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**Adjustment and Intra-Individual
Value Change in Migrants: The
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Country Embeddedness**

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INTRODUCTION

The notion that cultural values are inherently stable is an accepted tenet in cross-cultural research. However, there is ongoing debate about the stability of individual values. While much of the literature has focused on the stability of cultural values, few studies have systematically examined whether and how individual values change in the context of migration. Migration represents a significant life transition that challenges individuals to adapt to a new cultural and social environment, making it an ideal context for studying intra-individual value change.

In general, there are few studies in the literature that measure changing values within individuals (Schuster, Pinkowski, & Fischer, 2019). Studies by Bardi et al. (2014), Lönnqvist et al. (2011, 2013), and Rudnev (2014), are among the few that have explored values change in migrants, offering valuable insights into the mechanisms underlying this process. However, the broader literature has primarily concentrated on the influence of individual values on aspects of acculturation or adaptation by migrants to their host country (e.g., Ward & Searle, 1991); the impact of migration on values change is largely underexplored, and there is still a gap in our understanding about how migration shapes individual values and the processes through which such changes occur. Our study takes a different approach by examining how in-country adjustment leads to intra-individual value change in migrants.

We base our study on the premise that values are dynamic and subject to change when individuals encounter significant disruption or change to their lives, such as through a major life event like immigration. The decision to commit to a new life in a different culture and the processes associated with adapting to the host country can profoundly alter one's perspective. Interactions with host country individuals repeatedly challenge personal beliefs and assumptions, which may lead to a re-evaluation of values over time. This interaction manifests in various ways, including an acceptance of the host culture as "home" and a gradual adaptation of individual values, depending on the degree of comfort and acceptance individuals feel toward their new environment, or how embedded they are in the host country.

Bierwiazek and Walczus (2016) highlight that the literature on cross-cultural adaptation has tended to focus on specific subpopulations, such as expatriates and international students, often neglecting the socio-cultural adaptation of first-generation migrants. They argue that because migrants are generally more committed to settling in their host countries than temporary sojourners, it is often assumed that they attain satisfactory adaptation over time. This assumption, however, overlooks the unique challenges and contextual influences faced by first-generation migrants, and the longer term outcomes of transition to the host country context, which remain underexplored in the literature. For these reasons, we focus on European migrants from Lithuania, voluntary migrants, who have chosen to settle permanently in their host countries.

Our study seeks to address these gaps by investigating whether and how individual values change as a consequence of migration and the mechanisms through which these changes occur. Specifically, we examine how in-country adjustment influences values change and the mediating role of host country embeddedness. Using a sample of 1,687 voluntary migrants to four European Union host countries, we aim to provide new insights into the literature on values in the migration context by generating a deeper understanding about how migrants' individual values change in the process of adapting to new environments.

Human Values

We define values as “desirable, transsituational goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in people’s lives” (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001, p. 269). Individual values are viewed as an integral part of an individual’s self-concept and identity, shaped by personal experiences within a sociocultural context (Trommsdorff, Mayer & Albert, 2004, p. 160). Furthermore, individual values are influenced by interactions with others and the surrounding environment, rendering them dynamic and subject to development over a person’s lifespan (Trommsdorff et al., 2004).

Schwartz (1992) proposed a theory and framework for measuring values in psychology that has been widely applied in research. The theory identifies ten distinct value types, arranged in a circumplex model. Values that are positioned close to each other share similar motivational goals and are therefore more compatible and prioritized, while values on opposite sides tend to conflict and are less emphasized by individuals. These values have been grouped into two broader dimensions (Schwartz, 2005). The first dimension, openness to change versus conservation, reflects whether individuals value independence, novelty, and self-direction or prefer stability, tradition, and order. The second dimension, self-enhancement versus self-transcendence, distinguishes between the pursuit of personal success and dominance and a focus on the well-being or welfare of others.

Do values change?

While values are often held to be relatively stable, particularly in adulthood, research has identified instances of change, especially during significant life transitions or in response to environmental and life circumstances. Theories of value stability propose that values, acquired through socialization during formative years, tend to stabilize as individuals mature (Bardi, Buchanan, Goodwin, Slabu, & Robinson, 2014). While many studies have demonstrated long-term intra-individual value stability, based on Schwartz’s orientations (Schuster, Pinkowski, & Fischer, 2019), adaptation to environmental circumstances or repeated challenges can result in meaningful shifts. Schwartz and Bardi (1997) argue that people adapt their values to life circumstances, emphasizing values that are attainable and de-emphasizing those that are not. Economic or material scarcity can also affect values; as people respond to hardship, the importance of values such as power and security increases (Inglehart, 1991, 1997). Vecchione (2022) found that Italians experiencing income decline during the pandemic placed greater importance on conservation values, underscoring the role of economic stress in shaping value priorities.

Research supports the idea that values follow a life cycle trajectory but also respond to changing roles, statuses, and environmental stimuli. In a study of 32 European countries, Dobewall, Tormos, and Vaclair (2016) demonstrated that age and cohort membership both significantly influence value change. They identified that self-transcendence values tend to increase in young adulthood, while conservation values become more pronounced later in life. This aligns with the “age stability” perspective, which holds that values, attitudes, and beliefs stabilize as people grow older, with the most marked stabilization occurring after early adulthood (Glenn, 1980; Mannheim, 1953; Ryder, 1965). Life transitions, such as new roles or

experiences, can also activate change in values. Such changes are individually scripted and shaped by life experiences, rather than tied to chronological age. However, circumstances themselves are often shaped by values, as individuals make choices—such as career paths, relationships, and lifestyles—that align with their values (Schwartz, 2016; Bardi et al., 2014). Riediger (2006) and McAdams (2008) note that middle-aged adults often reassess their life goals and adapt their expectations to accommodate shifts in work, family, and leisure roles. Studies have found that adults often cite such transitions as triggers (Hoge & Bender, 1974; Newcomb et al., 1967; Roberts et al., 2002). For example, Lönnqvist et al. (2018) observed that Finnish mothers experienced an increase in conservation values over openness to change shortly after childbirth, highlighting that values can change rapidly after a life-changing event.

Bardi and Goodwin (2011) distinguish between two routes to value change: automatic and effortful. The automatic route involves activating less prominent values in response to new situations, while the effortful route entails intentional reevaluation of value priorities, often triggered by significant life events; migration is such an event. A combination of these routes can occur when individuals face major life changes. Using secondary data from five rounds of the European Social Survey, Rudnev (2014) examined the values of migrants from multiple countries and found that migrants' values tend to align more closely with those of their host country than their country of birth. Research has also found that changes in migrant's values are only temporary. After some time in the host country, migrants' values revert to their baseline values, in what Lönnqvist, Jasinskaja-Lahti, & Verkasalo, (2013) term rebound effects. However, Bardi and Goodwin (2011) argue that value change will occur temporarily if values are challenged in a singular event, or if the values challenged are of little importance to the individual. More permanent change in values is possible, when a value is challenged repeatedly, resulting in a reassessment of the value. The process of socialization, for instance, in a workplace that prioritizes autonomy, may encourage prioritization of individualistic and achievement values (Schwartz, 2016). Repeatedly encountering situations that challenge one's own values, such as when adjusting to life in a new country, will raise awareness of one's own values and, over time, result in an adaptation to that which is endorsed in the new culture (Bardi & Goodwin, 2011). Schwartz (2016) argues that this also depends on the individual's receptiveness to change; value change is more likely to occur if the individual has awareness of one's own challenged values (Bardi & Goodwin, 2011) and identifies with the socializer, such as through a sense of embeddedness in the organization or community. In their comparison of value change in three different settings, Bardi et al. (2014) found stronger socialization effects on the values of migrants, compared with police officers and students, demonstrating that a significant change across numerous life aspects, as opposed to self-selected transitions in a single aspect, such as an occupational role, is necessary for change to occur. Thus, for migrants, the process of adaptation to the host culture plays a pivotal role in values change.

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The role of adjustment in values change

According to cultural learning theory, individuals learn the implicit and explicit rules of the host culture through interaction, observation, and engagement in daily activities (Ward,

Bochner, & Furnham, 2001). This exposes individuals to others' interpretations of events in a new culture (Bardi and Goodwin, 2011). Interaction with host nationals increases social learning about acceptable or unacceptable behaviors and awareness of norms and attitudes. Over time, as individuals interact with various host country nationals, they gain an understanding of the host country's normative institutions. This understanding enables them to compare these norms to their own values, which may challenge their existing values and gradually lead to acceptance and internalization of host country values. Further, and in line with social identity theory, through modeling their behavior on that of others, individuals may seek to reduce intergroup differences to strengthen their social identification and acceptance within the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This process not only aids in understanding behavioral norms but also facilitates the gradual internalization of host culture values (Schwartz, 1992).

This process of socialization, interaction, and learning from locals is critical to value transformation. Interaction adjustment plays a pivotal role, as it facilitates the acquisition of information about the host country through knowledge transfer. Through this process, migrants develop cognitive skills that enable them to adjust their mental frames of reference (Haslberger & Brewster, 2009). Host contacts are an important source of knowledge about local social and cultural norms, further enhancing the alignment between migrants' values and those of the host country.

Hypothesis 1: In-country adjustment is associated with greater similarity to host country values.

Migrants who actively engage with individuals in the host country are more likely to benefit from social learning and develop an understanding of the host country's norms and values. Through sustained interactions and adjustments, migrants often transform initial challenges into positive experiences, eventually fostering a sense of belonging and integration. Embeddedness, defined as the extent of cultural, social, and institutional integration into the host country, reflects this deeper connection (Clark & Li, 2024). It encompasses not only participation in social networks but also a broader alignment with the host country's cultural and institutional frameworks.

Expanding social networks through meaningful interactions with host country individuals strengthens migrants' ties to the host country while simultaneously weakening their reliance on home country connections (Haslberger & Brewster, 2009). This dynamic aligns with Berry et al.'s (1988) findings, which highlight that maintaining active host country contacts reduces the likelihood of separation or marginalization. Interaction adjustment, therefore, is a critical pathway through which migrants achieve host country embeddedness.

Hypothesis 2: In-country adjustment is positively associated with host country embeddedness.

The role of embeddedness in values change

Embeddedness fosters consistent and meaningful engagement with the host culture, providing the continuity and depth of relationships necessary to internalize and align with host country values. For example, participation in cultural rituals, institutional roles, or community activities reinforces value alignment by embedding migrants in the fabric of the host society. These sustained connections encourage the replacement or modification of prior value systems in

favor of those prevalent in the host country. Thus, the extent of a migrant's embeddedness in the host country directly influences the degree to which their values align with those of the host culture.

Hypothesis 3: Host country embeddedness is associated with a greater similarity to host country values.

The relationship between embeddedness and host country values is rooted in the deeper connections migrants form with their host culture. Embeddedness builds on the foundation created by interaction adjustment by deepening engagement and fostering a reciprocal relationship between migrants and their host environment (Therenou & Caulfield, 2010). While interaction adjustment introduces migrants to acceptable behaviors and social norms through social learning, embeddedness provides the continuity and depth of relationships necessary to internalize and align with these values (Repke & Benet-Martínez, 2018).

We argue that embeddedness will mediate the relationship between adjustment and values similarity. Although interacting with host country individuals is an element of socialization that can affect migrants' values, the extent to which positive adjustment facilitates the view of the host country as "home" and migrants' degree of comfort in the country as a result of their integration into their various communities are key. Embeddedness, therefore, reflects an identification with the host culture that extends beyond specific interactions to encompass the wider realm of the migrant's social and institutional integration.

Hypothesis 4: Host country embeddedness will mediate the relationship between in-country adjustment and similarity to host country values.

METHOD

Sample and Data Collection Procedures

Data for this study were collected from Lithuanian emigrants to four European countries: Ireland, Germany, Norway and the United Kingdom. Participants were contacted through various means, such as community organizations, publications in Lithuanian language media (including newspapers, magazines, newsletters and social media). Participants responded to an online Lithuanian language questionnaire that was translated and backtranslated following the recommendations of Brislin (1970). Items were initially translated from English by a Lithuanian bilingual native speaker. The Lithuanian version was reviewed by a second English/Lithuanian bilingual speaker to check for language clarity and consistency in meaning. Items were then backtranslated by a third bilingual speaker, and the original and backtranslated versions were again compared for consistency in meaning, and a final Lithuanian language version was adopted by consensus of the research team.

We received 3048 responses in total. We removed questionnaires from respondents who withdrew consent (N=61), duplicate responses (N=3) and abandoned the survey or had missing data on values (N=1297), leaving 1687 usable questionnaires and an effective response rate of 55%. Our sample was skewed on gender with 78.7% female (N=1327). This is not atypical of

studies on Lithuanian migrants (Mockaitis and Zander, 2023; Kumpikaite-Valiuniene et al., 2023). The mean age was 40.83 years (SD= 9.66, min 19, max 85). Most of the respondents were married or residing with a partner (82.9%, N=1399) and had children (72.1%, N=1217). Almost all respondents (96.6%) held Lithuanian citizenship; a minority (3.2%) held another country's citizenship. This is typical of migrants, especially those residing in EU countries, as Lithuanian law does not currently allow dual citizenship. Finally, 42.6% of respondents were university educated. By country, 29.3% of respondents were from Norway, 25.4% from Ireland, 24.5% from Germany, and 20.8% from the United Kingdom. Table 1 depicts the characteristics of our sample.

TABLE 1. Sample characteristics.

	N	%
<i>Country</i>		
Ireland	428	25.4
Germany	413	24.5
Norway	495	29.3
United Kingdom	351	20.8
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	1327	78.7
Male	360	21.3
<i>Education</i>		
Unfinished secondary	60	3.6
Secondary	287	17.0
Vocational	315	18.7
Some college	307	18.2
University degree	486	28.8
Higher university degree	232	13.8
<i>Living arrangements</i>		
Live alone Yes	200	11.9
Live alone No	1487	88.1
Have children	1217	72.1
Childless	470	27.9

Measures

Individual values similarity to host country. Our measure of similarity to host country values is derived from primary and secondary data. The Portrait Value Questionnaire (PVQ) section of the European Social Survey (ESS) is a core questionnaire, included in all survey waves. Respondents are asked to evaluate 21 statements developed by Schwartz (2003) as to the extent to which the individual portrayed is like themselves. Items are rated on a scale, where 1= very much like me, and 6 = not like me at all. The scale items represent portraits of individuals and their aspirations in which the importance of values is implicit. Sample items are: "He/she strongly believes that people should care for nature. Looking after the environment is important to him/her," and "It is very important to him/her to show his/her abilities. He/she wants people to admire what he/she does." Gender pronouns were matched to the respondent's gender.

The 21 PVQ items comprise ten sub-dimensions of values which are used to form the four higher-order values dimensions. We focus on the four higher-order dimensions in this study: self-transcendence (ST), self-enhancement (SE), conservation (CO) and openness to change (OC). The mean response of items or portraits comprising the higher-order dimensions reflects the importance score for that dimension. To enable ease of interpretation, we reverse-

coded scale items so that a higher value signifies that a value or higher-order dimension is more important.

We collected PVQ survey data from migrants and calculated the four higher order dimension scores for individuals by taking the mean of items for the 10 values subdimensions, and correcting for scale use by subtracting the mean rating (MRAT) of all values for an individual from each of the 10 value scores. This within-person centering preserves the variances of value ratings for individuals (Schwartz, 1992) and is appropriate in the circumplex structure of values with positive and negative intercorrelations (Rudnev, 2021). Subdimensions of values were aggregated to the four higher order dimensions.

Individual values were compared to country aggregate scores calculated using ESS data (Bardi et al., 2014). As we are interested in current differences in values, we applied the most recent ESS dataset for each country in our study. For Ireland, Norway and the UK, the ESS Round 10 (2020) datasets were used. Values scores for Germany are not available in the Round 10 dataset; the most recent available dataset, Round 9 (2018), was used. In each country, we calculated values subdimension and higher-order dimension scores for individuals (N=29,816) using the above procedure.

Z-scores were obtained by subtracting the population mean from individual scores on each higher order dimension and dividing by the standard deviation of the host country score. To enable interpretation, the absolute value of the z-score is taken as a measure of distance from the host country higher-order value mean. A lower score represents greater similarity, and a higher score - larger distance from the country mean score.

Our *independent variable*, interaction adjustment, is a four-item measure (Black & Stephens, 1989) that gauges the degree of adjustment to day-to-day interactions with host country nationals. Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1=completely unadjusted; 5 = completely adjusted). Sample items are: “Speaking with host country nationals,” and “Socializing with host country nationals.” Cronbach’s α for the four-item scale is 0.95.

Mediating variable. Host country embeddedness was measured with five items (Therenou & Caulfield, 2010) focusing on the extent of comfort of migrants in the host country. Responses were measured using a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). Sample items are “I think of the community where I live as home” and “My family roots are in the community I live in.” Cronbach’s α for this 5-item scale is 0.76.

Control variables. We included several control variables. *Gender* (0= male, 1= female) was included as past research shows that women emphasize certain values more so than men (Vecchione et al., 2016). Two variables were included to control for the migrant’s family situation: whether one *lives alone* (0=No, 1=Yes), and has *children* (0=No, 1=Yes). Whether a migrant is *employed* (0=No, 1=Yes) may influence one’s opportunities, such as the ability to establish strong or weak in the host country (Giulietti et al., 2018). Having a job in the host country, and whether or not one lives alone or with others in the household, can influence the extent to which a person maintains regular contact with host nationals and other migrants and affect the degree of embeddedness in the host country, belongingness to in-groups, and identification with the host country social landscape (Grosskopf, Landes & Barmeyer, 2022), be it through one’s organization or familial ties to the local community. The language spoken in the household reflects attitudes about one’s heritage culture and the space afforded to the

majority language (Moreno-Fernandez & Lamas, 2023). We asked whether the *home language* spoken is Lithuanian (0=No, 1=Yes). *Host language proficiency* represents the mean of three items, asking respondents about their degree of confidence in speaking, reading and writing in the host country language (1= very low, 5 = very high), based on Takeuchi, Yun and Tesluk (2002). Language proficiency opens many doors for migrants, such as better employment opportunities and wider social networks (Adsera & Pytlikova, 2016). How long a migrant has lived in the host, and whether or not a migrant intends to stay in the host country will influence one's receptivity to the host country's way of life, including assimilation of values. *Years in host* measures the length that the respondent has been domiciled in the host country in years. The variable *likely to stay* measures whether respondents intend to stay in the host country permanently on a 5-point scale (1= unlikely, 5= very likely).

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data analysis

Nonresponse bias was assessed with independent t-tests to compare respondents of completed surveys against those who abandoned the survey at an early stage. Respondents and nonrespondents were compared on key demographic variables: age, gender, marital and familial status. No significant differences were found between the groups on gender, marital or familial status. There was a difference in age between the groups (mean difference = -1.42, $t = 3.525$, $df = 2732$, $p < .001$). Common method bias was minimized through the use of diverse sources in the measurement of our independent and dependent variables; differences in values are measured against secondary data sources (Baumgartner & Weijters, 2012).

Results

Correlations between all study variables, means (M) and standard deviations (SD) are depicted in Table 2. Among the higher order values dimensions, similarity in SE values correlated positively with similarity in ST ($r = .34$, $p < .001$) and CO ($r = .07$, $p < .01$) values. Similarity in ST values correlated negatively with both adjustment and embeddedness ($r = -.10$, $p < .001$), years in host country ($r = -.08$, $p < .001$), host language proficiency ($r = -.06$, $p < .05$), education ($r = -.05$, $p < .05$) and gender ($r = -.12$, $p < .001$). Home language was also positively associated with ST similarity ($r = .06$, $p < .05$). SE similarity negatively correlated with embeddedness ($r = -.07$, $p < .01$), age ($r = -.08$, $p < .001$) and whether one has children ($r = -.05$, $p < .05$). CO similarity correlated positively with host country language proficiency ($r = .05$, $p < .05$) and gender ($r = .11$, $p < .001$). Further, OC similarity correlated positively only with gender ($r = .12$, $p < .001$). The correlation between adjustment and embeddedness was positive and significant ($r = .50$, $p < .001$).

TABLE 2. Bivariate correlations and variable level statistics.

	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
1. ST similarity	1.29	.94															
2. SE similarity	1.04	.74	.34***														
3. CO similarity	.82	.66	-.02	.07**													
4. OC similarity	.91	.72	.05	-.00	.43***												
5. Gender	.79	.41	-.12***	-.05	.11***	.12***											
6. Age	40.83	9.66	.04	-.08***	-.02	.03	-.09***										
7. Education	3.93	1.42	-.05*	.04	-.01	.01	.14***	.08***									
8. Employed	.92	.27	.04	.04	.03	.01	-.12***	.13***	.03								
9. Live alone	.12	.32	.05*	.01	-.01	.01	-.15***	.18***	-.01	.02							
10. Children	.72	.45	-.00	-.05*	-.02	.03	.04	.28***	-.01	-.08***	-.17***						
11. Home language	.72	.45	.06*	.02	-.04	-.03	-.11***	-.05*	-.10***	.00	.00	.06**					
12. Host language proficiency	3.60	1.03	-.06*	.04	.05*	-.02	.10***	.00	.25***	.05*	-.03	.03	-.25***				
13. Years in host	11.97	6.50	-.08***	-.04	-.00	.03	-.05*	.44***	.01	.11***	.00	.20***	-.18***	.37***			
14. Likely to stay	3.53	1.30	-.04	-.01	-.02	-.05	.10***	.01	.04	.03	-.11***	.10***	-.18***	.29***	.19***		
15. Interaction adjustment	3.83	1.17	-.10***	-.02	.02	.02	.08***	.03	.11***	.07**	.01	.04	-.20***	.57***	.27***	.37***	
16. Embeddedness	3.20	.95	-.10***	-.07**	-.01	-.01	.09***	.11***	.09***	.05*	-.06*	.12***	-.11***	.32***	.22***	.46***	.50***

Notes: *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$ [p -values are two-tailed]; ST = Self-Transcendence, SE = Self-Enhancement, CO = Conservation, OC = Openness to Change.

We analyzed our model (Figure 1) using mediation analysis with the Hayes PROCESS macro in SPSS. The Hayes macro provides a robust test for simultaneously measuring the effects of primary relationships and significant indirect and conditional indirect effects. Using Process model 4, we tested for indirect effects based on 5,000 bootstrap samples in generating 95% bias corrected bootstrap confidence intervals. A full description of the Hayes method is provided in Hayes (2013). The results of the PROCESS analyses are shown in Tables 3 to 5.

TABLE 3. Values similarity to host country regression results

	Model 1 Self-Transcendence				Model 2 Self-Enhancement				Model 3 Conservation				Model 4 Openness to Change			
	B	SE	LLCI	ULCI	B	SE	LLCI	ULCI	B	SE	LLCI	ULCI	B	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Const.	1.39***	.18	1.04	1.73	1.14***	.14	.87	1.42	.64***	.13	.39	.89	.79***	.14	.52	1.05
Gender	-.24***	.06	-.35	-.12	-.10*	.05	-.19	-.01	.19***	.04	.11	.27	.24***	.04	.16	.33
Age	.01**	.00	.00	.01	-.01**	.00	-.01	-.00	.00	.00	-.00	.00	.00	.00	-.00	.01
Education	-.03	.02	-.06	.01	.02	.01	-.00	.05	-.02	.01	-.05	.00	-.00	.01	-.03	.02
Employed	.12	.09	-.05	.30	.11	.07	-.03	.24	.11	.06	-.01	.23	.07	.07	-.07	.20
Live alone	.07	.07	-.08	.21	.03	.06	-.08	.15	.00	.05	-.10	.11	.05	.06	-.07	.16
Children	.02	.06	-.09	.13	-.03	.04	-.11	.06	-.02	.04	-.11	.06	.04	.04	-.04	.13
Home language	.04	.05	-.06	.15	.04	.04	-.05	.12	-.03	.04	-.11	.04	-.04	.04	-.12	.04
Host language proficiency	.05	.03	-.01	.11	.06*	.02	.01	.10	.04	.02	-.00	.08	-.04	.02	-.08	.01
Years in host	-.02***	.00	-.03	-.01	-.00	.00	-.01	.00	-.00	.00	-.01	.01	.01	.00	-.00	.01
Likely to stay	.01	.02	-.03	.05	.00	.02	-.03	.03	-.02	.02	-.05	.00	-.04*	.02	-.07	-.01
Interaction Adjustment	-.07**	.02	-.12	-.03	-.04*	.02	-.08	-.00	-.00	.02	-.04	.03	.02	.02	-.02	.05
R	.19				.14				.14				.16			
R ²	.04				.02				.02				.03			
F	5.73***				3.07***				3.09***				3.90***			

Notes: N=1687; *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$.

TABLE 4. Results of PROCESS analysis: Self-Transcendence and Self-Enhancement

	Model 5 Embeddedness				Model 6 Self-Transcendence				Model 7 Self-Enhancement			
	B	SE	LLCI	ULCI	B	SE	LLCI	ULCI	B	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Const.	.60***	.15	.31	.89	1.43***	.18	1.09	1.78	1.18***	.14	.91	1.46
Gender	.07	.05	-.02	.16	-.23***	.06	-.34	-.12	-.10*	.05	-.19	-.01
Age	.01**	.00	.00	.01	.01**	.00	.00	.01	-.01*	.00	-.01	-.00
Education	.02	.01	-.01	.05	-.03	.02	-.06	.01	.02	.01	-.00	.05
Employed	.05	.07	-.09	.19	.13	.09	-.04	.30	.11	.07	-.02	.25
Live alone	-.09	.06	-.20	.04	.06	.07	-.08	.21	.03	.06	-.09	.14
Children	.08	.05	-.01	.17	.02	.06	-.08	.13	-.03	.04	-.11	.06
Home language	.08	.04	-.01	.16	.05	.05	-.06	.15	.04	.04	-.04	.12
Host language proficiency	.00	.02	-.04	.05	.05	.03	-.01	.11	.06*	.02	.01	.10
Years in host	.00	.00	-.00	.01	-.02***	.00	-.03	-.01	-.00	.00	-.01	.00
Likely to stay	.22***	.02	.19	.25	.03	.02	-.02	.06	.02	.00	-.01	.00
Interaction Adjustment	.30***	.02	.27	.34	-.05*	.03	-.10	-.00	-.02	.02	-.06	.02
Embeddedness					-.08**	.03	-.13	-.02	-.06**	.02	-.11	-.02
R	.59				.20				.16			
R ²	.35				.04				.02			
F	82.36***				5.80***				3.42***			
Mediation index					Indirect effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	Indirect effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Mediator: Embeddedness					-.023	.010	-.042	-.003	-.019	.007	-.034	-.005

Notes: N=1687; *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$ [p -values are two-tailed]; Coefficients are unstandardized; Bootstrap sample size = 5,000; level of confidence for all confidence intervals = 95%.

TABLE 5. Results of PROCESS analysis: Conservation and Openness to Change

	Model 8 ^a Embeddedness				Model 9 Conservation				Model 10 Openness to Change			
	B	SE	LLCI	ULCI	B	SE	LLCI	ULCI	B	SE	LLCI	ULCI
Const.	.60***	.15	.31	.89	.64***	.13	.40	.89	.78***	.14	.51	1.05
Gender	.07	.05	-.02	.16	.19***	.04	.11	.27	.24***	.05	.16	.33
Age	.01**	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00	-.00	.00	.00	.00	-.00	.01
Education	.02	.01	-.01	.05	-.02	.01	-.05	.00	-.00	.01	-.03	.02
Employed	.05	.07	-.09	.20	.11	.06	-.01	.24	.07	.07	-.07	.20
Live alone	-.09	.06	-.31	-.05	.00	.05	-.10	.10	.05	.06	-.07	.16
Children	.08	.05	-.01	.17	-.02	.04	-.10	.06	.04	.04	-.04	.13
Home language	.08	.04	-.01	.16	-.03	.04	-.11	.04	-.05	.04	-.13	.03
Host language proficiency	.00	.02	-.03	.07	.04	.02	-.00	.08	-.04	.02	-.08	.01
Years in host	.00	.00	-.00	.01	-.00	.00	-.01	.01	.01	.00	-.00	.01
Likely to stay	.22***	.02	.19	.25	-.02	.01	-.05	.01	-.04*	.02	-.07	-.01
Interaction Adjustment	.30***	.02	.27	.34	.00	.02	-.04	.04	.01	.02	-.03	.05
Embeddedness					-.01	.02	-.05	.03	.01	.02	-.04	.05
R	.59				.15				.16			
R ²	.35				.02				.03			
F	82.36***				2.85***				3.58***			
Mediation index					Indirect effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	Indirect effect	Boot SE	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI
Mediator: Embeddedness					-.003	.007	-.016	.010	.002	.007	-.012	.018

Notes: N=1687; *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$ [p -values are two-tailed]; Coefficients are unstandardized; Bootstrap sample size = 5,000; level of confidence for all confidence intervals = 95%. ^a Model 8 is identical to Model 5.

Hypothesis 1 predicted a positive relationship between cross-cultural adjustment and similarity to host country values. Table 3 depicts the total effect regression models for each of the four dependent variables. Results indicate that cross-cultural adjustment was a significant predictor of similarity in self-transcendence values (Model 1: $B = -0.07$, $p < .01$, 95% CI= -0.12 to -0.03) and self-enhancement values (Model 2: $B = -0.04$, $p < .05$, 95% CI= -0.08 to -0.00). The negative relationship indicates that as migrants become more adjusted, their values become more similar to host country values. However, this relationship holds only for one dimension. Adjustment is not a significant predictor of similarity to conservation or openness to change values.

Hypothesis 2 predicted a positive relationship between cross-cultural adjustment and host country embeddedness. The results are depicted in Table 4. Interaction adjustment was a positive predictor of host country embeddedness (Model 5,8: $B = 0.30$, $p < .001$, 95% CI= 0.27 to 0.34). Hypothesis 2 is supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted a negative relationship between host country embeddedness and similarity in values. That is, higher embeddedness is associated with greater similarity in values. Results indicate that language embeddedness was a significant predictor of values similarity in the predicted direction in self-transcendence values (Model 6: $B = -0.08$, $p < .01$, 95% CI = -0.13 to -0.02) and self-enhancement values (Model 7: $B = -0.06$, $p < .01$, 95% CI = -0.11 to -0.02) but not for conservation (Model 9: $B = -0.01$, $p = .67$, 95% CI = -0.05 to 0.03) or openness to change (Model 10: $B = 0.01$, $p = .73$, 95% CI = -0.04 to 0.05) values.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that host country embeddedness mediates the relationship between cross-cultural adjustment and similarity to host country values. The results are depicted in Table 4 and Table 5. The indirect effect of host country embeddedness was significant for the relationship between interaction adjustment and self-transcendence values similarity (Model 6: Value = -0.023, boot SE = 0.01, Boot CI -0.042 to -0.003) and between interaction adjustment and self-enhancement values (Model 7: Value = -0.019, boot SE = 0.007, Boot CI -0.034 to -0.005); there was no mediation effect in the models for conservation of openness to change. After controlling for host country embeddedness (Model 7), cross-cultural adjustment is not significantly related to self-enhancement similarity, suggesting full mediation. The indirect effect of -.019 suggests that individuals who differ by one unit in host country embeddedness are estimated to differ by .019 units in their similarity to self-enhancement values as a result of the tendency for individuals who are more adjusted to also be more embedded in the host country, which in turn translates to greater values similarity. This indirect effect is statistically different from zero. The Sobel test confirms this result ($Z = -2.94$, $p < .01$). The coefficient for cross-cultural adjustment (Model 6) is reduced in significance in the model for self-transcendence, indicating partial mediation. Here, individuals who differ by one unit in embeddedness will differ by .023 units in their similarity to self-transcendence values as a result of the positive and significant relationship between adjustment and embeddedness, which in turn translates to greater values similarity. The Sobel test confirms mediation ($Z = -2.63$, $p < .01$).

Of the covariates, gender, age, host country language proficiency, years in host country and likelihood of staying in the host country were significant predictors of similarity to host country values. Females are more likely than males to adjust their values toward those of their host country on self-transcendence ($B = -0.24$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = -0.35 to -0.12) and self-enhancement ($B = -0.10$, $p < .05$, 95% CI = -0.19 to -0.01) and less than males on conservation ($B = 0.19$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = 0.11 to 0.27) and openness to change ($B = 0.24$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = 0.16 to 0.33). Older migrants' values are more different to host country values on self-transcendence ($B = 0.01$, $p < .01$, 95% CI = 0.00 to 0.01) and more similar on self-enhancement ($B = -0.01$, $p < .01$, 95% CI = -0.01 to -0.00). Years in host country was a significant predictor of values similarity only in the model for self-transcendence ($B = -0.02$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = -0.03 to -0.01). While this may be counterintuitive, this result aligns with prior studies that found that duration of stay in the host is not important for value adaptation (e.g., Rudnev, 2014). Host country language proficiency was positively associated with self-enhancement ($B = 0.06$, $p < .05$, 95% CI = 0.01 to 0.10), suggesting that it contributes to increasing the distance between individuals' values from the host country. As language acquisition enables social interaction in the host country, this is contrary to what would be expected. However, it may suggest a pronounced relationship in individuals who have generally higher ambitions to succeed.

Likelihood of staying in the host is a negative predictor only of openness to change ($B = -0.04$, $p < .05$, 95% CI = -0.07 to -0.01), suggesting greater values similarity to the host with a greater commitment to residency in the host country. The association between age and embeddedness is positive and significant ($B = 0.01$, $p < .01$, 95% CI = 0.00 to 0.01), as is the coefficient for likelihood of staying ($B = 0.22$, $p < .001$, 95% CI = 0.19 to 0.25) in the host country.

DISCUSSION

Implications for theory

Our study makes some important contributions to the literature on values change. Our study departs from traditional research that treats values as antecedents to change. Studies have considered the relationship between individual values and types of adjustment of migrants (REFS HERE), such as work adjustment (REF), interaction adjustment (REF) and general adjustment (REF). We find evidence that values change in line with the process of adjusting to the host country. MORE Recent research has numerous antecedents of host country embeddedness, such as identification with the home and host country (Stahl et al., 2024). We build on this research, and find that embeddedness in the host country is an important driver of values adjustment in the self-transcendence and self-enhancement dimensions.

Self-transcendence includes values that emphasize concern for the welfare of others and tolerance. Interpersonal interaction exposes individuals to the views and opinions of others; in time, as one grows accustomed to life in the host country and becomes more embedded in host country day-to-day life, self-transcendence values can conform to those of the host country. That host country embeddedness mediated the relationship between interaction adjustment and self-transcendence suggests that greater subjective proximity to the host country, and the role of socialization in instilling and reinforcing values remain strong. Personal contact, sharing views and opinions, provides a basis for reevaluating one's own values; where this contact is frequent or ongoing, it can result in long term values change and in daily perceptions, attitudes and behaviors (Russo et al., 2022).

Self-enhancement includes values pertaining to social status, prestige, personal achievement and success, and demonstrating competence according to social standards. These socialization processes through interacting with locals, and through gaining the acceptance of locals, by adhering to host country social standards, lead to greater conformity to host country values. The relationship between interaction adjustment and adjustment in self-enhancement values was fully mediated by host country embeddedness, suggesting that comfort with social expectations to the extent that they one feels at home in the host country, is a driver of change in these values. Schwartz, Sagiv and Boehnke (2000) identified self-enhancement as a deficiency need, suggesting that more importance is placed on this value dimension to compensate for insecurities or threats to associated values, as one is socialized into local norms and adopts the new environment.

Although we found that self-enhancement and self-transcendence values are affected by adjustment and embeddedness, there were no meaningful relationships between adjustment, embeddedness and either conservation or openness to change. A recent study by Mockaitis et

al. (2024) on changing values of Lithuanian nationals found that they are becoming more conservative over time. Conservation values increased in the population during the ten years to 2020. The authors speculated that the increase in these values may be a consequence of high emigration during the period of the study. However, our study shows that these values are not affected by adjustment or embeddedness in our sample of migrants. This begs the question of whether these particular migrants' values reflect the patterns found in the home population and whether these higher order values are more stable, or more permanent than are self-transcendence and self-enhancement values in the Lithuanian population (i.e., whether these are a reflection of the cultural context).

The openness to change versus conservation dimension reflects individuals' acceptance of change and new experiences, versus resisting change and preference for the status quo (Tormos et al., 2017). As the recent waves of emigrants from Lithuania are, for the most part, economic migrants, the importance that migrants place on security and stability, especially during or after the upheaval of relocation and securing a foothold in a new country, may be heightened. We do not know circumstances, whether economic or otherwise, of the respondents in our study; as Inglehart (1997) purports, these values will be more important for people who face economic hardship than for those who live in relative comfort. Individuals may be well-adjusted and feel at home in the host country, while still experiencing uncertainty and economic insecurity. On the other hand, these values may also be a characteristic of modern day Lithuanians. As Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė and Žičkutė (2017) outline, post-transition Lithuanian society is marked with stress and anxiety, a decline in social security and security of employment, and general pessimism, factors that align with the steady increase in conservation values over time in Lithuania.

The lack of a significant relationship between acculturation and openness to change and conservation might also be a consequence of the timing of our study. Our study was conducted after the COVID-19 pandemic, a period which resulted in high stress and uncertainty for many (refs about uncertainty here). In a longitudinal study of Australian personal values prior to, during and post-pandemic, Daniel, Bardi and Lee (2021) found that the higher order values were stable among Australians prior to the pandemic, but conservation values increased during the pandemic, while openness to change values decreased. These findings point to changes in personal values as a consequence of disruption, uncertainty and upheaval. In the case of migrants, who are already likely facing additional uncertainty in a host environment, the pandemic was an additional layer of stress that may have amplified conservation values in an ethnic group that is already characterized as conservative.

An additional, and opposing explanation, is that the migrant population is in fact different from nonmigrant Lithuanians. That is, the fact that migrants have taken the decision to uproot in search of opportunities elsewhere may reflect higher levels of openness to change and lower levels of conservation in many migrants. If this is the case, then any change in these values after immigration could be small relative to host country values. Future research comparing the values of migrant to nonmigrant populations would help to answer these questions.

Implications for practice

Our findings have practical implications for individuals and for organizations employing migrants. For individuals, it is important to recognize value change as a natural process and a result of prolonged adjustment to the host country culture. While this process can feel unsettling, it often leads to personal growth. Interaction with host country nationals can foster empathy and a greater appreciation for diverse perspectives.

For organizations employing migrants, opportunities for greater socialization and provision of social support in the workplace are important for the intergration of migrants. Workplace training programs that frame value adaptation as a positive, ongoing process can help migrants feel more comfortable navigating local expectations, while providing opportunities for social interaction – both formal and informal, such as through mentoring programs and team-based work, can foster socialization into workplace norms.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

Our study was based on migrants from a single country to four European nations. The small number of host countries limited the statistical analysis that we could use. A larger number of destination countries, for example, would allow for the inclusion of group-level and contextual variables, as well as to account for random effects in multi-level analysis. Although our sample size is relatively large, with a larger number of countries nesting would be appropriate to account for country-level effects.

We recognize that host country adjustment has many facets; our focus was on interaction adjustment. We did not study work adjustment, for example, as the respondents in our sample were not all employed. Nor were they all skilled migrants. Researchers are encouraged to examine additional types of adjustment to account for contextual factors, as well as, for example, cultural novelty.

In our study, we find significant effects for age and gender on value adaptation. Future studies could consider the effects of different stages in the lifecycle on value adaptation in migrants. Individuals will have different capacity for coping with major life changes, such as migration, during different stages of the life cycle. Younger adults may have a higher capacity for new language acquisition, and thus more opportunities in the host country (Wingens, de Valk, Windzio & Aybek, 2011). Mid-career individuals may have more accumulated financial, social capital and personal resources at their disposal. Depending on their personal situation, some migrants may also resist local practices and norms and tap into their conservation values more strongly. These are but a few examples that warrant further investigation.

Acculturation implies that migrant populations become more like the host population, measured on a continuum, as a result of intercultural contact. At the opposing end of the continuum is no acculturation; that is, migrants retain their heritage cultural values. These ends of the continuum are represented by different acculturation strategies: assimilation, implying full acculturation, and separation, striving toward maintenance of one's heritage culture (Berry, 1997). In between these strategies is integration, whereby cultural identity is maintained while participating in the wider heritage culture (Berry, 1997); individuals may also identify simultaneously with both cultures, adopting a bicultural strategy. We did not make such delineations in this study. Future research would benefit from analysis about how the different acculturation strategies of individuals and groups of individuals shape their values over time.

The literature on cultural fusion purports that migrants undergo a process of culture change in adapting to a new culture. At the same time, the processes of interaction between individuals in the dominant and minority cultures results in the adoption of certain traits and behaviors of the minority culture (Croucher & Kramer, 2017; Kramer, 2019). This process of change in the dominant culture towards a hybrid culture is an important avenue for future research.

CONCLUSION

Moving to a new culture is a particularly stressful and major life transition. Our findings show that for migrants, the process of migrating to and living in a new country, insofar as migrants make efforts to interact with local people and make their new country home, triggers changes in values. Positive adjustment and host country embeddedness result in greater similarities in self-enhancement and self-transcendent values. Our findings also suggest that openness to change and conservation may be less susceptible to socialization. Migrants may already possess a high degree of openness to change. Also, through dealing with high uncertainty in various facets of life in the host country, they may activate security and stability values.

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