Changes in Perceptions of Filipino Immigrants about Themselves and of Americans Before and After Coming to the United States

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Abstract

This paper examines the changes in Filipino immigrants’ perceptions about themselves and of Americans before and after coming to the United States. Filipinos have a general perception of themselves as an ethnic group. They also have perceptions about Americans whose media products regularly reach the Philippines. Eleven Filipinos who have permanently migrated to the US were interviewed about their perceptions of Filipinos and Americans. Before coming to the US, they saw themselves as hardworking, family-oriented, poor, shy, corrupt, proud, adaptable, fatalistic, humble, adventurous, persevering, gossipmonger, and happy. They described Americans as rich, arrogant, educated, workaholic, proud, powerful, spoiled, helpful, boastful, materialistic, individualistic, talented, domineering, friendly, accommodating, helpful, clean, and kind. Most of the respondents changed their perceptions of Filipinos and of Americans after coming to the US. They now view Filipinos as having acquired American values or “Americanized.” On the other hand, they stopped perceiving Americans as a homogenous group possessing the same values after they got into direct contact with them. The findings validate social perception and appraisal theory, and symbolic interaction theory.

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