & Zárate, 1992), the various models of representation served more as heuristic tools for examining stereotypes than as subjects of investigation in their own right.

Maintaining stereotypes

Regardless of how they are formed, stereotypes are maintained through a variety of processes. The way we perceive information, even ambiguous information, is strongly influenced by the knowledge we have previously accumulated. Bruner (1957) argues that prior experience acts on current perception, making certain categories more "accessible" during the interpretation of incoming information. Known by various names such as category accessibility, implicit memory, and priming, the impact of prior experience on current perception and cognition is pervasive. If one conclusion can be drawn from hundreds of experiments in cognitive and social psychology, it is this: Past experience determines what we see and hear, how we interpret that information, and how we store it for later use.

In the field of stereotypes, priming plays an important role in the perception and evaluation of outgroup members. For example, after exposure to television commercials in which women are presented as sex objects, men are more likely to identify the next woman they meet in a sexual way, paying more attention to her appearance and clothing style than to what she says (Rudman & Borgida, The authors state that this article is pending). Interestingly, men also behave in a more sexual way towards women after watching these ads, asking sexist questions, moving their seat closer to the woman, and spending more time looking at her body (Bargh & Raymond, 1995). It appears that priming a particular domain makes people more likely to use that domain in subsequent evaluations, even when the prior priming experience should be completely irrelevant to the current task (Sherman et al., 1990).

The influence of priming is not limited to conscious information processing; rather, assimilative priming effects occur even when the initial priming episode occurs outside of consciousness. Such priming effects are also manifested at the level of social category, the conscious or unconscious activation of a social category determining the interpretation of an individual's behavior according to dimensions relevant to the category (Macrae et al., 1996). Macrae states that indeed, the priming of one social category may inhibit the activation of other categories more, because information about race, gender, and age appear to be able to automatically activate associated stereotypes, the mere presence of a female, African American, or being older may increase the likelihood that this individual's behavior will be interpreted in a stereotype-consistent manner, even if the perceiver has not consciously encoded the target's social category. Thus, despite the fact that social behaviors can often be interpreted in a variety

of ways, and all individuals are members of many social categories, priming can still lock perceivers into a stereotypical frame of reference (Skowronski et al., 1993 apud. Hilton & von Hippel, 1996).

Smith et al. (1992), state that once a behavior has been interpreted in a certain way, this interpretation has long-term consequences for its evaluation. In Smith et al.'s experiments, subjects were presented with behaviors that could be interpreted along two different dimensions with opposite evaluative connotations. Smith found that when subjects initially rated behaviors along a dimension on which the behaviors appeared positive, they subsequently rated the behaviors more positively than when they rated them along a dimension on which they appeared negative. This priming effect was just as evident a week later as it was an hour later, and was actually strongest for behaviors subjects no longer remembered having encountered. These findings suggest that a single prior experience with a behavior, even if long forgotten, can later exert a similarly strong influence on how that behavior is interpreted.

If the events leading to assimilative priming effects had been randomly determined, the findings of Smith et al. it would simply suggest that we should hope that, for whatever reason, people are driven to interpret our behaviors according to their most favorable dimensions. However, recent evidence suggests that events prime evaluations only when the events are stereotype-consistent. In Banaji's experiments, priming the dependence construct impacted subsequent ratings of female targets but did not influence ratings of male targets. Similarly, aggression priming influenced men's ratings, but not women's. These findings suggest that even random priming events (eg, daily experiences, news stories) facilitate the maintenance of stereotypes by selectively influencing interpretations only when they are congruent with the stereotype. These findings also suggest that multiple interpretable behaviors tend to be interpreted against the stereotyped group. Because the cultural stereotype holds that African American males are hostile and unintelligent a stereotyped perceiver is led by the mere presence of an African American to interpret his behaviors as consistent with these traits. For this reason, if he did something friendly but stupid, it would probably be considered stupid, while his unfriendly but intelligent behavior would probably be considered unfriendly (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996).

Research objectives

The objective of this research is to demonstrate that, even if we are willing for interpersonal communication and teamwork, there are still some reservations regarding sexual or religious affiliation. Stereotypes are part of us, we, in turn, try to judge a person, either female or male, by what they are, not by what they can do. Women are the fairer sex, they are the life-giving component, they are part of us and they have their role in the development of humanity. However, not to generalize, some men tend to exhibit certain sexist attitudes when it comes to a woman and her role in a certain place, field of activity or society, why not.

Research hypotheses:

This paper is based on the comparative analysis of stereotypes between two societies with a common past.

I1: It is assumed that there is a significant difference in terms of sexism, among Moldovan citizens, compared to those from Romania.

I2: It is assumed that there are significant differences in sexism between women and men, regardless of their nationality.

The group of participants

To validate the stated hypotheses and to carry out the research, a sample of people was chosen from the two countries: Romania and the Republic of Moldova, the total number of respondents being 80 people, of which 40, i.e. 50%, of Romanian nationality and 40 people, i.e., the remaining 50%, of Moldovan nationality. The entire research sample is between the ages of 16-48.

From the total of 100% of respondents: 2 – age 16 (2.3%); 3 – age 17 (3.5%); 7 – aged 18 (8.1%); 10 – they are 19 years old (11.6%); 6 people – age 20 (7%); 12 respondents – age 21 (14%); 13 – aged 22 (14.4%); 6 – people aged 23 (7%); 4 – age 24 (4.7%); 1 respondent – age 25 (1.2%); 2 – they are 27 years old (2.3%); 1 – age 31 (1.2%); 1 – age 33 (1.2%); 1 – age 35 (1.2%); 1 respondent – age 37 (1.2%); 2 – age 38 (2.3%); 1 of the respondents – age 39 (1.2%); 2 – age 40 (2.3%); 1 – 45-year-old respondent (1.2%); 1 – 46-year-old respondent (1.2%); 1 – people aged 47 (1.2%); 2 – people aged 48 (2.3%).

Regarding the gender of the people who willingly participated in the research, a total of 44 people (53.48%) were female, 30 were male (38.37%). Referring to the level of education of the researched group, a large part of the respondents (66.3%) have completed higher education or are in the process of completing it; 25.6% remained at the average level of education (vocational schools, technological training, courses), and 8.1% have high school studies in progress or completed.

Research tools

For the validation of the proposed hypotheses and for the comparative analysis of stereotypes between the two countries: the Republic of Moldova and Romania, the research tool ASI (Ambival Sexism Inventory) questionnaire was used, written and composed by university professors Peter Glick from the University "Lawrence" and Susan T. Fiske, University of Massachusetts "Amherst" in 1996.

Research results and their significance

Hypothesis 1: It is assumed that there is a significant difference in terms of sexism, among Moldovan citizens, compared to those from Romania.

From the descriptive data, we observe that the average of research results in Romania is 50.62, with a standard deviation of 20.132, and the median being 54.00. The responses of the Moldovans have an average of 64, with a standard deviation of 16.075 and a median of 66.00.

After the descriptive data of the statistics, the normality test was applied to make aware which calculation method will be used: parametric or non-parametric.

Tests of Normality

Naționalitate		Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Sexism	Românească	,111	39	,200*	,965	39	,257
	Moldovenească	,136	41	,053	,940	41	,031

According to statistics, to apply the calculation method it is checked if: $\text{sig} < 0.05$, then the non-parametric method is applied, and if $\text{sig} > 0.05$, then a parametric method is applied. Between the two tests (Table 3.3.), Kolmogorov – Smirnov is the most exact. It is noted above that $\text{sig} > 0.05$, so a parametric calculation method will be applied.

Group Statistics

	Naționality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Sexism	Românească	39	50,62	20,132	3,224
	Moldovenească	41	64,00	16,075	2,510

The average of the results of the research instrument is 50.62, for Romanians and 64.00 for Moldovans.

Independent Samples Test

		t-test for Equality of Means		
		Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Sexism	Equal variances assumed	,001	-13,385	4,063
	Equal variances not assumed	,002	-13,385	4,086

Viewing the Significance Threshold Sig. (2-tailed), we note that it is less than 0.05, and at Levene's test of equality of variances, sig = 0.018 is obtained, likewise < 0.05, from which it can be deduced that there is a significant difference in the level of sexism between Moldovans and Romanians, i.e. with a higher rate of sexism among Moldovans than among Romanian citizens.

Despite efforts in recent decades to reduce the amount of stereotypes and gender equality, sexism is still prevalent among people around the world. In Romania and implicitly in the Republic of Moldova, countries in continuous development, the discrepancy regarding sexism is visible. Although currently, in Romania, there are a lot of women who hold positions in the state and are involved in political life, and in the Republic of Moldova the president is female, this discrimination is not decreasing.

These archaic stereotypes have their roots deeply positioned in the history and culture of each state. Regarding Romania, which joined the European Union, informing the population, educating it and creating prevention plans, regarding the stereotype of gender equality, it is supposed to be a debated and applied aspect. The Romanian citizens, compared to the Moldovan ones, show an openness towards the change of these perspectives, probably also due to the development, which also implies the reduction of some outdated thinking principles. On the other hand, in the Republic of Moldova, as I mentioned in the introduction, there are still delays in the development of mentality, a fact due to the traumas left by the communist regime. Although, also in Moldova, the need for equality between genders and implicitly equality in education and culture were presented, still a large part of citizens, especially those from rural areas, live on "old" principles, where sexism and discrimination against femininity is "in flower". The hypothesis tends to show this significant difference, which I have demonstrated following the statistical calculation, namely that on the part of stereotypes and acceptance, the Republic of Moldova presents a slower approach, compared to the neighboring state, Romania.

There are studies that discuss the sexism present in both men and women. It turns out that both sexes, in both social groups, are sexist, only the type of sexism differs. In men, hostile sexism persists, to the detriment of women, but women also present, some of them, benevolent sexism, which means that they have a beneficial attitude towards men, which can lead to their

inferiority. This aspect is also demonstrated in a study by Mihaela Jitaru and Mihai C. Holman, "Ambivalent sexism in Romanian students: Examining gender, sex roles and social dominance". These two researchers faced the same problem, namely, the lack of studies on stereotypes and sexism in Romania and/or the Republic of Moldova. In the study, their hypothesis that men present predominantly hostile sexism, and women the benevolent one, is confirmed, referring to the poor information of the population, regarding the reduction of stereotypes and discrimination.

The difference between the two states, in terms of gender equality, can also be seen on the platform of the European Institute of Gender Equality, where Romania ranks 26th in Europe, with a 54.2% rate of sexism, in 2020, while in the Republic of Moldova the rate of sexism is 83.3%, which confirms, once again, the validity of the given hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: It is assumed that there are significant differences in sexism between women and men, regardless of their nationality.

Hypothesis number 2: "It is assumed that there are significant differences in sexism, between women and men, regardless of their nationality.", starts from the idea that, although we are used to hearing in society, that "you men are so sexist".

Analyzing the descriptive data regarding the female respondents, we note that the average is 55.66 (Mean=55.66), with a standard deviation (Std. Deviation) = 16.343 and a median (Median) = 59.00. As for the male sex, the mean (Mean) = 60.06, the standard deviation (Std. Deviation) being 22.814, and the median (Median) of 66.00. Analogous to the previous hypothesis, we check for normality, in order to establish the type of test to be applied, to verify the comparison.

Tests of Normality

Sex	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Sexism Feminin	,128	47	,050	,962	47	,133
Sexism Masculin	,192	33	,003	,907	33	,008

Interpreting the data from the normality test, according to statistics, for the application of the calculation method, it is observed that if: $\text{sig} < 0.05$, then the non-parametric method is applied, and if $\text{sig} > 0.05$, then a parametric method is applied. It can be seen that in the Kolmogorov – Smirnov test, we have two values of sig. Taking into account that one of the two values of sig, shown in table 8, is $\text{sig} = 0.003$, i.e. < 0.05 , the non-parametric calculation method is used to verify the comparison.

Test Statistics

	Sexism
Mann-Whitney U	600,500
Wilcoxon W	1728,500
Z	-1,711
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,087

At the end of the statistical calculation for this hypothesis, we obtain an insignificant difference in the results, because $\text{sig. (2 – tailed)} = 0.087$, which is greater than 0.05. Hence the fact that I suspend the decision, stating that in this study, the hypothesis "It is assumed that there

are significant differences in sexism, regardless of its type, between women and men, regardless of their nationality.", is refuted.

However, analyzing all the data presented in the calculation, we already know that the number of female participants is 47 (N=47), compared to the men who are 33 (N=33), and the result sig. (2 – tailed) is only 0.087. In other words, I can say that if the number of respondents from both sexes was equal, then the differences were also significant. Thus, anticipating that men were proving to be much more sexist than women, as they were fewer in number in the given research, the average ranks are higher than that of women.

But there are studies that confirm that men are sexist and prone to stereotypes, but women show an equally high disposition towards sexism. The difference, however, is that men exhibit more hostile sexism (HS), while women are more prone to benevolent sexism (BS), according to Ann R. Fischer's study titled "Women's Benevolent Sexism as Reaction to Hostility," which is based on the theory of ambivalent sexism. This study tested the speculation that women's benevolent sexist attitudes may be, in part, a self-protective response to environments they perceive as hostile to them. The data that have indirectly supported this theory so far have been correlational. This study involved a stronger experimental test of the hypothesis. Women (N = 105) were randomly assigned to one of three environments, which differed only in what participants were told about the results of research on men's attitudes toward women (negative or positive attitudes, or no information). As predicted, benevolent sexist attitudes—but not hostile sexist attitudes—were strongest for women who were told that men had negative attitudes toward women.

This effect is consistent with an explanation of benevolent sexism as protest and was statistically significant even while controlling for attitudes toward feminism. The differential effect of beliefs about men's attitudes on these two types of sexism further supports the idea that although hostile and benevolent sexism are related, they may have different functions. In other words, the given study confirms that women are sexist and prone to stereotypes, equally with men, because this sexism can vary due to the fields of activity of those two sexes. For example, women tend to be sexist when they are in the specific field of their activities, such as beauty salons, because they do not feel the need for the presence of a male individual to be able to make another woman "beautiful", at just as men do not need women when they fix certain things where a high physical effort is assumed. The difference being only the type of sexism that women use to annihilate male ideologies. Fischer's study claims that there are no significant differences in the level of sexism by gender, which supports the invalidity of hypothesis number two in this research.

Assuming that women accept benevolent sexism, we can say that they are trying to get men to respond positively to their hostile sexism. Many other studies certify that women, or some of them, accept a sexist man, if he falls into the BS (benevolent sexism) type, because the man has a predisposition to show more attention to women, namely: support, help, family availability, etc. On the other hand, men, in turn, claim that women with a higher rate of sexism are more attractive because they have more self-confidence, are more open in society and know how to get what they want, but this sexism not to end up in a form of convinced feminism.

Conclusions

Sexist individuals may be ambivalent toward women without experiencing any sense of confusion, conflict, or tension about these attitudes, in that sexist ambivalence may generally take the form of dividing women into female groups (e.g., housewives) that embrace traditional roles that fulfill the paternalistic, gender-identified, and sexual motives of traditional men—

versus groups made up of women (e.g., feminists) that challenge or threaten these needs and desires. Many have argued that women are usually classified according to such subtypes. Ambivalent sexism may be most evident in polarized views of these different types (eg, the notion of women as "saints" or "whores"). It is noteworthy that it is precisely this form of ambivalence (polarized reactions toward different target individuals that evoke either the positive or the negative aspect of ambivalent attitudes) that is typically demonstrated in research on racial ambivalence

If we focus on the ethnic stereotype we can say that teenagers are in the formation of adult behavior and attitude. Along with the identification of social status, young people are subject to stereotypes from adults. By this I can also refer to my own person. Once the young person makes a decision to move to another country, in the given case Romania, he automatically becomes judged and categorized according to some stereotypes based on the level of society. To prove that those judgments that have no fundamental basis are just socially invented formations, you need to have certain strengths, such as: high self-esteem, emotional intelligence and last but not least, decision-making ability. From here I can say that teenagers can be more subject to racial, ethnic or gender discrimination, compared to adults.

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