On How a Combination of the Social Network Paradigm and Focus Group Interviews Can Provide Insights into “Cultural Fluidity”

Adrian Stanciu

VECHTA UNIVERSITY, INSTITUTE FOR GERONTOLOGY, GERMANY
JACOBS UNIVERSITY BREMEN, PSYCHOLOGY AND METHODS, GERMANY
adrian.stanciu@uni-vechta.de

STATE OF THE ART

1. Culture is a construct of people’s communication, whether verbal or via written artifacts (Kashima, 2008). Culture therefore is thought to remain stable as a result of people communicating information that reproduces the cultural status quo (consistent information) and, contrastingly, culture is thought to be fluid as a result of people communicating information that challenges the cultural status quo (inconsistent information). The flow of cultural information is sustained by an existing common ground (Kashima, 2014), which is an implicit or explicit state of interacting individuals who share a set of experiences, such as language and national history.

2. Ideally, cultural fluidity is studied in longitudinal endeavors, where a researcher investigates specific elements of a culture and whether they remain stable throughout a large time frame (decades). This approach however is highly demanding in terms of time and financial resources.

3. Existing Stereotypes.


MOTIVATION & PROPOSITION

1. Migration has become as of late a highly debated theme among politicians and lay people alike (e.g., the recent so-called refugee crisis, the ‘revival’ of populist parties, etc.). Right wing ideological movements would argue that migration has a detrimental influence on a country’s culture. Left wing movements would argue quite the opposite, namely, that migration has a positive role in the societal and cultural development of a country.

2. What is the scientific stance in this case: Does migration into a country has the potential to change the local culture? And if so, in which way does that happen?

3. A study on the flow of cultural information between indigenes and immigrants can give insights into a culture’s fluidity:
   - Modes of living together influences the transmission of cultural information.
   - Immigrants and indigenes incorporate the cultural-relevant information of the other into their preexisting culture-relevant information.

A RESEARCH PROGRAM ON THE FLOW OF CULTURAL INFORMATION BETWEEN INDIGENES AND IMMIGRANTS AS EVIDENCE FOR CULTURAL FLUIDITY

KEY CONCEPTS

1. Cultural information as stereotypes about and behavioral tendencies towards social groups (Fiske et al., 2002; Cuddy et al., 2009).

2. Modes of living together as level of social-cohesion at the city level (e.g., Avant, Larsen, & Boehnke, 2016).

3. Social cohesion represents an objective indicator as to how well varying groups function together in society (Schiefner & van der Noll, 2016).

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IDEAL DATA

1. SNA – Primary data from ego-networks collected using the “name generator technique” (Marchesini, 2011).

2. FGI – Focus groups with indigenes and immigrants as majority, immigrants as minority, and balanced.

EXPERIMENTAL ‘SNA’ RESULTS

1. a.

2. b.

3. c.

Figure 1. Three example patterns of how social cohesion influences dissemination of cultural-relevant information among indigenes and immigrants (figure from Stanciu, 2016).

   a. Low social cohesion > low flow of cultural-relevant information
   b. Moderate social cohesion > moderate flow of cultural-relevant information
   c. High social cohesion > high flow of cultural relevant information

MIXED-METHOD APPROACH

1. The Social Network Paradigm (SNA) can be a tool for the study of the way modes of living together at the city-level region influences the transmission of cultural information between indigenes and immigrants.

2. Focus Group Interview (FGI) can be a tool for the in-depth study of the manner in which indigenes and immigrants incorporate the cultural-relevant information of the other into their preexisting culture-relevant information.

RESEARCH PLAN & EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. A RESEARCH PROGRAM ON THE FLOW OF CULTURAL INFORMATION BETWEEN INDIGENES AND IMMIGRANTS AS EVIDENCE FOR CULTURAL FLUIDITY

2. MIXED-METHOD APPROACH

3. RESEARCH PLAN & EXPECTED OUTCOMES

4. INITIAL EMPirical STEPS (Note: On the incorporation process in figure 2)

   1. Stanciu, Vaucclair, and Rodda. (2018; unp): Study on Romanian immigrants in Germany (N=171) and in France (N=54). The longer immigrants live in their host countries and the stronger their interest in adopting the host culture, the higher the similarity between their subjective stereotypes and the culture-level stereotypes in their host cultures (concerning ‘politicians’). Stanciu. (2018; unp): A multi-level study on the horizontal transmission of elderly stereotypes between indigenes (N=51,616) and immigrants (N=5,014) across 29 European cultures.

   • At the within level:
     i. Duration of stay in the host culture, Quality of contact with the elderly, Openness to change (value priority) predicted higher similarities between immigrants’ subjective stereotypes and the culture-level stereotypes in their host cultures.

   • At the between level: Immigrants in more individualistic cultures report more similar subjective stereotypes to the culture-level stereotypes than immigrants in more collectivistic cultures.

FRAMEWORK TO GUIDE ‘FGI’

1. A framework of the cross-cultural differences, learning opportunities, individual differences and cognitive resources of how culture-relevant (e.g., stereotypes) information learned from others is incorporated into preexisting culture-relevant information.

   (figure from Stanciu & Vaucclair, 2018)