

Migration for Love? A Study of Brazilian Women Married to Swiss Men

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We are living in the age of globalization, characterized by rapid social change and great technology advances. Intercultural marriage is nothing new, since the barriers to such unions are diminishing; consequently, they are gaining space. In Switzerland, for instance, 49% of all marriages that happened in 2007 were intercultural. Brazilian women appear in second place with whom Swiss men marry most. The general objective of this research was to investigate the adaption of Brazilian women who are married with Swiss men, as well as the repercussions of this marriage in their lives. The specific objectives were: the reasons that made them migrate and marry with a foreigner, the obstacles and enabling factors of the coexistence, the process of adaption to a foreign country, to the family-in-law, and to marriage by itself. The participants were 12 Brazilian women who live in the German part of Switzerland. They responded to an interview, focused in the objectives of the study. It was found that apart from the reasons for the migration, all of them experienced difficulties because of cultural differences, in the social environment as in marriage and parenting.

Keywords: couple, culture, intercultural relationship

Introduction

We are living in an age of globalization, of rapid social changes and great technological advances. Zini and Arantes (1996) define globalization as an amplification of the exchanges among people of different cultures. These authors recognize that this type of exchange has been happening for quite some time, but not at the rate that it takes place nowadays. All these changes influence the various cultures involved and, consequently, people's behavior. Amazonas, Dias, and Santos (2009) state that, among all the changes that the process of globalization is causing, those affecting sexuality, affective relationships, marriages, and the family unit have the greatest repercussions in people's lives. Each of these is imbued with global values. According to Hollenstein (1994), in Germany alone more than two million people live in intercultural families, and in the United States only 25% of all weddings take place between people from the same cultural background. According to the BSF (Swiss Federal Statistics Department), in 2007, 49% of all weddings performed in Switzerland were intercultural weddings, and Brazilian women occupy the second place on the list of whom the

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Swiss marry most. Furthermore, research shows that, nowadays, intercultural families constitute a large part of the European population (CBIF (Centrum für Binationale und Interkulturelle Paare und Familien), 1999) and, quite possibly, the world. Intercultural families are often considered the families of the future.

Given these facts, the goal of this research project was to study marriages between Brazilian women and Swiss men and the repercussions of these marriages in their lives. Specifically, we analyzed: (1) the motivations behind migration and marriage; (2) the elements that made living together easier, and those that made it more difficult; (3) the process of adapting to the new country, fitting in with the spouse's family and the marriage itself; and (4) the feelings experienced and the needs felt.

Female Migration and Marriage

According to the United Nations Organization (2009), the scale of international migration has grown substantially in the last few years and has become a global phenomenon. More than 200 million people live outside their home country; practically half of these are women who left their countries in search of better living opportunities.

A report published by UNFPA (the United Nations Population Fund) (2007) states that female migration is a revolution that is growing constantly. This revolution is related to mobility and autonomy, fueled by hope, but plagued with risk. It is still, however, a silent revolution. Knight (2009) talks about the various faces of female migration, trying to better understand its multifaceted, complex nature. According to this author, female migration is an issue rife with contradictions and paradoxes, with contrasts and injustice, moral dilemmas and conflicting interests. This author states that if, on one hand, this migration can contribute to gender equality and capacitating women, allowing them access to the income, social status, autonomy, freedom and self-respect that a job can provide, on the other hand they are vulnerable to exploitation and are easy prey for human traffickers. They may, based on promises of a more prosperous life in a foreign country, fall into forced prostitution, factories that exploit them, or inhumane domestic service. Mothers who leave children behind bear a great psychological and emotional burden.

In Brazil, the situation is no different. According to the Brazilian Census Institute of Geography and Statistics (2010), of the total emigrants counted, 60% are aged between 20 and 34. These numbers indicate dislocations motivated mainly by the sale of labor-power, in which the family does not come along. Furthermore, the Census showed that women are a majority (53.8%) among those who emigrated.

The study of international migrations from Brazil identifies a much higher rate of marriages to foreigners among the women who migrate than among the men in the same situation. The women leave their country filled with hope and dreaming of marriage. A large portion is outside of Brazil for a number of reasons beyond their control. According to Huber, in 1996, in Switzerland, Brazilians, together with Dominicans, Moroccans, and Thais, made up the largest group of migrant women from the so-called third world or developing countries. Despite this fact, it is hard to find specific data because a large number of them live illegally in the country, with no registration in any official organ. According to the Brazilian Consul in Zurich, Vitoria Cleaver (2009), around 60,000 Brazilians now live in Switzerland, the grand majority of whom are women. However, while Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Relations estimates that 60,000 Brazilians currently live in Switzerland, Switzerland's Federal Department of Statistics (BFS, 2007) has other numbers: According to them, only 14,108 Brazilians live in the country. This discrepancy in the information from both countries is likely a sign of the large number of Brazilians, specifically women, living illegally in Switzerland.

But how do these women get into Switzerland? There are basically three ways: as cabaret dancers (for which they can get an eight-month visa), through marriage, or as tourists. However, the only way for a Brazilian woman to stay permanently in the country is through marriage to a Swiss or European man. Thus, in most cases, both the women who go as dancers as well as those who go as tourists are actually seeking a marriage. According to Keller (1997), few Brazilians go to Switzerland as migrant workers because no agreement of this type exists between the two governments.

The Brazilian women married to Swiss men can be divided, basically, into two groups: those who meet their future husband in Brazil, given Brazil's privileged status in the field of tourism, attracting tourists who want to see the "exotic tropic" up close, and migrate to Switzerland; and the women who decided to migrate of their own accord, first as dancers or tourists, looking to get jobs and get married, to build or rebuild a family.

Relationship and Culture

Intercultural marriage in globalized times is nothing new. It is now possible to maintain relationships with people from other continents without leaving home. According to Hotvedt (2002), the topic of "intercultural marriage" is vast and complex and, according to Perel (2000), has not received due attention because it is a new phenomenon, becoming more prevalent beginning in the 1950s. Despite this, people of different credos, cultures, nationalities, and races have established short- or long-term affective-sexual relationships and, in the latter case, these bring to light new modes of family and behavior that adapt to a world in constant transformation. This type of relationship raises questions about intellectual and emotional challenges, and is defined by Romano (1997) as the union between two people from different cultures, as well as different countries, and may, but not necessarily, include different races and/or religions.

This type of marriage, like any other, generally begins based on similarities and idealization of the partner. The differences are, in the beginning, considered unimportant, uninteresting, or unattractive. However, when living together and forming a family, all these differences surface in the form of values and roles, which make the relationship more complex. According to Carvalho, Hoffmeister, and Schmidt (2009), at the beginning when two people from different nationalities fall in love, everything is very exciting. This cultural difference is, in fact, the main aspect bringing the couple together. But, over time, it can cause several problems. Illoz and Lacher, (as cited in Stadhaus, 2005), state that, in actuality, love belongs to myths, to magic. When we love, we're not interested in knowledge, much less enlightenment, because everyone knows love is blind. So people assume that love is sufficient to solve every problem. On the other hand, experience shows that this belief generally does not pan out.

What happens is, in fact, an idealization of love. This idealization happens mainly due to distance. After the couple first meet, there is a separation for a time, until they decide to live together. In our case, a Brazilian woman decides to live in Switzerland. While she was in Brazil, there was some idealization of what life would be like as a couple in Switzerland. But when the dream becomes reality, the day-to-day difficulties come into play. What used to be idealized can become banal due to these daily difficulties.

According to Reif (2004), most intercultural couples have to fight against migration laws: If they want to stay together, they have to get married quickly, skipping the phase during which the couple should get to know each other better, straight into marriage. Thus, for the intercultural marriage to occur, the man or woman leaves his or her country of origin and migrates to his or her partner's country. For Scheifele (2008), migration is a traumatizing adventure. Migrants have to face isolation, risk, and misunderstanding, they have to abandon their

families, friends, safe and familiar places, to face not only a new culture and language, but also new cultural and religious habits, as well as insecurity in a new country.

People feel supported in their own culture, which allows them the freedom to act because they are prepared to do so, at an instinctual level. Lang (2002) goes so far as to say that culture can be compared to the air we breathe: We get used to it and are not even aware of it all around us. But, if we are deprived of the air we breathe, we immediately feel it. When cultures collide, instinct may not help anymore. When we are away from our cultural support, we spend more time trying to make sense what is going on than participating in the events themselves, and this is exactly the experience of many people who find themselves in a foreign culture.

On the other hand, in the same way that migrants experience culture shock, so too do the local inhabitants have their reactions to foreigners. According to Salman (2007), the process of acceptance of a new arrival happens slowly, especially when there are various physical differences between the foreigners and the local population. This condition can have a negative influence on the immigrant's assimilation and reorganization although, naturally, a series of other factors are also involved.

However, besides the cultural difference, another important factor is the new language, which will certainly affect communication, in society as well as in the relationship. Intercultural couples generally communicate in a language in which at least one of the two is not completely fluent. This causes difficulties in communicating and understanding, especially when dealing with emotions. For Romano (1997), a truly intimate relationship between two people who do not share a mother tongue is very difficult, because the chances of failures in communication are so great. In a foreign language, humor and deep emotions are difficult to communicate.

Another aspect that cannot be forgotten or minimized is religion; it impregnates society, as well as its system of rights and duties. According to Perel (2002), in marriages between people of different belief systems, it is often difficult to deal with religious differences because accepting religious truths as "relative" can be difficult. It is necessary to know how religion is experienced by one's partner and what influence it may have in that person's daily life, because this will certainly be reflected in the marriage. A person's religious beliefs are generally taught in childhood, and religious sentiment, even dormant, can surface at given moments in life.

Other factors that can also be stressful for intercultural couples, says Hotvedt (2002), are the values attributed to the original families and the relationship with them, to rules for upbringing and interacting with children. Whether a couple is from the same culture or not, the arrival of a child brings about a series of feelings, tasks, and roles. According to Perel (2002), the dilemma regarding bringing up children is generally complicated and emotionally charged, and can begin even before birth. Andolfi (2002) states that, in couples from different cultures, misunderstanding about raising children and expectations about their future can be profound and especially stressful.

The birth of a child begins the long road to educating him or her in an intercultural home. It is exactly in the daily routines, in responding to a child's needs and desires, that cultural differences become clearer. Now the couple needs to decide which upbringing style it will use, the language spoken and even the religion the child will be taught. According to Urech, Schiess, and Stucki (2005), in a family of immigrants, in which both mother and father are foreigners, the situation might be considered, from one point of view, less complicated, since both parents come from the same culture and, as a result, the children live with one reality within their family and another without. Children of intercultural couples, on the other hand, live with this diversity inside their own homes and often do not know for sure whether they are foreigners or not. But it is important to point

out that children of intercultural couples will not necessarily face family problems, because many couples manage a synthesis and develop what could be called a “third” culture. However, if these arrangements or syntheses are not made, the child may be “lost” among all the conflicting information.

In most cases, it is the foreign spouse who ends up giving up more and needs to have a higher level of tolerance, because raising a child out of one’s country is comparable to playing a soccer game away from your home field, where most of the audience supports the opposing team. The foreign spouse sees him or herself only in relation to the environment he or she now finds him/herself in, where his/her customs find little support in society.

According to Romano (1997), in an intercultural marriage, the husband who is in his own country has many more “cultural strengths” in his favor, which often does not help, but actually hinders him from reaching his wife. For him, it is easier to stay centered on his own culture and not consider his companion’s different expectations. In the case of this study, in which Brazilian women migrate to Switzerland, they are the ones who need to have greater flexibility in order to adapt to a society so different from her own. If, on one hand, there is the possibility of complementation between the couple, on the other hand there are several obstacles to be overcome. Larcher (2000) compares intercultural marriages to a jigsaw puzzle that must be solved every day. However, like every marriage, an intercultural marriage requires a long process. It is an endless project which requires translation and availability for daily adaptation in the couple’s relationship. Without hierarchy, without opposition, without exploitation, the word “love” gains new meaning: “deconstructing differences” (Larcher, 2000, p. 3).

Methodology

The criterion for choosing the participants was that of purposeful sampling, also called intentional or deliberate (Turato, 2003). The participants were 12 Brazilian women who live in Switzerland, in the German part, and are married to Swiss men. They have been married, on average, seven years and their schooling goes from elementary school to undergraduate college degrees. All of them have had children in Switzerland or in Brazil. As to religion, five are Catholic and seven are evangelical Christians. The interviewee’s names have been changed in this text.

The instrument used was a scripted interview with 13 questions, with items related to the objectives of this research project and to the socio-demographic data of the interviewees. The interview was semi-directed, individual and in an appropriate setting, and took place after an explanation of the objectives of the interview and the guarantee that the information would remain confidential. Interviewees were asked for their permission to record the interview and were asked to sign a Term of Free and Informed Consent.

The data were analyzed according to the technique of analysis of thematic content. According to Minayo (2004, p. 209), it consists in “discovering the nuclei of meaning that make up a communication whose presence or frequency mean something to the chosen objective of analysis”. Thus, the topics related to our objectives and analyzed based on the literature consulted were the following: reasons for the marriage, positive aspects of an intercultural marriage, difficulties due to the intercultural marriage, and an evaluation of the experience.

Analysis and Discussion of the Results

We will now present the topics discussed and, immediately after, we will present a discussion on these topics whenever possible.

Reasons for the Migration and Marriage

We ascertained that the reasons for migration and marriage vary greatly, including romantic love, the desire for a better life, to remain legally in Switzerland and even to bring their children. Among the 12 women interviewed, six named as the main reason for migration the fact that they were in love, thus migrating in order to get married.

According to Keller (1997), one of the reasons for the rise in the number of Brazilian migrants in Switzerland is the important role Brazil currently occupies in the realm of tourism, attracting many Europeans to come to see the “exotic tropics”, which results in an increase in intercultural marriages between Brazilians and Swiss, as can be seen in the following statements:

I met my husband in Brazil and he had to come back. So, one month later I was married and living in Switzerland. I came to Switzerland for love. I was 26. (Rebeca)

I met my husband in Brazil, an intense love that swept me off my feet. He was only there for about twenty days. We corresponded by e-mail, by phone. Later he invited me to spend Christmas with him. He sent me the tickets and I came, but was scared. Because I knew here I would be in his hands. (Suelen)

I came here because I married a Swiss man. I used to work and study in Brazil. My husband was there, doing some research, so we met and fell in love. He stayed there three months and then he went back to Switzerland. We kept in touch—we talked on the phone—and later I came here on vacation and we got married. (Eliana)

The other six participants gave as the main reason for migration the search for better life opportunities and of a marriage, including the possibility of bringing their children, as can be seen in the following statements:

I already had two children and had been abandoned. A lot of my friends had already come here and gotten married. That's why I came. On the same street where I used to live there were a lot of Brazilian women there who had met someone and gotten married. I used to think: someday I'll meet my Prince Charming. (Rebeca)

I came from a broken marriage. So I decided to come to Switzerland and work hard to build a home and get married so I could stay here. (Amélia)

All the participants did actually get married. They met their husbands through friends or relatives who already lived in Switzerland, but also on dating sites, in newspaper ads, or at parties, as can be seen in the following statements:

I met my husband through a personal ad I put in the paper. You know this is common around here. I got 34 letters, a lot of them were trash, but two of them interested me because of the language. They spoke Spanish and I understood a little. (Amélia)

I was living illegally, I had to work to send money to my father to support my kids. My sister kept telling me, “You've got to get married! You've got to get married!” Then I met my husband at a disco and lived with him for three months. Later, I went to Brazil and came back with my kids and married him. (Bernadete)

It just so happens I had fallen in love with Switzerland, with my way of life here, because of the financial issues. I thought, God, when I get back to Brazil I won't have any of this! So I decided to get married, I met my husband on the Internet, on a dating site with Swiss men. (Carolina)

Positive Aspects of the Intercultural Marriage

The predominant topics here were organization, the fact that the husbands help around the house, the sincerity of the Swiss, the things they could afford, the love of Switzerland, the stability, the expansion of world and cultural horizons. According to Perel (2002), whereas intercultural marriage can provoke a break with one's family, it can also enrich all involved, including family. New doors are opened to diversity and new forms of behavior and relationships. Rittiner (2006) adds further that the interaction with another culture can

enrich the lives of the spouses. The statements below exemplify these positive aspects:

What's positive, I think, is the opportunity to live in a country like Switzerland, to learn another language, and the better financial situation we have here. (Patrícia)

The positive side is our independence. There is no emotional dependence. Each person can take care of themselves. But this positive side can become negative, because the couple want to make a life together. I miss the family feel – the human warmth, hugging, physical contact, this has to be worked on. (Carolina)

Difficulties From the Intercultural Marriage

On this topic, the interviewees mentioned a certain personal distance, the language, raising children, rigidity, criticisms of their religion (from their husbands) and the Swiss mentality. According to Rittiner (2006), in the absence of constant learning, attrition stemming from the differences between the spouses may appear, which can generate daily conflict. According to Figueiredo (2005), there is a very close relation between communication and marriage, because in the conjugal relationship, the spouses interact constantly and intimately. Since they share the same physical space, communication permeates the couple's daily life. According to Romano (2007), between couples from different cultures there are many risks involved in communication. Not only the choice of words, but tone of voice and gestures can mean different things to those who transmit and those who receive the message.

The language is another thing that gets in the way, in the sense of how you express yourself. Because there are a lot of things that if you translate them too literally, you get offended or upset, you think your partner is heartless, has no feelings. We Brazilians are very emotional and even when we speak the same language one of us is always at a disadvantage, since it's not our language. Talking with hands and feet is very complicated; it's a huge barrier. (Eduarda)

Another problem is tone. When he says something, I think he's being aggressive, that he's accusing me of something. So I respond angrily. He says, "But I spoke in a normal tone!" I say, "Say it again, say it a different way and I'll respond better." The German language is aggressive. The sound is aggressive, it's very guttural. (Suelen)

The language is, generally speaking, an obstacle in the couple's communication, much as it is between the intercultural family and its closest relatives, including the relationships at the children's school and with society in general. It makes not only communication more difficult, but also inclusion in the workforce. Not speaking the language of the country perfectly makes everything more difficult. According to Ammann (2006), people who migrate to the German part of Switzerland need to learn, apart from German, one of the dialects. Those who speak German without a Swiss accent are soon identified as foreigners, which makes integration more difficult.

Even after the (German language) course I still have a lot of trouble with the language. I learned almost nothing and he (the husband) always says that I'll never learn this language, because I'm uninterested. He argues with me a lot. My mother-in-law wants to talk to me and can't. Even going to the doctor is a problem. (Amélia)

My main objective was to continue working in my field. I'm a psychologist and I wanted to continue working as a psychologist. But to work as a psychologist I need more than to learn German, I needed to speak and understand Swiss-German (the dialect). I can't tell a patient in my clinic, "Could you repeat that?" I've also had to face prejudice. (Eliana)

Another topic that the Brazilian women often emphasized was the upbringing of children. Bringing to mind the ideas of Hall (1990) about the existence of countries with high and low context, while the Swiss value their children's independence and autonomy, Brazilians are more focused on upbringing and family unity. The rigidity of the Swiss mindset regarding upbringing is very difficult for a Brazilian mother. According to

Mainardi (2005), many Brazilian women say it is difficult not only being a mother, but being a woman. In Switzerland, they feel totally responsible for their children's upbringing, and if the children have trouble at school, it is always their fault. They cannot work because they have no one to help with the children. Many of them say it is easier being independent in Brazil. According to Lang (2002), one of the complaints of South American women is the husband's or even in-laws' interventions in the decisions regarding the home and the children's upbringing.

My son had to be a little robot just like the other children. He had to do this and not do that. We had a lot of trouble with television, with children's videos and other things. I said, "I'm a full-time mother, I don't have anyone to help me. I have to do everything by myself and still have to follow a program!" (Suelen)

When my son was five months old, he had trouble falling asleep. My mother-in-law said, "Just lock him in his room, even if he's crying, for five hours if possible, then he'll learn." I said, "I'm not going to do that. In my country that's not how we do things." I had a fight with my husband and mother-in-law, because that's how they do things here. (Carolina)

However, some couples manage to make a synthesis and develop what could be called a "third" culture.

With my daughter, I'm not only a mother, I'm also a teacher. The Swiss don't watch much TV. She does, but with limits, because I know it's not good for her. She has a bedtime, because I know this is conditioning. She has rules, which helps her get along with others. She speaks two languages, Portuguese and German, because it's through my language that I express my feelings and emotions. She is going to learn my culture. (Eliana)

Criticism regarding religion shows up constantly. While the Brazilian women profess their religion, there are a large number of Swiss people who are atheists, and religion is experienced in a more distant manner. Many husbands are bothered by the fact that their Brazilian wives like to go to church.

The Swiss think differently, especially about religion. They don't believe in God. This is what's been hardest for me in these three years we've been married. I like to go to church, but he thinks I'm overdoing it and we argue a lot about it. (Carolina)

Alice sums it up best in her statement:

The difficulties were so great that I had to do couples therapy. If we had kept doing things that way, we would have separated even though we loved each other, because there were a lot of difficulties. (Alice)

The obstacles to be overcome are diverse. Some couples manage to overcome them, but others do not. Each case is different, so it is difficult to generalize. Every intercultural couple experiences these conflicts. What varies is the way each couple deals with them. The children of intercultural couples can become a point of contention in cases of divorce, with it being not uncommon to see media reports about custody battles, or even children kidnapped by their own parents. Some Brazilian women keep up their marriages in Switzerland solely due to their children.

When my son turns eighteen, I'm going back to Brazil. I've had it with Switzerland! I've had it with all this! Each of us has our own culture! When I say it's my culture, it's my culture. But if you're in an intercultural relationship, you have to respect the other's culture. (Rita)

Relationships With the Original Family

On this topic, all the participants found resistance on their husband's family's part to accepting them, and there is some resentment due to the emotional distance of the women. The relationship with original families is difficult at first because intercultural marriages are seen, generally, by the Swiss families, as being self-interest

on the part of the Brazilian women. According to Hollenstein (1994), at the beginning it is very difficult for the parents-in-law to accept their daughter-in-law, but over time the relationship tends to improve, as we can see in the following statements:

To his family I'm a little like the "exotic animal" of the family. Hugging your mother-in-law is just something that isn't done here. Today they've "softened up" with me. His mother didn't like the fact that he had married a Brazilian, but it got better when she met me and saw I wasn't a darkie and not all that different from them. (Eduarda)

Brazilian women who are more used to a cohesive family unit in Brazil find Swiss family relations a bit odd.

Contact with family members here is very limited. My children's grandparents only see them once a year. (Mariana)

Acceptance by the family usually happens once the Brazilian woman adapts to life in Switzerland.

His family accepts me if I stay Swiss. Foreigners are strange and difficult. So I wear a mask to keep up appearances. I have two roles, that's my relationship here. If I don't do that, we crash head on. It works if I dress like a Swiss and behave like one. (Eliana)

On the other hand, some husbands feel fine with their Brazilian families.

With my family, he feels almost overwhelmed with so much care and attention. For instance, lunch lasts three hours, everyone sitting around the table talking. It's not like that in his house. Everyone stays quiet at the table. Nowadays, he likes being in my parents' house better than in his parent's house. He thinks it's fantastic. (Eduarda)

Adaptation to the New Country

In this category, all the participants recognized the need for changes to better adapt to the new cultural context.

According to Ammann (2006), Swiss culture and civilization are rooted in century-old traditions that can be hard to learn and understand for people from non-alpine cultures, thus forming something akin to a barrier around immigrants. It is very difficult to adapt and integrate oneself to a country that is geographically and socially cold, with a close, introverted culture as is Switzerland's. Through transcultural experiences people can learn to understand the new reality they find themselves in. In this case, according to Lang (2002), all the adaptations will be made by the wife. We observed that some Brazilian women had adapted to their new country, while others were still struggling to find the balance between the two cultures. Initially they experienced culture shock and, little by little, began adapting to the differences. In the excerpts below we can see changes in behavior in relation to silence and schedules.

When you're here, you begin to shape yourself and can't stand noise anymore, neighbors yelling, or people being late. You begin transforming yourself. You've got to get into the rhythm. If you do things your way, you won't get anywhere. (Lena)

On the other hand, we see that these behavior changes are often made to avoid discrimination.

To integrate here, you need to be a little Swiss, so people don't look at you as a foreigner. Here I learned to be even more isolated: I learned to dress like them, to talk like them, to become part of this world here. I had to wear a mask, to develop a new me to become part of this society. At that time, I had no contact with Brazilians, I consumed everything that came from Switzerland, trying to integrate. I tried to be as Swiss as possible. I only noticed afterwards that it shouldn't be like that. Let's be at least 50% (Brazilian) and 50% (Swiss)! (Eliana)

Desire to Return to Brazil

Some Brazilian women would like to return to Brazil, but find it difficult due to their husbands or children. Others wish to return to Brazil on vacation only. They prefer to live in Switzerland because of the safety and convenience the country offers them. Almost all of the women spoke about the issue of safety and that Brazil had become a very dangerous country. This is the reason many Brazilians want to stay in Switzerland and only one of the interviewees would like to return to Brazil definitively so she could work in her chosen profession.

Going back to live in Brazil, yes, I think about it, but I don't see how. Because now I have a family here. In Brazil I feel afraid all the time. (Suelen)

I would like to go back to Brazil, go back to working in my field. Here, if I wanted to be a maid, a nanny, it'd be easy. There is discrimination in Europe. They think all Brazilian women have little formal education. I don't have anything against those jobs, but I didn't spend six years in college for that. I wish I could go back to work, to work cognitively. (Eliana)

One of them said her husband would like to live in Brazil:

Going to Brazil is my husband's dream, he thinks people there don't need much to be happy. They smile even when they have nothing. People here are grumpy, even though they have everything. They're always stressed out. Nowadays, I'm scared of Brazil. I fear for my safety. But it is my country. (Alice)

Evaluation of the Experience

In general their evaluation was pessimistic when talking about the illusion of meeting a Prince Charming and getting rich or about the lack of preparedness to face a new and demanding professional marketplace and learning a difficult language. Only one said Switzerland was her second country.

This is my second home. I miss my relatives, the beach, but I like living here. I've managed to adapt. (Patrícia)

There are people who bought a (plane) ticket to Switzerland and won the lottery. Nobody here is rich, and you work hard. Switzerland is beautiful, organized, but it's great for a vacation. I say if you're the adventurous kind, like I was, stay in Brazil; it's much better. Here people are like water and oil: they live together, but they don't mix. I always say, "If I die here, take my ashes to Olinda, so I can die happy." (Lena)

Coming to live in Switzerland—You should only come if you're living in the street, under the hot sun, and even then, be careful! Switzerland is beautiful and wonderful for the first months, like all of Europe. But it's another culture, and you're alone. If you like to live alone and in isolation, the doors are open! I came because I was in love, and even then, it's a two-edged sword. (Eliana)

Final Considerations

All the participants, whatever their reasons for migration, went through the experience of culture shock. The ones who went as tourists and stayed illegally say this caused them great psychic suffering and increased the need to quickly find a Swiss or European husband to stay in the country. The ones who migrated for love did not have the experience of illegality but went simultaneously through the process of adaptation to the new country and to the marriage.

Intercultural marriage between Swiss men and Brazilian women, especially in the marriages in which the women migrated based on the dream that they would find their Prince Charming, get rich, and live happily ever after, did not make their dreams come true. Reality seems quite different. However, the Brazilians discussed some advantages like a new worldview and learning a new language. The difficulties with the culture and with the language stood out, both in the relationship and in dealing with the larger society. We also observed that raising children, in most cases, is conflict-ridden because of the cultural differences. We found some Brazilians

who expressed ambivalent feelings, because many of the positive aspects found in the relationship are also, simultaneously, negative. If, on one hand, they like the stability they have in their marriages in Switzerland, on the other hand they face a lot of challenges in the relationship. These challenges affect their children's upbringing, their religious practices, the difficulty of working in their profession and dealing with the larger society as a consequence of the language and prejudice towards foreigners.

Given the complexity of the issue at hand, we consider that we were able to make a brief map of the issue and what new investigations are necessary. We hope to have contributed to sensitize professionals, families and, especially, women to the problems related to migration and the reality of living in another country so different from their own, as well as to the adaptation to an intercultural marriage.

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