Univerzita Karlova

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Katedra psychologie

DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE

Integration of foreign students in the Czech public higher education:
difficulties and opportunities

Integrace zahraničních studentů na českých veřejných vysokých školách:
úskalí a možnosti

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Odevzdáním této diplomové práce na téma Integrace zahraničních studentů na českých veřejných vysokých školách: úskalí a možnosti potvrzuji, že jsem ji vypracovala pod vedením vedoucího práce samostatně za použití v práci uvedených pramenů a literatury. Dále potvrzuji, že tato práce nebyla využita k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

V Praze dne

ABSTRAKT

Hlavním tématem diplomové práce je analýza stresových faktorů, se kterými setkávají zahraniční studenti při jejich integraci do České republiky. Všichni respondenti jsou původem ze států Východní Evropy: například Rusko, Ukrajina, Bělorusko. Výzkumný soubor zahrnuje dvě skupiny studentů:

- studenti, kteří jsou v ČR méně než jeden rok
- studenti, kteří jsou v ČR více než 1 rok

Jednou z hlavních metod výzkumu je polostrukturovaný rozhovor s osmi respondenty. Pro měření míry akulturačního stresu byl použit dotazník The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), který vyplnilo 36 studentů. Mezi dvěma skupinami studentů se objevily rozdíly v míře integrace do české společnosti a znalosti českého jazyka. Výzkum také prokázal vysokou míru souvislosti mezi délkou pobytu v České republice a úrovní akulturačního stresu.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA
zahraniční studenti, stresové faktory, integrace, veřejné vysoké školy

ABSTRACT

The central theme of this diploma thesis is to analyze key stress factors, which foreign background students meet during their integration in the Czech Republic. All respondents are recruited from the Eastern European countries, for instance, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus. Two main groups include:

 - students who are in the Czech Republic less than one year
 - students who are in the Czech Republic for more than one year

The primary research method was using a semi-structured interview with eight respondents. For measuring acculturative stress level was used the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), which was filled in by 36 students. There were found differences in the adjustment level and language competence among two groups of students. This research has also confirmed the relationship between the length of stay in the Czech Republic a level of acculturative stress.

KEYWORDS

foreign students, stress factors, integration, public higher education

Contents

1 Introduction

International migration is considered to be one of the most discussed topics in the XXI century. *"Within-society contacts are increasing due to more and more nation states changing from being predominantly monocultural to multicultural; societies, in part a function of increasing levels of migration from poorer to richer countries and by waves of refugees dislocated by civil wars, famines, and other natural and human-made disasters"* (Ward, Bochner, Furnham 2001, page 8). People migrate due to various reasons, and one group of migrants includes international students. Many cross-cultural psychologists have intensively studied the migration process of foreign students in the past few decades (Kim 2000, Berry 2005, Kang 2006, Sullivan, Kashubeck-West 2015). The interest of young people to study abroad is getting higher with time. International experience can bring them new opportunities as well as challenges to overcome.

Living in a new socio-cultural environment can be full of stressful situations. Every society has different rules and norms, which foreign people should accept. Students need to face many unknown aspects of life in a foreign country. These differences are an essential part of the adaptation process.

Why is it so important to understand all those issues? At first, migration was and always be a part of our global life. There are no strict boundaries between countries nowadays. It is hard to imagine the world without international companies, travelling or mass culture. Therefore, studying the process of migration of different groups is of high importance.

Secondly, migration is always inextricably linked to diversity. Learning and understanding the differences between social groups might change the whole perception of many cultural representatives. Breaking stereotyping and prejudice might become a great tool against discrimination in our modern society. Finding healthy ways for an intercultural living is the main reason for consistent studying of migration of different groups, including international students.

2 Migration of international students in the era of globalization in the Czech context

Migration is also closely related to the process called globalization, which influences many aspects of our everyday life. Globalization as an economic, political and cultural process expands the exchange of goods, people and ideas across borders around the world. It creates a lot of new opportunities for travelling and discovering other countries, people and culture. International exchange of ideas and opinions leads to transformations in people's perception of the world. Many of them are more likely to become intercultural and tolerant toward other nations. Results of intercultural studies show how people can gradually change: *"The perception regarding my own culture has changed as I had the possibility to see it from the exterior. So, I became more tolerant, as I realised that no culture is perfect."* (Flanja, Gaz 2011, page 138). Globalization influences cultural variety and therefore traditions and values of the population. It also affects the entire education system around the world. As Douglass et al. observed:

"Universities and higher education systems, for both real and romanticized reasons, have become globalization's muse: in essence, a widely recognized and worshipped route for full participation in the knowledge society, an unparalleled source of knowledge and artful innovation, a foundation for modern science, an unequalled generator of talent, and a nearly required path for socio-economic mobility in the postmodern world."

(Douglass et al., cit. in Arkoudis, Dollinger, Baik, Patience 2018, page 800)

We can also notice significant changes in educational programs of various specializations in institutions around the world. It is evidenced by creating standard learning plans and a unified system of student's performance evaluation. As a result, an increased number of international students is observed all over the world, including USA, Europe, Australia[1]. Those students are also called "degree-mobile students" to distinguish them from students, who came for a short-time period.

Researchers describe two categories of migrants: sojourners and longtime migrants. Sojourners are living in a foreign country for a certain period of time and recognize the fact that they will be back to their own country. *"Examples of sojourner categories include*

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[1] https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/international-students

business people, overseas students, technical experts, missionaries, military personnel, diplomats, and even tourists" (Ward, Bochner, Furnham 2001, page 6). This group of migrants also include international students. Their experience differs from the experience of short-term period students, as for instance, Erasmus+ students.

According to some authors, the aim of short-term foreign students is social and economic rather than a cultural integration: they occupy a temporary position in a host country in comparison to degree-mobile students, who are more involved in a local environment (Flanja, Gaz 2011). Short-term period students might feel less effect of the culture shock because they are not entirely involved in the host country culture. Their interactions with local people are limited, so communication problems do not occur so often (Flanja, Gaz 2011). Erasmus+ students might experience changes at a personal level, whereas long-term students transform their perception of the cultural aspects, as well. In summary, the duration of stay is an essential factor to consider for the analysis of cultural adjustment.

Staying in a different socio-cultural environment can have an impact on aspects of personality, including behaviour, thinking and feeling. The degree-mobile students are more and more involved in many local social activities with time. This exposure increases their familiarity with the new environment. In some cases, international students decide to stay in a foreign country after finishing their graduation. It can be due to many reasons: successful adjustment, job perspectives, personal or family reasons. Based on different factors, Bochner identified several groups of migrants:

TABLE 1 *Dimensions of cross-cultural contact and examples of each classification*

Contact variables	Between members of the same society		Between members of different societies	
	Type	Example	Type	Example
On whose territory	Usually joint	Black and white Americans	Home or foreign territory	Tourists Overseas students Immigrants and their respective hosts
Time-span	Long term	Black and white Americans	Short-term Medium-term Long-term	Tourists Overseas students Immigrants
Purpose	Make a life in	Black and white Americans	Make a life in Study in Make a profit Recreate	Immigrants Overseas students Workers Tourists
Type of involvement	Participate in society	Black and white Americans	Participate Exploit Contribute Observe	Immigrants Workers Experts Tourists
Frequency of contact	High	Black and white Americans	High Medium Low	Immigrants Overseas students Tourists
Degree of intimacy between participants	High to low social distance (variable)	Black and white Americans	High to low social distance (variable)	Immigrants Overseas students Tourists
Relative status and power	Equal to Unequal (variable)	Black and white Americans	Equal Unequal	Tourists Overseas students Immigrants
Numerical balance	Majority– minority Equal Distribution	White-Black Americans, Chinese, Japanese & Caucasian Hawaiians	Majority– minority	Host and students Immigrants Tourists
Visible distinguishing characteristics	Race Religion Language	Black and white Americans Ireland India Canada	Race Religion Language	Immigrants Overseas students Tourists

Table 1. Dimensions of cross-cultural contact and examples of each classification (Bochner 1982, page 9)

Table 1 shows how cross-cultural contacts influence the relationships between all members in a society. The level of their communication depends on several factors, including the length of stay, purpose, participation in social life. As a result, it affects many other aspects

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of social life, for instance social status and power of particular groups of people. The following classification also includes overseas (international) students, who have various characteristics and length of stay in a host country.

The global interest of young people in higher education has increased during the past few decades. What drives them to move to another country for getting a higher education? "*The global pattern of international student flows may be explained by a combination of 'push and pull' factors that encourage students to study overseas. 'Push' factors operate within the source country and initiate a student's decision to undertake international study. 'Pull' factors operate within a host country to make that country relatively attractive to international students*" (Mazzarol, Soutar 2002, page 2). There are multiple explanations for that: low level of higher education and corruption in the field of education in their own country, poor working conditions or lack of economic opportunities. The number of international students has increased several times in recent years, and it is still growing[2]. There are about 20 % of international students in the USA, 15 % in the UK and almost 10 % in France, and those numbers continue to increase[3]. A lot of young people show a keen interest in getting higher education in European countries. One of the popular destinations is the Czech Republic, which lies in the very heart of Europe. According to the official information on the website of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, the number of international students is steadily increasing each year[4].

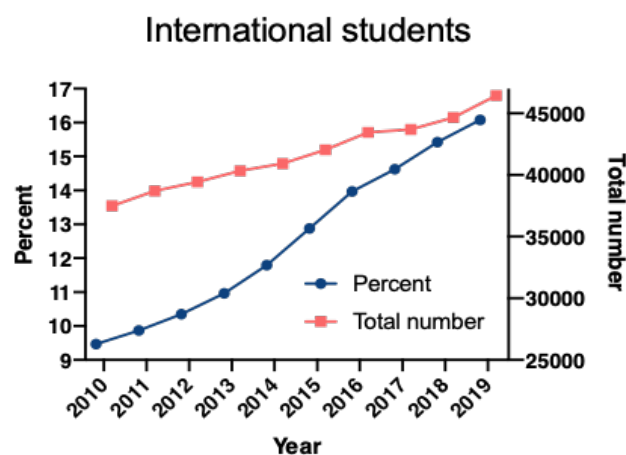*Table 2*. Number of international students in the Czech Republic between 2010-2019

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[2] https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/international-students
[3] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_student
[4] https://dsia.msmt.cz//vystupy/vu_vs_f2.html

The number of foreign students in the field of higher education reached 46.441 in 2019[5]. It confirms the fact that young people become more and more interested in new learning opportunities, and the Czech Republic is a preferred destination, especially for degree-mobile students.

The migration process does have a significant impact on international students and also on the actual situation in the host country. European countries, including the Czech Republic, can be interested in young population because of the ageing process in Europe. Researches have confirmed its influence on demographic rates, which resulted in a decrease of the working-age population. In contrast, the number of the retired population in European countries increases[6]. As for the Czech Republic, the percentage of local Czech students is recently decreasing. According to data of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic, the number of the Czech students at all universities was 354,591 in 2009. In 2019 that number dropped to 242,486, which is very significant for that short time period[7].

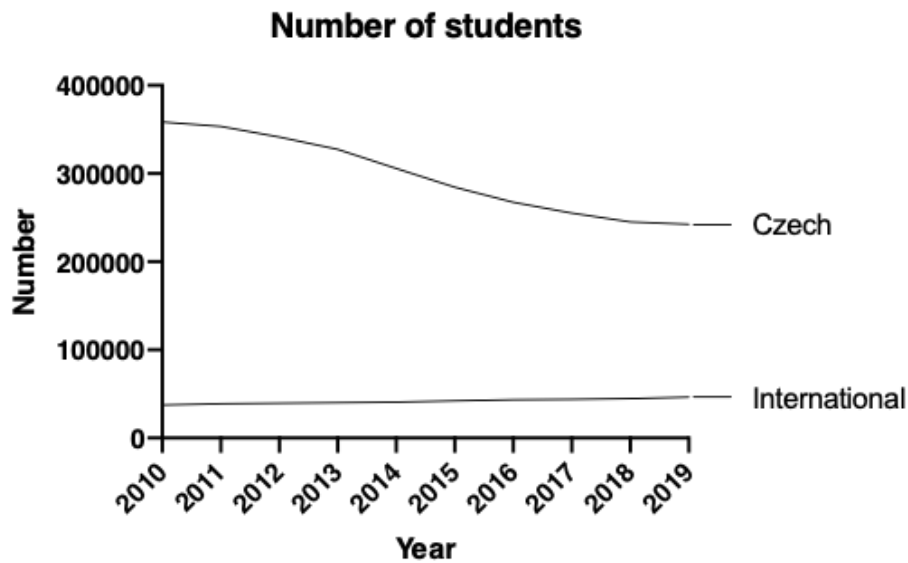**Number of students**

Table 3. Number of international and Czech students in the Czech Republic between 2010-2019

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[5] https://dsia.msmt.cz//vystupy/vu_vs_f2.html

[6] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ageing_of_Europe#:~:text=The%20aging%20of%20Europe%2C%20also,life%20expectancy%20among%20European%20populations.

[7] https://dsia.msmt.cz//vystupy/vu_vs_f2.html

Therefore, host countries have a strong reason to be interested in a new-coming intelligent youth. It should also serve as an additional reason to support international students in the field of higher education. Arranging social and educational environment for the new-coming international students requires much effort. Those special conditions become a basis for strengthening intercultural relations between international and local students. This process should be explored in detail for better understanding. As Nussbaum states:

"We live in a world in which people face one another across gulfs of geography, language and nationality. More than at any time in the past, we all depend on people we have never seen, and they depend on us. The problems we need to solve – economic, environmental, religious and political – are global in their scope. They have no hope of being solved unless people once distant come together and cooperate in ways they have not before." (Arkoudis, Dollinger, Baik, Patience 2018, page 802)

Studying the adaptation process of international students can be an additional source of valuable information, which can help them connect to others in the local community.

2.1 Cultural diversity

The migration is closely connected with diversity, which represents a variety of people within a society. In short, it recognizes the fact that all people are different. As we know, people differ from each other in many ways: skin colour, age, gender, ethnicity or religion. Everyone has his own way of thinking, behaviour or communication skills. Every person is also unique in his expression. Those differences influence many processes and levels of society. It also affects the educational environment, which includes international students. Local students are sharing space with foreign students, who come from diverse backgrounds. In this case, diversity can build empathy and tolerance, encourage students to communicate with others, establish new intercultural relationships. Cultural diversity should be respected by representatives of all ethnic groups.

On the other hand, the process of student's migration has its own limits. Sometimes students can face great challenges in a new society, including discrimination, violation or segregation experience. For instance, international students can face intercultural conflicts during their education in a host country. *"Host conformity pressure is often reflected in the level of*

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intolerance, prejudice, and discrimination aimed to strangers. Of course, given historically rooted sociopolitical reasons, different host environments show different levels of tolerance to strangers and their ethnic or cultural characteristics" (Kim 2000, page 80). Previous studies have confirmed that international students can face an unfair or prejudicial treatment of local people against them (Arkoudis, Dollinger, Baik, Patience 2018). Challenging discrimination can be an additional stress-factor for foreign students. It can lead to segregation from the majority, which can split one society.

Therefore, the priority of many countries should include preventing discrimination: for instance, creating new intercultural campaigns or opening international organizations. It is necessary to learn to understand and accept the fact that we all are different. *"Of equal importance to effective cross-cultural service delivery is developing empathy and an appreciation for the life experiences of those who are culturally diverse…"* (Diller 2015, page 3-4). Accepting this priority and idea of intercultural acceptance in order to release resources can lead to prosperity and development of society and its people.

2.2 Culture shock phase

Studying abroad can bring various difficulties to a young student. *"Entering college is a period of transition with inherent stressors, but for international students studying in another country carries additional stressors, such as adapting to cultural differences, dealing with language barriers, having reduced support from family and friends, and having concerns regarding visas"* (Lopez, Bui 2014, page 315). Described factors of migration process can precede the process of culture shock. *"Culture shock is the process of initial adjustment to an unfamiliar environment. This psychological construct of culture shock has been used to describe the adjustment process in its emotional, psychological, behavioral, cognitive and physiological impact on individuals"* (Pedersen 1995, page 1). Individuals who are not ready for such significant life changes may experience negative feelings and emotions.

International students can feel lost in a new society because everything is unknown, unusual and unpredictable for them. Difficulties might appear in many life aspects, for instance, personal, cultural, educational, psychological or financial. It can be hard to overcome for an adult, not to mention a young person who is alone in a foreign country. First time of admiring can very soon end up with feelings of loneliness or depression. Authors describe several

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stages of culture shock starting with admiring phase and ending with apathy and melancholic states. One of the most famous theories of culture shock is the U-curve theory by Lysgaard, 1955, refined by Oberg in 1960. Oberg describes four stages of the Culture shock, which people pass while they adapt to a new society. "*According to Oberg, cultural adaptation starts with a Honeymoon Stage, during which sojourners tend to feel excited about new experiences, such as making new friends or observing the new culture. It is followed by the Culture Shock Stage, consistent with the Crisis idea mentioned above. Sojourners in this stage are highly likely to suffer from anxiety and conflicts. For example, they might feel lonely, isolated, helpless, or find it hard to use appropriate behaviors to abide by the host culture's conventions. The next stage is the Recovery Stage, during which cultural differences are accepted and adapted to. The stability of mood and positive attitudes comes along on a day-to-day basis. Finally, in the Adaptation Stage, people are able to function fairly well and reach a higher level of adaptation*" (Wang et. al 2018, page 825). Results of the study by Wang et al. have shown that adjustment of international students starts with the Honeymoon Stage when they admire the new country and culture. It is followed by the Culture shock phase, which is characterized as a melancholic period. The authors of this study did not find clear boundaries between the last two stages of the Culture shock and consider that there is no specific boundary between the Recovery and Adjustment stages (Wang et al. 2018).

This theory is mainly focused on mental state and well-being of sojourners during their living in a host country. It also includes the level of their social connections with the majority. According to the results obtained, the migration process leads to various emotional and psychological changes: positive and negative, as well. "*Migrants may therefore remain confused, anxious, apathetic or angry until a level of adjustment is reached. Culture shock may be seen as a transitional experience and also as essential for self-development and personal growth*" (Bhugra, Ayonrinde 2004, page 15). Facing new cultural and social norms can be confusing and problematic for minorities. It is highly important to find things, which can stabilize their position in a new society at that moment. The adjustment process of sojourners in a host country is described in detail in the next chapter.

3 Acculturation process

Numerous personal changes which take place in migration are included in the process called acculturation. This phenomenon has attracted researchers even in the last century. In the 1936 Robert Redfield et al. in Memorandum for the study of acculturation wrote the following definition: *"Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups"* (Redfield, Linton, Herskovits 1936, page 149). Acculturation process is a long-term process, which affects minorities and majority groups of a host country. Both groups differ in many socio-cultural aspects, which significantly influences the quality of their communication and connection. Hofstede classified those different aspects in the following figure:
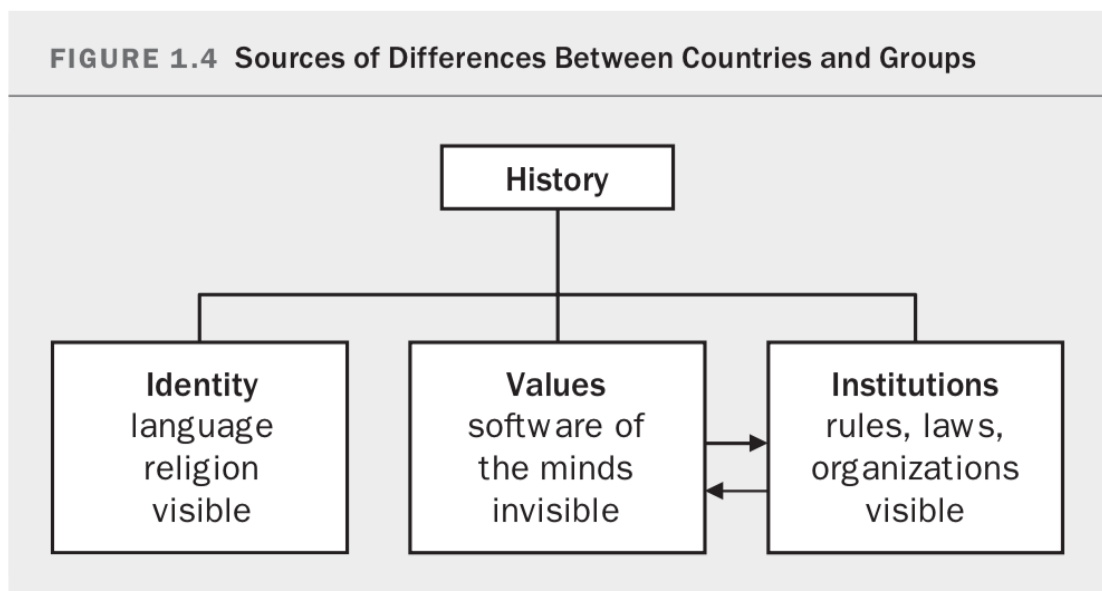
Figure 1. Sources of differences between countries and groups (Hofstede, Minkov 2010, page 22)

According to Hofstede, there are three main sources of differences between countries and groups: cultural values, identity and institutions of society. Some of those parts are visible to other people, and others are not. Identity of a person includes external manifestation, for example, the way of behaviour, appearance, food preferences, etc., which are visible. Additionally, there are our values that are not readily visible to an observer. *"Values are implicit: they belong to the invisible software of our minds... () it implies questioning our*

motives, emotions, and taboos" (Hofstede, Minkov 2010, page 23). Other sources of differences are institutions: country's rules, laws, schools, government.

Values of one country and its system of institutions are interrelated and can affect each other through various activities; that is why there is an arrow between those two resources (Figure 1). All of them can also be influenced by external forces if necessary (for instance, foreign institutions or a process of globalization). According to Hofstede, the only thing that cannot be changed by external forces is the identity of a person: the way he thinks and feels. *"The degree to which identities can be multiple depends on culture"* (Hofstede, Minkov 2010, page 23). In other words, the culture around an individual "multiplies" an identity and creates new facets. In one society, many groups can learn to live together and coexist despite their differences.

The process of acculturation includes changes that result from continuous contacts of people from different cultures. *"The acculturation process is multidimensional, including physical, psychological, financial, spiritual, social, language, and family adjustment"* (Mui, Suk-Young Kang 2006, page 244). Resources of cross-cultural psychology describe two acculturation theories: unidimensional and bidimensional model. *"The unidimensional model describes this acculturation as the process of moving from one cultural identity (e.g., ethnic identity) to the other (e.g., mainstream cultural identity) over time"* (Gordon 1964 cit. in Kang 2006, page 670). According to this theory, a sojourner is changing his own cultural identity to a new one while living in a host society. It can also be called assimilation or bipolar model, which is characterized by the imbalance in favour of one culture. Some authors expect that *"international students would prefer assimilation or integration strategies as these might provide students positive adjustment experiences to the new culture"* (Lopez, Bui 2014, page 317).

According to several authors, the unidimensional model considers acculturation as a one-way process, which in many cases is not so simple (Kang 2006). There are no strict and absolute boundaries between student's preferences in adjustment: a lot of them are interested in a new cultural environment while trying to retain their original culture. It is a reason why new studies in cross-cultural psychology mainly prefer the bidimensional model of acculturation provided by John W. Berry.

One of the mainstream theories of acculturation is a bidimensional theory developed by John W. Berry, which concludes the role of both cultures in a host country: the original culture of a sojourner and new local culture. Both of them interact and have a significant impact on the identity of an international student by influencing him in various ways. "*This model is based on the observation that ethnic/cultural minorities residing in multicultural societies should confront two essential questions: whether they maintain ethnic identities and whether they want to be actively involved in mainstream culture*" (Kang 2006, page 670).

Based on this suggestion John W. Berry and his colleagues identified four types of acculturation style:

●integration: interest in maintaining both cultural identities

●assimilation: only interest in maintaining mainstream cultural identity

●separation: only interest in maintaining ethnic identity

●marginalization: little interest in maintaining both cultural identities

(Kang 2006, page 671).

ISSUE 1:
MAINTENANCE OF HERITAGE CULTURE AND IDENTITY

ISSUE 2:
RELATIONSHIPS
SOUGHT
AMONG
GROUPS

+ ←→ −   + ←→ −

INTEGRATION   ASSIMILATION   MULTICULTURALISM   MELTING POT

SEPARATION   MARGINALIZATION   SEGREGATION   EXCLUSION

STRATEGIES OF
ETHNOCULTURAL
GROUPS

STRATEGIES OF
LARGER SOCIETY

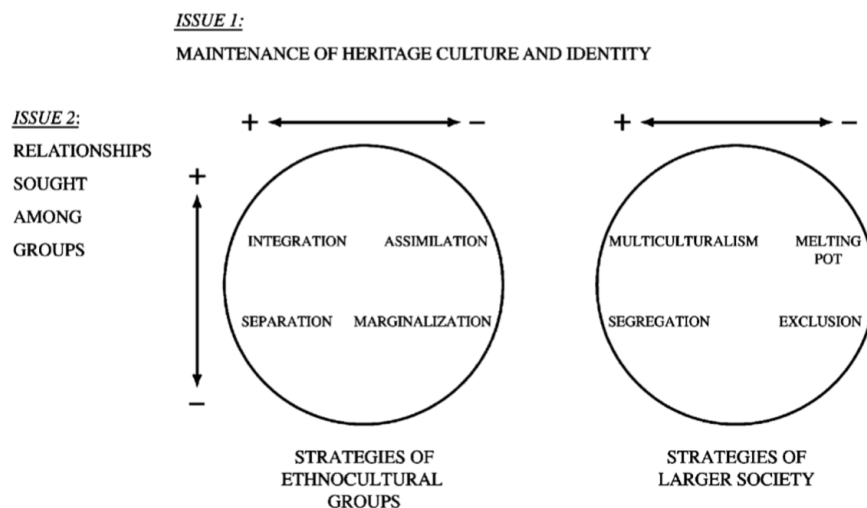Fig. 3. Four acculturation strategies based upon two issues, in ethnocultural groups, and the larger society.

Figure 2. Four acculturation strategies based upon two issues, in ethnocultural groups, and the larger society (Berry 2005, page 705)

Presented information in the Figure 2 shows the ways of intercultural communication between both groups of society: ethnocultural minority groups and broader society. John W.

Berry suggests that there is a considerable variation of how people deal with the acculturation process in a culturally diverse society. Ethnic minorities can manage relationships with others in different ways: from acceptance to rejection. Preferred acculturation type can be reflected in the way of interacting, behaviour or attitudes of a person. Adjustment modes can lead to personal and social changes in one population, affecting both sides: minorities and majority.

There is also strong evidence between acculturation type and acculturative stress during the migration process. Researchers demonstrate that integration and assimilation strategies are more beneficial for the psychological state of international students (Berry 2005, Lueck, Wilson 2010, Sullivan, Kashubeck-West 2015). "*Adjustment has consistently found to be most stressful for individuals with a Marginalization mode and least stressful for those with an Integration mode, with Separation and Assimilation falling in the middle*" (Sullivan, Kashubeck-West 2015, page 2). As a result, the more person is involved in a host culture, the less acculturative stress he/she experiences. Therefore, close ties and relationships with the same cultural representatives and host people might positively affect an individual's position in a new society.

3.1 Acculturative stress

The acculturation process can be very stressful, especially for a young student, who needs to overcome new challenges alone. It can be a source of acculturative stress, which negatively affects the emotional and psychological state of a person. "*Acculturative stress is a reduction in mental health and wellbeing of ethnic minorities that occurs during the process of adaptation to a new culture*" (Lueck, Wilson 2010, page 48). Signs of it can be identified in different life areas, for example, personality, relationships, education. "*The results of Sodowsky and Lai's study (1997) indicated that migrants with low levels of acculturation had higher levels of acculturative stress*" (Lueck, Wilson 2010, page 48). Acculturative stress level also depends on many other variables, which include preferences for social customs or language preference, gender, the age of migration, level of education, years of residence in a new place, income levels, ethnic networks, family extendedness, and perceptions of prejudice (Lueck, Wilson 2010). Other crucial factors can be financial side, language proficiency, lack of social support and social isolation during the first months of living in a host country. Degree-mobile students, who migrate for a certain period of time

might not be interested in maintaining close relationships with local people. Therefore, they may remain culturally and religiously isolated from the larger society. It can become an additional factor of the highest acculturative stress level among them. Studies have also shown the relationship between an established social network and support of a migrant with stress level (Lueck, Wilson 2010). Other stress-related predictors of depression are perceived in cultural gap between people and longer length of residence in a host country (Mui, Suk-Young Kang 2006, page 252).

What are the most common signs of acculturative stress? International students can experience loneliness and worries about their studies and future, which might negatively affect the emotional, cognitive, physical and behavioural state of a person. Signs of acculturative stress can vary depending on the personality and his/her ability to cope with stressful situations. In some cases, it can lead to depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder (Mui, Suk-Young Kang 2006, Bhugra, Ayonrinde 2004). International students might reflect an unusually sad mood, loss of interest in daily activities, lack of energy or even sleeping difficulties. Symptoms of experienced stress vary among people and may change over time. *"Despite substantial prevalence rates, symptoms of depression are often underrecognized, underdiagnosed, and undertreated because of patient- and health care-related barriers and problems in the organization, financing, and delivery of mental health services for older adults"* (Gottlieb, 1991; Mui et al., 2001, cit. in Mui, Suk-Young Kang 2006, page 244). An international student with signs of acculturative stress may also struggle with many additional problems, which can get worse without the right treatment. Raising awareness of acculturative stress-related symptoms can help international students to overcome it. Learned coping skills and strategies can prevent severe mental health problems and increase personal functioning in society.

3.2 PSS Perceived Stress Scale

Intercultural psychology offers different tools for measuring acculturative stress, for instance, the Social, Attitudinal, Familial, and Environmental Acculturative Stress Scale (SAFE; Mena, Padilla, & Maldonado, 1987), Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). Multiple studies use questionnaires for understanding and measuring the stress level of international students. PSS Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein,1983; Cohen & Williamson, 1988) is an

available tool for measuring the actual level of stress. "*The PSS is a measure of the degree to which situations in one's life are appraised as stressful. Items were designed to tap how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded respondents find their lives. There are three versions of the scale, with 4-items, 10-items, or 14-items. The 10-item version is suggested since it has maximum reliability, although the 4-item version can be used for telephone interviews and situations where the number of items is critical. This scale assessed the amount of stress in one's life rather than in response to a specific stressor and has been used widely in studies of both mental and physical health*"[8].

PERCEIVED STRESS SCALE

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. **In each case, you will be asked to indicate by circling** *how often* **you felt or thought a certain way.**

Name _____   Date _____

Age _____   Gender (*Circle*):   **M   F**   Other _____

0 = Never   1 = Almost Never   2 = Sometimes   3 = Fairly Often   4 = Very Often

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	0	1	2	3	4
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?	0	1	2	3	4
4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	0	1	2	3	4
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?	0	1	2	3	4
6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	0	1	2	3	4
7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	0	1	2	3	4
8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	0	1	2	3	4
9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?	0	1	2	3	4
10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	0	1	2	3	4

Table 4. PSS Perceived Stress Scale 10 item scale[9]

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[8] https://macses.ucsf.edu/research/psychosocial/stress.php

[9] http://www.mindgarden.com/documents/PerceivedStressScale.pdf

Time of testing is relatively short. The PSS can also be combined with open-ended questions, which can provide additional valuable information about the feelings and thoughts of a respondent. Validity and reliability of PSS 10 item scale were investigated and confirmed by previous studies (Andreou, Alexopoulos et al. 2011). This instrument provides a quantitative result of the stress level. As well, it is easy-to-use. PSS scale can help to identify people with a high level of stress, and to start a timely intervention.

4 Process of intercultural contact

Migration to another country, followed by close communication with other cultural representatives, invariably leads to personal and social changes. Human interactions are a fundamental tool of receiving new experience, knowledge and ways of thinking. Everything that was once familiar can become unrecognizable in another socio-cultural environment. Local norms, values, thoughts and ideas are being constantly exchanged between all members of one country. Many of those acculturation changes have been studied during the last decades by authors Colleen Ward, John W. Berry, Young Yun Kim. One of the first authors of the cross-cultural study was Stephen Bochner, who wrote a book called Cultures in Contact: Studies in Cross-Cultural Interaction in 1982. The author described two main groups of outcomes of intercultural contact: at a group and individual level.

Group outcomes include genocide, assimilation, segregation and integration. Discussed in detail:

●genocide: violent and cruel confrontation between two groups of people, when representatives of one group kill people from another cultural group
●assimilation: the way of adaptation of people, when minority groups assimilate cultural norms and traditions of majority, thus losing the uniqueness of own culture.
●segregation: when minorities are forced out and segregated from the majority of society
●integration: a specific way of adaptation, when every cultural group remains true to their own values and traditions, living together in one society. This term is usually mistaken for the term of assimilation, which is wrong. Integration is an example of cultural pluralism when various cultures represent one common cultural complex.

(Bochner 1982)

This classification shows many ways of interactions between groups inside one country. Social context and culture have an enormous impact on different aspects of migrant's life. Consequences of interactions tend to appear not just at macro-level, but at micro-level, as well. Micro-level includes each individual in society. Macro-level outcomes affect the next categories:

●attitudes: an internal way of predisposed state of mind, being a basis of a person's values
●social perceptions: the way a person or social situation is perceived, based on personal attitudes. Attitudes and social perceptions are interrelated
●attributions: the situation when a person makes inferences on a cause of someone's behaviour. The way we explain someone's behaviour and reasons for it
●behavioural indices: the way our personal behaviour is changed as a result of certain circumstances and place

(Bochner 1982)

According to Bochner, intercultural interactions have a significant effect on the whole society and each of its representatives. Those changes can be very traumatic and psychologically challenging to overcome. New culture and society can dramatically change the perception of a person, especially at a relatively young age. A young foreign student does not have a traditional way of thinking and acting. It is very crucial to avoid psychological problems and difficulties during this sensitive period. Thanks to early intervention and help of intercultural organizations, students can avoid many harmful psychological states, as for instance, depression, anxiety, fear. Professional support can also prevent discrimination and racism in many fields of society: job, education, cultural, public environment. Described challenges can be achieved by constant dissemination of information about cultural diversity and discrimination. By those activities government of one country can create an enabling environment for peaceful coexistence between majority and minorities in one society.

4.1 Psychological adjustment

Acculturation process is closely related to the psychological adjustment of the sojourner. Most international students migrate to achieve a bachelor's degree after secondary education. It means that the average age of leaving their home is between 18-20 (the age of achieving secondary education). It can be a very critical period due to ongoing

developmental changes of a young person, which are still affecting behaviour. This developmental period includes psychological and physical changes, which influence a person's mental state. Studies have confirmed that psychological adjustment plays a central role in the whole process of acculturation, especially during the first phase of migration (Ward, Kennedy 1993, Hirai, Frazier, Syed 2015, Xiong, Zhou 2018).

The main focus of studies in that field is on how well migrants psychologically adjust to a new environment. According to Lazarus and Folkman, a psychological adaptation of a person can be best interpreted within the stress and coping framework (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). The psychological state of a migrant depends on various factors, which include personality and social support. "*Dispositional factors are also likely to predict the ability of international students to adjust to their new environment*" (Hirai, Frazier, Syed 2015, page 439). Personal characteristics affect daily activity, especially when a person is dealing with stress during the acculturation process. In that case, healthy self-esteem and the right coping style can have a positive effect on adaptation.

"*One dominant model of cross-cultural adjustment is the recuperation model in which psychological recovery follows the initial shock of the cross-cultural contact. The most widely known recuperation model, the U-curve theory, proposed a U-curve shape of psychological adjustment characterized by an initial euphoric state, followed by a period of adjustment difficulty ("culture shock"), and eventual recovery*" (Lysgaard, 1955; Oberg, 1960 cit. in Hirai, Frazier, Syed 2015, page 438). According to this theory, psychological adjustment already starts from the very early stages of migration, shortly after arriving in a host country. This theory is mainly focused on the psychological aspects of acculturation, including migrant's well-being, emotional state, psychological issues. Aspects of psychological well-being should not be underestimated because they are closely related to subjective well-being and health.

4.1.2 Social support

Moving to another country is often accompanied by losing close contact with family and friends in the home country. Building a new life can be very difficult without having their support and help. International students can have a lot of depressive thoughts during the first period of migration. Loneliness is commonly associated with a mood disturbance. The

following manifestations of diverse stressors occur during the acculturation: mental health problems (especially confusion, anxiety, depression), feelings of marginality, decreased self-esteem, psychosomatic symptoms or even identity confusion (Sullivan, Kashubeck-West, 2015). All mentioned signs of stress appear due to moving and living in a foreign country, where social, demographic, economic and primary cultural living conditions differ. The situation of international students can be complicated by the fact that academic life can also become challenging. Many sources state that social support is an important factor in buffering the effects of the existing stress (Hirai, Frazier, Syed 2015, Sullivan, Kashubeck-West 2015).

Maintaining close relationships with families in the home country is an essential part of social support. Their help can reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation in a new place. Modern technologies (Skype, Facebook) could serve as a valuable tool and a bridge between students and their families, especially during the transitional period after arriving in a host country. With the time students can expand their social network with local students and become more adjusted in a new cultural environment.

Social support from the host country can also decrease difficulties during the cultural adaption of foreign students. Support from the majority can provide a better understanding of cultural norms and values. Additionally, it can improve knowledge of important aspects of the host culture, for instance, historical events, social life, cultural differences. One of the most valuable parts of close relationships with local students is better and constant communication in the host language. Studies have confirmed that intentionally developing connections to the host country and having a better level of social support from host nationals are crucial aspects in minimizing acculturative stress (Sullivan, Kashubeck-West 2015). It means that a higher level of contact with local students can prevent the manifestation of acculturative stress among international students during their adjusting.

Raising awareness among international students about the effects of social support on the mental state is a necessary component of their well-being. All challenges that students had to face can be overcome with kind support and help of the closest people and friendship with local students. "*It seems that maintaining connection to the home culture while exploring and developing positive connections to the host culture leads to a decrease in difficulties in*

cultural adaptation. Additionally, the results of studies indicate that a wider social network, extending beyond both co-nationals and host nationals to include other international students as well, is similarly beneficial in adapting to studying in the host country" (Sullivan, Kashubeck-West, 2015, page 7).

4.2 Socio-cultural adjustment

Besides the psychological adjustment, migrants can also experience changes in their behavioural and social composition. "*Sociocultural adjustment, in contrast, is understood within a social learning framework that focuses on how international students acquire social and cultural knowledge. As a result, the strongest predictors of sociocultural adjustment should be social relationships and cultural tools (e.g., language)"* (Hirai, Frazier, Syed 2015, page 439). Studies in that field are mostly focused on learning models of a migrant. *"Another dominant model is the learning model in which cross-cultural adjustment is described as a process of social communication and behavioral learning, with adjustment following an ascending learning curve"* (Furnham and Bochner, 1986 cit. in Hirai, Frazier, Syed 2015, page 438). Behavioural competence of a person plays a central role in his social and personal life. The ability of fast and right reacting is a necessary social tool in everyday life. Migrants come with a particular model of behaviour, which was affected by their own culture. Facing new cultural norms and values leads to systematic changes in the behaviour of an individual. Social skills being a key instrument of adaptation in a new society, are changed according to the current situation. Successfully changed behavioural patterns can positively influence the relationships with the larger society. Daily interactions and communication of international students with local people can have a strong positive effect on social and behavioural skills of international students. Individuals become more aware of specific local norms, ways of reacting and interacting with others. It can be manifested in the way of dressing of a student, changed food preferences, vocabulary, social activities. Successful adaptation of foreign students is based on the ability to adapt and change internal patterns of behaviour and thinking accordingly to the new environment.

Preferred acculturation type (integration, assimilation, marginalization, separation, Figure 2) of a migrant has also a considerable impact on the sociocultural adjustment. All those acculturation modes are based on the preferences of the host or own culture. For instance, a migrant, who undergoes the integration, is mostly very active in communication with the

majority. Those individuals are entirely integrating themselves into a dominant culture in all aspects: psychological and sociocultural, and, consequently, have better cultural understanding, relationships and even lower acculturative stress level. Previous studies have also confirmed the advantage of integration mode of acculturation (Kang 2006). *"Adjustment has consistently found to be most stressful for individuals with a Marginalization mode and least stressful for those with an Integration mode, with Separation and Assimilation falling in the middle"* (Sullivan, Kashubeck-West, 2015, page 2).

Another key factor, which has a further impact on a migrant's social adjustment is cultural distance. Vast differences across acculturating groups might also be expected. The minority group, which culture is much more different from the host culture, has greater sociocultural adaptation problems (Ward, Kennedy 1993). Those differences can lead to a higher acculturative stress level among minority representatives. As a result, individuals can become economically and socially disadvantaged. The language barrier can also lead to increased prejudices or discriminatory behaviour against minority groups. In conclusion, the quality and quantity of host contact play a central role in the acculturation process. Therefore, those intercultural interactions should be additionally studied for better understanding.

4.2.1 Language competence

Language is a crucial instrument, connecting people all over the world. Society is based on the everyday communication of its citizens. *"Language is considered one of the most important components of ethnic identity and has been commonly and widely assessed across acculturation instruments"* (Kang 2006, page 677). Researchers recognize host language as a component of the acculturation process (Jiang, Green, Henley, Masten 2009). *"Greater competency in the host language increases adaptation, and influences emotional attachment both directly and indirectly. Thus, host language proficiency seems to be a necessary key to access the host country's values and customs. Indeed, linguistic proficiency eases daily interaction with host-culture members, which undoubtedly helps immigrants increase their comprehension of the norms governing social events and relations"* (Miglietta, Tartaglia 2009, page 56).

The process of learning the host society language might become a challenge for international students during their first year of study. Often, entrance exams at the university and the entire

life depends on a good knowledge of the host language. For many people learning a second language can be a difficult task. Several studies have also confirmed that learners, who begin to acquire a second language in the social environment after puberty compared with early learners, are usually constrained by age-related maturational factors (Jiang, Green, Henley, Masten 2009). Learning a second language consists of various stages with different thinking processes. It starts with the Preproduction phase when a student is not able to answer the question. Continuing in the Early production when the comprehension is still not good enough, but a person can use keywords and phrases. Then, the Speech emergence follows, when a student has good comprehension and can produce simple sentences. The last stages include the Intermediate and Advanced fluencies when a person has excellent comprehension and pronunciation[10]. A student needs to complete all stages in the learning second language to achieve better results in communication with native speakers.

During the first time of learning a foreign language, students start to improve the receptive language, manifested in how well they understand the meaning of sentences and texts. After some time, a person can easily understand the mean idea of a conversation, but rarely can answer or add anything in return. The expressive side of a language, being very stressful for students, is a long-term process. Those students often understand and want to participate in a conversation using a second language with local people, but are not yet able to do this, which can be very frustrating. A constant educational process can improve all aspects of language. Students can increase grammar and vocabulary knowledge step by step. "*Immersion in a host society and positive acceptance of ethnic identity may be necessary for successful second language. It has been argued that immersion within the native culture could offer a sense of belonging and emotional security, thus providing people the psychological capacity to deal with acculturation stress during the second language learning process*" ((Jiang, Green, Henley, Masten 2009, page 489). Students can use every possible opportunity to practice their language skills with local people. Language proficiency can positively affect the adjustment process of international students. Researchers also confirmed the fact that linguistic factors have an impact on the acculturative stress level (Lueck, Wilson, 2009). It is a reason why a permanent effort in learning a foreign

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[10] http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/108052/chapters/The-Stages-of-Second-Language-Acquisition.aspx

language is crucial for achieving excellent results in communication during the adjustment period.

5 Length of stay in relation to acculturative stress

Several studies have also confirmed the relationship between the length of stay and the acculturative stress level (Miglietta, Tartaglia 2009, Ayoob, Singh, Jan, 2011). Findings in the field of cross-cultural psychology show that acculturative stress is higher among international students with shorter length of stay, in comparison to students with longer duration of stay in a host country. The main reason for that could be emerging factors after arriving in a new country. According to Hofstede, the first months after arriving in a new country are the most critical for a migrant. The Honeymoon stage or Euphoria phase is replaced by the Culture shock, which dramatically affects the psychological state of a student. The following acculturation curve accurately describes the mentioned stages:

FIGURE 11.1 The Acculturation Curve
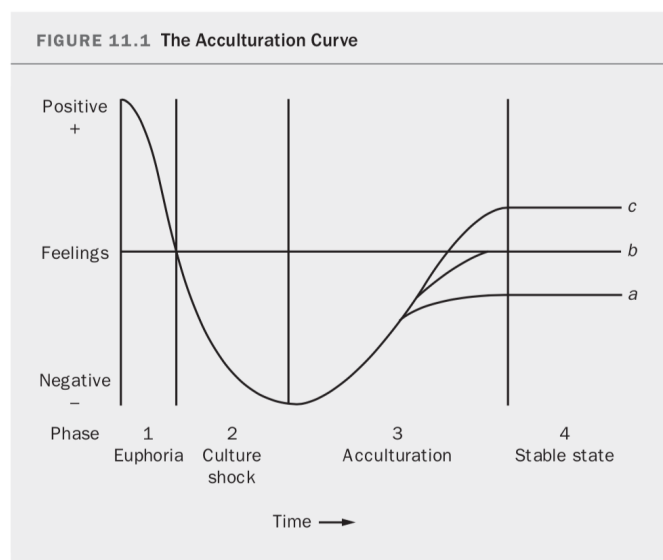
Figure 3. The Acculturation Curve (Hofstede, Minkov 2010, page 385)

Based on Figure 3, individual's well-being is changing during the whole process of his adjustment period. Length of stay can have a significant impact on the psychological and emotional state of a person. Many essential life aspects can be negatively affected by the migration process, so it might become a reason for the declining of positive emotions. According to Hofstede's theory, the most dramatic period of adaptation is the Culture shock stage, when individuals can start to perceive a new social environment as a threat to their

own cultural identity. As it was mentioned before, the Culture shock increases a stress level. People may feel anxious or confused until an appropriate level of adjustment is reached.

With the time each individual comes toward the next Acculturation stage and its outcomes. During this phase, a person is trying to cope with stressful situations and adjust to a new cultural environment. The degree of interaction with the host population and language competence influence the perception of new coming challenges. New local acquaintance and friends might become an additional source of the necessary information in many complicated cases of a migrant's life. A more extended period of stay can also become a decisive factor of better adjustment to new life conditions. People become more familiar with a lot of problems, which were unknown before the transition, so their feelings become more positive. Acculturation is a long-lasting process which does not have a specific end, but as psychologists say, it leads to a certain acculturative type of a migrant (Berry, 2005).

According to John W. Berry (2005), migrants can choose and act according to a particular acculturation type (integration, assimilation, separation or marginalization). Figure 2 shows the ways of acculturation and how a chosen mode influences the psychological condition of a person. Individuals start to prefer one of the acculturation types over time. For instance, according to some studies, the Integration type of adjustment prevents acculturative stress and, as a result, leads to better well-being (Sullivan, Kashubeck-West 2015). Those individuals may refer to the *C-line* in the figure, where the most positive feelings are detected. The *B-line* can be related to Assimilation or Separation type when feelings are in the middle. Finally, the *A-line* can refer to Marginalization mode when a lot of negative manifestations appear. Individuals can choose the intensity of communication with local people, and it can also affect their entire adaptation in a host country. The mode of the acculturation can be "freely" chosen and achieved when the larger society is open for minorities and inclusive in cultural diversity (Berry 2005). It is a reason for providing the necessary information, support and help for vulnerable minority groups of society. Living together may be changed by dedication, diligence and composure in the face of stressful situations.

6 Prevention of acculturative stress among international students

Acculturation as a two-way process should be studied on both individual and social level. Minority and majority groups interact and interchange various cultural elements, which irreversibly leads to psychological changes. The goal of many diverse societies is to achieve acceptance and tolerance among all representatives in population. It is also crucial to maintain values of every unique culture. Cooperation of many organizations on adjustment of minority representatives can be beneficial for everyone.

New coming students face many challenges during the adjustment to a new country. In this case, financial support from the family is a necessary aspect of migration because it is associated with a lot of expenses. Often students are not able to work in a host country during their studies, because of additional demands (e.g. learning the local language). New-coming students should also solve additional visa issues, accommodation and daily problems. Families are the very first source of psychological support during the transition period. A better social adjustment can also be achieved by learning and improving personal social skills. Better communication level might enforce contacts with local students, which is an additional source of information and support.

International students might also need support shortly after the arrival in a host country. *"Additionally, more needs to be done in respect to assisting student orientation and even pre-arrival planning, to help students find safe and suitable living spaces and begin their studies with a positive attitude about their upcoming experiences. (..) Simultaneously, academic staff and administrators need in-service training programs to sensitise them to the challenges international students are facing and to enable them to nurture better interactions between international and domestic students"* (Arkoudis et al. 2018, page 811). Buddy programs at a university could be a source of establishing a student's movement, which can create an opportunity for new meetings between all students, including international. The purpose of the program is that every international student receives support from a local student, who becomes a gatekeeper to a new life at the university. Local students can exchange personal experience, explain the educational system, inform about subjects at a university. Foreign students can also ask for help during their daily student's life if needed. Through those connections, local and international students can become friends, giving consequent support to each other.

Another way to bring multiculturalism is intercultural events, where representatives of different cultures can meet together and interchange their life experience. It can be an excellent chance to meet other international students, who have the same cultural background and who have also passed the same acculturation period in a foreign country. Those intercultural events at a campus can be organized several times during the whole academic year, so students can get more opportunities to meet someone and become friends. Such activities are also valuable for breaking or changing negative stereotypes and biases about foreign and local people, as well. Stereotypes have a significant role in shaping attitudes toward certain ethnic groups, which in turn affects the behavioural aspects of people. That might include discrimination or aggressive behaviour against minorities. Students will get some time and space to know other ethnics. It can help them to understand the foreign culture and express their own. It is a reason why intercultural meetings can also prevent discrimination in society. In this way, a sense of community can be achieved among many university groups. A strong sense of belonging can stimulate positive feelings among international students.

An additional advantage of intercultural meetings among students is improving knowledge of the host language. International students can practice the language and expand their vocabulary when they communicate with local students. They can also improve their pronunciation skills, as it is the hardest part of learning the second foreign language. Another way to help international students in learning language can be specific language courses. It can be an additional course based on learning grammar and practicing communication skills in the host language at a university. The goal of this kind of program is to help students improve their communication skills for academic life, focusing on listening, speaking, reading and writing. That kind of support is extremely important for achieving academic goals and developing a safe environment for international students in a new educational environment.

A university can also offer the help of professional counsellors, trained in cross-cultural psychology or counselling psychology. Additional help and support provided by trained counsellors might prevent depressive states and therefore decrease the level of acculturative and academic stress among international students. Counsellors can organize special group meetings, discuss specific problems, watch special lectures dedicated to issues affecting the

well-being of students. Real life-related activities and cultural events could also be introduced into classrooms. Some lectures can be related to mental health issues, well-being, acculturative stress and discrimination. Students can receive information about consultations with university counsellors, who can them in stressful situations. Their services can also be provided anonymously, because many discussed issues can be sensitive for an individual.

The personal well-being of students can affect their academic life and vice versa. It is a reason to have specialized resources to support them, especially during their first months of studying, when everything seems to be very complicated and unknown. Those activities can prevent a decline in well-being, and so many students won't need to seek professional help in other health-related institutions. Trained counsellors, for instance, can detect threats earlier and offer their support. Many issues can be resolved by educational programs in cross-cultural psychology and mental health training. It is also necessary to expand a personal social network, especially for international students, who are alone in a host country. *"Emphasizing the development of host country rather than home country social support is an important part of decreasing acculturative stress and encouraging successful adaptation to living and studying"* (Sullivan, Kashubeck-West 2015, page 7). All mentioned activities are a progressive step for productive cooperation and harmonious living together in one community.

7 Summary

The current study aims to explore the adjustment process of international students in the Czech Republic. According to presented official data, the number of international students in the Czech Republic is continually growing. How do different groups of international students adjust to a new society? There is a relatively limited number of studies dedicated to the acculturation process of international students in the Czech environment. It is useful to explore the actual position of the foreign students in the Czech Republic. The present study aims to find differences between two groups of students: who live in the Czech Republic for less than one year and who live in the Czech Republic for more than one year. Mostly, this work is concentrated on differences in their psychological and sociocultural adjustment.

Review of studies has also confirmed the fact of acculturative stress among international students. This work discusses their main challenges. Additionally, the stress level of students

in both groups will be measured. This research will bring new understanding regarding the acculturative stress and its consequences on student's well-being.

This topic is of great importance because of its social and intercultural value. What steps should be taken into consideration for a successful acculturation of international students? Those questions needed to be answered in view of the considerable number of foreign students in Czech society. Findings of this research can bring additional information which can be used in many psychology-related fields.

8 Empirical part

8.1 Research design

The aim of this study was to get a deeper understanding of the adjustment process of international students in the Czech Republic. For this purpose were used two methods of research: 8 interviews with international students and an online questionnaire filled in by 36 international students. Those *methods* were used to collect data for the study. According to the central theme *research questions* were formulated:

1.　　Do the international students with a longer length of stay adjust differently from the students who had just arrived in the Czech Republic?

2.　　Does a stress level in those two groups of students differ? If yes, what are the main reasons for this difference?

3.　　What are the key steps of the successful adjustment of the international students in the Czech Republic?

The main research question was to identify differences in the migration experience of two groups of international students. This study aims to identify the relationship between experienced acculturative stress and length of stay. Acculturative stress is expected to be higher in the group of respondents with shorter length of stay. It is also anticipated that the adjustment between the two groups will be different. As the next model demonstrates, stages of adaptation might be various:

Migration model: Arrival (same)—Culture shock (same)—Adjustment (different)

8.2 Methods of research

Interviews with 8 students were semi-structured, which can provide meaningful qualitative data. In the Group 1 (length of the stay in the Czech Republic up to 1 year) were 2 women and 2 men, and the Group 2 (length of the stay in the Czech Republic more than 1 year) included 3 women and 1 man. All conversations were recorded and later transcribed. Collected responses were analyzed using MAXQDA program, where they were thematically coded. Answers were coded to various categories that have emerged during the interviews. The next step was to combine those categories into central themes, which were based on differences and similarities among answers of all students. Final themes of discussions were chosen according to their relevance to the main questions of the study.

Findings of the interviews were supported by an additional online questionnaire PSS Perceived Stress Scale (PSS; Cohen, Kamarck & Mermelstein,1983; Cohen & Williamson, 1988), which was created on the web application Google Forms. The questionnaire was filled in by 36 international students (13 females and 5 males in the Group 1; 12 females and 6 males in the Group 2), including students from interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed with Excel program and R software, which was used for statistical computing and graphics. All data were collected anonymously.

8.3 Characteristics of respondents

International students were personally asked for participation in research interviews related to the adjustment of foreign students in the Czech Republic. Following inclusion criteria were applied:

●Russian speaking international student
●Studying the Czech language in a language course or studying in the Czech language at the university, female and male.

All potential participants were informed about the main goal of the present study in advance. The age of the participants was between 18-25 years. All international students came from the Post-Soviet states, including Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan. Respondents were divided into the two separate groups:

●students who are living in the Czech Republic up to one year. They were currently studying the Czech language in the language school. The course included two semesters of the intensive learning of the Czech language with native speakers qualified to teach (Group 1)
●students who are living in the Czech Republic for more than one year. They were currently enrolled in a Bachelor or Master program at the university in the Czech language (Group 2)

Respondent	Sex	Length of stay	Education
1	Female	Short-term	Language course
2	Female	Short-term	Language course
3	Male	Short-term	Language course
4	Male	Short-term	Language course
5	Female	Long-term	University
6	Female	Long-term	University
7	Female	Long-term	University
8	Male	Long-term	University

Respondents of the interviews included - *Table 5*. Description of respondents

For participating in online research, respondents were recruited remotely. Students who met the requirements were asked to fill in an online questionnaire using Google Forms. They received a link and filled the PSS Perceived Stress Scale questionnaire anonymously.

9 Results

Results of the study are divided into the two parts: data received from the interviews and data received from the online questionnaire described in the last part of the Results and Discussion.

At first, structured information from conversations with 8 students from Group 1 and 2 is presented. Those respondents were asked research questions about their arrival to the host country. They have shortly described their life in a home country before migrating to the Czech Republic. Students have also mentioned factors, that led them to leave their own country and face new challenges in a new one. According to their answers, Push and Pull-factors were identified. Also, the Honeymoon, Culture shock and Adjustment stages were described, including factors of poor and successful adjustment to the Czech society.

In the last part the results from the online PSS Perceived Stress Scale questionnaire are presented. The questionnaire was filled in by 36 students from Group 1 and 2. Levels of the acculturative stress in relation to the length of stay were analyzed.

9.1 Push-factors and Pull-factors of migration

Based on interviews with international students, factors of their migration have been identified. Migration to a new country, being a very challenging change, is often

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accompanied by serious reasons, which may be classified as Push and Pull-factors. One of the main mentioned reason for migration was the attractiveness of studying in the Czech Republic. According to respondents, this European country is providing quality and affordable education. Additional attractive feature is that education in the Czech language is tuition-free for every person, regardless of the citizenship. Commonly, students were not satisfied with the level of education provided in their own countries. That is why they decided to find an alternative way outside of their home country. Described Push-factors combined with emerging Pull-factors inevitably led to international migration for educational purposes. Expectations of the respondents from both groups were highly positive. For instance, student 5 described his expectations as follows:

"I wanted to get a good education outside of my own country. That's why I've decided to move to the Czech Republic".

Student 4 has also mentioned the high level of education in the Czech Republic:

"The Czech Republic is a much more developed country. You are expecting better a way of living, that's why people are coming to study here. It is something new, interesting and scary, as well. But, when you come here, you get used to it. You have a huge expectation that everything will be much better".

Other respondents have also admired the level of higher education in the Czech Republic. This country is considered to be a very safe place with many opportunities in the education field for all international students. Described reasons have become a significant Pull-factor for moving to this country for a long-term living.

The following conclusion can explain the decision of foreign students to migrate to the Czech Republic: *poor level of education in a home country* combined with *tuition-free education* for every person who joins Czech language programs and *high quality* of education in many fields at Czech universities. Due to those reasons, international students are first come to study the Czech language for one year to prepare for the future academic life and the entrance exams for desired universities.

9.2 The Honeymoon phase of the acculturation process

Studying abroad is a good chance to live in a foreign country, learn a new foreign language and meet new friends. This experience can open a new world, filled with new perspectives and opportunities for a young person. Representatives from both groups were highly motivated and excited to move to the Czech Republic. During the first time, they felt great about their arrival to this country. For some of them, it was their first travelling abroad on their own. The positive effect after the arrival to new country can be referred to as the Honeymoon stage, described by Oberg (1960). Student 3 has mentioned:

"- What was your first impression of the country?

- That it is a perfect country to live in... Pretty houses, kind people and new cars."

Student 6 has also described the same feelings during the first months after the arrival to the Czech Republic:

"It was comfortable. It's like to be in the right place."

During this phase students believed that they had made the best decision to study and live in this country. Everything was interesting: new places, sights and people. Some students were excited about how good everything was organized in the city. It was a great chance for them to explore a new country, its culture, food and surroundings of the new environment, even though they did not know the local language. In general, students were inspired to visit historical places and local landmarks without noticing country's problems and weaknesses.

However, beyond those advantages, there were some challenges, which every international student had to face during his migration. Such strong positive feelings of all respondents were followed by melancholic and anxious mood. This experience might confirm the idea of the Honeymoon and Culture shock phase in the adjustment process. Successful overcoming new-coming difficulties is highly important for a school leaving qualification and future career.

9.3 The Culture shock phase in the adjustment process

Signs of the Culture shock were presented in both groups several weeks after their arrival to the Czech Republic. There is no evidence of a specific event, that caused it. The Culture shock can arise due to extremely different social and cultural conditions in a new country, where everything seems to be unknown and unpredictable. Students had to face educational challenges, including learning the Czech language. Moreover, the realization of the long-term living in a foreign country without family and friends can cause devastating harm to a young person. It was noticeable that students from Group 1 clearly described their emotional states during the interview. Apparently, it was due to recent memories and feelings. Representatives of Group 2 have also mentioned negative feelings shortly after they migrated to the Czech Republic. Three main aspects of the Culture shock phase were identified: *loneliness, lack of social support* and *additional challenges*.

9.3.1 Loneliness as a prediction of depression and anxiety

Moving to a new location has a vast influence on person's mindset, including his mental health condition. Characteristics of an individual had a significant impact on the ability of respondents to cope with acculturative stressors efficiently. Students from Group 1 and Group 2 have reflected different challenges during their migration experience. The prevailing feeling *of loneliness* during the Cultural shock phase was presented among all respondents. It became a factor of emerged negative emotions, such as depression or anxiety mood. Their mental state was also closely related to other factors: homesickness, recognition of foreign degree in the host country, stress in the school, anticipation of the entrance exams. This complex of emotions has caused adverse effects on the physical and mental state of respondents.

Students from Group 1 have been studying in the Czech Republic for less than one year. Before the migration, all of them were living with their families, where they could get everyday support and protection. Those respondents have mentioned depressive states, troubles at home and anxious feelings. Student 3 said:

"I was upset… Always sad… I wanted to start my language course, not to feel alone. To be a part of something. I have found several friends after some time, but … it was sad."

"It wasn't simple. Before that time, I've lived in a family house, where everything was known. You're coming home and everything is done, washed. You can go for a walk with your best friends from your childhood. Here you don't have such things… It was obvious that the first two months would be the most difficult because you don't know anyone here."

Students from Group 2 have also reflected the same psychological stressor during their first time of living in the Czech Republic. Student 5 descriptions:

"I didn't realize what was happening at all... I was lost, and I had melancholic crises periodically. I've cried, I could be in a tram and then just start to cry..."

"I personally changed dramatically after I moved here. I was a very "home child'. I lived in the countryside, where my parents took care of me, got me from school and back home. Socially I wasn't adapted so well. And when I've arrived here, life here moved me to change myself. Of course, I'm still working on it, but I've become more responsible for many things."

Respondent 7:

"It was hard because of loneliness… Well, I've had some schoolmates, but they were loners. We've had our lessons, had some fun and learned… And that it. Everyone went home alone after each lesson. And I was like: Hm, what next? I am alone. What am I supposed to do? And I could decide to just go shopping, buy some food, cook and watch TV and go to bed. And that it. That is loneliness."

Based on the responses, loneliness was the most common feeling in both groups of students during their first months of staying in a host country. Almost everyone wanted to move and study in the Czech Republic, but the initial psychological adjustment was very intense. Every respondent has described negative psychological states during the first period of adjustment. Students had mixed emotions about their migration: on the one side they wanted to study abroad, but on the other side, the reality was too hard for them. The prevailing feeling of loneliness was one of the hardest parts after they migrated to the Czech Republic. Some students reflected it more, another less. Several respondents did not know how to cope with

stress. Others did not want to burden family members or friends with such problems. No one of the presented students had ever asked for professional help when it was needed: for example, psychological support in the language school or at a university.

Social support is highly important for every international student during the first months after arriving in a host country. It might be difficult to overcome all upcoming issues alone under such circumstances. Migration may induce depressive symptoms, so that a young student may feel desperate under the influence of acculturative stressors. It can encourage young people to seek and get professional help in different intercultural organizations or at school. Special meetings, courses, even brochures, can become a source of crucially important information for foreign representatives.

9.3.2 Lack of social support

The key aspect of the acculturation process is the *social support of relatives* and *close friends*. Facing personal or school challenges can be very hard for a new-coming student. A person can lose constant communication with family members and friends. Respondents from the Groups 1 and 2 have mentioned a lack of communication with their close people because of the distance between them. Nevertheless, they tried to ask for family support during the first time after arriving to the Czech Republic. Thanks to modern internet technologies (Skype, Facebook), students had an opportunity to call and text their family almost every day. They shared their feelings and emotions about a new place and school.

However, several respondents did not ask for family help. The main argument was that parents or friends from their own country did not have much international experience, so they were not able to understand and give the right advice in that kind of situations. Students have decided to find support in the group of international students from their school because they were sharing the same migration and life experience. Respondents assumed that other foreign students had already passed the same stages of the adjustment and had useful information. This feeling of belonging to the group with the same type of migration experience might become an additional source of social support. Finding new friends in a host country can be a coping strategy for overcoming the acculturative stress. Respondents from this study have found understanding in the same group of students, where they had an opportunity to express themselves without any judgment. The continuous exchange of

experience between new-coming students was a way to cope with stressful situations during the acculturation process. Thus, student 6 said:

"-All the problems faded into the background. I had new friends. We were like a small family. Like a fortress. And other problems weren't so difficult. The recognition of school education, financial problems… Nothing. I've always had support.

-So, you've asked them for help in stress situations?
-Yes!"

Another respondent 1 answered:

"-Which coping strategies can you name?

-Meeting new people. I've met one student, and I've got at least some useful information. So, my guess is that meeting new people can help you to overcome such stressful situations."

Student 5 has also described how support from her roommates helped:

"At that moment, I've tried to find some support from my roommates. Well, I've tried to talk to them, asked them what they like here or not. I didn't have close friends during my first time here, but I've found one with the time, and it made me feel much better."

Remarkably, different hobbies and sports can become a source of the new acquaintances. It can also help to alleviate the stress and find people with common interests. For example, while student 3 was a keen athlete, he joined a volleyball team:

"Of course, the very first weeks were very hard, because I didn't know anyone. But I was lucky, and I've found some new people in a volleyball team, so I had a place to go during the weekend."

Answers of respondents show a constant need for close relationships, especially after arriving to a new social environment. Meeting new people had helped them to overcome

upcoming obstacles. Many students might think that they are alone in this situation and that no one can understand their position. They can even think that their life experience is unique. However, the experience of presented respondents shows the opposite. Students have found necessary understanding in the same community. Respondents did not feel alone and always had necessary support in stressful situations among representatives from the same ethnic group. Student 3 said:

"During the first lesson, you think that you are not able to handle this, that you won't be able to finish your studies, because you don't understand anything. And you think, oh, well, everyone understands everything, besides me... But everyone felt the same, and you can understand this just after having some communication with them."

Conversations with other students can help to realize how other students are coping with the same stress events in a new place. In conclusion, the first step of overcoming personal anxiety or depression is building new relationships with students from the same ethnic community in the school or dormitory. Social support can be beneficial for an international student in many ways: emotional support, sharing migration experience, consultations about visa issues, preparing for the entrance exams at a university, learning the Czech language together. An international student can get many useful insights from the ethnic minority groups, that have already overcome similar obstacles.

Besides, interacting with other international students can be an opportunity for a person to be useful for other people. A student can share his own opinions and thoughts and become a support for others. Those activities might help him to overcome personal fears and psychological issues. For instance, support, kind words or advice can positively affect student's surrounding. Sharing personal emotions is a necessary aspect of building healthy relationships with people. The majority of respondents reflected that creating a safety net among foreign students can help to overcome many stressful situations during the first period of migration. *"Findings show that fewer family contacts and a smaller social network are associated with higher depression* (Mui, Kang 2006). A strong social network can reduce the negative effects of the adjustment process and become a foundation for stable well-being during the crisis.

9.3.3 Academic and personal stressors

International student's migration is also complicated with additional stressors, including personal or family problems, financial questions, accommodation or visa issues. A significant stressor for all respondents of this research was *recognition of the school education*. The recognition is a necessary step of a university admission and is represented by randomly chosen exams in several subjects. The process starts after some months of studying in the Czech Republic. This period is sensitive for young students: they are just starting to adjust to a new society and learn the Czech language. Based on the responses from interviews, this phase was difficult to face alone. The process of the recognition of the school education can complicate the adjustment because foreign students just start to get used to their new life. To be more precise, recognition of the school education is a relatively long and laborious process. International students need to complete several exams in front of unknown teachers in the regular Czech school to approve the educational degree. The goal is to show the appropriate level of knowledge in certain school subjects. The whole process becomes very stressful for a student who just started to learn the Czech language. A student needs to study for those exams, but also prepare for the entrance exams at a university. Everything can be also complicated with personal or family problems, which are also a part of everyday life. Student 2 reflected:

"-What was the biggest stressor?
-Recognition of the school education process."

This respondent had the recognition exam period at the time of the interview. She continues:

"- Choosing who you want to become. To pass all the exams. I understand that it is very difficult to organize your time. You need to do this, this and this… You're coming back home, and you need to prepare for your entrance exams, recognition of the school education and study the Czech language, and a lot of other stuff... I've decided whom I want to be, but what's about other students, who doesn't know whom they want to become?"

Besides the study-related stressors, personal and family changes can also have a huge impact on the psychological state of a young student. These issues cannot be ignored because they can also alter the dynamics of the acculturation process. Student 6 responded:

"-Which difficulties did you have during your adjustment here?

-Relationships with my parents.

-How did you manage it?

-I didn't. It can't be changed."

Family problems can exacerbate the feeling of loneliness during the migration and acculturation in a foreign country. A young student becomes deprived of necessary social support. Therefore, the emotional and psychological condition can deteriorate. The desire to communicate and integrate with the majority can deteriorate in turn.

Personal problems can represent another example of the negative adjustment factors. Student 5:

"Something that really bothered me during that time was the fact that I had a long-distance relationship. I thought that I will have an opportunity to come back home several times and that I will have time for this… I thought that I would work, earn some money and I would be able to buy flight tickets. Well, my expectations have not been met."

According to the following examples, many students had to face additional difficulties, that influence their mental health state during the first months. Because everyone's issues were so individual and unique, no significant differences between the two groups of students were identified. Lopez and Bui have noticed that: "*Entering college is a period of transition with inherent stressors, but for international students studying in another country carries additional stressors, such as adapting to cultural differences, dealing with language barriers, having reduced support from family and friends, and having concerns regarding visas*" (Lopez, Bui 2014, page 315). Personal or family troubles can also become a reason for mental health failure. A lot of personal crises can arrive because of a complex of challenges at one time. Besides, a young student is alone in a foreign country, which makes his position even more vulnerable. All mentioned factors might be taken into consideration by many organizations, including schools. Professional psychological help and support can prevent behavioural problems and mental disorders in the minority population.

9.4 Adjustment to the Czech society

The phase of the Culture shock is followed by the Adjustment process characterized by the acceptance of the actual situation and establishing a regular routine in a new social environment. Adjustment of the international students can vary due to many personal and social factors. Each person can experience a variety of triumphs and defeats on the road to sustainable development in a new place. That can lead to a different level of his connection with the host society representatives.

9.4.1 Factors of poor adjustment

The overall adjustment process does not always lead to a successful adjustment of a person. An individual might reject the fact that the new way of life differs from the previous. Sometimes people remain isolated and rejected by the majority. Based on the results of the research, two main factors of poor adjustment in a host country can be identified: *isolation in the same ethnic group* and *low level in the second language*. Those factors will be described further in the following chapters.

9.4.1.1 Isolation in a Russian community

Students with a short length of stay were mainly communicating with Russian speaking students in the language school. They did not reflect an intensive communication with the Czech people. Those international students were mostly from the Post-Soviet states. Students have recognized the significance of the Russian language as a unifying factor among all foreign students at their language school. Sharing common trait, such as language, creates a basis for establishing positive relationships with other foreign students. It helped respondents to effectively build safe connections with each other, which provided mutual support and understanding in their community.

Several students have noticed that on one side, it was a huge advantage because they shared the same migration experience. It created a sense of belonging to one community, where a person received advice, additional information about living and studying in the Czech Republic. Those interactions made them feel less lonely during their stressful periods after arriving in a host country. Student 3 said:

"-How do you feel about being just in a Russian speaking community?

-Neutral. I cannot say that it is an advantage or disadvantage. But it is always easier to integrate when you have someone culturally related to you. I can practice my second language later."

Focusing on creating new relationships with students from the same ethnic group seemed to be a helpful strategy for respondents. Individuals were certain about the importance of those positive relationships. For many of them, it facilitated the process of adjusting in a new cultural environment, which seemed to be full of new constraints and challenges.

On the other hand, building a net inside one specific ethnic group can lead to generating an isolated group of international students in a host country. Moreover, it can become a constraining factor in the process of the acculturation of an individual. Student 2 has noticed:

"-What else do you need for a successful adjustment into the Czech society?
- To know the local language. Get new acquaintances. Then I will have an opportunity to communicate with people. But now I don't have any opportunity. We all are in a Russian community. We don't go out of it. We are in the Czech Republic, but we are isolated."

Reflected isolation is perceived to be a limitation in the adjustment process. Its impact on creating new relationships with local people can be dramatic for a student. It can be concluded from the respondent's explanation that the students do not have the necessary opportunities to meet the Czech people. Close isolated relationships with Russian speaking community create a sense of safe place for international students. Besides, language courses do not give them additional support in developing social relationships and networks with the Czech population: no one of the respondents noticed such kind of activities in the school. The long-term outcome can also be seen in the low motivation of international students to integrate into the Czech society. Therefore, this puts students in a difficult situation, that prevents them to become active members of a new society.

Students with a long-term length of stay have mentioned minimal to intensive contact with the Czech people. Several of them have described difficulties in building relationship with the Czech people. Student 5:

"I had never communicated so well... Well, when I came here, people who were living here for a long time said that if I want to know the Czech language very well, I should communicate just with Czech people. I did a completely different thing."

Although those respondents didn't mention any negative predispositions against the Czech representatives, they were not "interested" in establishing relationships with locals. Almost everyone has mentioned the importance of close connections with Czech people, but those respondents were not actively looking for it. It can be because they were trying to find Czech friends at the university, but they could not. Negative experiences, such as discrimination due to their language proficiency, could reduce their motivation. Additionally, early establishment of the connections within the minority group could saturate their social environment. Here they have found mutual understanding and support. A lot of students sought help in stressful situations from their close Russian speaking friends. Those factors can become a limitation in establishing a long-term close friendship with Czech students.

Another crucial factor of not being "interested" in maintaining relationships with locals can be negative attitudes of the majority towards the Russian minority. Student 5 has explained:

"One thing which I don't like is their (Czech people) attitude towards all Russian people."

The answer above confirms that constructed negative attitudes towards a particular group of people can block the internal motivation of minorities to integrate into a host society. Negative emotions and actions of the host population can create conditions for unfair discrimination. Those prejudices and beliefs of the majority can be unconscious and automatic. Nevertheless, ethnic minorities can perceive this behaviour as an identity threat, which in turn can trigger a segregation process. That is what happened to some of the respondents. They have experienced various negative situations, which led them to avoid the larger society. It was additionally reinforced by belonging to a Russian speaking community, which provided escape. As a result, students preferred to maintain close relationships with the same ethnic minority and exclude contacts with the locals. This situation demonstrated how a discrimination experience become an additional social stressor in the acculturative process of international students. However, prejudices can be eliminated with constant efforts from both minority and majority sides.

9.4.1.2 Lower language skills in Czech

Language is one of the key social components, that serves as a tool for interchanging ideas and thoughts between people. Acculturation process depends on how well an international student knows the local language and communicates with the host representatives. The principal goal of every international student is to learn Czech during their first year of studying in the language course. All respondents have noticed a particular importance of knowing the Czech language. Student 3 said:

"Well, language is the most important. Everything else depends on what type of person you are. How can you talk to people, study, learn new information."

The Czech language is involved in every phase of the acculturation process: in language school, during daily life, at the university, in public places. Advanced knowledge of the Czech language can accelerate communication with local people, which can positively affect the level of psychological and sociocultural adjustment of a student. All students have mentioned the similarity between Russian and Czech languages and evaluated it as an advantage in learning. After some months of learning the Czech language a respondent 4 said:

"It is a Slavic language group. Of course, it depends on the person and his established relationships with Czech people, as well."

Student 2, who is living in the Czech Republic less than one year, said:

"-What level of Czech language do you have at this moment?

-I can understand everything. It is harder to form a sentence. I am able to understand everything that teacher says, in public… I can understand everything. The meaning. But it is difficult to express myself because I cannot find the right words."

It shows how the learning process of language differs among all stages of living in a host country. First months of studying are very challenging for an international student. During this phase, students can understand the meaning of the sentence, which indicates that the

receptive aspect of language is progressing. Students accumulate a lot of new words and better understand the key meaning of the text. However, the expressing part of the language is just developing, mostly because it takes much more time to achieve an advanced level in it. Several respondents from the Group 1 have mentioned the same idea during the interview: "*I can understand everything, but I am not able to answer.*"

The intensity of communication with local people of students with a short-term length of stay was minimal. Those respondents did not have the opportunity to build relationships with local students, mainly because of the low level of the Czech language. Student 2:

"*-How often do you communicate with Czech people?*

-Not at all. I am not against it. I want to practice the language. I just don't know where to find local people. Once I have spoken with a girl in the library. I was alone, and she asked me for a ruler. And I gave it to her, and we've talked a little bit about life, where we want to study..."

Student 3:
"*I didn't have any contact yet.*"

Students from the Group 1 have shown a great interest in building relationships with Czech people. Respondents hope that they will have more opportunities and possibilities for creating wide net with local students at a university. Student 2:

"*I will get to know them at the university. In the library. I don't know. Czech people are in their own groups. I think that I will meet them at the university.*"

And student 3:

"*Of course, the first step had just started. I've become a part of another social system. The next step is to get into the university. As for now, I am studying Czech with Russian students, but the next step will be communication with the local people, with whom I can practice the language.*"

Respondents fully realized the importance of continued efforts in this direction. The expressive aspect of the language needed to be improved, even though the receptive side of it was at the appropriate level. Lack of the language knowledge became a barrier for the international students. It suspended the process of creating close relationships with locals. Low level of the Czech language combined with forced isolation into a Russian speaking community negatively affected the adjustment process of Group 1 and 2 during the first year of living in the Czech society.

9.4.2 Factors of successful adjustment

The host country is built on various unknown norms and tradition, which are transferred from one generation to another. New culture consists of different explicit and implicit patterns of symbols, ideas or behaviour. In some cases, an international student can encounter misunderstanding with representatives of the larger society mostly because of the existing cultural differences. This, in turn, can lead to intercultural conflicts and deterioration of individual's adjustment process. Czech representatives can become a guide for new-coming international students. They can help foreigners to adapt to changes and cope with uncertainty in a new place. Thus, intense communication with local people can become an important tool of knowledge and experience. Developed relations based on mutual cooperation may be useful for the both groups: majority and minority representatives.

9.4.2.1 Intense communication with Czech people

Respondents who had intense communication with Czech people reported better adjustment into the Czech society. Many of them have found interesting and tolerant people at the workplace during their studies; others have established a close friendship with Czech students at the university.

One presented student with a short-term length of stay decided to be very active in the adjustment process. Realizing the fact that there were no opportunities to meet Czech people in the language course, he decided to find a part-time job. His main goal was to start integration into the Czech society as soon as possible. Student 4 reflected an intense contact with the Czech population, even though he was living in the Czech Republic for less than two months:

"-How often do you communicate with Czech people?

-Very intensively. Almost every day. At work."

This respondent has also described positive feelings about living and studying in the Czech Republic. He didn't reflect any signs of depression or anxiety during the interview. It can be an example of a successful start for those international students, who have just moved to a new country. His experience shows the way of establishing communication with the local population. The job conditions differ from state to state, but a foreign student can find a part-time job, internships or a volunteer job. There they can improve social and communication skills.

Several students from the Group 2 have succeeded in maintaining close relationships with Czech students. It has led to many improvements in their academic and social life. Those students did not reflect any language barrier in their daily life. They have also shown a high level of self-esteem. Those students presented the ability to solve new-coming challenges in the Czech Republic: go to the state institution, fill in an application, talk to the Czech people in public places. One respondent shared an apartment with a Czech friend. Student 6:

"-How often do you communicate with Czech people?

-My best friend is Czech!"

-How did you meet?

-We were studying together in one group, then we went together somewhere outside for a drink, and she said that she doesn't have a roommate. Me neither. So, we've decided to rent an apartment together. And we have become best friends… I don't have any problems with the Czech language, I can talk, make a phone call, etc. I have an extensive vocabulary. My Czech is not perfect, but I have been living with a Czech friend for almost three years and I don't have any language barrier."

The example above shows how an intense daily communication with a Czech person can influence the adjustment of a foreign student. The respondent has maintained close friendships with a Czech friend and did not show any sign of the language barrier or anxiety in a daily communication with the local people.

Student 8 has also described his friendship with a Czech student. His Czech friend even visited his family during a summer vacation. Student 8 answered:

"Yes, I do have Czech friends. I wanted to find some Czech friends with common interests. I've found one friend. We know each other for more than one year. He even visited my home country this summer. We know each other well. And there is another one Czech friend. We can talk about different interesting stuff, how we are concerned about cultural life, politics, or can just share some life experience. He is my work colleague and we have fun when we work together."

Great communication between people from different cultural backgrounds can open new possibilities and opportunities for every member of a society. Experience of the presented respondents has shown that, if a person is proactive, he can find a lot of close people who will be happy to become friends. Secure connection with a Czech student brings a lot of benefits: close friendship, safe communication, mutual understanding and minimization of the stereotypes. It can work in both directions, positively affecting majority and minority representatives. Meeting new local people can also lead to a better adjustment process of international students. Those steps can prevent segregation of the majority and minority groups, as well.

9.4.2.2 Advanced level of language
A permanent language practice of an international student can lead to an advanced level in a second foreign language. Communication in a foreign language with native speakers can have an excellent effect on the adaptation of international students. Both groups of respondents have confirmed that good language skills are more likely to lead to a successful adjustment to Czech society. Student 1:

"-How does the level of local language affect your adjustment into the Czech society?
- Language plays a huge role."

Student 6:
"Advanced knowledge of the Czech language is a 90% of your calmness. Especially in a foreign country. Because you can ask for help when it is needed. It is an additional stressor

when you don't know the local language. Just because you don't know what to do and how to do it."

As it was described above, respondents from the Group 1 were frustrated by the lack of language practice with Czech people. The main reason for it was insufficient knowledge of the Czech language during the first months of staying. This inability to express own thoughts and ideas had led to a language barrier. Understandably, the representatives of the Group 2 did not reflect signs of the language barrier, especially when they had established close relationships with Czech people. Advanced knowledge of the Czech language had a significant impact on their socio-cultural adjustment and educational adjustment. Constant communication with the larger society during several years at the university, at home, public places positively affected their psychological and emotional state. Respondents from the Group 2 also did not reflect signs of low self-confidence. Students from the Group 2 can be divided into the two small subgroups: 1) those students who still demonstrated signs of the language barrier and 2) those students who were completely adjusted into a new social environment. Student 5:

"Sometimes, I am afraid to go and solve the visa issues. I have that strange anxious feeling."

Even though several authors agree that longer staying in a host country can increase host language proficiency (Length of stay, A. Miglietta, S. Tartaglia, page 57), this respondent had some visible signs of the language barrier. This fear was mainly related to specific visa duties or a job-seeking process. Perhaps, this kind of emotional reaction can occur even among ordinary local people. On the other hand, this respondent did not reflect close relationships with Czech people after several years of living in this country. Student 7 specified her language barrier too:

"Well, during stressful situations, as for example exams, I'm starting to have a fear. I can forget some words."

Those manifestations can be observed during the exams taken in the native language, as well. It can also be a normal reaction for every regular student. This respondent did not describe any other situation where the language barrier gained its full expression.

It is important to note, however, that the two other respondents from the Group 2 that have established close relationships with the Czech people did not reflect any sign of anxiety. It can be concluded that the high language proficiency and communicative skills help to fight a social anxiety, associated with the language performance. On the other hand, low self-esteem, associated with little daily language practice, can exaggerate the situational anxiety. The students 6 and 8 confirm this observation with the following statements:

Student 6:
"I don't have any language barrier."

Student 8:
"-Well, I am okay with my language. May by pronunciation, but I don't know how to refine my accent. I accept it. And people do too."
-Do you feel integrated into the Czech society?
-I don't feel that I am not integrated. I guess I am. I think that I am worried about the fact that I have a lot of Russian speaking friends."

It is important to note a visible and strong relationship between the advanced language level and the success of the adjustment process of these two respondents. Those cases show how communication skills lead to respondent's confidence during his integration into the Czech society. Students with the opportunities to practice the language with the native speakers in a daily basis demonstrated a high self-esteem in social interactions.

Anna Miglietta concluded in her study that the host language is an important aspect of the acculturation because it can become a key to host country's values and customs: "*Indeed, linguistic proficiency eases daily interaction with host-culture members, which undoubtedly helps immigrants increase their comprehension of the norms governing social events and relations"* (Miglietta, Tartaglia 2009, page 56). Collected data point out that competency in the host language and adjustment into the host country are highly interrelated. Results of these interviews also confirm the fact that the language barrier hampers the social interactions with the Czech people and vice versa. That, in turn, can negatively affect the acculturation process of a foreign student. That perpetuated circle can lead to an isolation,

as described above. Raising awareness of intercultural communication importance can prevent additional problems in the adaptation process of international students.

Improving the ability to speak the local language might positively affect the psychological and socio-cultural adjustment of a student. For this reason, new coming students can start learning Czech before their migration to the Czech Republic. As a result, their acculturation process can be less problematic and more effective. For instance, some respondents were visiting the Czech Republic as students of summer language courses before their long-term migration. The language school offers students between 14-17 years of age a short 1-month course of Czech language during summer vacation. For those respondents, this short-term course helped to understand local traditions, norms and language. Additionally, it was an opportunity for them to learn the basic Czech phrases. This month was specifically designed to introduce the language, history and culture of the Czech Republic. Student 7 said:

"Well, it was like I've never left this country. The same school and dormitory. So, it was a little bit easier to move here, because I had some acquaintances, and I also knew what the Czech language would be like. It was easier because of it."

Student 2:

"-Did a short summertime language course help you?
-Yes, of course. I have visited Prague several times before. So, I didn't have that feeling that I don't know where I migrate. I was here before, and I had some expectations about it."

The short journey to the Czech Republic was beneficial for the mentioned students in many ways. Students have also realized what it is like to live in a foreign country and study in a completely different language. Nevertheless, the second foreign language always needs a constant learning and improvement. It is a reason why many international students start their migration with a year-long Czech language course. Advanced communication competence provides a more comfortable and safe living in the host country.

9.4.2.3 Minimization of prejudice

Data from the interviews show that student's relationships with local people were directly dependent on various factors, including prejudices and attitudes toward each other. Prejudices have a strong influence on how people interact with other people, mostly negatively. They can include stereotyped beliefs about certain groups of people, who differ from the majority. Respondents have mentioned that negative attitudes toward Russian speaking students can lead to a discrimination. It was probably one of the reasons why those students did not seek close friendships with the Czech students. Respondent 7:

"When I was in a public place with a group of other students, I've heard a lot of bad words about Russian people. But I didn't do anything bad. I've come here, I study well, and I don't understand why they are so aggressive. Of course, we can understand them, it's because of the historical facts. And unfortunately, it's hard to forget. They think that all of us are bad people. I agree, there are some bad people, but they are in every nation. Some of our people are visiting this country and are doing bad things, and because of them, Czech people have such automatic attitudes… It is important to understand that every nation has good and bad people."

This respondent did not reflect close relationships with Czech people after several years of living here. The example above shows how a negative way of thinking about minorities can ruin communication between members of one society. Those tendencies can be minimized by representatives of both groups: majority and minority. Student 5 has explained it in the following answer:

"I think that it mostly depends on your own desire. If you want, you can find some people and practice language with them. Maybe have some hobbies. When you start going somewhere… and it doesn't matter who you are there - Czech or Russian. If you are an open-minded and curious person, no one will care about it. So, you can easily communicate with the Czech people there."

Respondent 4 from the Group 1 with a short-term length of stay said:

"I think that you should not try to integrate into the Russian group after your arrival here. People can say many bad things about Czech people in those communities. You can form a certain negative opinion based on it. Also, you are searching a zone of comfort, but it is not right, it is not the right zone of comfort. I think you should try to find a Czech group of people, go to work, communicate with Czech people… Because I am always trying to understand the person without looking on his nationality. There are different people. So, you should try to integrate into the Czech society and communicate with them as much as possible."

Negative attitudes and stereotypes can emerge in majority and minority groups as well. It is a bilateral process, which can change the perception of every person. A mental representation of a certain group of people can have a negative effect on social interactions. In many cases, stereotypes are not real, but they continue to dehumanize other people. As a result, certain groups can be segregated out of the society.

Shared social activities can lead to a better communication with the host population, so that an international student can achieve the appropriate level of adjustment as a result. Students emphasized the importance of changing the perception of other people. It is important to be free from the stereotypes at the local and national level. The principal goal of every modern society should be exclusion of any stereotyping based on nationality, ethnicity, religion etc.

9.5 Stress level during the adjustment process of international students

Based on interviews, signs of the acculturative stress have been found in both groups: almost every student has mentioned stressful events during his living in the Czech Republic. Students have experienced depressive mood and anxiety because of the lack of social support, administrative issues, difficulties in communication with Czech people. Due to several reasons, stress level of representatives from two groups of this study varied.

9.5.1 Summary of the interviews

According to the **interviews**, students from the Group 1 have reflected various stressors more often in comparison with students, who were living in Czech society for long time. The table below describes the prevalence of the three main emotional disruptions emerging during the interviews with respondents from both groups up-to-date:

		Group 1				Group 2						
	Respondent #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8			
	Loneliness										Not mentioned	
Descriptors	Lack of social support										Identified stressor in group 1	
	Language barrier										Identified stressor in group 2	

Table 6. Prevalence of disruptions during emerged during the interviews with respondents

Based on interviews, the students from the *Group 1* have had to face many unfamiliar challenges during their first months of living in the Czech Republic. Data from the Table 6 show probable differences in the prevalence of experiencing acculturative stressors among two groups of students. Three from four students from the Group 1 have indicated loneliness, lack of social support and language barrier during the interview. They have expressed a lot of anxiety and depression signs: many of them were talking about their fears linked to the learning the language, recognition of school education process, academic and family problems. One respondent was even thinking of returning the their home country because of the high tension experienced during the very first weeks in the Czech Republic. Students from the Group 1 have underlined language difficulties and lack of daily communication with Czech people. Only one respondent did not mention signs of loneliness and lack of social support, most likely because he migrated to the country together with his close relative.

Information obtained via interviews suggests that problem of *loneliness* is influenced by language competences, which obviously affects the ability to communicate with host students and solve daily life issues. Students have also mentioned how they felt "isolated" in a Russian speaking community. Described segregation in the same ethnic population has contributed to the additional problems during their adaptation in the host country: no new opportunities to learn local customs, traditions or norms, language barrier, no possibility to practice Czech language, no new acquaintances. Even though those students were motivated to find new contacts with the Czech people, the language level did not allow them to do it. It indicates that knowing the local language is highly important for comfortable living in the Czech Republic.

Representatives of the *Group 2* did not mention those descriptors (loneliness, lack of social support or language barrier) during the conversations. Many of them have already found close friends and community after a longer period of living in the Czech Republic. They have also adjusted to the new customs and values of the local culture. After a relatively long period of living in the host country, those students have noticed personal competence in coping with the stressful situations. Additionally, almost everyone has been experiencing regular communications with the local students at a university. Two students who have expressed internal motivation to adjust to a new society, have also reflected close contacts with the Czech people. Those respondents even became close friends with Czech students. Close relationships with the majority had changed their own stereotypes and prejudices about locals. As a result, they have described themselves as more open-minded and culturally tolerant against other cultures.

However, the *Group 2* also included two representatives (females), who have expressed concerns about communication with Czech people. As well as the students from the Group 1 they have described several signs of a *language barrier*: fear of speaking in public places or specific situations (state institutions, exams). Those manifestations of a fear were not constant, but definitely affected their quality of life. In common, students from the Group 2 have mentioned some challenges related to the acculturation, but were mostly satisfied about the migration to the Czech Republic. According to them, here they have found close friends and new life opportunities, which positively changed their lives.

In conclusion, the primary reported acculturative stressors of international students were - loneliness, lack of social support and language barrier. The respondents from the Group 1 clearly described how lonely they feel in the host country. Their position in the society was deteriorated due to many factors. Respondents from the Group 2 (with a long-term length of stay), in turn, had established supportive relationships, which helped them to cope with stressful situations. The students from the Group 2 did not mention feelings of depression or anxiety, in contrast to the Group 1, where the students were struggling with those negative feelings.

9.5.2 Online-questionnaire results

Based on the interviews with 8 international students, a correlation between the length of stay in the Czech Republic and the level of experienced acculturative stress of international students can be assumed. It is important to note that provided information illustrates that students from the Group 1 compared with students from the Group 2 have expressed stressful situations more often in the recent time. Based on the analysis of interviews, the following hypothesis was formulated: stress level between the Group 1 and 2 differs and is higher in the Group 1. An **online questionnaire** was used to investigate this hypothesis. The PSS Perceived Stress Scale was used as an additional survey resource. 36 respondents filled in the questionnaire: 18 students were living in the Czech Republic less than 1 year, and 18 students were living in the Czech Republic for more than 1 year. The groups had a matching distribution of gender (13 females and 5 males in the first group; 12 females and 6 males in the second group). The questionnaire contains 10 items with 5 possible semi-quantitative answers, that are converted into a point score (from 0 to 4). As a result, a summarized score of all the questions is calculated and categorized into three stress levels: low, moderate and high. Scores ranging from 0-13 would be considered low stress. Scores ranging from 14-26 would be considered moderate stress. Scores ranging from 27-40 would be considered high perceived stress. The following Figure 4 demonstrates the distribution of the stress levels in the two groups:
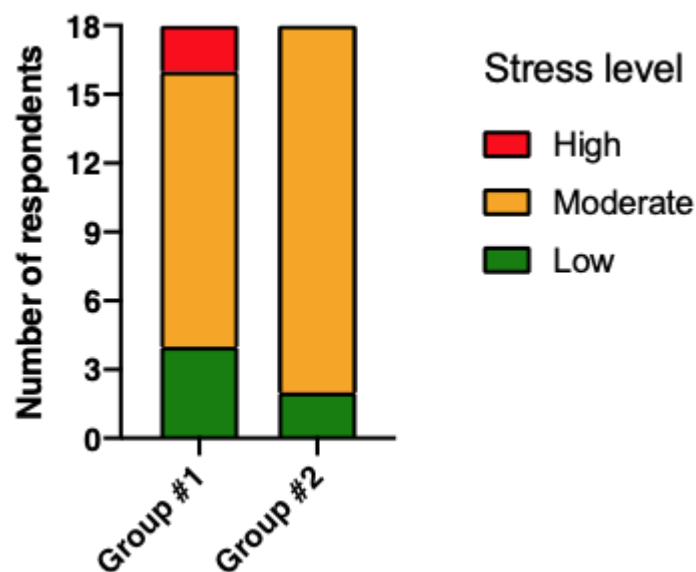
Figure 4. Stress level among respondents of the online-questionnaire

1) Group 1 of students with a short-term length of stay has reflected low to a high level of stress (based on the PSS questionnaire). Four students have indicated a low level of stress (female). Two students have reflected a high level of stress (1 female and 1 male). The rest of the respondents demonstrated a moderate level of stress.

2) Group 2 of students with a long-term length of stay has reflected low (2 students: female and male) to moderate stress level. No respondents from this group had high level of stress.

Next step was to clarify the differences in stress level between the two groups. At first, the distribution of the data needed to be identified. The normality of the dataset distribution was determined visually using frequency distribution histogram (Figure 5). No clear Gaussian distribution was identified. Due to non-normal distribution, non-parametric t-test (Mann-Whitney test) was selected for a statistical comparison and median was selected for the measurement of the central tendency.
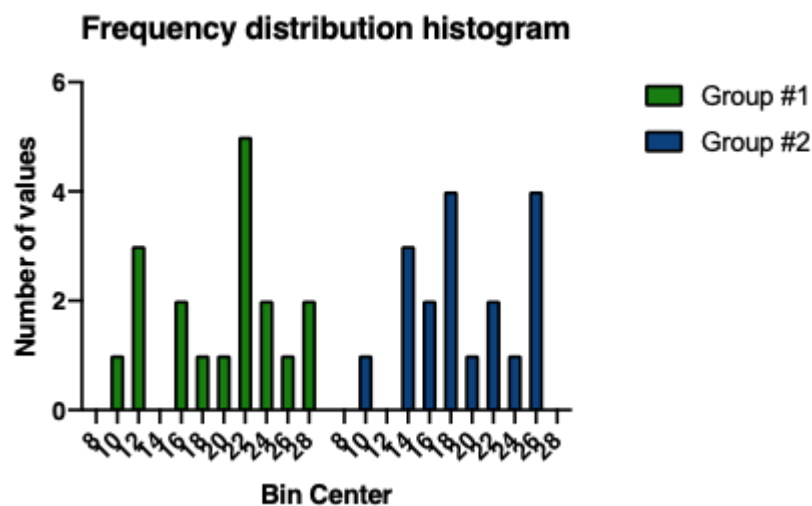
Figure 5. Frequency distribution histogram

The distribution of the stress scores was compared between the groups. The respondents in the Group 2 tend to have a lower stress score (Median 21.5 vs 18 in the Group 1). However, this result was not statistically significant when the Mann-Whitney test was performed (p-value = 0.71). This can be explained by the small sample size.
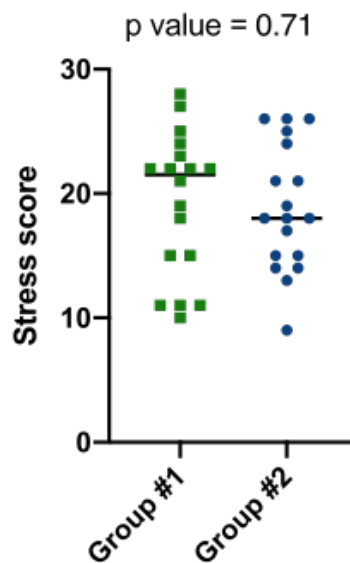
Figure 6. Median of two groups of respondents

Based on the data obtained, differences between the two groups have been found. Some students with a short length of stay reported a high level of stress, in contrast to the second group, where such stress level wasn't found. It can be an additional argument in favour of the hypothesis that first time of living in a host country might pose more stress for international students. Information from the interviews demonstrated that adjustment of international students depends on psychological and socio-cultural factors (see below).

10 Summary of results and discussion

The present study has examined adjustment of Russian-speaking international students in the Czech Republic. Respondents of this study have expected to join a better educational environment, get new opportunities and improve their living conditions. Their adaptation was studied using two methods of research. Results from interviews and an online-questionnaire are presented in the following figure:

Acculturation curve of international students in the Czech Republic
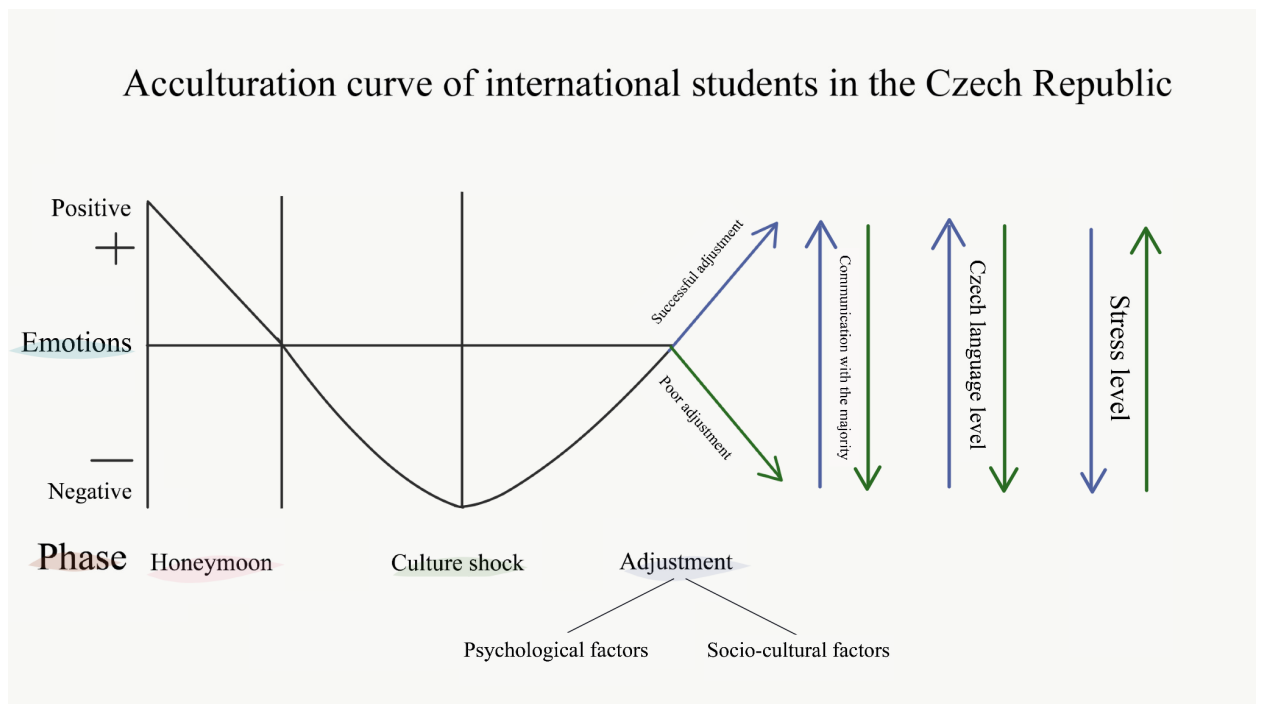
Figure 7. Acculturation curve of international students in the Czech Republic

Figure 7 demonstrates the acculturation curve of international students in the Czech Republic. Differences between two groups of students with different length of stay have been found. The process of acculturation consists of several stages, which include typical experience. Every phase is linked to different emotions: a mixture of positive and negative. As it was demonstrated during the interviews, a student's life in the Czech Republic starts with experiencing the Honeymoon stage, which is full of positive emotions and moments. Then it is replaced by the Culture shock stage. The following Adjustment phase can be successful or not. Psychological and socio-cultural predictors influence the degree of the adjustment. As a result, different ways of the adjustment lead to a different level of the acculturative stress. A detailed explanation is provided below.

Early time after the arriving to a host country is associated with the Honeymoon stage. Students perceived this phase as an exciting adventure that will go on forever. Then this phase is replaced by the Cultural Shock stage, which is mostly characterized by negative emotions and thoughts. The adjustment phase is the final part of the acculturation. Results from the interviews and an online-questionnaire demonstrate that Group 2 had better adjustment into the Czech society in comparison to the Group 1 at the moment of

measurment. The main reason can be *psychological and socio-cultural factors*. Those factors can serve as **predictors** of future adjustment to the larger society.

Psychological factors	Socio-cultural factors
a) loneliness	e) language competence
b) social support	f) communication with the majority
c) personal problems	g) communication with the minority group
d) internal motivation	h) stereotyping or discrimination

Figure 8. Psychological and socio-cultural factors as predictors of adaptation

Psychological factors include feelings of loneliness and lack of social support. The situation was further complicated with additional stressors: academic and personal stressors. The extent of a communication between majority and minority groups and a language level relate to socio-cultural factors, which also affect living in a new place. Both groups of factors can become predictors of a better or poorer adaptation to a new social environment.

The first predictor of the adjustment is *a) loneliness*. This factor leads to isolation and downward of motivation to adapt to a new environment. Students from the Group 1 and 2 have experienced negative emotions during the Culture shock phase. It included a common feeling of loneliness during the first time. Three out of four students from the Group 1 have mentioned several signs of anxiety and depression during the conversations. Only one student didn't reflect any sign of negative feelings after some months of living in the Czech society, likely because of strong family support.

The next predictor is *b) social support* from family and friends. Both groups were living alone without family and friends after arriving in the Czech Republic. Data from the interviews illustrate a lack of social support. Students did not receive the necessary help while they have been living far away from their families. Their life in a new country was full

of fear and anxiety. Social support can also be granted by the minority or the majority. Students can feel welcome in a new country, when they receive a social support from their own ethnic group or majority. As a result, increased positive emotions and motivation to adapt are observed. Additionally, *c) personal problems* (relationships, family) have caused a negative effect on the level of the adaptation.

The last identified psychological predictor of adaptation was *d) internal motivation* of a person. It relates to a broad spectrum of other factors such as motivation to communicate with the majority, motivation to prevent isolation into the ethnic group, motivation to learn the Czech language. The adaptation process was less problematic and mostly successful when the motivation to learn the host language and to connect with locals was high. As well, those students, who did not want to be segregated into a Russian speaking community have found close Czech friends. On the other side, a poor adjustment was related to low motivation in expanding social network. Described psychological factors have deteriorated position and eventually decreased adaptation of students, and the opposite. Internal motivation of students is the basis for another group of predictors - socio-cultural.

Socio-cultural predictors include *e) language competence* of international students. It is known that the host language is one of the critical components of the acculturation process. But how does the level of foreign language influence it? Both groups showed an extreme interest in learning the Czech language. All of them have described the Czech language as a key instrument of maintaining connections with Czech people. Students from the Group 1 confirmed the importance of learning the local language. Unfortunately, those students have just started to learn the Czech language and therefore did not have strong linguistic skills yet. One student from the Group 1 has mentioned during the interview, that she was not able to communicate well with a Czech person because of the low language level. Studies of cross-cultural psychology also revealed that lower level of local language leads to fewer contacts with the larger society and poorer social integration in society (Kostelecká et al. 2019). The future aim of respondents from the Group 1 was to gain a deeper understanding of language constructions, grammar and vocabulary. Those students were also hoping to improve their language skills at a university. Improving skills in the Czech language is interrelated with the level and depth of communication with the majority. Examples of students from the Group 2 demonstrate the effect of language proficiency. Based on the

interviews, two students with a higher language level presented proficient receptive and expressive linguistic skills. As a result, those two respondents have reflected close friendships with Czech students. Other two representatives from the Group 2 reported lower language ability. Those two respondents did not have Czech friends. There is no doubt that the personal motivation in learning the host language is extremely important for foreign students, especially for those who are interested in long term living in the host society. International students can expand their vocabulary and pronunciation through constant training and practice. It can also help them to find Czech friends.

As it was mentioned, respondents from the Group 1 and 2 had a different level of adaptation into a new socio-cultural environment. This process also depends on two predictors: *f) communication with the majority* and *g) communication with the minority group*. Students from Group 2 have noticed that they did not fully belong to the Czech society. More importantly, those respondents felt "isolated" or segregated in a Russian speaking community. Here they found psychological and emotional support in various stressful situations. Many respondents believed that people from the same cultural background could understand them better. Maintaining close relationships with Russian students served as a safe background. Although, several students from the Group 1 have noted that it can become a barrier in developing connections with local Czech students. Maintaining close relationships with a minority group and rejecting majority can become a negative predictor of poorer adaptation. Such position in society leads to separation or marginalization mode, which, according to previous studies, is maladaptive (Berry 2005). Data from other researches confirm the fact that marginalization mode of adjustment leads to a higher level of acculturative stress (Lueck, Wilson 2010). It is also important to remind that the Group 1 also tended to have a higher stress level (PSS results: Median 18 in the Group 1). Mentioned factors point to poorer adjustment of the Group 1. Of note, the students from the Group 1 were expecting to have more intensive interaction with local people at a university.

Adjustment of the students from the Group 2 was also different at the moment of interviews. Just two students maintained close relationships with the Czech students. Those two students felt "adjusted" into the Czech society. Other two reported close friendship only with representatives of the Russian speaking community and didn't mention any close connection with locals. It can be a reason why does stress level in this group varies from low to moderate

(PSS scale). Those two respondents had an opportunity to establish connections with Czech students at the university, but they didn't succeed. As a result, they felt segregated at a university and frequently mentioned lack of social interactions with the majority. That can be a reason why they've decided to maintain close relationships with peers from the same cultural background. Analogously, maintaining only close connections with the same minority group had led to segregation from the larger society. It demonstrates that adaptation of students with a long length of stay can also be problematic. Longer staying in a host country does not always lead to a better adjustment into the host society. As it was discussed before, Berry's theory of acculturation includes many ways of adaptation: integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization. All those modes include different connection with the larger society. For instance, separation type rejects involvement with the host culture and degree of cultural integrity is not maintained (Berry 2005). On the other hand, data from the previous studies reveal that students with assimilation type report less social difficulty (Ward, Rana-Deuba 1999). Motivation in learning the local language and establishing close relationships with locals is an essential element of better social adaptation.

International students also need to feel welcome by the Czech people. Social-cultural predictors also include *h) stereotyping or discrimination* activity from the larger society towards minorities. Those factors negatively affect the internal motivation of small ethnic groups to adjust to a new social environment. Negative activities can stimulate the same activity of minorities toward local people. A segregation process can spread across groups and dominate in society under such circumstances.

Obtained data answer research questions and demonstrate that foreign students can adjust differently. According to the results, significant predictors of successful adjustment can be classified into two groups - psychological and socio-cultural predictors. Those aspects have influenced both the level of adjustment and stress of international students.

The success of the adaptation was correlated with a stress level. According to PSS scale results, the students from the Group 2 have experienced lower stress level at the moment of measurement. Different studies have also confirmed that length of stay does have an impact on the acculturative stress (Ayoob, Singh, Jan 2011). The Group 2 has already adapted to a new cultural environment and therefore did not obtain high levels of stress. During the

interviews, respondents with a longer length of stay have described all passed periods of the acculturation process, including the Honeymoon stage and the Cultural shock. However, adjustment of the Group 2 varied from poor to successful; it is a reason why moderate level of stress was presented. High level of stress was only revealed in the online-questionnaire results of two students with a short-term length of stay, probably due to the experienced Culture Shock phase at the moment of interviews and measurement. Data from the interviews and online measurement suggest that level of stress correlates with the social adaptation.

Findings of the present study additionally found differences between stress perception in females and males. During the interviews, females from the Group 2 have experienced a language barrier and signs of anxiety. According to PSS scale results, females from the Group 1 demonstrated high levels of stress too. It is also known that women are more likely to report greater stress level than men[11]. It can be a starting point for additional studies related to the experience of acculturative stress in women and men.

Results of this study are consistent with results of similar researches in this field. Study "International students' experience in Australian higher education: can we do better?" from S. Arkoudis et al. has also confirmed that international students address many challenges during their adjustment, including loneliness, lack of social support, anxiety, visa or accommodation issues. Successful adaptation into a new cultural environment is influenced by various factors, as, for instance, linguistic competence and degree of communication with the majority and the minority. According to the results of this study, international students encounter a lot of challenges during interactions with domestic students. Foreign students pointed out discrimination issues, as well. As a result, broader segregation process between local and host students was observed (Arkoudis, Dollinger, Baik, Patience 2018). The present study has also found out that stereotyping and discrimination activity can decrease the internal motivation of minority representatives to maintain close relationships with the larger society. Understandably, it leads to a lower level of the local language and an absence of close contacts between different groups of people in one society. Those predictors also correspond to the results of S. Arkoudis et al. (2018) in their research.

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[11] https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2010/gender-stress#:~:text=Women%20are%20more%20likely%20than%20men%20(28%20percent%20vs.,10%20(39%20percent)%20men.

Results related to acculturative stress were also observed in similar researches. According to K. Lueck and M. Wilson (2010), acculturative stress is interrelated with a level of adjustment of a person. Language competence in the second language and discrimination also predict the level of stress. Data of the present study are also consistent with this study.

The present study has some limitations as well. First, a small sample size of students: just 8 semi-structured interviews were conducted, and only 36 students filled in an online-questionnaire. The sample size for statistical measurement was insufficient for statistically significant results: Mann-Whitney test on inter-group comparison demonstrated p-value = 0.71. Despite the small sample size, the combination of two methods proved to be useful because results seem to be consistent with international research. Larger studies could look in more detail on the specifics of the Czech context (e.g. available support at the university). As well, future studies can study the current situation in the world (online education, problems with visas and travelling).

Secondly, the PSS Perceived Stress Scale was chosen for measuring the stress level among international students. The reliability and validity of this scale were proven by previous studies (Andreou et al. 2011). Nevertheless, there are more specific scales for measuring acculturative stress among international students, for instance, Acculturative Stress Scale for International Students (ASSIS; Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). But, unfortunately, the PSS scale was the only one free and online available questionnaire. Further studies can use specific scales for acculturative stress measurement, which include items related to adaptation into a foreign country.

Further, we need to acknowledge that separate stressors emerging from the acculturation process interact with common life difficulties. It is the nature of this interaction and factor that positively facilitating or on the other hand, increasing challenges of the acculturation that deserve further research attention. Furthermore, we need to be cautious while comparing the experience of international students with the experience of local students, yet, this direction of research is valuable since this might actually reveal more specific information about a) particular challenges of international students b) challenges common across students that perhaps might need to be eased by the university administration in order to increase students capacities for study/prevent premature drop-off. The aim of this research was to

point out on specificities of the acculturative process of international students and compare two groups of students with different length of stay. I would also like to draw attention to the needs of this group of students in the Czech Republic, since there is lack of previous research studies about acculturation process of international students in the Czech Republic, yet their numbers were increasing in the past decade.

11 Conclusion

Concept of this study was based on comparing two groups of international students living in the Czech Republic. As a result, vulnerable subgroups were identified: students with a short length of stay and students with a long length of stay having a lower level of Czech language and communication with Czech people. Outcomes of this research can be used for developing early interventions and specific strategies to support them during their adjustment in the new cultural environment. The practice of inclusiveness can be very effective in creating trust between majority and minorities. It can also reduce the level of acculturative stress among foreign students, remove prejudices and promote successful coexistence of all groups in one country.

Academic stressors, such as visa issues, accommodation, could be supported at the government level. It can also be provided by universities or special international organizations. Education in mentoring foreign students during their life in a new society can include orientation at the university campus and program. When international students feel supported in their essential needs, they may feel more comfortable to develop and maintain close relationships with local students. This kind of support can also bring them a sense of belonging to a host society.

Another major factor, which can be minimized or even reduced, is stereotyping or discrimination activity against minorities. International students can be engaged in training intercultural skills programs (for instance, 1-day program), where all intercultural aspects will be presented and discussed. Special information might be useful to avoid intercultural misunderstandings and mediate conflicts between students. It can also build deeper trust in relationships among people living in one society.

Studies carried out in the field of acculturation provide necessary information about intercultural coexistence of people in one socio-cultural environment. Implications of this research can also be used by professionals in the field of cross-cultural psychology, social psychology, special education, sociology. Presented outcomes can serve as a basis for developing special tools for intercultural communication among individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Accepting people's differences leads to breaking boundaries between them. As John F. Kennedy stated: "If we cannot now end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity."

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13 Appendix

Part of the interview with Respondent 2

-Какие у тебя были общие представления о переезде? Ожидания?

-Я не знала, что есть такое ужасное слово, как ностификация. Но по сути я ожидала, что будет тяжело. Язык иностранный учить тяжело. Я знала, что будет сложно, но надеялась, что будет немного попроще. Уже увидела все здесь. Думала, что не будет так насыщенно. Что не такие заполненные дни, нужно подумать, запомнить, выбрать. Никто не поможет и в принципе до этого я жила все время с родителями. Теперь же все самой решать.

-Какие были впечатления после приезда?

-Ну, как будто и не уезжала. Тоже самое общежитие, школа. То есть, было намного проще переехать, потому что уже и знакомые были, и в принципе понимала, что такое чешский. Намного было проще было из-за этого.

-С какими сложностями ты сталкивалась?

-Ностификация (актуально проходила экзамены). Выбрать кем хочешь стать. Поступить. Понимаю, что это очень сложно, и организовать свое время. Вроде нужно сделать это и это. Приходишь домой, нужно подготовиться к вступительным, ностификации, и чешский повторить, и кучу всего. Ну, я то определилась кем хочу быть. А кто приезжает и не знает кем хочет стать?

-Как ты справляешься в такие моменты? Я никогда особо сильно не переживаю. Например, как я к ностификации готовилась. Я понимала, что это сложно. Сидела, повторяла. Учу что-то, и думаю что все сдам. Всегда как-то получалось и сейчас получится. Не так все плохо. Я понимаю, что экзамен нельзя оставлять на потом и надо учить сразу.

-Как ты относишься к чехам и как они к тебе относятся?

-Чехи - супер люди. Они очень добрые. По-доброму отношусь, с уважением. Спасибо, до свидание, улыбаются... Очень добрые люди. Вежливые.

-Как интенсивно ты общаешься с местным населением?

-Никак. Я не против с кем-нибудь из них пообщаться. Язык попрактиковать. Я не знаю где их найти. В библиотеке вот недавно с девочкой поговорила, я сидела одна и ей нужна была линейка. И я достала ее и мы немного поговорили о жизни.

-Какой у тебя уровень языка сейчас?

-Я понимаю все. Сформулировать тяжелее. Все ,что говорит учитель, на улице, все понимаю. Смысл понятен. Но сказать, именно не могу подобрать слова.. сформулировать предложение сложнее.

-Как влияет уровень языка на твою интеграцию в чешское общество?

-Язык играет большую роль.

Part of the interview with Respondent 3

-Какие были представления о переезде?

-Было непросто. Так как до этого я жил на всем готовом. Ты приходишь домой, все приготовлено, все хорошо, постирано, вечером ты идешь гулять с друзьями, которых знаешь с самого раннего детства. Здесь такого нет. Понятное дело, что первые недели тут было очень тяжело, так как никого в принципе не знал. Но, так как, мне повезло и у меня была компания среди волейболистов, хотя бы по выходным я куда-то выбирался.

- Какие у тебя были представления о самом переезде? Хотел ли ты сюда ехать?

- Конечно хотел.

- Почему ты хотел сюда переехать?

- Потому что здесь хорошее образование.

- Какие первые впечатления?

- То, что это достаточно хорошая страна, ухоженные дома, люди, машины.

-Какие самые большие сложности при переезде в Чехию возникли?

-Уехать от семьи, от друзей, из зоны комфорта.

-Какие еще стрессовые факторы ты бы мог назвать?

-На первом уроке посещают мысли, что ты не справишься, ты не сможешь поступить, потому что ты ничего не понимаешь. И ты думаешь что все всё понимают, а ты один

ничего не понимаешь. Хотя у всех все было одинаково. Это я узнал уже после того, как познакомился с остальными и спросил.

Part of the interview with Respondent 5

-Какие были первые впечатления после приезда?

-Я не понимала, что вообще происходит, я была потеряна, у меня были периодические приступы меланхолии, я плакала, я могла просто ехать в трамвае и начать плакать. Я искала поддержку у моих, на тот момент, соседок. То есть, я разговаривала с ними, спрашивала нравится им это или нет. У меня первое время не было близких друзей. Но потом я нашла подругу и мне стало гораздо проще.

-Какие основные стрессовые факторы были после переезда?

-Мне было страшно из-за языка, я боялась ходить в публичные места, например. В магазин, то есть для меня это было очень сложно.

Results of the PSS Perceived Stress Scale questionnaire

Questions:

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?

2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?

3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?

4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?

5. In the last month, how often you felt that things were going your way?

6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all things that you had to do?

7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?

8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?

9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that happened that were outside of your control?

10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?

Sex	How long do you live in the Czech R	Question 1	X6	Question 2	X8	Question 3	X10	Question 4	X12	Question 5	X14	Question 6	X16	Question 7	X18	Question 8	X20	Question 9	X22	Question 10	X24	Sum	Stress
Female	For more than 1 year	fairly often	3	sometimes	2	very often	4	fairly often	1	very often	1	fairly often	4	never	1	sometimes	4	very often	2	very often	4	26	Moderate
Female	For more than 1 year	very often	4	very often	4	sometimes	3	fairly often	2	sometimes	1	sometimes	3	sometimes	1	sometimes	2	very often	2	very often	4	26	Moderate
Female	For more than 1 year	sometimes	2	fairly often	2	sometimes	3	almost never	3	fairly often	1	fairly often	2	almost never	1	fairly often	2	very often	2	fairly often	3	25	Moderate
Female	For more than 1 year	fairly often	3	very often	4	sometimes	4	fairly often	2	sometimes	2	fairly often	3	fairly often	1	almost never	1	fairly often	3	fairly often	4	24	Moderate
Female	very often	4	fairly often	1	fairly often	4	sometimes	2	fairly often	3	fairly often	1	sometimes	0	never	0	never	0	fairly often	3	21	Moderate
Female	For more than 1 year	fairly often	3	almost never	1	sometimes	3	sometimes	2	almost never	3	fairly often	1	almost never	1	sometimes	2	almost never	3	fairly often	4	24	Moderate
Female	For more than 1 year	very often	4	fairly often	1	sometimes	4	sometimes	1	sometimes	1	very often	1	almost never	0	sometimes	2	fairly often	0	almost never	1	13	Low
Female	For more than 1 year	sometimes	2	almost never	1	sometimes	2	fairly often	2	almost never	1	fairly often	0	almost never	0	almost never	2	almost never	1	never	1	9	Low
Female	For more than 1 year	almost never	1	almost never	0	never	1	sometimes	0	almost never	1	very often	1	sometimes	2	fairly often	2	almost never	2	sometimes	3	17	Moderate
Female	For more than 1 year	sometimes	2	almost never	2	sometimes	1	almost never	1	sometimes	2	almost never	1	sometimes	3	sometimes	2	almost never	2	fairly often	1	18	Moderate
Female	For more than 1 year	sometimes	2	almost never	1	almost never	4	never	4	almost never	4	very often	2	sometimes	2	fairly often	3	never	2	almost never	0	26	Moderate
Female	For more than 1 year	almost never	1	never	1	sometimes	2	fairly often	1	fairly often	2	fairly often	1	sometimes	1	sometimes	3	sometimes	3	never	2	19	Moderate
Female	For more than 1 year	sometimes	2	almost never	1	sometimes	2	fairly often	2	fairly often	1	fairly often	3	almost never	2	almost never	2	almost never	3	almost never	1	18	Moderate
Male	For more than 1 year	almost never	1	never	0	never	0	never	4	almost never	4	very often	0	very often	2	fairly often	3	never	0	almost never	0	13	Moderate
Male	For more than 1 year	sometimes	2	almost never	1	sometimes	1	fairly often	2	fairly often	1	fairly often	1	sometimes	1	sometimes	2	sometimes	3	almost never	2	15	Moderate
Male	For more than 1 year	fairly often	3	fairly often	4	sometimes	3	sometimes	2	fairly often	2	fairly often	1	sometimes	2	fairly often	3	sometimes	3	sometimes	2	27	High
Female	For more than 1 year	sometimes	2	fairly often	3	sometimes	3	sometimes	2	fairly often	2	almost never	2	sometimes	1	almost never	3	almost never	2	almost never	1	14	Moderate
Female	For more than 1 year	almost never	1	very often	4	never	0	never	4	almost never	4	very often	0	sometimes	0	never	2	almost never	1	sometimes	0	14	Moderate
Male	For more than 1 year	sometimes	2	fairly often	3	sometimes	2	fairly often	1	sometimes	2	fairly often	1	sometimes	1	sometimes	2	sometimes	2	almost never	2	18	Moderate
Male	For more than 1 year	fairly often	3	almost never	2	sometimes	2	sometimes	2	sometimes	2	sometimes	2	sometimes	1	fairly often	3	sometimes	2	almost never	2	23	Moderate
Female	For more than 1 year	fairly often	3	fairly often	3	sometimes	2	sometimes	2	sometimes	2	sometimes	2	almost never	2	fairly often	3	sometimes	3	almost never	2	25	Moderate
Female	For more than 1 year	sometimes	2	almost never	1	fairly often	1	fairly often	1	sometimes	2	very often	0	almost never	0	fairly often	2	very often	4	sometimes	4	22	Moderate
Female	For more than 1 year	sometimes	2	sometimes	1	sometimes	2	fairly often	1	sometimes	1	fairly often	1	sometimes	1	almost never	2	fairly often	3	very often	2	22	Moderate
Female	For more than 1 year	almost never	1	sometimes	3	fairly often	1	fairly often	1	almost never	1	fairly often	1	almost never	1	fairly often	3	fairly often	1	almost never	2	19	Moderate
Male	For more than 1 year	fairly often	3	fairly often	4	very often	2	almost never	2	very often	3	fairly often	2	very often	3	very often	4	very often	4	fairly often	1	15	Moderate
Female	For more than 1 year	sometimes	2	sometimes	2	sometimes	2	fairly often	1	sometimes	2	fairly often	2	sometimes	2	sometimes	3	sometimes	2	sometimes	1	15	Moderate
Female	For more than 1 year	sometimes	2	sometimes	2	very often	1	fairly often	1	sometimes	1	fairly often	1	fairly often	1	fairly often	1	almost never	2	almost never	1	11	Low
Female	Less than 1 year	almost never	1	sometimes	0	fairly often	1	fairly often	2	fairly often	1	fairly often	1	fairly often	1	sometimes	2	almost never	1	almost never	1	11	Low
Female	Less than 1 year	never	0	almost never	1	fairly often	1	very often	1	fairly often	0	sometimes	2	sometimes	2	sometimes	3	never	0	never	1	11	Low
Female	Less than 1 year	sometimes	2	almost never	1	fairly often	0	very often	1	almost never	0	very often	0	sometimes	2	almost never	3	almost never	1	almost never	1	15	Moderate
Female	Less than 1 year	sometimes	2	never	1	almost never	1	fairly often	1	fairly often	2	sometimes	2	fairly often	1	sometimes	2	almost never	1	never	0	10	Low
Male	Less than 1 year	almost never	1	almost never	0	fairly often	1	fairly often	1	almost never	1	fairly often	1	fairly often	1	sometimes	3	very often	4	never	1	28	High
Male	Less than 1 year	sometimes	2	very often	3	very often	4	sometimes	2	sometimes	2	almost never	3	almost never	3	very often	4	very often	4	fairly often	0	24	Moderate
Male	Less than 1 year	fairly often	3	fairly often	3	fairly often	2	sometimes	0	very often	4	almost never	1	almost never	0	fairly often	3	fairly often	3	fairly often	3	24	Moderate
Male	Less than 1 year	sometimes	2	sometimes	3	very often	2	fairly often	1	sometimes	1	fairly often	3	almost never	2	fairly often	3	fairly often	3	fairly often	3	22	Moderate
Female	Less than 1 year	fairly often	3	fairly often	2	fairly often	1	fairly often	0	very often	2	fairly often	0	almost never	2	fairly often	3	fairly often	4	fairly often	3	24	Moderate
Less than 1 year	sometimes	2	sometimes	3	fairly often	2	sometimes	1	sometimes	1	sometimes	2	sometimes	2	fairly often	3	sometimes	2	almost never	1	11	Low
Male	Less than 1 year	fairly often	3	fairly often	3	fairly often	1	fairly often	2	sometimes	3	sometimes	2	almost never	3	sometimes	2	sometimes	3	sometimes	0	11	Low
Male	Less than 1 year	almost never	3	almost never	2	sometimes	1	sometimes	2	sometimes	3	sometimes	3	almost never	2	almost never	3	sometimes	2	sometimes	2	15	Moderate
Male	Less than 1 year	almost never	1	sometimes	2	fairly often	3	sometimes	1	fairly often	2	sometimes	3	never	4	almost never	3	sometimes	2	sometimes	2	21	Moderate

Tables

Table 1. Dimensions of cross-cultural contact and examples of each classification (Bochner 1982, page 9)

TABLE 1 *Dimensions of cross-cultural contact and examples of each classification*

Contact variables	Between members of the same society		Between members of different societies	
	Type	Example	Type	Example
On whose territory	Usually joint	Black and white Americans	Home or foreign territory	Tourists Overseas students Immigrants and their respective hosts
Time-span	Long term	Black and white Americans	Short-term Medium-term Long-term	Tourists Overseas students Immigrants
Purpose	Make a life in	Black and white Americans	Make a life in Study in Make a profit Recreate	Immigrants Overseas students Workers Tourists
Type of involvement	Participate in society	Black and white Americans	Participate Exploit Contribute Observe	Immigrants Workers Experts Tourists
Frequency of contact	High	Black and white Americans	High Medium Low	Immigrants Overseas students Tourists
Degree of intimacy between participants	High to low social distance (variable)	Black and white Americans	High to low social distance (variable)	Immigrants Overseas students Tourists
Relative status and power	Equal to Unequal (variable)	Black and white Americans	Equal Unequal	Tourists Overseas students Immigrants
Numerical balance	Majority— minority Equal Distribution	White-Black Americans, Chinese, Japanese & Caucasian Hawaiians	Majority— minority	Host and students Immigrants Tourists
Visible distinguishing characteristics	Race Religion Language	Black and white Americans Ireland India Canada	Race Religion Language	Immigrants Overseas students Tourists

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Table 2. Number of international students in the Czech Republic between 2010-2019
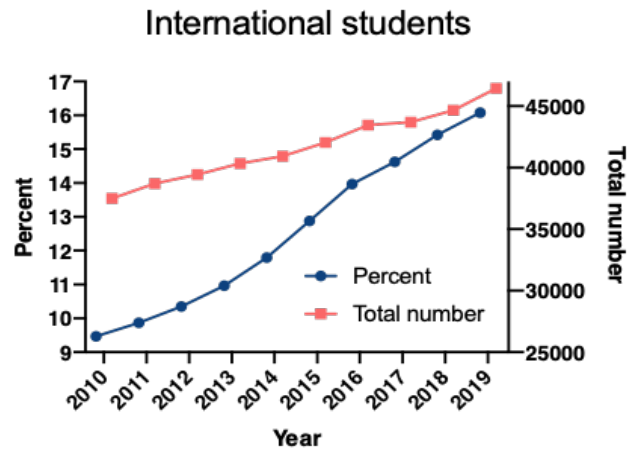

Table 3. Number of international and Czech students in the Czech Republic between 2010-2019
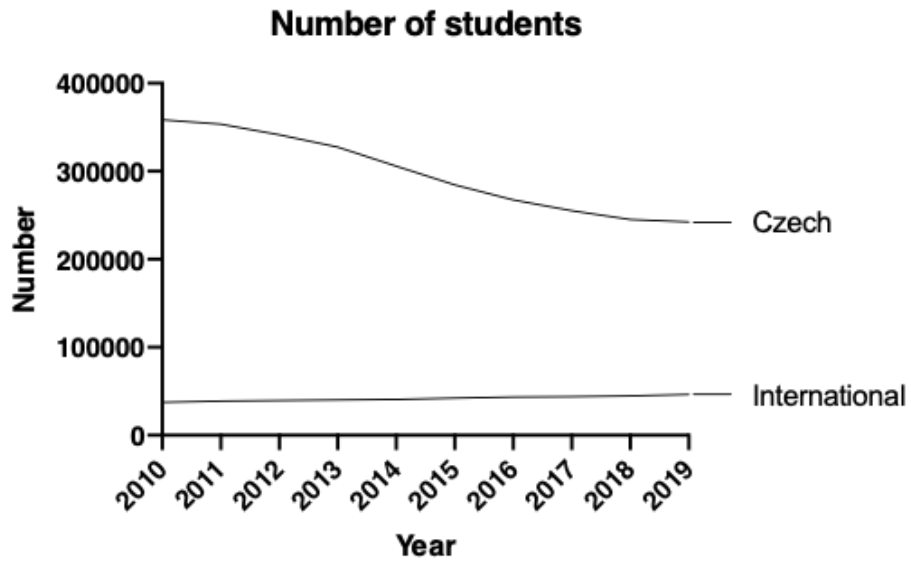
Table 4. PSS Perceived Stress Scale 10 item scale

PERCEIVED STRESS SCALE

The questions in this scale ask you about your feelings and thoughts during the last month. **In each case, you will be asked to indicate by circling** *how often* **you felt or thought a certain way.**

Name _____ Date _____

Age _____ Gender (*Circle*): **M   F**   Other _____

0 = Never   1 = Almost Never   2 = Sometimes   3 = Fairly Often   4 = Very Often

1. In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	0 1 2 3 4
2. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	0 1 2 3 4
3. In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed"?	0 1 2 3 4
4. In the last month, how often have you felt confident about your ability to handle your personal problems?	0 1 2 3 4
5. In the last month, how often have you felt that things were going your way?	0 1 2 3 4
6. In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do?	0 1 2 3 4
7. In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	0 1 2 3 4
8. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	0 1 2 3 4
9. In the last month, how often have you been angered because of things that were outside of your control?	0 1 2 3 4
10. In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	0 1 2 3 4

Table 5. Description of respondents

Respondent	Sex	Length of stay	Education
1	Female	Short-term	Language course
2	Female	Short-term	Language course
3	Male	Short-term	Language course
4	Male	Short-term	Language course
5	Female	Long-term	University
6	Female	Long-term	University
7	Female	Long-term	University
8	Male	Long-term	University

Table 6. Prevalence of disruptions during emerged during the interviews with respondents

		Group 1				Group 2						
	Respondent #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		Not mentioned	
	Loneliness										Identified stressor in group 1	
Descriptors	Lack of social support										Identified stressor in group 2	
	Language barrier											

Figures

Figure 1. Sources of differences between countries and groups (Hofstede, Minkov 2010, page 22)

FIGURE 1.4 Sources of Differences Between Countries and Groups

History

Identity
language
religion
visible

Values
software of
the minds
invisible

Institutions
rules, laws,
organizations
visible

Figure 2. Four acculturation strategies based upon two issues, in ethnocultural groups, and the larger society (Berry 2005, page 705)

J.W. Berry / International Journal of Intercultural Relations 29 (2005) 697–712   705

ISSUE 1:
MAINTENANCE OF HERITAGE CULTURE AND IDENTITY

ISSUE 2:
RELATIONSHIPS
SOUGHT
AMONG
GROUPS

INTEGRATION   ASSIMILATION

SEPARATION   MARGINALIZATION

MULTICULTURALISM   MELTING POT

SEGREGATION   EXCLUSION

STRATEGIES OF
ETHNOCULTURAL
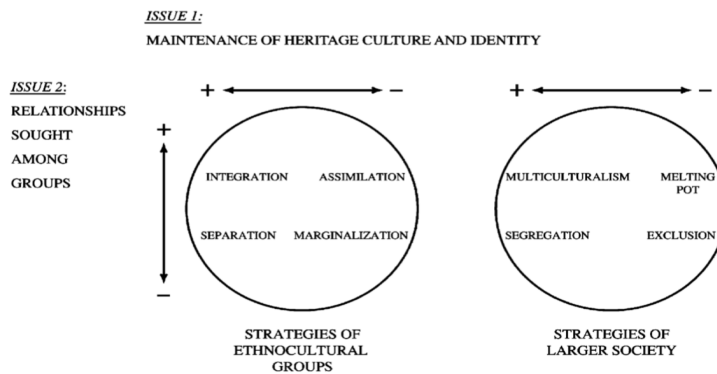GROUPS

STRATEGIES OF
LARGER SOCIETY

Fig. 3. Four acculturation strategies based upon two issues, in ethnocultural groups, and the larger society.

Figure 3. The Acculturation Curve (Hofstede, Minkov 2010, page 385)
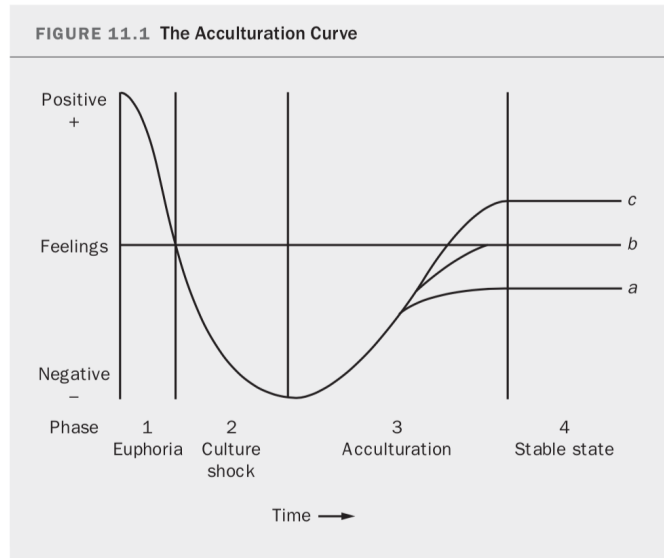

FIGURE 11.1 The Acculturation Curve

Figure 4. Stress level among respondents of the online-questionnaire
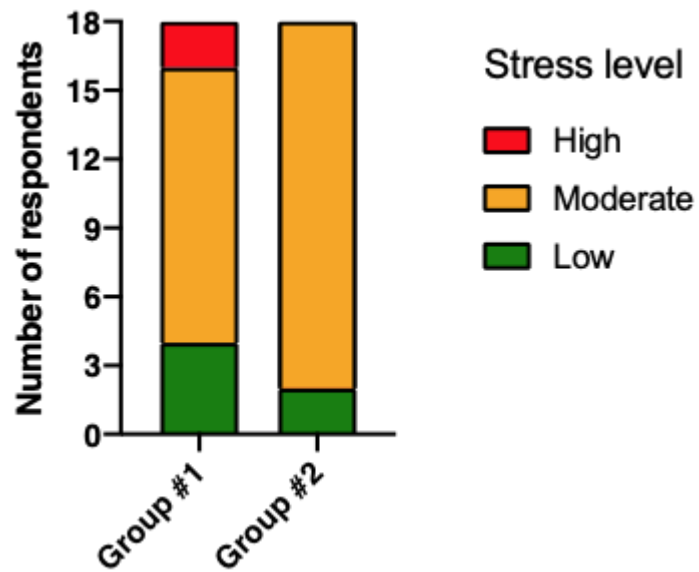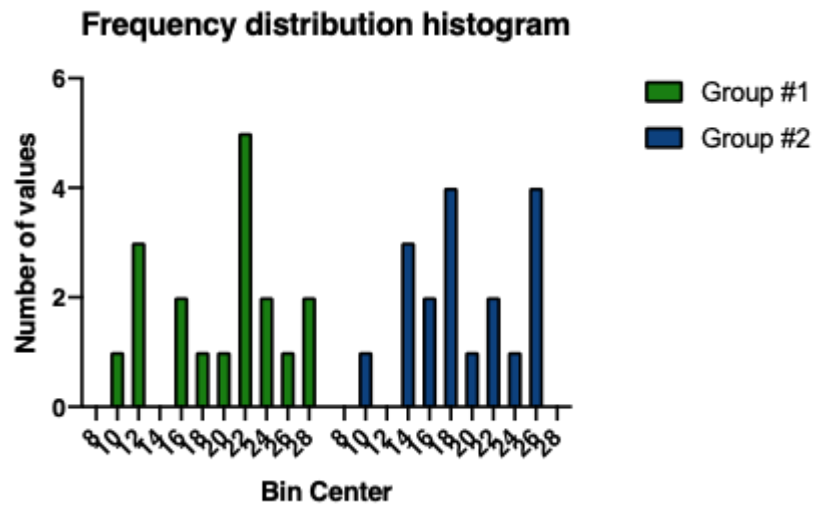
Figure 5. Frequency distribution histogram

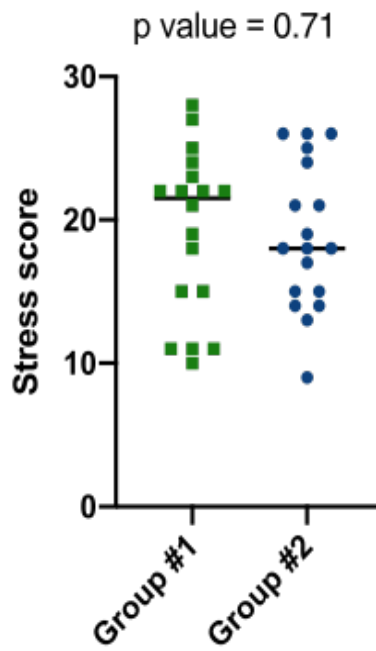Figure 6. Median of two groups of respondents

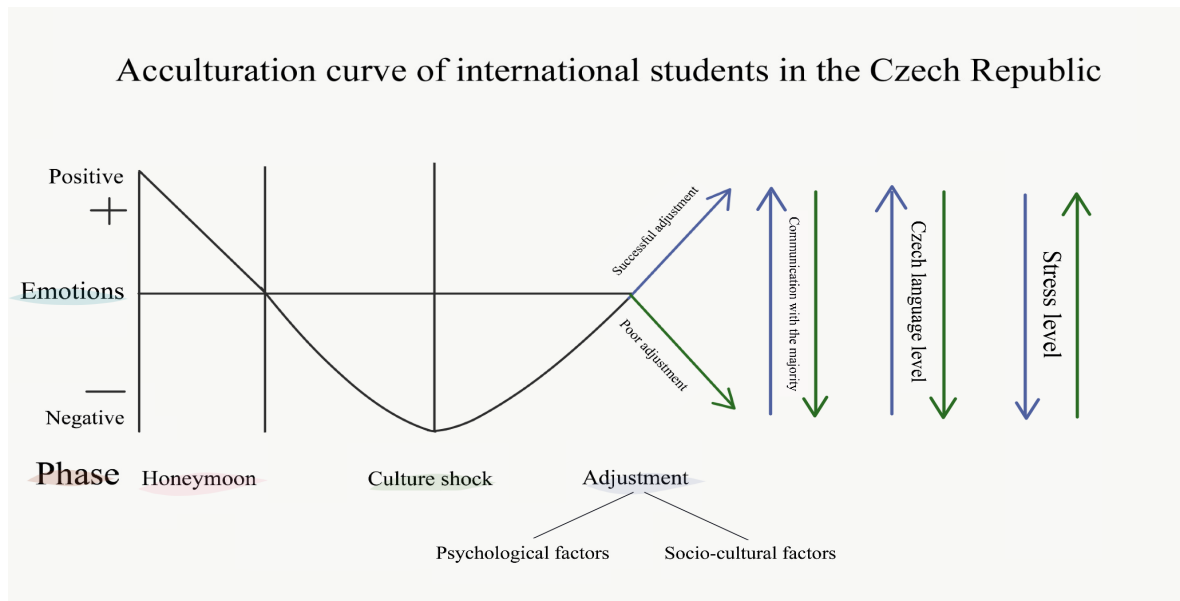Figure 7. Acculturation curve of international students in the Czech Republic

Acculturation curve of international students in the Czech Republic

Figure 8. Psychological and socio-cultural factors as predictors of adaptation

Psychological factors	Socio-cultural factors
a) loneliness	e) language competence
b) social support	f) communication with the majority
c) personal problems	g) communication with the minority group
d) internal motivation	h) stereotyping or discrimination