

Free essay on migration, identity and multiculturalism

[Sociology](#), [Immigration](#)



Specific Problem and Specific Thesis Statement

In the current global context, migration has become an economic attribute that completes and defines the concept of free market in a global society. The right to free movement and the right to work in foreign countries facilitate the cultural exchange between migrants and autochthonous populations. While the migrants come with their traditions and their own identity, the local populations absorb the migrants' inherited customs while learning about them. Likewise, the immigrants living in the daily specificities of the foreign countries in which they reach become accustomed with the local traditions and trends and become assimilated into their cultural patterns. Like this, migrants become multicultural, by enriching their culture and their identity, while acknowledging, recognizing and even assuming the national, cultural or social identity of the countries in which they have entered.

Introduction

Migrants represent groups of people who have their own national and cultural identities. However, besides these, which are shared identities, migrants also have their own, individual identities, which define their personalities. Each of them has a set of values or believes to which they adhere that they share with the others and this builds their shared cultural, social or national identity. When living outside their home country, people develop “ hybrid identities”, because they mingle with the local populations, transferring their identities among them, locals and migrants (Docker & Fischer 178). This leads to acceptance and celebration of the others, who

have different nationality, cultural, religious, linguistic or ethnic background. On the other hand, migration can also imply losing something from the original attributes of identity, while gaining specificities of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism as a Form of Integrating for Migrants

Speaking about identity, Reitemeier paraphrases OED that defines the concept in psychological, sociological and philosophical terms. Therefore, based on OED, identity indicates “ the sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances” (7).

Based on this definition, people should be the same in all the circumstances, including when they are abroad, in a foreign country. This definition challenges the migrant concept. A migrant is a person who moves from his home country to another country, to live and to work. Living and working cannot be done without interaction and while interacting people share beliefs, ideas, or perceptions about how they see life, in their regular working process. In this context, it is difficult to consider that individuals can maintain their “ sameness”, while they meet different views and approaches upon casual aspects of life and work, for instance, to which they have to adjust in order to be able to continue working or living in foreign countries. Reitemeier connects the term migration with the concept of integration, as he considers that it is the political responsibility of the host countries to integrate the migrants and not to discriminate against them (297). The phenomenon of integrating the migrants holds a multicultural connotation, as it implies assimilation and adjustment by migrants, which denotes that migrants have

to comply with the social and cultural aspects of the host country, as a way of integrating (Reitemeier 297).

Multiculturalism – negotiating between the Original Identity and the One Imposed by the Host Country

Docker and Fischer define multiculturalism as a phenomenon that celebrates cultural diversity and human rights, by allowing self – determination and encouraging the differences between individuals who possess distinct legal, political or social views, or who have different cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious background (33).

Living in other countries implies learning new written and unwritten regulations and code of conducts and this defines a process of negotiating migrants' identities, caught in a multicultural interaction where they share their identities with the local populations, while absorb their culture and identity. While living in other countries, among people of other nationalities, other social, political views, other traditions and historical backgrounds, migrants are intersecting with them and as they interact they express their identities and in the same time the locals are expressing their own identities. Like this, as Reitemeier observes, individuals have to negotiate a new place, to change their self – understanding, hence their identities, based on the interaction with the local inhabitants (317).

Identity Shifts and Shaping a Multicultural Identity

As part of the negotiation process, of finding a place and an identity in the new country, while maintaining the place and the identity of the home country, migrants pass through various shifts and changes, which will affect

their individuality, changing it into another individuality and identity, which encompasses the attributes of the new countries, which contributes to shaping a new identity.

Individuals negotiate their multicultural identity by adapting their behavior to the new country, by aligning to the socio - cultural environment that the host country imposes and to the various processes that determine changes from the original identity and a complete adaptation and assuming of the cultural identity of the host country (Cheryan & Monin 718).

Identity – between Resistance and Change

Although this is not a general case, for some migrants, their identity and their connection with their home countries remain vivid and do not suffer changes while accommodating in the new country, but on the contrary it becomes stronger while abroad.

Individuals tend to resist changing, as a natural reaction in a new environment. However, people who have left their home countries followed the path of foreign countries in the search of a better life, better jobs or employment conditions and this is the reason for which they know that they have to integrate and to become assimilated into the host country.

Despite the process of assimilation and integration, some migrants have strong feelings about their home countries, being deeply emotional attached to the place of their birth. Colic - Peisker notes that for the Croatian migrants who have established in Australia, their native places hold a physical presence and are entrenched in their minds through smells, colors, sounds and some of them even considered themselves separated from their homes,

because of their everyday existence, just as the “ body [is] separated from the soul” (2).

On the other hand, there are also immigrants who hide their true identity, in order to appear as belonging to the culture of the host country. For not having to face the discrimination, lack of benefits and facilities that the inhabitants of their host country possess, immigrants deny their belonging to their actual home country, so that their ethnic background not to be the cause for their marginalization. This is the reason for which migrants have developed secondary identity, meant to protect them from being considered foreigners, acting as a shield against discrimination, and helping them to survive in the environment of the host country (Colic – Pesker 168).

When denying their origins, the individuals are suppressing their own original identity and their own self – understanding and by devoting their entire being to a new culture and identity, they also suppress multiculturalism.

Migration and Multiculturalism Foster Progress and Human Evolution

Nevertheless, complying with a new identity imposed by the host countries and by the interaction with the local people of the new countries does not mean suppressing the original identities of the migrants. There are indeed, countries that are unsupportive with the migrants, who reach these states for working or for living. Considering them as a threat to their own identity, the local populations of these countries do not welcome migrants. Moreover, when the social system is also unsupportive with the migrants, they have no other option than to return home or search for a new and more hospitable host country. Nevertheless, the countries that do accept migrants and aim

for their integration and their accommodation, approach a “ multicultural conception of citizenship” (Kymlicka & Banting 281).

These countries represent open societies who promote the politics of free movement in a global society and celebrate diversity, having a strong support for multiculturalism. On a global scale, societies that encourage multiculturalism understand the advantages of assimilating and accommodating other identities as contributing to human development, because diverse identities hold different approaches on socio – politic, economic, legal, technological, scientific, or other areas that imply the evolution humanity, which can foster the creativity and empowerment (Docker & Fischer 178).

Conclusion

Engaged in a new society in their host countries, migrants negotiate their identity by letting themselves absorbed into a new identity, while approaching a multicultural conception and maintaining their original identity. Interaction with the inhabitants of the new country they live in and living in the environment imposed by the new country determine shifts and changes into the migrants’ original identity. While some of them feel strongly emotionally connected with their home countries, others deny their origins in order to avoid discrimination, marginalization, or being called foreigners. Nevertheless, in a global society, the shifts and changes that occur in the migrants’ identities and in the host country population’s identity (as a result of the interaction with the migrants) should result in fostering progress and

human development, by joining the minds of people with a diverse background, by celebrating multiculturalism.

Works Cited

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