

Personal values in an acculturation context: a study of Filipina women in Rome

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Abstract

The current context of global migration trends and the new realities of multicultural societies make clear the need for understanding the role that personal values can have on immigrants' acculturation attitudes. This study highlights the adaptive role of values such as benevolence, conformity, and security in a sample of Filipina mothers who immigrated to Rome (Italy) with their families. These initial results can be useful for future studies and interventions policies focused on immigrants' well-being.

Key words: immigration, acculturation processes, personal values, integration, multiculturalism.

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Contemporary immigrant receiving societies, characterized by growing multiculturalism, is the object of systematic studies that, throughout the analyses of countless interacting factors, try to deepen the knowledge of the phenomenon of cultural encounters. Italy has turned into a receiving country over the last half century after having been a country of emigrants (DeFelice, 2010). According to official data (ISTAT, 2012), in January 2011 foreigners residents in Italy are estimated to be 7.5% of the total number of residents. We propose to investigate some relevant issues in the Filipina Community in Rome. The Filipina immigrant Community is one of the hugest in the world and the sixth in Italy (Caritas, 2010).

In literature concerning acculturation, personal values have demonstrated as being the guiding principles and the major drive of human behaviour, characterizing global and cultural behaviours (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990). In this regard, one can argue that values, acculturation, and adaptation are all interlinked (Phalet & Swyngedouw, 2003).

Personal Values

According to Schwartz and Bardi (2001), people's values form a coherent system that identifies them as distinct individuals. Schwartz's model concerns ten value orientations: Self-Direction, Stimulation, Hedonism, Achievement, Power, Security, Conformity, Tradition, Benevolence, and Universalism. These motivationally basic values have been tested in 78 different cultures, showing strong cross-cultural invariance (Davidov, Schmidt, Schwartz, 2008). A pan-cultural base-line of values hierarchy has been obtained by averaging values hierarchies on thirteen representative different cultures (Schwartz and Bardi, 2001).

Benevolence is the first value pan-culturally ranked: it refers to being concerned for the well-being of people with whom one is in personal contact (the "in-group"), namely being helpful to them (Schwartz, 2006).

However, in some specific cultures, conformity, defined as restraint of divergent impulses likely to harm society and its norms, is ranked first in the hierarchy of values. Conformity-oriented individuals are likely to display a better psychological adaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 1993).

Berry's Model of acculturation processes and its relation with values

Personal values are not static domains of human's lives and choices; they have shown to be modified under specific conditions, such as immigration. Accordingly they are strongly related to the concept of acculturation that refers to cultural encounters among dominant-host cultures and immigrated groups (Berry, 1997). Under Berry's framework, four types of possible attitudes towards the new context are described: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization.

The present study will focus on personal values of a sample of Filipina immigrants in Rome (Podio-Guidugli, 2012). Their value hierarchy will be compared with a Filipina sample of non-immigrants (who did not undergo any

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acculturation process), with the pan-cultural base-line of values (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001), and with that of the host-dominant Country (Italy). The novelty of our study relies upon the fact that there are no previous studies testing differences, consequent to immigration processes, in the hierarchy of values. The community of Filipino immigrants constitutes an elucidate group in testing the differences considering its long-standing tradition of emigration and positive adaptation to various contexts.

In particular, the following hypotheses were investigated:

H1: Results provided by Schwartz and Bardi (2001) showed that in five countries (Ghana, Fiji, Nigeria, Filipines, and Uganda) conformity was at first place while self-direction showed lower rated importance. This importance attributed to conformity might testify to f cultural issues pre-existing to immigration such as having been subjected to colonialism for centuries. Therefore, we hypothesize to find a similar pattern in the sample of Filipina immigrants. Benevolence is, by definition, the positive attitude that leads human beings to take care of the welfare of their closest members inside the in-group, this value is at the utmost position of the pan-cultural hierarchy. We hypothesize, therefore, that benevolence will be among the top ranking values in immigrant samples.

H2: According to Ward & Kennedy (1993), people oriented towards conformity are generally psychosocially better adapted than other individuals. Hence we expect that the endorsement of this value will lead to an orientation to assimilating the dominant society's culture and values.

H3: A high importance attributed to security should elicit a lower importance placed over the openness toward Italian values and culture. This is due to the fact that immigrants search for security inside their ethnic community the help to understand and to face the new challenges, and rules of the host country (Berry, 2005).

Method

Participants and Measures

Filipina immigrants. The sample of Filipina mothers consisted of 139 participants, living in Rome, Italy, for a minimum of eight years. Mean age of respondents was 38.04 ($SD=6.77$). Among them, 106 on the total were married and 126 were occupied as domestic workers. Each mother answered a battery of questionnaires. A bilingual version Italian-English of the instruments was administered to each participant who could choose to answer in either one or the other language. These instruments consisted of: Family Information Form (*FIF*); this is a questionnaire that investigates the structural features of families by means of 26 socio-demographic items (Lansford's et al. 2005). Portrait Values Questionnaire (*PVQ*); it consists of 40 items on a six-point Likert-Style scale to assess cross-culturally ten personal values in accordance to Schwartz' theory (Schwartz, 2005). Bicultural Attitude Scale for Parents (*BAS*); it is a self-report measure devised to assess people's cultural orientations or attitudes (Khaleque, 2006).

Italian women. A normative sample of Italian mothers ($N=1339$) completed a set of questionnaires that measured values throughout the Portrait Value Questionnaire scale (Schwartz, 2005). This was a convenience sample gathered at the University of Rome. The mean age of women was 48.8 years ($SD = 11.89$).

Non immigrant Filipina women. A sample of 459 Filipina women rated each value in their native language version of the Schwartz value survey (*SVS*) containing 56/57 items. The sample mean age= 41.74 ($SD =16.29$). Data, provided by Schwartz, are part of the pan cultural base-line study.

Pan-cultural base-line. This sample belongs to the above mentioned cross-cultural study (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001).

Results

According to our first hypothesis both Filipina samples, when compared to Italians and the baseline, attributed a higher importance to conformity and a lower importance to self-direction. In particular, the ranking was lower by about four positions from the baseline . As noted by Schwartz and Bilsky (1990), Conformity represents the best strategy for groups' survival fulfilling the requirement for social coordinated living.

Regarding benevolence, a significant difference in ranking among Filipina immigrants and the other three groups emerged: in the baseline and Italian samples, benevolence occupied the first position, while it occupies the second

position in the non-immigrants' sample. A striking finding is that it occupied the eighth place in the hierarchy of Filipina immigrated women. This results can be explained by considering that Filipina immigrant families live in very small households, often together with other nationals (not necessarily relatives or very close friends) and are de facto highly interdependent for survival. Benevolence is an intrinsic motivation that concern helpfulness, honesty, forgiveness, loyalty, responsibility and should be internalized to be displayed by individuals. Under specific conditions such as immigration a central value such as benevolence can follow a different pattern. The explanation is coherent with that proposed by Schwartz and Bardi (2001) to justify the high rating of conformity and the low rating of benevolence in some African nations. Conformity values are crucial to group survival and positive relations while: "Benevolence values may be less effective and hence less important because the large number of people and the diversity of relationships in the household may weaken the identification with close others that underlies this value" (Schwartz and Bardi, 2001, page 283). That is, benevolence, is here thwarted and lowered.

It is widely acknowledged how values have a significant impact in affecting people's orientation towards acculturation choices (Ward & Kennedy, 1992, 1993). We regressed on the ten values measured by PVQ the two scales derived from Khaleque' BAS, and by means of a confirmatory factor analysis we obtained two dimensions (these two scales have been named "*orientation toward the culture of origin*" versus "*orientation toward the host culture*"). Values explained about the 18% of variance in orientation toward Italian culture and 16% of variance in orientation toward the culture of origin. The three significant values affecting these orientations are conformity, security and benevolence. The results confirm the second hypothesis that, the more importance people place on conformity, the more positive is their attitude toward Italian culture. This could be the direct effect of conforming to these values or either the strategic mimicry induced by striving to fit into the dominant culture. In fact, conformity values promote cooperation in order to avoid negative outcomes for self. It fulfills the basic requirement for preserving social order and to lead individuals to follow societal rules, this value pertains to extrinsic motivational bases. On the other hand, in line with the third hypothesis, it seems that the more importance they place on security, the more positive is their attitude toward Italian culture. This is probably due to the fact that they search security in their roots and among the members of their community. As far as orientation toward the culture of origin is concerned (the second regression), the only value showing a significant impact on acculturation attitudes is benevolence. That is easily understandable since benevolence is, by definition, related to the attitude toward the culture of origin.

Conclusions

The central aim of this study was to arrive at a better understanding of a core motivational construct such as personal values in a sample of Filipina immigrants in Italy. In particular attention was given to the adaptive role that values such as benevolence, conformity and security have in impacting these mother's acculturation attitudes. We found that the primary role of conformism was pervasive. The primary role of conformity, evident in both samples of Filipinas immigrants and non immigrants, points to the strong adaptive function of this value for survival among this specific group. We believe this can be the result of historical reasons. This "apparent" conformity is a useful coping strategy to assimilate to the context. And finally, this study highlights the role played by social contexts. Benevolence is a clearly thwarted value: people who are in physical proximity do not necessarily coincide with the affectively to those in closest distance to one.

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