

SOCIOCULTURAL MAPPING OF GROUPS OF IMMIGRANTS AND THEIR OFFSPRING SETTLED IN THE PROVINCE OF BUENOS AIRES (OTHER THAN SPANISH AND ITALIANS)

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ABSTRACT

Argentina has a population characterized by its diversity of origins which confers it a truly multicultural profile. Our purpose is to study Polish, Cape Verdean, Greek, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Dutch, Danish, Japanese, etc communities, in order to characterize the modifications that are produced as a consequence of cultural changes, to make a first characterization of the socio-cultural profile of these communities and to geographically locate the immigrant groups and their offspring in the province of Buenos Aires. The analyzed facts, were obtained through a selection of items from a semi-structured and pre-codified survey, which was designed in order to find out a plurality of dimensions: personal data (age, marital status, profession etc) and socio-cultural ones (mother tongue, second tongue, religion, music, food, dance, etc). We will exemplify showing the cases of the Chilean, Japanese, Lithuanian and Syrian-Lebanese communities and studying the distribution of some of the variables.

KEY WORDS: Cultural changes; Migrations; Socio-cultural mapping.

RÉSUMÉ

L'Argentine présente une population caractérisée par la diversité d'origines lui donnant un profil vraiment multiculturel. Nous nous proposons d'étudier des communautés de Polonais, de Cap-verdiens, de Grecs, de Lituaniens, d'Ucrainiens, de Hollandais, de Danois, de Japonais, etc. dans le but de caractériser les modifications qui se produisent comme conséquence du changement culturel, de réaliser une première caractérisation du profil socio-culturel de ces communautés, et enfin de localiser géographiquement les groupes de ces immigrants et de leurs descendants dans la province de Buenos Aires. Les données analysées ont été retenues à partir de la sélection des items d'une enquête semi-structurée et précodée, conçue pour rechercher une pluralité de dimensions, à savoir: renseignements personnels (âge, état civil, occupation, etc.) et socio-culturels (langue maternelle, langue seconde, religion, musique, alimentation, danses, etc.). Nous donnerons l'exemple dans le cas des communautés de Chiliens, Japonais, Lituaniens, Syriens – Libanais et nous étudierons la distribution de quelques variables.

MOTS CLÉS: Cartographie socio – culturelle; changement culturel; migrations.

1. INTRODUCTION

Argentina has a population characterized by its diversity of origins which confers it a truly multicultural profile. (Panettieri, 1970) (Lattes et al. 1975) Buenos Aires, setting in which our research was developed, is the Province which has historically received European, Asian, African, and American immigrations. It shows not only a particular ethnical physiognomy but also a cultural, economical, social and political one. Traditionally, research on migrations

has been referred to the two largest majorities: Spanish and Italians and a few anthropological works on small and medium-sized immigrant groups (Polish, Cape Verdean, Greek, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Dutch, Danish, Japanese, etc) have been carried out. The aim of our research exposed on this paper is, firstly, to geographically locate the groups of immigrants and their offspring who settled in Buenos Aires Province, and secondly, to outline the socio-cultural profile of these communities.

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2. METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

This research is focused on the approach of the processing of the immigrant groups and their offspring settled in Buenos Aires, according to a qualitative – quantitative Methodology. (Inchuasti, 1976) (Denzin et al., 1994).

Through the use of techniques developed in the anthropological field, in which the direct contact is privileged and a certain permanence in the information source field (Cresswell et al. 1981), we carried out semi-structured interviews, starting from a guided questionnaire to be put to public people (from the local councils, consular staff, etc.), authorities and members of associations; and structured interviews in the form of questionnaires, in order to search for socio-cultural data (family, language, religion, occupation, etc.). The survey was carried out on individuals, immigrants or descendants in any generation; of both sexes; from six year- old individuals, settled in Buenos Aires Province.²

Taking into account the information based on the National Census of Population and housing of 1991, we studied those municipal areas in Buenos Aires Province which presented a greater number of immigrants.

In total, 50 municipalities were selected: 19 corresponding to the Great Buenos Aires area and 31 to the interior of the province. Up to the moment 44 out of this total, have already been processed.

Up to this date we have 1553 polls stored in a data base.

The surveyed communities were: Albanese, German, Armenian, Austrian, Belgian, Belarusian, Bulgarian, Cape Verdean, Croatian, Czech, Irish, Polish, Lithuanian, Greek, Danish, Syrian, Lebanese, Japanese, Chilean, Bolivian, Portuguese, Slovenian, French, Peruvian, Paraguayan, Uruguayan, Dutch and Ukrainian.

For this Paper four communities were selected : Chilean, Japanese, Lithuanian and Syrian - Lebanese with a sample range of 84, 131, 79 and 335 individuals, respectively. These communities were selected because they represent the ethnic variation of the immigration groups settled in Buenos Aires Province. Out of the 26

studied variables we selected age, sex, language and customs (food, music and typical dances).

Chi-square test was applied in order to see if there was independence among the studied variables and the four analyzed groups.

2.1 Operating definition of the variables

Firstly the pollster asks for the personal data of the questioned individual, which includes surname, name, address, sex, birth date and age. This information is separately stored in the data base and the access is restricted through a password to protect the identity of the participants in the survey.

The individual variables sex and age allow us wide possibilities of combination with the rest of the variables.

Regarding the family situation, we consider primarily the marital status of the interviewee person, which is usually treated as a synonym of the "marital situation" in the demographic literature. This is the condition that allows us to talk about relationships in anthropology. This variable can adopt the following defined values: single; married; united; separated; divorced; widowed. Regarding children, we asked for their number and sex of them.

As regards immigration, we traced the origin of the polled person, their parents, his grandfathers and marital partner. The origin is understood as: "if he/she has any ancestor who immigrated in any lineage (maternal or paternal) and in any generation."

Finally we set the place of birth and the present residence, and in the case of immigrants, the date of departure from their country of origin and the date of arrival in Argentina.

Regarding the language we distinguished between the variable of the mother tongue, defined as "the language which is first acquired by the person and which is transformed in their natural instrument of thinking and communication" (UNESCO) and the variable second language: "is the one acquired after the mother tongue was established. It generally coincides with the official language" (UNESCO).

Regarding the mother tongue, we asked if their understands, speaks, reads and writes it.

Finally there were two questions, which could be considered as related to the attitudes towards learning the mother tongue and reading news related with their place of origin.

² We consider indispensable, according to the exposed ideas, to present a group of principles of ethical character that will have to be present on every occasion.

- Voluntary participation on the part of the interviewee
- Acceptance of using the information thus provided
- Confidentiality.

The variable religion is understood, in a wide sense, as the practice of any type of religious belief. We asked about the actual religion, if there was a second one and, finally the religion of their father and mother.

Regarding the job, we homogenized statistical and anthropological criteria, understanding this term as: the collection of specific tasks that are practiced during his/her work, of any branch of economic activities or any professional category they has. If the person is an immigrant, it should be specified what was his/her job in his/her place of origin, and which their first job in Argentina was.

The variables related to recreation referred to the activities that were carried out during free time. The alternatives considered were sports, dancing, cinema and television. These were complemented with the indication of affiliation to or participation in institutions, where he/she is member or regular visitor. With the term habits, we referred to the common way of realization of cultural practices, which are linked to the place of origin, like meals, the playing of musical instruments and dances.

With regard to schooling, the boundaries between the large categories (primary, secondary, tertiary/ college) are maintained. We considered it as appropriate to distinguish within these three categories, whether these were complete or not.

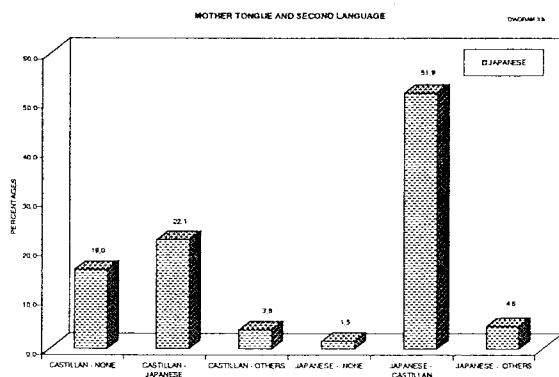
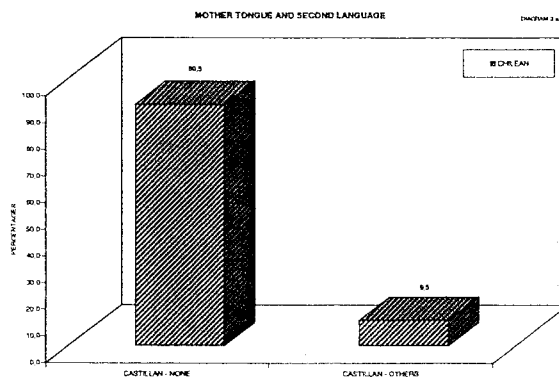
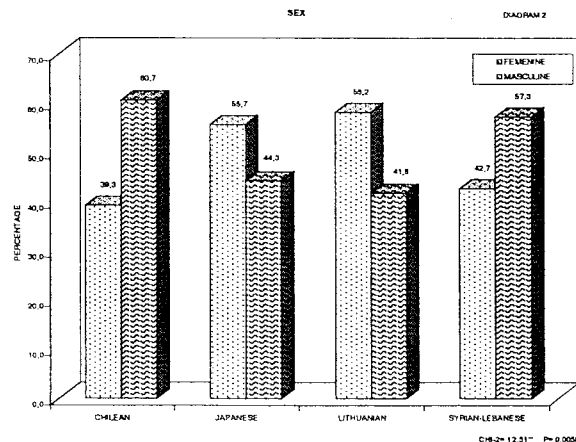
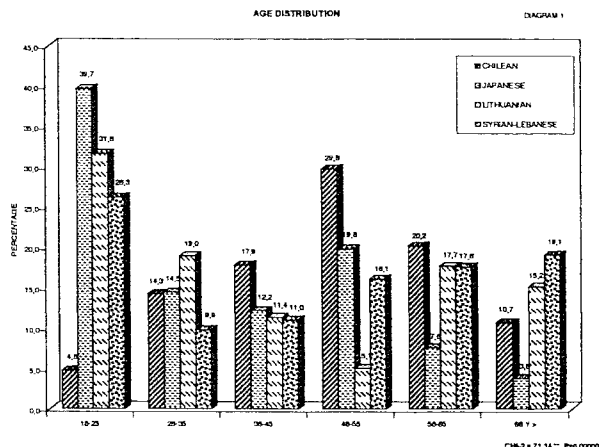
Although we recognize that these variables are not sufficient as analytical indicators of social stratification and mobility, the profession and school level allow us to measure in some way the position that an individual occupies within a social scale, and also the experimented social mobility (horizontally and vertically). The latter means the social change, suffered with respect to the place of origin in relation to the present residence and the changes in profession and school level (the one of their own and the one of their parents and children).

3. RESULTS

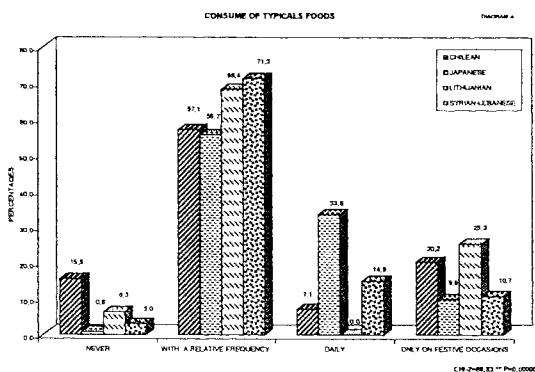
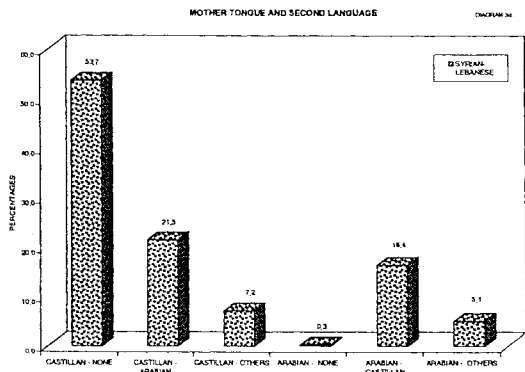
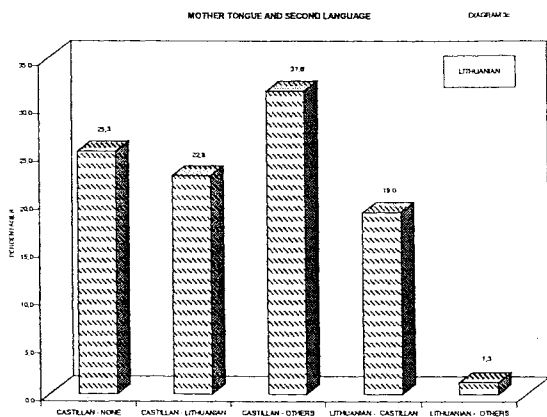
Distribution according to the age of the interviewees is shown in Diagram 1. Sex of the interviewees for each group, can be seen in Diagram 2.

Mother tongue and second language of the groups is displayed in Diagram 3 (a,b,c,d).

The highest percentage of people who consume typical dishes with a relative frequency are the Syrian-Lebanese. The Japanese are the ones who present a



high degree of daily consume and the Lithuanians do it only for festivities with the highest percentage (Diagram4)



Almost no community plays a musical instrument.

Lithuanians have the highest percentage in the typical dancing practice, followed by the Chilean. And the Japanese have the lowest figure.

We will give some examples of the relationship between some variables evaluated according to age and sex.

Analyzing the preservation of typical dances, we can conclude that the Japanese are the only group who does not continue with their custom, in contrast with the other studied groups. In the case of the Lithuanian the predominance falls on the women under 40 years of age, due to the fact that they are the ones who mainly attend dance classes in their own clubs and institutions.

In the Chilean group there is no difference in sex, in relation to this cultural practice and the range goes from 41 to 60 years old. Among the Syrian-Lebanese one third of them perform typical dances, not presenting differences according to sex or age.

As regards the performing of a musical instrument all groups showed a very low frequency. We will mention only the case of the Chilean with a mere 10% of the population playing the guitar.

Out of the studied variables the most rooted one seems to be the consuming of typical food. This is done quite frequently by the four studied groups. The Japanese and Syrian-Lebanese appear consuming typical food on a daily basis.

As regards consuming typical food it is to be noted that the highest frequencies occur in people over 21 years old. But in the case of the Japanese and Syrian-Lebanese it is also observed in people under 20 years old.

Evaluating the variable mother tongue, we shall notice that the Chilean, Lithuanian and Syrian-Lebanese use Spanish in a preponderant way. In the case of the Japanese, the Japanese tongue takes the first place-not existing significant differences in relation to sex. Adult people over 61 are the ones who maintain their mother tongue. It has to be highlighted that the Japanese group includes young people knowing their native language.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In this paper we have developed the results obtained in relation to a series of variables in four of the mapped groups in the province, where a basis for analysis is shown for the elaboration of a socio-cultural profile.

This profile could undoubtedly be considered as a starting point for a further deeper analysis.

The common origin, together with the language, music, other cultural practices as cookery art and dances and in some cases religion, having been transferred by means of the immigration phenomenon, facilitated and enhanced the particularity of each group, giving birth to their ethnical identity, which appears intermingling with a different culture.

The constitution of the identity of these groups through the contact with cultural situations, undoubtedly provides very interesting data in order to implement programs or activities related to the improvement of the population life-quality.

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