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Romanians caught between the American dream and pragmatic transnationalism

Luciana Anăstăsoaie[1]

Abstract
The substantial and continuous influx of Romanian emigrants who have maintained ties with their homeland and/or engaged in a form of migratory commute contribute to the cultural exchanges evident in social values. The current study presents an analysis conducted as part of the research on the dynamics of social values in Romanian communities in the United States. A total of 18 semi-structured interviews were conducted online with stable members of Romanian communities in the American diaspora. The qualitative data from the interviews was processed using a coding software, which helped discover indicators of values as important topics for migrants. The analysis of the interviews revealed the existence of two categories of values with a significant impact at the community level and implications beyond the geographical, economical, and cultural boundaries. These were identified as materialist-economic and cultural-identity. The two lenses through which migrants view their country of origin afford a deeper understanding of the process of change at the level of mentality and values. Also, the data reveals the stages through which these changes occur, and the types of connections established between the Romanians who emigrated and those remaining in Romania. There are three key factors in the process of changing social values specific to Romanian immigrant communities in America: triggering (related to well-being, such as values related to basic needs), mediating (related to cultural values, valuing tradition and customs) and repurposing (an alternative interpretation of values in the context of solving the signaled problems). These factors facilitate the rapid change of values for migrants.

Keywords
Social values; Diaspora; Migration; Culture change; Pragmatic transnationalism;

[1] Doctoral School of Sociology, University of Bucharest, Bucharest, Romania, luci.anastasoaie@gmail.com.

> "In order to remain compatriots even when we live lives that are torn from each other, in different places, where we have adapted to different cultures, we must shake hands and do our best to preserve the emotional ties between us. The physical distance is great enough as it is, so let's try to lessen the others". (Parinoush Saniee)

Introduction

The experience of international immigration encompasses the full spectrum of human existence, challenging members of a society to engage in new interactions and undergo profound changes at both the individual and community level. This process often involves a reconfiguration of value systems. The phenomenon of Romanians emigrating has become a common occurrence, no longer surprising anyone and a significant issue on the political agenda. However, the large and constant waves of emigrants who have been practicing a type of migratory commute are contributing to the economic, cultural and demographic exchanges in the countries involved. Among the various perspectives on migration, the cultural implications have been less studied but have a greater impact over time.

Gaining a deeper understanding of how these values evolve in the context of migration and integration into a new society. What social values are retained and which are changed? What are the specific changes that occur? What are the implications of the reconfiguration of the value system of those who have left? What is the relationship between the value systems of those who emigrated and those who remained in the original society? The objective of this research is to address a number of key questions pertaining to the subject matter.

The present analysis is informed by two theoretical perspectives. In order to analyze the context and framework, the theories of migration are considered first and after that the theories of social value change/adjustments in order to gain an understanding of the dynamics of values.

The first theoretical perspective employed in the analysis of migrant communities is based on integration/assimilation theories of international migration, with a particular focus on the unified migration theory of Douglas S. Massey (Massey, D S. & Arango, J. & Kouaouci, A J. & Pellegrino, A. & Taylor, J., 1998). The proponents of transnationalist migration theory (Levitt, P. and Glick Schiller, N., 2008, Portes, A., Escobar, C. and Radford, A.W., 2007) also nuance the concept of transnationalism by recognising and confirming that two important conditions are met in the process: 1. the activities of migrants are simultaneous, encompassing several spheres of migrant and non-migrant life; 2. there is a regularity in their actions. These approaches make it possible to examine the dynamics of migration processes as part of a complex process of social change, including both contradictions and consequences.

The second perspective employed in the analysis of social values is based on the postmodern value change theories of Ronald Inglehart & Christian Welzel, Rudolf Rezsohazy and Thomas R. Rochon. The theoretical framework of Ronald Inglehart & Inglehart and Christian Welzel is based on empirical research and traces values between two poles: conservative (religious) and modern (secular) (Inglehart, R. & Welzel, C., 2005).

In their respective works, Thomas R. Rochon (1998) and Rudolf Rezsohazy (2008) employ a qualitative approach to examine value change/adjustments at the societal level, focusing on social problems, crises, and social movements as central elements. This entails investigating the socialization of individuals and the experience of exposure to diverse new ideas, changes in the ideas, perceptions, or beliefs of an individual, and the subsequent influence on value change within the community to which they belong.

The objective of this current research is to identify the value profile of Romanian communities in the United States of America (USA), with a particular focus on the specificity of these communities in the context of the migration phenomenon. This will be achieved by analyzing the dynamics of values within these communities, as part the migration trend.

The specific objective of this research twofold:

- To identify the core values shared by the members of the communities.
- To highlight the specificity of the communities in the dynamics given by immigration and the relationship with the host country.

The qualitative research proposed for the analysis of the dynamics of social values was conducted in two distinct phases. The first phase involved interviews with individuals from Romanian communities in the United States, while the second phase entailed content analysis of websites belonging to Romanian Christian and cultural communities in America. The research was conducted in order to gain insight into the values of the Romanian immigrant community as well as to understand their relationship with mother country. Semi-structured interviews, conducted online with 18 Romanians who emigrated to the United States after 1980, constituted the primary method of exploration. Additionally, content analysis was employed to examine images, announcements, and information found on the websites and social media accounts of the communities.

The database on the Romanian community in the USA was constructed using data from the website of the Romanian Embassy in the United States of America (Embassy of Romania, n.d.). This yielded over 60 Romanian-American organizations and associations, including Romanian churches organized in Metropolia, Episcopate, Diocese, Associations, Conventions and Christian Alliances of Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Pentecostal and Evangelical denominations in the USA, with over 500 parishes and 20 Student Associations of Romanians in America.

In order to gain insight into the dynamics and social values of Romanian communities in America, research was conducted through interviews with members of religious communities. The research thus conducted in a community with a "traditionalist religious" value pattern (Inglehart, 2019) also facilitated the tracing of the links between social values and various cultural aspects. Furthermore, the context of migration, the link with the country and the social aspects related to human needs for recognition, belonging and self-fulfilment could be traced.

The Romanian religious establishment, in conjunction with the country's professional communities, have an important role to play in influencing the values held by younger generations. The former are more inclined to conserve and transmit cultural elements, whereas the latter facilitate the adoption of economic values, such as organization,

management and efficiency. If the communities around the churches contribute to the shaping of a cultural identity, the professional ones facilitate the establishment of new standards in technology, quality and connectivity (Brădățan, C. & Kulcsár, L. 2014; Galitzi, C. 1929, p. 90). Nevertheless, both contribute to the evolution of social values, which become increasingly apparent in diaspora.

Methodology

This research project is a study of social values in Romanian American communities. It began with an analysis of the emigration stories of the respondents, after which a semi-structured interview technique was selected for the purpose of data collection. The interviews were conducted individually, remotely via video, and subsequently recorded and transcribed.

In order to conduct the online interviews, I sent over 250 emails were sent to parishes and communities that had public addresses on their websites. Of the 25 that responded, discussions of approximately one hour on ZOOM platform with 11 members of Romanian communities within various Orthodox churches. Four additional respondents were recommended by the initial respondents. One of the unexpected findings of the email call for participation in this study was that some of the respondents from other denominations did not speak Romanian and/or had limited knowledge of the language, however, the suggestion that the discussion be conducted in English, was rejected.

The semi-structured interviews were presented as discussion about the experiences of immigrants in America, with a focus on personal accounts and recommendations for young people in Romania. The transcripts were analyzed using two distinct methods: firstly, by allowing the subjects to narrate the relevant stories and important personal aspects, and secondly, through examinations and content analysis of the answers provided to each question.

In order to explore coherence, and the references of the value system, the relation between "need and value" and the changes/adjustments that took place, we examined aspects related both to the past (reasons for emigration and integration – link between needs and values), and to the present (perception of personal and communal values) and their projection into the future (recommendations for young people – value changes into the future).

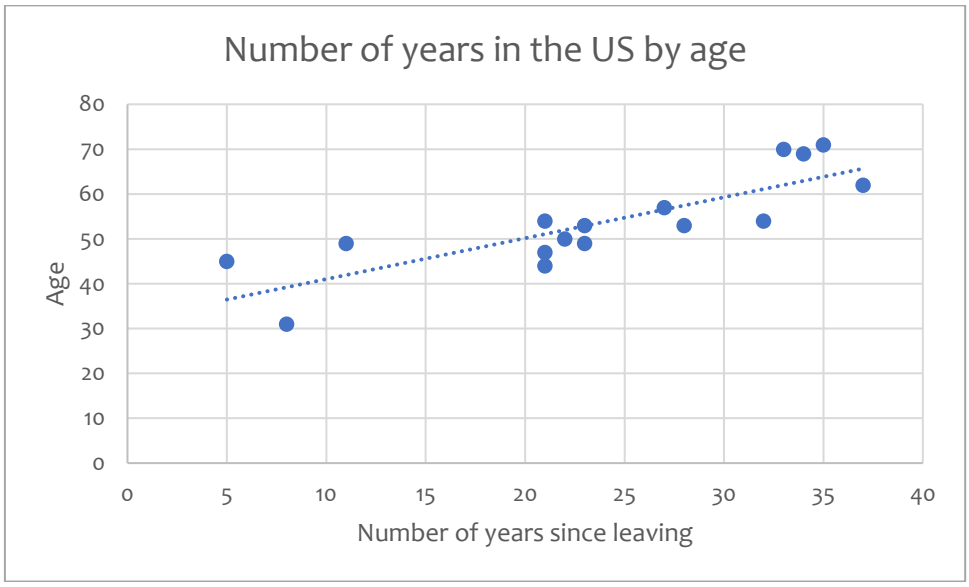
As the research was conducted exclusively via the internet, no pre-determined sampling was employed. Instead, data was gathered from 16 respondents, either responding to a direct call to participate in the research or being referred. The resulting statistical data is presented in the table below (Table 1). In order to preserve the anonymity of the respondents, names were changed, data on field of work and area of residence was randomized. Discussions were held between 1 April and 10 June 2022 following a snowball sampling design with eight participants both women and men. In terms of the age the respondents fall into three categories were distinguished depending the number of years since their departure for the United States. The first category includes individuals who departed during the time when Romania was under the communist regime - four

individuals aged 62 and older. The second category is comprised of those who left after the fall of communism in Romania (1990-2001), the largest group in terms of the number of respondents (fourteen individuals). They are aged between 50 and 57. A total of four respondents from those who have emigrated since 2001 are aged between 44 and 49. Only one respondent, from the recommendation, aged around 31, expressed a desire to participate in the discussion. The average age at departure is 29, with ages at departure ranging from 22 to 40. This is representative of the optimal working age.

Table 1. Statistical and social data on respondents

Nr. Crt.	Name of respondent	Age	Year of emigration	Field of work	Education	Area of residence	No. of years since left
1	Ana	62	1985	Medical field	Master	Portland	37
2	Smaranda	71	1987	Professor emeritus - Chemistry	PhD - Chemistry	San Francisco	35
3	Ion	69	1988	Priest & Professor	PdD - Theology	Michigan	34
4	Cicuța	70	1989	Real Estate	High school	Wakefield	33
5	Fane	54	1990	University Professor	PhD - Mathematics	California	32
6	Mia	53	1994	Chemical Industry	University	Michigan	28
7	Nenea	57	1995	Car industry	High school	Denver, Colorado	27
8	Paul	49	1999	Research - physics biomedical	PhD - Physics	Denver, Colorado	23
9	Ileana	53	1999	Medical field	Master	California	23
10	Floarea	50	2000	Military	University	Detroit	22
11	Costică	44	2001	Priest	Master	New York	21
12	Constanța	47	2001	Medical field	University	San Francisco	21
13	Simion	54	2001	Car Industry	Faculty	Michigan	21
14	Gheorghe	49	2011	Priest	Master	Georgia, Atalanta	11
15	Dora	31	2014	Accounting	Master	Denver, Colorado	8
16	Bob	45	2017	IT	Master	Michigan	5

Figure 1. Age distribution by number of years since leaving for the US



All respondents indicated that they possessed both citizenship and a legal work visa. Two of the respondents left during the communist period and have only a high school diploma. Four have completed college, six have also completed a master's degree in the United States, and four have one or two doctorates (in the country and in the United States). This aspect indicates that the interviewed emigrants are representative of the category of professional emigration, yet they also occupy a prominent position within the Romanian communities, enjoying a high standard of living and a secure status. They have also established a strong sense of identity.

Quirkos, a qualitative analysis tool was used to process the interviews data. This program categorized the individual and social values aspects found in the interviews into distinct categories. Furthermore, the categories could be organized according to the number of codings assigned, and the potential for interconnectivity with other data. Some data that was initially considered less significant was considered valuable after further analysis. Using this tool facilitated the comprehension of the data and led to the formation of new connections.

From the coded issues, we will focus on those that have been referenced the most, namely:

a) language aspects, with a total of 146 codes, of which English phrases and words have a total of 48 codes;

b) aspects relating specifically to values, with 121 codes, expressed as attitude, belief or thought; and

c) comparisons made between Romania and the USA, or between Romanians and Americans, with a total of 60 codes.

Table 2: Number of codes assigned on the aspects tracked

Theme	Description	Total number of codes
Language issues	With regard to the languages spoken in the community, including Romanian and English, by children and/or parents at home or with other Romanians.	146
Values	Pro/Cons/Neutral on the aspects mentioned, namely thinking, believing, feeling and active participation.	121
Romania - USA comparison	Comparisons have been made between Romania and the USA, as well as between Romanians and Americans.	60

Data analysis

Analysis of the linguistic aspects

The most frequently cited obstacle among those who immigrated to the United States was language. This was regardless of the period of time they immigrated, their age or education. The respondents indicated that the most significant aspect of their experience was the ability to speak, pray, and hear Romanian being spoken. For instance, Cicuța asserted that "this is what I consider to be of paramount importance". The preservation of the Romanian language and traditions was a common theme among the interviewees. Language and music were considered particularly valuable. Simion stated that he participated in activities "if I want to go somewhere, I go to church, if I want to do something, I go to an event where Romanian music is played". This indicates that these sentiments are shared by all, including those who remain in Romania. This suggests that for the first generation of immigrants, language serves as a "specific cultural feature that gives them a sense of identity and self-perception as different from other members of the host society" (Mihăilescu, I. & Zamfir C. & Vlasceanu L, 1993, p. 218).

For Romanians still residing in their country, the aspects related to the mother tongue spoken, heard, and used daily are not considered significant factors in identity formation, with the exception of some are instances. In contrast, for Romanian immigrants in the USA, language is a fundamental aspect of identity formation. Conversely, proficiency in English is crucial for numerous aspects of immigrant life and integration, including job search and employment, document preparation and legal work visas. Using the mother tongue remains within the family and is employed in the Romanian community. However, the necessity to learn English and subsequently utilize it in all other life situations is a defining factor in their integration and the achievement of their goal.

Conversely, the mother tongue (Romanian) is more widely spoken among the first generation than among the second or third generation. Although the majority of Romanian families speak Romanian at home and within the family, children, regardless of whether they were born in Romania or the USA, tend to choose to speak more English than Romanian due to a number of factors. These include the language environment at school, the influence of other children and socialization with children from Romanian communities with similar language experiences. In a subsequent interview, Floarea indicated that when her daughter began university it became evident that returning to Romania was untenable

for her: ,,She was highly ambitious and aspired to excel. She did not speak any Romanian with us. At present, she speaks with an accent but experiences a language barrier. For her, Romania represents family, cousins, and uncles, and she finds the country beautiful". Dora discloses her experience with her five-year-old son, born in the United States thus: ,,I speak to him in Romanian and he answers me in English. He is ashamed to speak in Romanian with his grandparents. It's too bad there's no school here where he can learn Romanian".

The situation is also problematic in the communities near the church, where discussions and decisions are taking place at parish council level regarding the language to be used in church. Parents do not contemplate a change from Romanian to English as the language of service, yet children or those from mixed families are less involved due to their inability to comprehend the language of service. Priest Costica clarifies his approach, delineating the languages typically utilized for service: "The church I told you about in Ohio, had the Service in both English and Romanian, because it was already they were third generation immigrants there. Depending on who I saw the services, I would adapt the language used during the service. If I saw that there were more Americans, I said more in English, if I saw that the majority was Romanian, I used more Romanian".

The link with the communities is maintained, particularly in relation to social and cultural activities, such as traditional festivals featuring Romanian music and food. For Paul, the community surrounding the church was of great importance, as it afforded him the opportunity to cultivate ,,meaningful relationships. I am from Bistrița, I went to school in Bucharest and I grew up in the countryside. I went to church in America because I missed Divine Liturgy that use to have back home. I helped me retain a sense of manliness, and a spiritual identity. I asked myself the question, could I have stayed without having all that? I suffered until I found this community. They helped me and I stayed", and Bob goes on to say that they help you ,,to fit in, to have something to talk about, and to have shared memories".

The role of the Romanian communities in facilitating the integration of newcomers into the United States is widely acknowledged. In particular, the opportunity to hear Romanian language, to meet other Romanians, and to engage in meaningful dialogue is seen as invaluable. Not only does this allow for the sharing of experiences, and receiving support but also provides a sense of belonging and ,,a sense of being heard". The continued existence of these communities around the church, even after 100 years of its foundation, demonstrates that Romanian values, have retained a cultural and spiritual role. The newcomers and the subsequent generations were free to live out their values enjoying the openness of the American environment. In his account, Gheorghe, who was also a priest in one of the communities founded in 1906, describes that families who had arrived in the United States and lacked formal education, and whose children were attending school were able to learn English from their own children. English language was often spoken at home and thus language acquisition was a multigenerational experience.

Another point worthy of consideration is the prevalence of English words and phrases among those who have been emigrating for over 20 years (48 codes). The insertion of English words in the discussion did not appear to be a cause for concern. However, the use of a greater number of such words by those who have been absent for a longer period

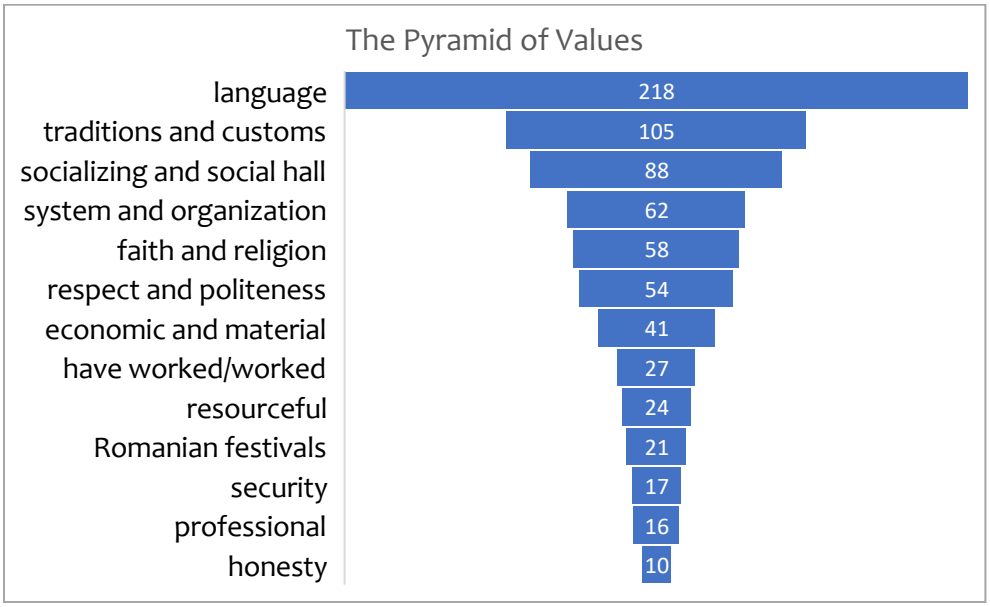
than those who have left more recently also indicates the significant influence that the environment has on the unconscious replacement of linguistic identity.

Consequently, language issues not only demonstrate how immigrants' ethnic identity is shaped but also highlight its evolution and dynamics as a result of the influence of the environment, particularly in terms of education and social context. The dynamics of linguistic value, and of the Romanian language in our case, can be observed in the fact that it is important and defines the identity of the first generation, but its importance decreases in subsequent generations.

Analysis of values

In order to gain a deeper insight into how respondents perceive and define their values regarding Romania, in addition to the direct question "What are the values of Romanians in the community?", we posed further probing questions that referred to both positive and negative reports about Romania. These included the following: "What should Americans adopt from the Romanians? What are the positive aspects of Romania? What aspects of Romanian culture do you feel should be retained in the United States?" This resulted in a considerable number of codes pertaining to values, which were identified as aspects related to the valorization of traditions and customs.

Figure 3. Number of details of issues mentioned as important by respondents



The first category of values observed among Romanians in American communities is related to traditions and customs. The traditions and customs that have been preserved in the communities in the U.S. include caroling, specific holiday foods such as Christmas cake, Easter bread known as "pasca", sarmale, etc., and festivals with folk music and Romanian music. These traditions and customs are not specific to a single area of the country but rather a sum of them that is related to those who bring them from the areas

where they came from. They provide a framework of harmony and unity for the Romanians („It's a little Romania" – Ana). The interviewees admit that "they are more patriotic than at home" (Bob), that they put up the flag at home, or as well that they don a traditional costume at festivals. They explain this as a manifestation of their own cultural identity: „personally I think, this national costume is basically imprinted in our genetic code in all of us. It's kind of a group thing, we, think that sometimes it is the easiest way to connect with someone who has the same background as you, who speaks the same language, who comes from the same region" (Simion). Additionally, Ana explains the rationale behind their decision to employ these resources: „Those who look for us at festivals want Romanian souvenirs. They are looking for spiritual values: festivals, traditions and customs. We found that this is a way in which we can promote our country through culture and spirituality".

The social role of the communities, as evidenced by the meals and festivals held in the social halls of the churches, indicates that traditions were preserved in close connection with the community's spiritual life: „I say that there are two things that are very important in a man's life: tradition and religion. They are so intertwined that if you lose one - you lose the other also. If you lose your tradition, you lose your religion, because you get mixed up, as they say, if you lose your religion, you lose your tradition. So you have to keep both" (Nenea). Gheorghe explains how „the church is a nucleus that plays a communal well-being role, it coagulates the community through festivals and social life after church" and Paul specifies, "as values, the church community has: social, religious and family".

A second category of values ascribed by Romanians in the United States is related to the qualities and skills they possess in relation to their professional capacity. The respondents consider themselves as hard workers, as evidenced by Ana's assertion that "Romanians are good workers", and Dora's observation that they are "smart and resourceful". "The family and career are of paramount importance, as one cannot succeed in life without a career. Education towards a career represents a significant investment of time, and if one chooses a career that aligns with their deeper interests, it is indicative of a vocation. This implies that it fundamentally marks the remainder of one's life, from the point of commencement until the point of retirement, and also after retirement, as one "remains wholeheartedly invested in that field" (Ion). The moral and professional values that were deemed important were honesty, love, and respect. These values were conveyed to his children by the aforementioned individual. "I told them time and again and I still tell them that they should be proud to be Romanian" (Ileana).These professional values that are at the intersection of identity and morality, get more specific in relation to how they are perceived, accepted or appreciated at their workplace "…as previously stated, Americans tend to accept moral rules, although they may not necessarily endorse them. They recognize individuals who perform their duties in an exemplary manner" (Smaranda).

The third category of values most respondents identified is family, which they regarded as a central value::

"family comes first" (Cicuța);
"first of all, family is one of the essential values" (Smaranda);

> *"is basically the result of a society, a sum of individual life results at family level if the family is the core. Yes, the point is: how much does this state of national consciousness rises from the family level where it is forged?"* (Simion).

Furthermore, the significance of the family unit extends beyond the provision of assistance to those who immigrate. It also serves as a driving force behind the decision to emigrate:

> *"it's important to stay legal that you can bring your family from Romania" (Ion);*
> *"once I got a job and had an income so to speak, I was able to support my family and improve my life here" (Simion);*
> *"I realized that, in fact, in a way my home is here, where my family is, where my friends are" (Nenea).*

The following questions were posed to ascertain the most effective means by which Romanians can improve their quality of life: "What should young people do to improve their situation back in Romania? If a young Romanian were to inquire as to how they might improve their circumstances in Romania, what advice would you offer them?" These questions do not present us with a nostalgic projection of the country, but rather with lessons learned on our own skin, which seem to be applicable to everyone. They demonstrate the dynamics of values on the desirable axis and encompass the economical, educational, and political fields, as well as aspects related to character and personality.

Table 3. The value categories on the desirable axis represent the recommendations made by emigrants who believe that they would be better off at home;;

Categories	**"Desirable"**
Entrepreneurial	"Let him commit himself wholeheartedly and every little thing will impress him. Do something extraordinary". "Do little things with friends, things that happen quickly". "Keep the front of the house neat and clean, don't throw cigarettes, don't litter the streets. Build highways because we have a beautiful country. Let them bring home the good things they have seen elsewhere". "Let them bring the positive things and apply them". "Let them come to America and learn and take the good things".
Character and personality	"Young people should be united like the wolves in a pack..". "Let them start doing what they want without complaining and not expecting results very quickly". "Let them be the first to do something". "Let them be fair and respectful: behave nicely, say thank you, answer back nicely, not be rude". "If change starts with us then it will be good". "Common sense as an attitude in Romania". "Regain punctuality. Punctuality has disappeared in Romania". "Help someone - like older people". "Learn from others. Try to be better, respectful, trust people, be wise. Don't be so stressed". "Appreciate what they have. Trust themselves".
Cultural and spiritual	"I would like to keep the traditions, the customs, that you feel that you belong...that it's beautiful". "Language to be spoken correctly". "Do something to grow spiritually".
	"At the hospital, doctors answer questions". "Let them research. Let them exchange experience, see what it's like".

Economic and professional	"Let them think ahead about what they should choose to do, to work". "Let them build the motorway in Transylvania". "Let the Americans invest in Romania - as the neurosurgeons in Constanta and Calarasi did. - If they still feel Romanian, they should not forget that Romanians need them more than others". "I would discourage them from leaving because it's not like at home, it's not like at home. Let them look for work where it's better". "Let them be as good as they can be. They should keep their sense of humour and not tarnish their reputation". "Economically they can do better. It takes an entrepreneurial spirit to create your own opportunity". "Learn to do something, not just make money and spend it".
Educational	"Education should be restructured, teachers should be paid better, there should be continuity because education shapes your mind".
Political	"Stop proliferating corruption in public administration when you try to achieve something". "The political system is important for the country. And vision matters when you do what you can for our people".

In summary, the values deemed most important by respondents from Romania are related to identity. These include traditions, customs, family, and the values projected for the need of change in Romania, which are related to material, political, economic, and organizational factors. The respondents' view was that identity should rely on culture rather than on technology: "Culture gives us an identity not technology. Through technology we survive" (Ana).

A comparative analysis of Romania and the USA

"We are with our souls on two continents", states Floarea, which implies that there is in fact a double projection of immigrants, both towards the country of origin and towards the country of destination. The axis of reporting is drawn somewhere at the ideological level. "Once one has left Romania, one is neither happy in one's country of destination nor in one's country of origin". The dichotomy between the material and spiritual needs of those who have left and those who have remained is evident in the way they compare their experiences.

The comparisons between Americans and Romanians encompass a range of economic and organizational aspects, as well as considerations of the types of thinking, attitudes and mentalities involved. For instance, Fane posits that "In America, there is the conception that everything can be done, Romanians have the first thought that there are obstacles. Americans have a sense of entitlement, Romanians have something "Mioritic" (passive/resigned), they sit and wait for it to happen. American students have a sense of possibility compared to what we have". Additionally, Dora compares the attitudes observed. "In America I met all kinds of people. Here they are more tolerant, they have no problem with you. The difference is that they speak different languages. In America you feel freer, they don't judge you. They are not as friendly, and if you don't have a healthy

routine you get destroyed. They work very hard and don't make time for their families. People in Romania are often angry, frustrated. Romanians judge others a lot".

At the economic and organizational level, the most significant comparisons are observed. "The system here is designed to help you achieve your goals, while (unfortunately) the system in Romania prevents you from achieving them…" (Simion), which demonstrates the consistency of their choices and reinforces the reasons for permanent emigration. The discrepancies perceived at this level frequently give rise to feelings of indignation or helplessness, prompting a sense of futility in attempting to effect change in the mother country.

> "One cannot remain indifferent to such developments. When one observes the sale of Rosia Montana and the subsequent sale of the Bărăgan, it evokes a sense of profound disquiet".
> "I don't know,... it hurts me" (Floarea)
> or
> "it hurts me very much to hear about the corruption that they sold so much of the country's wealth" (Cicuța)
> or
> "unfortunately, I am disappointed by what is happening there, by the people's lack of will, I mean the people in charge, not the ordinary people". (Ileana)

This is a source of great concern, as there appears to be a lack of effort on the part of those in charge of the destiny of the country to improve the situation in Romania. But when Floarea raises questions such as: "Why are good things possible here and not in Romania?" And then proceeds to ask herself "why it is so difficult to effect change?" She displays the aforementioned attitude: "We have departed and thus, we lack the authority to make comments".

Conversely, active involvement in organizations such as the Romanian-American Freedom Alliance (RAFA, n.d.) demonstrates a dual attachment to the country of origin and to the transnational community. The latter is evidenced by the organization's fundraising activities:

> "We raise funds for families in need. I know it's not enough, because you can't change, and those who are left don't want to listen to you. We've seen that it can be better, and for those who have left and come back - the houses look better, it's now clean in front of the house". (Floarea)
> "I don't do much for Romania, but I get involved through RAFA - which helps children from Valea Plopului; I support them to build the road 'Via Transilvanica' - to make Romania known with its beauty" (Paul)

The intertwining of material values with professional, cultural, identity and spiritual values demonstrates that individual and social needs can be correlated with certain values, which become essential and visible in attitudes, actions and even phenomena such as pragmatic nationalism.

Conclusions

Among the values most mentioned and exemplified by respondents are language and tradition and customs. However, looking through the lens of tradition as Zuckermann said "a passing on of something valuable, precious and important, even particularly important from one generation to the next" (p.9) allows us to understand the dynamics of values in their present unfolding, i.e. how they are transmitted in the studied context, the phenomenon of migration. In other words, the dynamics of the transmission of what is considered important, in studied community, is more about identity, cultural and spiritual than economic and material. Tradition seen as a value in itself, with all the cultural content it has, "in whatever form of expression it is encountered, artistic and/or literary: worked textiles, paintings, stories, legends, ceremonies, music, songs and rhythms and dances" (Zuckermann, n.d., p. 9) is a form of assimilated identity, and those who have left feel that it deserves to be shown, passed on and valued Respondents practically facilitate this movement of "Romanian traditions and customs" between generations but also to those in the area where they arrived.

Conversely, the prevailing economic and political circumstances in the mother country appear to have influenced the decision to emigrate without planning to return. If, as Maslow proposed, the pyramid of needs comprises basic needs, security and recognition, then the needs of belonging and spirituality are built upon these. For immigrants, the economic situation in the US and the socialization within traditional Romanian communities provide a balance, indicating that neither traditions nor spirituality are considered to be in opposition to technological or capitalist evolution. One possible interpretation is that values are intertwined, or that they are optimized according to certain needs, leading to a certain dynamic of values (the material, cultural and spiritual categories) that is related to an individual balance but also to societal integration.

Therefore, the preservation of cultural and spiritual values for traditional community is contingent on the context provided by the culture of the country of emigration and on forming communities that facilitate the transfer of traditions while adjusting to the technological challenges.

The initial catalyst, which is associated with well-being and encompasses values related to fundamental needs, is the primary agent that initiates the transformation of social values. The next factor is the mediating factor, which is related to cultural values and affects the value of tradition and customs. Finally, the repurposing factor, which is related to achieving tangible results in the area of the indicated issues and repurposing the values, is the least but not the last of the aforementioned factors. These factors facilitate the rapid change of mentality, but they also influence the values of those remaining in the country of origin.

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Luciana Anăstăsoaie is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in Sociology and Social Work at the University of Bucharest, having commenced her studies in 2018. She obtained a Bachelor's degree in Sociology in 2005 and a Master's degree in Security Studies in 2007. Additionally, from 2018 to 2019, she had the opportunity to collaborate with the National Institute for Cultural Research and Training. She is currently employed as a Customer Service Analyst in a Romanian company that was established by an individual who had previously emigrated and subsequently returned to the country of origin.