

The Italian culture is perhaps one of the richest cultures in the entire southern Europe. It has a very rich history in respect to its popular customs and traditions, classic architecture and art. The Italian people are very agreeable, welcoming and warm towards strangers. They are a people who derive pleasure in sharing the exciting pleasures of everyday life with their neighbors. Getting bored in Italy is quite an understatement since the Italian land offers the most exciting, delightful and stimulating beauty that nature has to offer. Coupled with this is the charm and the elegance of its residents who share a variety of regional cultures.

Perhaps the most exciting aspects of Italian culture is the richness of its wine and food, artists with an admirable reputation, glorious engineering and design. Italian musicians and filmmakers offer very captivating forms of entertainment. Any one who has gotten a chance to visit Italy will bear me witness that our architecture and monuments provide quite an enthralling experience (Killinger, 2005). Our language, Italian, offers a sensuous pleasure and any one who is keen enough to observe it in actual usage can not help falling in love with the way Italians use nicknames and diminutives in creation of intimacy and familiarity with those surrounding them. Most intriguing are the tragedies and scandals that accompany Italy's history as well as politics since the ancient Roman times through to the renaissance up to the present age offers quite a wonderful experience for any one who explores the Italian history.

Family Roles and Rituals

The family forms the core of the Italian social structure. It is often credited for the stability of its members. Family values are the building blocks of the Italian society which help in maintaining very close and strong social links. All Italians are expected to sustain strong bonds with their siblings, other relatives and parents regardless of whether one is married, single, or divorced. A typical characteristic of the northern families is the nuclear families living together while in the south the extended family are normally found living as a unit in one home. The family is entrusted with responsibility of providing for financial and emotional support for all its members (Killinger, 2005).

For the past few decades the Italian society has undergone a couple of drastic social changes which are characterized by both problems and advantages. There has been drastic increase in the number of women working away from their home as well as the swelling number of youths thirsting for higher education. The legalization of divorce In addition to the above has brought about a lot of profound changes on the structure of the family. Elderly persons are supposed to be taken care of and respected regardless of whether they reside with their children in their home or independently (Cuilleainain, 2006).

Communication/ Expression

Italians are people who value appearances hence the mode of dressings means a lot to them. They are a people who are extremely conscious of fashion. The Italians can learn a lot from you from your dressing code for instance the family background, level of education and social status even before they listen to your mannerism in speaking. The first impression to them is very important since it is normally the last hence they value the 'Bella Figura' concept which means good image (Cuilleainain, 2006). They can so easily assess ones social standing or age unconsciously even before they utter their first word.

Religious Beliefs and Values

Italy is very rich in holy places some of them which are worth over 2000 years. The Vatican City and Rome alone has thousands of churches, shrines and relics. For instance St Peters relics other saints and popes, sites that the Virgin Mary is said to have appeared, sites that were holy to 'Saint Francis of Assisi,' and other numerous sites associated with miracles. Religious ceremonies are common phenomena in Italy. For instance Easter, Immaculate Conception, Pentecost, and charismas which mark the holy days of the Roman Catholic church Italy's. Other rituals and ceremonies include sanctification of saints, blessings, and the reciting of the novenas, sodalities, reciting the rosary, masses both dairy and weekly, and feast days as well as their quasi religious activities (Killinger, 2005).

The Italian people believe in life after death. This belief is based on the conviction that the good shall be rewarded while the sinners shall be punished. They believe in purgatory a place where sinners reside before they go heaven for their sins to be purged. Hell and heaven form part of their realities. The dead are celebrated and quietly spoken to. Modern day funerals are carried out in parlors and the dead are supposed to be respected. Absentia from the funeral of a friend or for one of the family members attracts relationship breach if at all there no valid reason.

Culture Influence on My Counseling

One of the cultural values that might influence my role as counselor while dealing with a client who shares a different culture is my belief in my religion and its values. Dealing with a client who might tend to dispute my religious values taking for instance Protestants or Muslims who attach different beliefs and respects to the Virgin Mary might cause me to feel that the client does not respect my religious beliefs and values. The remedy or adjustment that I might have to adopt is to keep the therapy session professional. I would try as much as possible to avoid getting personal or involving our religious differences in our conversation and make the client realize that religion is a personal thing since it involves one adopting a personal relationship with his or her God and the beliefs and values that the religion identifies with.

Another cultural value that might influence my role as a counselor is my strong belief in the family as the central pillar of the social structure. Counseling a person from a cultural background that does not put much value on the family for instance a man who has neglected his family and does not seem to care may affect my tolerance towards him. The remedy or adjustments that I might have to make is to understand that though people are equal they might never be the same. Some hold very different values from the ones that we consider important and therefore we should take this into consideration and approach them without any prejudices or personal judgments.