



Cultural values and attitudes toward immigrants and multiculturalism: The case of the Eurobarometer survey on racism and xenophobia[☆]

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Abstract

The current paper uses archival data to examine variations in Schwartz's and Hofstede's cultural value orientations and their relationship to attitudes toward immigration and multiculturalism reported in the Eurobarometer Survey [Attitudes towards minority groups in the European Union: a special analysis of the Eurobarometer 2000 opinion poll on behalf of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. Eurobarometer Opinion Poll. Retrieved September 1, 2003, from http://europa.eu.int/comm/public_opinion/index_en.htm] on racism and xenophobia. The results demonstrated that mastery, masculinity, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and collectivism were associated with weaker support for policies that promote social co-existence. Masculinity and mastery were also linked to more pessimistic attitudes towards multiculturalism, and increased harmony was correlated with less desire for cultural assimilation. The results largely converge with research undertaken at the individual-level of analysis, and the data suggest four clusters of cultural values related to immigration attitudes: humanitarianism-egalitarianism, conservation, collectivism, and instrumentality.

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1. Introduction

Values have played a small but significant role in acculturation research, particularly in those investigations that have examined the experiences of sojourners and immigrants. Studies have explored value changes across acculturating groups (Rosenthal, Bell, Demetriou, & Efklides, 1989), value discrepancies between generations in immigrant families (Moon & Pearl, 1991) and the influence of value discrepancies between parents and children (Lin, 2005) and between heritage and host cultures (Kurman & Ronen-Eilon, 2004; Ward & Searle, 1991) on the psychological and sociocultural adaptation of short and long term migrants. Values have received far less attention, however, in acculturation research on intergroup relations undertaken with members of host societies.

Related research on symbolic racism has linked two value domains to attitudes toward ethnic outgroups. The first is Humanitarianism-Egalitarianism (HE), and the second is Conservatism. Those who ascribe to HE values are sensitive to the difficulties experienced by disadvantaged groups, are more likely to support affirmative action programs, are more receptive to diversity and are less prejudiced towards minority groups (Federico & Sidanius, 2002; Rabinowitz, Wittig, von Braun, Franke, & Zander-Music, 2005). In contrast, people who hold conservative values are more likely to display prejudice and negative attitudes toward minority groups (Lambert & Chasteen, 1997). These patterns are also observed in studies that have specifically examined attitudes toward immigrants. Endorsement of benevolent and universalistic values are linked to more positive attitudes toward immigrants (Leong, 2005) while conservatism is associated with a desire to reduce immigration (Beaton, Tougas, Clayton, & Perrino, 2003).

Beyond these studies, theory and research arising from cross-cultural psychology suggests that collectivist value orientations may also be associated with outgroup attitudes. Triandis (1989) has argued that fewer distinctions are made between ingroups and outgroups by individualists/idiocentrics than collectivists/allocentrics. Lee and Ward (1998) found that collectivists/allocentrics display more ethno-centric biases, and de Vries (2002) reported that collectivism predicts ethnic supremacy aspirations.

Finally, personality research and cross-cultural studies of gender stereotyping may offer additional insights into attitudes toward ethnic groups, including migrants. Stereotypically masculine traits have been linked to dominance, competitiveness, mastery, achievement and a task orientation. In contrast, feminine characteristics have been defined in terms of warmth, nurturance, compassion and an interpersonal orientation (Lippa, 2001; Olds & Shaver, 1980). When the two domains are viewed as opposite, rather than orthogonal, clusters of traits, each domain is seen as lacking the traits and characteristics defining the other (Spence & Helmreich, 1978). On the basis of this distinction, we expect individuals from masculine cultures, which are characterized by competitiveness and instrumentality and lacking in warmth and interpersonal concern, to display more negative attitudes toward members of ethnic outgroups than individuals from feminine cultures (Williams & Best, 1990).

Although these studies have corroborated the link between values and attitudes, the results have been confined to an individual level of analysis. Far less is known about the relationship between cultural-level values and reception of immigrants. As immigration is increasing on a worldwide basis, and 175 million people now live outside their country of origin, this is a significant limitation in acculturation research (United Nations, 2002). This paper is a response to that limitation. The research presented here explores the relations

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