Identity and Integration dynamics.

A study with a group of Filipino first generation.

Damigella D., Licciardello O., Reitano E.

Abstract— **In Italy, among the Asian communities, the Filipino one is the second per number of legally resident migrants as well as one of the eldest. The Filipino immigration group is characterized by a polarization towards the female gender and it is mainly involved in housework or personal care services (Annual Report, 2014).This long lasting presence in the Italian community involves interesting dynamics that involve their social identity (Tajfel, 1981), different cultural systems and perceived well-being. The aim of this study was to explore the attitudes of a group of Filipino first generation on: their integration processes; groups and identity dimensions; perceived well-being. Data have been collected through the administration of a semi-structured questionnaire in a face to face setting. Results seem to delineate a general positive framework with some elements of complexity from which could it be desirable to start promoting real integration processes.**

Keywords—*immigration, intergroup relationships, acculturation processes, well-being.*

I.   Introduction

International migrations are one of the most significant, complex and of great social impact phenomena that have involved all regions of the Earth and that have characterized the history of mankind.

It suggests a coming together of people who coexist within the same geographical space but who are nevertheless separated by a myriad of internal borderlines which, sometimes, isolate, segregate and exclude people without any obvious institutionalisation of boundaries (Licciardello & Damigella, 2011).

In last decades Italy has become a place of transit or destination of increasingly intense migration flows, changing from a country of emigration to a 'space' of immigration (Bonifazi, 1998) .

Daniela Damigella Researcher
University of Messina, Department of Human Sciences,
 Italy,

Orazio Licciardello Full Professor of Social Psychology
University of Catania, Department of Educational Processes,
Italy

Elisa Reitano Teacher and Professional Educator
MIUR, Roma
Italy

In this Italian general framework, the Filipino community is one of the foreign communities with the highest migration seniority. The more consistent flow of Filipino migrants into Italy ranks in the first half of the '90s and the first appearances are recorded in the 70s. The Filipino presence, as it increased over the years, has not had the same imposing growth trend of other Asian nationalities (for example, Pakistani and Indian) (Annual Report, 2012).

With first generations of immigrants we refer to adults who have left the country of origin to a new country in search of better living conditions as well as for themselves for their children and family. Typically, for first generations the decision to migrate is made following a choice, which isn't suffered but conscious and matured over time. Migration, in fact, involves both separation from relatives and from social context in which migrants lived until the arriving in a different context. A feature that is often found in first generations is the strong attachment to the native culture, to their traditions and customs. In general, they maintain fundamental identity aspects acquired in the country of origin, as the meaning of life and death, family, relations between generations and genders, religious affiliation, the value of money (Coluccia & Feretti, 2010).

Nevertheless, among psycho-social dynamics that first generations of immigrants are facing with one is that related to process of definition and redefinition of identity, particularly social identity (Tajfel, 1981) as the self-image that derivates from belonging to a group (or groups), combined with the value and the emotional meaning associated with membership. Another dynamic is the activation of acculturation processes, that is a bidirectional change that occurs when two different ethno-cultural groups come into prolonged contact, influencing each other and leading to cultural changes, involving individuals, groups and socio-cultural contexts (Redfield, Linton & Herskovitz, 1936; Liebkind, 2001).

According to Berry's Acculturation Model (1986; 1997; 2001) the integration strategy, reflecting the desire to maintain the core values of their culture and, at the same time, to take the basic host society cultural features, can be considered the 'best' strategy of acculturation. It leads, indeed, at low acculturation stress and at high levels of adaptability and of psychological and social well-being.

Perceived psychological well-being of immigrants, in fact, is not only related to basic needs (home, work, etc.), but also to personal and relational dimensions combined with the sense of satisfaction associated with them.

II. Method

A. *Aim and hypothesis*

The aim of this study was to explore the representational framework that a group of Filipino first generation of immigrants has on: integration processes; native and Italian culture; perceived well-being; some identity and group dimensions. Specifically, it was intended to test the hypothesis that these representations are affected by the time they spend in Italy and by the overlap between cultural identity and native or Italian language.

B. *Participants*

Research was carried out with a group of Filipino first generation of immigrants (N. 50; M= 34% F= 66%; age range 33-73, *M*= 49.24) living in a Sicilian town. The considerable presence of women among participants reflects the prevailing polarization of female gender in the Filipino community (Annual Report, 2014). In relation to education, the majority has a medium to high level (56% diploma and 24% degree) and regarding professed religion most of the subjects are Catholic (84%).

Participants spend in Italy from a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 35 years (*M*=17.88). Among reasons of migration the need of a job is prevalent (78%), followed by the desire to give a better future to their children (12%) and family reunion (10%). Almost all (98%) maintain relationships with family and friends who live in country of origin,. With reference to work, most of the subjects (84%) are involved in domestic works.

In relation to Italian citizenship, 76% declared not having it and a 24% has it. Half (52%) of those who did not have Italian citizenship thought of acquiring it in the future.

C. *Materials and techniques*

Data was collected by a questionnaire containing: I) background questions aimed at collecting specific data in order to draw an appropriate profile of respondents' socio-cultural features, useful as research variables (Licciardello, 1994); II) two groups of items in order to measure the relevance of some intercultural activities and the relationships between native and Italian culture (1= *total disagreement*; 7= *total agreement*, with 4= 'mead point'); III) a scale (PWB) (1= *total disagreement*; 6= *total agreement*) in order to measure the perceived Psychological Well-being (Ryff, 2003) into 6 dimensions (autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, self acceptance); IV) the Inclusion of the Other in Self Scale (Aron, Aron & Smollan, 1992; Schubert & Otten, 2002) consisting of eight circular graphics symbols, each representing a different degree of overlap between cultural identity and language (1=*distant*, 8=*complete overlapping*); V) a section relating to residence domain of Bourhis Immigrant Acculturation Scale (IAS) in Capozza and Volpato (2009) Italian version (1=*total disagreement*; 7=*total agreement*); VI)four Semantic Differentials (Di Nuovo & Licciardello, 1997) concerning attitudes on Actual Self ("*As I am*"); Future Self ("*As I will be*"); ingroup (*Filipino countrymen*); outgroup (*Italian people)*.

The materials were administered by the researcher in a face to face setting using snow-ball method.

D. *Procedures*

Data analysis was carried by SPSS 20 for Windows, using MANOVA and Pearsons's "r" for correlation analysis. We calculated the mean values of each item for the data obtained with the questionnaire. Regarding the Semantic Differentials, we calculated the: 1) realiability with Cronbach's alpha: Actual Self (α=.796), Future Self (α=.903), ingroup (α=.868), outgroup (α=.796); 2) and the average sum of each pair of opposite adjectives scores.

III. Results

A. *Attitudes on Native and Italian culture*

Regarding data of Inclusion of the Other in Self Scale, respondents revealed good overlap between cultural identity and native language (*M*=6.82) and moderate overlap between cultural identity and Italian language (*M*=5.54).

Data on relationships between native and Italian culture (MANOVA with 5 factors Within DF=4,196 F=45.18 *p*<.000) revealed that participants approved with fairly good score (*M*=5.62) the item on integration, that is improvement and maintaining the two cultures, followed by that on individualization, namely consideration of people as individuals rather than as members of a cultural group (*M*=5.26). They approved moderately the item on preserving exclusively native culture (*M*=4.84) and they not take position with respect to the total prevalence of Italian culture (*M*=4.04). Item on marginalization was rejected, it refers to abandonment of native culture and to non-acquisition of Italian one (*M*=2.34).

Orientation toward integration seems to be reflected in the fact that most participants (80%) speaks regularly at home both in native and in Italian language.

B. *Integration dynamics*

To promote integration between immigrants and locals, respondents (MANOVA with 10 factors Within DF=9,441 F=10.78 *p*<.001) stated good agreement with promotion of products and foods of immigrants culture (*M*=5.90), followed by religious events (*M*=5.74), by encouraging tourism in immigrants native countries of origin (*M*=5.72) and by amusement events (*M* =5.62). Less agreement, but still slightly positive, was expressed toward fund-raising for solidarity interventions (*M*=5.06) and organization of meetings and conferences on intercultural issue (*M*=4.82).

Data on residence domain of Immigrant Acculturation Scale (MANOVA with 5 factors Within DF=4,196 F=10.66 *p*<.001) stated that participants expressed fair agreements (*M*=5.28) with integration– strategy, preferring to live in a town where their neighbours are both members belonging to their

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native community and Italians. Lower levels of agreement were assigned to separation (M=4.88) that is preference solely for their countrymen, to individualization (M=4.78) and to assimilation (M=4.68) (only Italian neighbours). Item on marginalization was basically rejected (M=3.42), it refers to the unimportance of neighbours' origin since they are uncomfortable both with members of the same culture and Italians.

As in relationships between native and Italian culture also in residence domain participants seem prefer integration strategy, rejecting those characterized by marginalization.

C. *Selves and groups representations and perceived well-being*

In general, participants (MANOVA with 4 factors Within DF=3,147 F=2.94 p=.035) seems to have a fairly good Self representation (Future Self: M=5.31 and Actual Self: M=5.22). Slightly lower is the assessment of their countrymen (M=5.11) and of Italians (M=5.02).

In relation to data on perceived well-being (MANOVA with 10 factors Within DF=9,441 F=10.60 p<.001), participants revealed a good level of well-being, probably expression of harmony with oneself, others and environment. In detail, fairly good scores are referred to purpose in life (M=4.84), self acceptance (M=4.70), autonomy (M=4.53) and personal growth (M=4.24). Lower scores, but still slightly positive, those related to environmental mastery (M=3.8) and positive relations (M=3.31).

D. *Correlation analysis*

The correlation analysis between how many time participants spend in Italy and dimensions previously examined revealed that the longer the time they stay in Italy:

a) more they expressed agreement with residence integration strategy (r=.360; p=.010) and less with residence marginalization strategy (r=.-358; p=.011);

b) more they revealed perceived well-being in dimensions of autonomy (r=.352; p=.012) and personal growth (r=.371; p=.008);

c) less they expressed agreement with marginalization which refers to the abandonment of native culture and non-acquisition of the Italian one (r=.-378; p=.007).

Moreover, the correlation analysis between the Inclusion of the Other in Self Scale (cultural identity and Italian language) and dimensions previously examined revealed that more is the overlapping between cultural identity and Italian language:

*a)*the less they expressed agreement with residence marginalization strategy (r=.-333; p=.018);

b) the more they valued Italian people (r=.286; p=.044);

The correlation between the Inclusion of the Other in Self Scale (cultural identity and native language) and dimensions previously examined revealed that more is the overlapping between cultural identity and native language:

a) the less they perceived well-being in dimension of personal growth (r=.-318; p=.025) and of positive relations (r=.-283; p=.047);

b) the less they expressed agreement with marginalization which refers to abandonment of native culture and non-acquisition of Italian one (r=.-306; p=.030).

IV. **Conclusion**

Results seem to delineate a substantially positive framework with some elements of complexity.

In particular, the acculturation strategy toward which participants seem to be oriented is integration, that is mutual opening between native and Italian culture. Moreover, participants rejected marginalization strategies concerning both cultural level and residence domain. Orientation toward integration seems to be reflected in the fact that most participants speaks regularly at home both in native and in Italian language.

The integration, however, is a cultural strategy toward which participants seem to be oriented and also an expectation for a better quality of relationships between immigrants and locals. Specifically, activities that seems able to promote relationships between immigrants and locals are those related to symbolic and cultural dimensions, such as food, local products but also religion, which, more than others, allow to cross the borders of a culture.

In this regard, a successful action-research was carried out in a Sicilian school context with the aim to better understanding and to respect cultural differences using Mediterranean cuisine as an expression of multicultural identity and as a tool of cultural mediation (Liccirdello & Damigella, 2009; 2011)

In relation to perceived psychological well-being, dimensions evaluated more positively belong to self acceptance, autonomy, personal growth and purpose in life. Lower scores are, however, assigned to those related to environmental mastery and positive relations. Certainly, the perceived psychological well-being is related not only to factors affecting the personal sphere but also to relationships with others and participation in the context of belonging. The individual, in fact, fully realizes himself also in relationships with other people and in participation in local community to which he belongs and the quality of these relations is correlated with psychological well-being. Participation, therefore, is a prerequisite for a better quality of life.

The research hypothesis seems to be confirmed. Specifically, data on correlations analysis revealed that longer participants reside in Italy more they agreed with integration, less with marginalization strategy and higher are their levels of well-being in autonomy and personal growth dimensions. Instead, the more is the overlapping between cultural identity and native language less the they perceived well-being in dimensions of personal growth and positive relations.

Even if results delineate a general positive framework, we have to point out that integration does not necessarily develop 'naturally' but needs to be supported along by socio-political

and civil society interventions that, following a bottom-up approach, put into action the real needs and proposals of immigrants and locals.

Based on results of this study, we could anticipate some future research developments. It would be interesting to investigate the role played in integration processes by first generations to second generations and by the coexistence of multiple generations within the same family (Damigella, Licciardello & Longo, 2013; Licciardello & Damigella, 2013).

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