


FRIENDSHIPS IN THE ADAPTATION OF THE LATIN AMERICAN IMMIGRANT

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ABSTRACT

Some studies on immigrant friendship relationships point out that these play a relevant role in the complex process of adaptation of immigrants to the new country. Therefore, the objective of this study was to analyze the role of new friendships with compatriots, natives or other foreigners for the adaptation of Latin American immigrants to the current country. 40 immigrants participated in the research, divided into four groups: A) 20 Latin Americans who lived in Brazil; B) three Brazilians who lived in another Latin American country; C) 12 Brazilians who lived in Spain; and D) five Brazilians who lived in Portugal. The instrument used was a questionnaire with open questions, sent and received by e-mail, which produced written reports, which underwent qualitative content analysis. The main results revealed that friends from their own country or from other countries are fundamental for adapting to the new country, to make up for the lack of their culture, to increase the sense of belonging, to provide emotional support and to alleviate loneliness. For most participants, friends do not replace relationships with family members in the country of origin, but fill the void left by the family. The vast majority of participants felt some social need such as welcoming, adjusting or adapting to the new culture. Finally, in parallel with the friends, the path most suggested by the participants of the four groups for a better adaptation and adjustment of the emigrant to new cultures was the approximation or openness to the new culture.

Keywords: Friendship. Immigrants. Latin Americans. Adaptation.

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INTRODUCTION

According to data from ECLAC's Population Division (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2013), in recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of Latin American and Caribbean immigrants, from an estimated total of 21 million in 2000 to an estimated figure of around 30 million in 2010, which represents about 13% of the 232 million immigrants in the world. In terms of three contexts, Latin America, Spain and Portugal, in addition to receiving a large number of immigrants today (ECLAC, 2013; Gois, Marques, Padila & Peixoto, 2009; Hierro, 2013; Malheiros, 2007; Peixoto & Egreja, 2012), have possible cultural aspects in common due to the issue of the colonization of Spain and Portugal in Latin America (Machado, 2006).

On the other hand, together with affective relationships and family relationships, friendship currently represents one of the forms of relationship studied, becoming the subject of systematic investigation from the 1980s onwards (Garcia, 2005a; 2005b). Friendship arouses interest due to the various beneficial effects it arouses, including adaptation processes, such as harmonious and respectful coexistence with other ethnic groups (Antonio, 2004; Jacobson & Johnson, 2006), favoring social inclusion (Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005), welcoming (Gomes & Silva-Junior, 2007) and adapting to new situations (Garcia, 2012a; Garcia, Bitencourt-Neto, Moura & Pepino, 2010; Garcia, Brandão, Costa & Togatlian, 2010; Garcia, Dettogni, Costa & Togatlian, 2010; Garcia & Goes, 2010). However, friendships related to the process of international migration, as well as friendships between people of different ethnicities, nationalities or cultures are still poorly investigated, especially in Latin America. In a recent review of inter-ethnic, interracial, intercultural and international friendships, Garcia and Miranda (2012) discuss the diversity of research on the subject, highlighting the social and cultural importance of these friendships. According to the authors, these friendships are still little known.

Among some of the topics investigated in interethnic and interracial friendships is the role of racial and ethnic identification in friend choices (Kao & Vaquera, 2006) and shared activities (Hunter & Elias, 1999). Related to social integration, some studies have focused on the role of ethnic or racial majorities and minorities and their influence on the relationships between members of these groups. Several studies relate ethnic and racial majorities and minorities and friendships. Fong and Isajiw (2000), for example, examined the determinants of patterns of inter-ethnic friendships between a minority group and the majority group and co-ethnic friendships. The analysis indicated that (1) participation in activities aimed at the ethnic minority group decreased the chances of developing friendships with the majority group; (2) individual socioeconomic characteristics strongly



affected co-ethnic friendships; (3) previous experiences of friendship with the majority group are related to the level of friendship ties with this group.

Schwartz, Galliher, and Domenech-Rodríguez (2011) investigated the self-disclosure in the inter- and intracultural friendships of Latinos and the links to collectivism, ethnic identity, and acculturation. The participants were 59 international Latinos (who lived outside the U.S.) and 73 Latin Americans living in the U.S. The results revealed that the type of relationship (friend vs. acquaintance) and the partner's ethnicity (Latino vs. white) were significantly associated with self-disclosure. Participants revealed more information to friends than acquaintances and more to Latinos than to white Americans.

Some studies on immigrant friendship relationships in Brazil point out that they play a relevant role in the process of adaptation of immigrants to the new country. An exploratory and descriptive research, of a quantitative nature, conducted by Garcia (2012a), aimed to describe some aspects of the friendships of foreign university students who lived and studied in Brazil, as well as to identify the role of these friendships in the social and cultural integration of the exchange students, according to them. A total of 100 foreign university students participated in the study, 50 males and 50 females. A questionnaire was applied, whose main results were: 1) most of the friends lived in the same city or metropolitan region; 2) personal contact/proximity were considered important for the establishment of the friendship relationship; 3) the main common interests and shared activities were associated with leisure, studies, scientific or cultural activities, sports, work and religion; 4) communication became less intense with friends from abroad, while it intensified with Brazilian friends, increasing their importance due to their availability and physical proximity; 5) the main difficulties in friendships were distance from friends, personal or personality differences, communication difficulties and cultural differences; and finally that 6) the friends were recognized as playing a relevant role both in the adaptation and in the vision they had of Brazil.

Garcia and Goes (2010) developed a qualitative research with the objective of describing some aspects of the friendships of foreign university students from Guinea-Bissau and São Tomé and Príncipe who lived in Brazil. Ten students from Guinea-Bissau and two from São Tomé and Príncipe, aged between 20 and 33 years, participated in the research. Semi-structured interviews were used, containing closed and open questions. The results referred to common interests (such as study, leisure, culture and relationships) and shared activities (such as talking, leisure, sports, studying, etc.), friendship difficulties (such as personal characteristics, communication, cultural differences, fights, among others) and remarkable episodes (related to leisure, help received, welcoming, help given



and daily events). Most of the friendships were relevant to adapting to Brazil, but only part influenced the way they see the country. It was concluded that friends are fundamental for the social and cultural adaptation of these students and serve as a basis for cultural and scientific cooperation.

Garcia and Rangel (2011) investigated the friendships of Cape Verdean university students living and studying in Brazil, through interviews with 12 undergraduate students. The participants mentioned 109 friends, 81 from Cape Verde, 18 Brazilians and six Angolans, in addition to four other friends, each of different nationality, with the most used languages being Creole and Portuguese. Most of the friends (72) lived in Greater Vitória, and among the 35 closest friends, 24 were acquaintances from Cape Verde. Among the results, it was highlighted that the main common interests and shared activities were related to study and leisure. Participants highlighted the value of friendship and the help received. The difficulties perceived in friendship were related to distance from friends, personal characteristics and difficulty in communication. The remarkable episodes were linked to leisure and help from his friend. Most of the friendships were considered relevant for the adaptation to Brazil, but only part of them influenced the way the students perceived Brazil.

Costa (2012) developed a qualitative study, whose objective was to describe the friendships in the life history of Greek immigrants living in Espírito Santo, with other Greeks, Brazilians or foreigners, with a view to understanding the relations between friendship and culture, also including intercultural friendships and the role of friendships in the process of adaptation or adjustment to life in Brazil. Ten Greek immigrants who came to Brazil at the age of ten or older participated in the research, and a script was used for the interview. The results indicated that friendships are part of the history of these immigrants in a new country. The meaning of friendship included breadth, freedom, spontaneity, disinterestedness, honesty, sincerity, fidelity, trust, and longevity. The main dimensions of friendship were similarities and differences, proximity and distance, support, reciprocity, and conflict. The relationships between friendship and sociocultural context included receptivity and rejection, adoption and adaptation, connection and disconnection, friendship and community abroad, democracy, family, work, and school. It was concluded, therefore, that friendship acts as a mediator of the foreigner's adaptation to the new country, despite its cultural variations, representing not only an active condition in the various traditions, but also allowing communication between these customs, contributing to immigrants feeling welcomed in the cultural bosom of the nation they chose to live in.

Garcia, Costa and Pereira-Oliveira (2016) conducted a study with five Portuguese and Spanish immigrants living in Brazil, who produced written accounts about their



experiences of international migration and friendship. The main results revealed that contact with friends who lived in the country of origin occurred through virtual social networks and internet communication sources (such as *Skype*, *WhatsApp*, *Facebook*, *Messenger*, *e-mails*) and in person when they traveled. The network of friends of the participants included compatriots who lived in Brazil, in their country of origin and in a third country. They also mentioned Brazilian and foreign friends, residing in their country of origin or in Brazil. Brazilian friendships began in the workplace, in social activities and were relatives of the spouse. Cultural influences were pointed out as benefiting friendships in the sense of cultural exchange and curiosity for the different. Shared activities included conversation, meals, and religious activities. The friends were indicated as playing a relevant role in adapting to the new country.

Some works on immigrants in Spain address friendship, however, with a focus on childhood and adolescence, such as the friendship networks of Spaniards and children of immigrants at school (Miguel-Luken & Carvajal-Gutiérrez, 2007). Herrero, Fuente and Garcia (2011) investigated the subjective well-being among Latin American immigrants in Spain and the role of social integration in the community. Latin Americans in Spain are seen as a group at risk of social exclusion. The authors conclude that there is a statistically significant relationship between social integration and social well-being and point to the need to promote the social integration of these immigrants in the community.

Entering Portugal or other European countries, such as Spain itself, has become cheaper and safer for Latin Americans than entering the US illegally (Gois *et al*, 2009). Brazilian immigration to Portugal is an old phenomenon, which has occurred since the nineteenth century, but the interest in its scientific study is much more recent, concentrating on the first decade of the twenty-first century. Despite this interest, the recent literature on Brazilian immigration in Portugal has focused mainly on insertion in the labor market (Gois *et al*, 2009; Machado, 2006).

Although Brazilian immigration takes place in several destination countries, there are similarities and differences regarding their insertion, adaptation and ways of life in these different contexts. When talking about support for immigrants, some authors use the term "social networks", and comment on associations of Brazilians in Portugal, such as the Casa do Brasil in Lisbon, for example (Gois *et al*, 2009). In this perspective, friendship relationships are inserted, as a strategy of support and collaboration for the immigrant.

Based on the above, the objective of this study was to analyze the role of new friendships with compatriots, natives or other foreigners for the adaptation of Latin American immigrants to the new country (Latin American countries, Spain and Portugal). The



relevance of the research lies in the originality of the theme, as well as in the direction of possible paths for a better adaptation and adjustment of the immigrant to new cultures, promoting their better quality of life in the nation they chose to live in.

METHOD

The present study can be considered a field research, of a qualitative nature, with descriptive characteristics. 40 immigrants participated in the research (70% women and 30% in the age group of 30 and 39 years), divided into four groups: A) 20 Latin Americans who lived in Brazil; B) three Brazilians who lived in another Latin American country; C) 12 Brazilians who lived in Spain; and D) five Brazilians who lived in Portugal.

Each participant was identified by the letter of the group to which he belonged (A, B, C, or D) and by a number, and their characterization is described below. group A (Latin Americans in Brazil) includes: A1, male, 40 years old, Colombia (country of origin), seven siblings, black, Colombian wife and Brazilian son, Catholic; A2, male, 30 years old, Peru, one brother, non-practicing Catholic; A3, male, 75 years old, Argentinean, married, one child from previous marriage, no religion; A4, female, 52 years old, Bolivia, two brothers, six-month-old son; A5, female, 40 years old, Argentinean, only child; A6, female, 30 years old, Peruvian, non-practicing Catholic; A7, male, 33 years old, Colombia, two brothers, lives with girlfriend, Catholic; A8, female, 37 years old, Colombia, one brother, non-practicing Catholic; A9, male, 32 years old, Colombia, divorced, one daughter; A10, female, 32 years old, Colombia, four siblings, childless, Christian; A11, female, 25 years old, Mexico, three siblings, single, evangelical; A12, male, 27 years old, Chile, four siblings, one son, own beliefs; A13, female, 26 years old, Colombia, two sisters, Catholic; A14, female, 32 years old, Colombia, one brother, married, six-month-old daughter born in Brazil, non-practicing Catholic; A15, female, 55 years old, Argentine, one Argentine daughter, Catholic; A16, female, 36 years old, Mexico, four siblings, married, one Mexican son, atheist; A17, female, 29 years old, Cuban, one brother, Catholic; A18, male, 30 years old, Peru, two brothers, Seventh-day Adventist; A19, female, 65 years old, Panama, five siblings, married, two children (one Brazilian and one American) and three grandchildren; A20, female, 40 years old, Peruvian, married, one Brazilian son, Catholic. Group B (Brazilians in other Latin American countries) includes: B1, female, 33 years old, lives in Chile, lives with a partner, has no children, has no religion; B2, female, 28 years old, resides in Mexico, married to a Mexican, one Mexican son, non-practicing Catholic; B3, female, 33 years old, lives in Mexico, a sister, married for the second time, has no children, agnostic. Group C (Brazilians in Spain) includes: C1, female, 35 years old, seven siblings, divorced, two daughters,



practicing Catholic; C2, female, 28 years old, only child, has no children, has no religion; C3, female, 33 years old, one sister, married, without children; C4, female, 30 years old, married, Catholic; C5, female, 37 years old, three siblings, single, childless, does not practice the Catholic religion; C6, female, 27 years old, only child, evangelical parents, doctrine with which she disagrees; C7, male, 28 years old, non-practicing Catholic; C8, male, 33 years old, only child, Protestant Christian; C9, male, 28 years old, lives with a friend, has no children, has no religion; C10, male, 36 years old, one brother, married, one Spanish son, no religion; C11, female, 41 years old, two sisters, Catholic, but identifies more with the Spiritist Doctrine, without children; C12, male, 54 years old, Brazilian children, agnostic. Group D (Brazilians in Portugal) includes: D1, female, 36 years old, no religion; D2, female, 41 years old, no children, non-practicing Catholic; D3, female, 34 years old, one brother, divorced, childless, practicing Catholic; D4, female, 29 years old, married, without children, without religion, but does not consider herself an atheist; D5, female, 32 years old, one sister, single, no religion.

The instrument used was a questionnaire with open questions, sent and received by *e-mail*, which produced written reports. A pilot procedure was carried out with a Brazilian volunteer who lived in Spain for approximately six years to test the instrument.

In total, direct contacts were made by *e-mail* with national and international universities and educational institutions, as well as by messages on social networks with approximately 1,000 people, between August 2014 and January 2016. In all direct contacts made, the "snowball" technique was used, i.e., each potential participant was asked to indicate others, who, in turn, would indicate others, and so on (Alves-Mazzoti and Gewandsznajder, 1999). After carrying out a previous reading, organizing and preparing the data, as well as reading them thoroughly several times, they were analyzed in detail with a process of coding (interpretation of the speeches), and subsequent organization of the material into categories, based on qualitative content analysis (Flick, 2004; Flick, 2009).

The research project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Espírito Santo – Goiabeiras Campus, under the CAAE (Certificate of Presentation of Ethical Appreciation) number 34551714.5.0000.5542 on 08/29/2014.

RESULTS

Participants in the four groups said that friends from their own country or from other countries are key to adapting to their new country, including making up for the lack of their culture. For all groups, these friends also mean a source of emotional support or support.



Participants from groups A, B and C commented on the importance of both friends from the country of origin and friends from the new country: those from the country of origin provide social support, security and welcome, ease homesickness and connect them with their culture; friends from the new country facilitate the adaptation and acceptance of the new culture, they ease loneliness and increase the feeling of acceptance. In fact, according to the literature (Costa, 2012; Garcia, 2012a; Garcia *et al*, 2016; Garcia & Goes, 2010; Garcia & Rangel, 2011) friends play an important role in adapting to the new country.

Regarding the question that dealt with the meaning of friendships for the perception of the country where they currently live, the participants in group A said that they are important, they are their family in Brazil, with whom one can spend time, superficial, that friendships have little or no meaning, among other specific characteristics.

For two participants in group B, friendships were important to enter the culture of the current country. This issue of greater adaptation and integration to the new culture was also brought up by participants from groups C and D, meaning that friends have an important role in this process of appropriation and immersion in the new culture. Also in the study by Garcia (2012a), friends were recognized as playing a relevant role in the vision of the new country. In the study by Garcia, Dettogni *et al* (2010), seven of the 20 interviewees did not perceive changes in the image they had of the country after friendship; for the others, the image improved.

Regarding the meaning of friendships in the life of the immigrant as someone who started to live in another country, participants from the four groups said that they are fundamental in several instances: in the adaptive process as a whole, for the issue of belonging to the country, to give emotional support and support, to give strength in the migration process and not to feel alone. For groups A and C, friends mean the family of the participants in the new country or at least make up for the longing for family and friends in Brazil (for group C).

A contradiction appeared among participants in groups A and D: for a Peruvian participant, physical distance hinders friendship, because even with virtual contact, nothing replaces physical contact with a friend; for a Brazilian participant in Portugal, physical distance brings people closer, because distance from family deconcentrates attention and contact with Brazilian friends becomes more of a connection with the country of origin. According to the literature (Garcia, 2012a; 2012b; Garcia, Brandão *et al*, 2010; Garcia, Dettogni *et al*, 2010), physical distance actually decreases the likelihood or makes it difficult to contact friends.



For the participants of the study by Garcia *et al* (2016), friendship is important not only in the context of migration, but in life in general. Friends help to get to know the destination country better and help immigrants adapt to a new country by providing information, companionship, help and even security.

For most participants in groups A (11 out of 20), C (nine out of 12) and D (four out of five), friends do not replace relationships with family members in their country of origin (in group D, for one participant they replace, for another it is relative and for another they do not replace). However, participants from the four groups who think that there is no such substitution, as they are different relationships, claimed that friends fill the void left by the family with love and affection, help to bear the absence of family members or to miss them less, as well as fulfill the role of the family in supporting, encouraging and making them happy. Still, for a participant in group C, the substitution exists, but only with Brazilian friends, indicating a greater approximation or intimacy with compatriots.

In any case, family and friends seem to be distinct categories, as the literature points out. For Bell (1981 apud Souza & Hutz, 2008), in friendship the absence of family ties is fundamental, justified by comparisons and competitions between family and friends and by the impossibility of choosing family members or relatives themselves.

The vast majority of the participants in the four groups felt some social need such as welcoming, adjusting or adapting to the new culture (17 out of 20 in group A; two out of three in group B; nine out of 12 in C; and four out of five in D). The term adaptation was the most mentioned by groups A and D and the term reception was the most mentioned by group C. Adaptation referred to aspects of the local culture, such as language (cited by groups A, B and D), customs, food, transportation and the place itself. Other terms used were: adjustment to the new culture, need for social acceptance, establishment of bonds and accommodation to the new culture. Regarding the adjustment to the new culture, a Panamanian participant (from group A) reported that she had to adjust her behavior, because the Brazilian culture is less liberal than the Panamanian one, "... leaving aside the thunderous laughter, the touching of people when he talked, the demonstrations of affection, the continuous dancing, the tough talking, etc." (A19). In this case, Brazilians seem to have less physical contact in their friendships than Panamanians.

Regarding how the participants dealt with these social needs of adaptation, welcoming, adjustment, acceptance, establishment of bonds and accommodation to the new culture, the form most cited by the four groups was through friendships, including Latin American friendships (in group A). This data shows again the importance of friends in the immigrant's adaptation process.



Knowing or being open to the new culture and people in the new country was pointed out by groups A, C and D as a way of coping with these initial social needs in the current country. Some aspects were also mentioned by groups A and C as a way of dealing with these new needs: family members, time, the support of natives and native family that they welcomed at home, information services for immigrants, daughters' schools and university classmates. The support of the church was mentioned by groups C and D, suggesting a religious rapprochement between Brazil, Spain and Portugal.

For the participants in the study by Garcia *et al* (2016), adaptation involves social relationships and social institutions. Regarding social relationships, the lack of loved ones left in the country of origin and the feeling of loneliness are difficulties encountered in the process of adapting to the new culture. With regard to Brazilian institutions, some participants in the study found it difficult to adapt to high levels of bureaucracy and disorganization. Bureaucracy was also pointed out as an unfavorable aspect in the opinion of Latin American immigrants about Brazil in this study.

Finally, in parallel with friends, the path most suggested by the participants of the four groups for a better adaptation and adjustment of the emigrant to new cultures was the approximation or openness to the new culture, with mention of new customs and cultural habits such as language, food, religion, history, music and arts. Another path that appeared as a suggestion in the four groups was not to compare the culture of the destination country with the culture of the country of origin, not to bring customs from the country of origin to the new one, not to impose these customs, not to demand that the culture of the current country change according to the culture of the country of origin, in short, to respect the new culture and accept the cultural differences between the two countries.

Regarding openness to the new culture, the study by Silva and Schiltz (2007) brings interesting data: that the majority of participants (62.9%) disagree that it is important for Brazilian immigrants to become similar to the Portuguese in the way they behave, dress and speak, and 88.8% agree that valuing the culture of origin is important for the integration of immigrants. However, 76.9% think that the children of immigrants should internalize the values of Portuguese society. So, according to the research of Silva and Schiltz (2007), elements of the culture of origin must be preserved, but cultural values and habits of the new context must also be incorporated for a better coexistence with it.

Another suggestion given by groups A, C and D was the approximation of natives and other foreigners, including notes to establish friendships with the natives (according to groups C and D). A possible path for a better adaptation and adjustment of the emigrant suggested by groups A, B and C was for the new country to provide guidance on migratory



procedures, or the bureaucratic and legal processes that the immigrant has to go through, preferably in the language of the immigrant, with important information about housing, transportation, communication, among others. In fact, as universities receive many immigrants, a participant in group A suggested that they offer "... monitoring people's needs and adaptation process." (A13). It was also suggested by groups A, C and D that maintaining ties with people from the country of origin helps in the processes of adaptation and adjustment to the new culture.

With regard to the immigrants in this research, despite referring to the preservation of elements of the culture of origin at times, most of the reports throughout the work show a tendency to superimpose the new culture on their culture of origin. This data also reflects, unfortunately, the existence of power relations and dominance of the majority culture over minority cultures, such as that of immigrants.

According to Berry (2005), "acculturation" is a process of cultural and psychological changes that involves various forms of mutual accommodation, the result of contact between two or more cultures and their members. Migration is a situation that requires these changes, both on an individual/psychological and a group/cultural level. While acculturation is a process that remains as long as there is contact between two different cultures, long-term adaptation to living in the new culture takes many forms, resulting in some accommodations within the new cultural group. This accommodation includes, for example, learning the new language, sharing gastronomic preferences, adopting ways of dressing and social interactions, characteristics of the new culture. Obviously, these adaptations can generate cultural conflicts and stress during intercultural interactions (Berry, 2005).

In a revised theory, Berry (2011) brings the concept of culturally plural societies, many of which are products of international phenomena such as colonization, slavery, and movements of immigrants and refugees. For this very reason, what usually happens is the imposition of the main or dominant culture on the cultures of ethnic minorities. However, the relationship between two cultures is not one-dimensional, but multidimensional, since intercultural relations are mutual and reciprocal. In this theory, an advance is perceived in relation to acculturation, the latter being permeated by power relations.

From the point of view of immigrant culture, when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural identity and interact daily with the other culture (they are open to it), the defined strategy is assimilation. On the other hand, when individuals wish to maintain their culture of origin and avoid interaction with the new culture, the defined alternative is separation. When there is an interest in both maintaining the culture of origin and



interacting with the new culture, the option is integration. Finally, when there is little interest in maintaining the culture of origin (often for reasons of imposed cultural loss) and little interest in establishing relationships with the new culture (usually for reasons of exclusion or discrimination), marginalization is defined (Berry, 2011). In integration, the immigrant tends to have friends of his nationality and also native friends; in separation, the immigrant seems to prefer friendships from his own ethnic group (Berry, 2005).

For Berry (2005), integration is the best form of adaptation, and marginalization is the worst. Thus, assimilation and separation are intermediate adaptation strategies. Integration is assumed to be the best form of adaptation because, engaged in both cultures, individuals gain competence, support networks, and social support in both cultures during the changes of acculturation (Berry & Sabatier, 2011), including friends in the country of origin and in the country of destination.

However, unfortunately, the strategies of living in the new culture are not always freely chosen by the immigrant, but imposed by the dominant culture. For example, integration is only successfully achieved by minority groups when the dominant society is open and inclusive in its orientation towards cultural diversity. So, from the point of view of the dominant society, when assimilation is imposed by it, what happens to the immigrant is a fusion with the new culture; when the immigrant is forced to adopt the separation strategy, he suffers segregation; when the imposition happens in relation to integration, the process that occurs with the immigrant is multiculturalism; and when the dominant society imposes the process of marginalization, the immigrant suffers exclusion (Berry, 2011).

Both integration and multiculturalism are based on the acceptance of two underlying values: diversity and equity. If there is diversity without acceptance of equity, the result is separation/segregation; if there is equity without acceptance of diversity, the result is assimilation/fusion; If there is no acceptance of any value, the result is marginalization/exclusion. Only when there is a balance of the two values, between individuals and society in general, are integration and social multiculturalism achieved (Berry, 2011).

Thus, the term acculturation (Berry, 2005) was replaced by multiculturalism (Berry, 2011), emphasizing the value of cultural diversity in a context made up of several peoples, and the promotion of equal participation of all groups, majority and minority, in this context.

As with the term "acculturation", more recently, the concept of "multiculturalism" has also been replaced by that of "interculturality", which is "a set of proposals for democratic coexistence between different cultures, seeking integration between them without annulling their diversity" (Vasconcelos, 2017). In other words, interculturality implies a significant



interaction of cultures in contact, through dialogue and mutual knowledge. According to this perspective, each culture has its importance and together they are enriched, forming a common culture. Therefore, interculturality presupposes the recognition of the contributions of all, including immigrants and minorities (Bäckström & Castro-Pereira, 2012), and not the loss of the culture of origin and subordination to the culture of power, characteristics of acculturation.

The main difference between the concepts of multiculturalism and interculturality is that the former understands populations as culturally watertight (Bäckström & Castro-Pereira, 2012).

"Each ethnic minority is seen as socially homogeneous and with well-defined borders, with ethnic diversity being overvalued and other factors such as social class, gender or religion ignored, which equally contribute to the construction of identities and introduce differences in values and lifestyles. Contrary to what multiculturalism defends, these factors combine in a complex way and are triggered by immigrants according to the context" (Bäckström & Castro-Pereira, 2012, p. 88).

In the case of this study, what is seen in practice is still a process of acculturation, in which the most adopted adaptation/accommodation strategies are 1) assimilation, when the participants defend the approximation/openness to the new culture and not the imposition of their culture on the new country, and partially 2) integration, when they reveal that they are proud of their origins, contact with their countries of origin, both compatriot and native friends and understanding that the two cultures must strive to get along well. However, integration is probably not allowed in its entirety by the majority groups in question and, consequently, multiculturalism (Berry, 2011) does not happen in practice. It seems, broadly speaking, that there is still no full respect for diversity or equity among the peoples treated here, which results in a process of marginalization/exclusion of immigrants, even if veiled. In other words, interculturality, which advocates respect for ethnic, religious, economic-social, relational, sexual diversity, among others, encompassing two or more cultures, is still far from being successfully achieved in the migratory process as a whole.

CONCLUSIONS

Two decades ago, Hinde (1997) already saw a reciprocal interaction between the individual and the culture in which he is inserted. According to his theory, the individual is built and formed by his interactions, relationships and groups to which he belongs (family, friendly, loving, professional, religious, social in general), in addition to being affected by the social structure and cultural environment in which he is inserted. Mutually, this individual also affects and influences their interactions, relationships, groups, and the sociocultural



structure that surrounds them. However, the author probably did not idealize that one culture would be predominant over the other when both were in contact. In view of this, the immigrant would have greater difficulty in influencing the dominant culture in which he is inserted.

When the immigrant leaves his cultural environment and inserts himself in another, with its idiosyncrasies, he is forced to develop a new behavioral repertoire of coping in order to adapt and live well. Undoubtedly, this is a very arduous process, as this immigrant has spent years of his life immersed in his culture, being molded by it and by the relationships established in his environment (and dialectically shaping them). In a short time, he needs to be open and incorporate into his behavioral pattern rules, values and cultural norms that he was unaware of or that were not familiar to him.

Hinde (1997) addresses this complexity of specific behaviors, interactions and relationships characteristic of each cultural and social context. However, the complexity becomes greater in an unknown cultural context, increasing even more when the majority society imposes its culture on minority groups.

According to the participants of this research, it is functional and healthy to incorporate elements of the new culture into their repertoire, that is, adaptation is really necessary, but with reciprocity. However, what is evidently clear is that the counterpart does not happen. In other words, it is only the immigrant who must open up and adapt to the predominant culture, because this culture, and consequently its natives, are not very open and willing to incorporate elements of the minority cultures with which they live. Perhaps the participants are not aware of this unequal relationship, and even if some are, they cannot express such a divergent opinion of what happens in practice. They would probably be segregated or excluded from the context.

So, what remains for immigrants to have a life with quality, mental health and peace is to use the available strategies: friends and openness to the local culture. When participants set out to be open to or approach the new culture as immigrants, they are being humble, as well as trailblazing and courageous. When they use their friends to favor themselves in this process of cultural insertion, they are being insightful.

Finally, this study pointed out that friends can mediate the process of insertion into the new culture in a more efficient and even pleasurable way, as they present cultural information in a more practical and accessible way to the newly arrived immigrant. The migration process is characterized by facing several new situations and, mainly, without the migrant having the social support he had in his country of origin. Therefore, friends emerge as a strong and functional coping strategy in the face of this new phase of life. This



information can support public, governmental, academic policies, among others, in the process of welcoming immigrants in the various countries, not only in the ones studied. Meetings aimed at immigrants could be promoted, in an attempt to stimulate friendly relations with natives, compatriots and other foreigners. In other words, friendship relationships could be a path to plural societies endowed with greater interculturality, with all the properties inherent to it: equity, respect for diversity, tolerance, empathy and solidarity.



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