

SYRIAN REFUGEES IN BRAZIL: THE ISSUE OF GROUPS

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Abstract

Refugees are people who are outside their countries because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or social participation, and who are unable (or unwilling) to return home. According to data released by the Brazilian National Committee for Refugees in its eighth edition (BRASIL, 2023), between January 2011 and the end of 2022, Brazil had identified 65,840 people as refugees in Brazil. Among the main countries of nationality or habitual residence of people identified as refugees in the period from 2011 to 2022, Syria stood out, with a total of 3,762 asylum requests granted, following Venezuela, which stood out in recent years. Syrian refugees have acquired great magnitude and representation in the issue that involves the policy of reception and insertion of refugees throughout the world and in Brazil. The arrival of these refugees in Brazil caused different reactions and behaviors, including potential conflicts. Different habits and beliefs generated responses from curiosity to rejection, creating a collective thought and a way of looking at these individuals as a cohesive and undifferentiated group, often based on the idea of uniformity, ignoring their singularity, as they are quite different from each other. This work aimed to discuss, especially through reading the work done by Jesuño (2004) and Cichoski (2017), the matter of how we see certain groups and their common and right away generalization that naturalizes this view with often preestablished standards without there being reflection and better knowledge about this group of people. This practice ignores the differences that exist within groups and tends to uniformize thoughts and conducts towards them, including providing the basis for the construction of public policies aimed at certain categories of people. Reading Bourdieu (Ortiz, 1983), in turn, opens a new horizon for understanding relationships in the same group and between distinct groups through field theory and the correlation of forces that is established from the symbolic capital acquired by the various social actors involved in these relations.

Keywords: *Social psychology, human rights, refugees.*

1. Introduction

Refugees are people who are outside their country because of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or social participation, and who are unable (or unwilling) to return home. According to the data released by the National Committee for Refugees in its 8th edition (Brasil, 2023), between January 2011 and the end of 2022, Brazil had recognized 65,840 people as refugees.

Among the main countries of nationality or habitual residence of people recognized as refugees in the period from 2011 to 2022, Syria stood out, with a total of 3,762 asylum requests granted, second only to Venezuela, which stood out in recent years. Syrian refugees have acquired great magnitude and representation in the issue that involves the policy of reception and insertion of them throughout the world and also in Brazil. The arrival of these refugees in Brazil provoked different reactions and behaviors, including potential conflicts. Different habits and beliefs generated everything from curiosity to rejection, creating a thought and a way of looking at these individuals as a cohesive and undifferentiated mass, often based on the idea of uniformity, ignoring their singularity, as they are very different from each other.

2. Objective

This work aimed to discuss the issue of how we see certain groups and their common, automatic generalization that naturalizes this view with standards that are often pre-established without there being reflection and better knowledge about this group of people.

3. Method

To achieve the proposed objective, theoretical research was used seeking to understand and provide space for discussion about group and intergroup relations.

3.1. Data collection procedure

As a data collection procedure, texts from Jesuíno (2004), Cichoski (2017) and Bourdieu (Ortiz, 1983) were selected.

3.2. Data analysis procedure

To carry out data analysis, the following steps were followed: I) Selection of texts. II. Pre-Analysis, first reading of the material, in order to define, within the possibilities of texts, those that could contribute to the discussion of the proposed theme to achieve the objective of this research. Next, III) Material Exploration was carried out, which consisted of readings of the selected texts, and finally IV) Treatment of results and interpretation, in which, based on the reading of the texts, the aim is to propose inferences and interpretations, thus building knowledge that makes it possible to deepen knowledge about group and intergroup relations, especially Syrian refugees in Brazil.

4. Results and discussion

Reading the texts by Jesuíno (2004) and Cichoski (2017), made it possible to understand the question of how we see certain groups and their common, automatic generalization that naturalizes this view with patterns that are often pre-established without there being reflection and better knowledge about this group of people. This practice ignores the differences that exist within groups and tends to standardize thoughts and conduct towards them, including providing the basis for the construction of public policies aimed at certain categories of people. Reading Bourdieu (Ortiz, 1983) in turn opens a new horizon for understanding relationships in the group and between groups through field theory and the correlation of forces that is established from the symbolic capital acquired by the various social actors involved in these relations.

Jesuíno (2004), when addressing the characteristics of the group, especially its size, says, “Conventionally, small groups are those in which members can interact with each other, around common problems. Passengers in a queue for public transport or a ticket office are a cluster, a serialized group in Sartre's (1960) terminology. An incident that gives them a common destiny can transform this simple aggregate into a group” (p. 299).

Syrian refugees, living their daily lives, were caught up in the civil war and were forced to abandon everything, to their homes to work, possessions and to leave their country to survive. These were gathered by an incident that gave them a common destiny: refuge.

Reading and discussing the topic of groups and its intersection with the topic of refugees makes us reflect on the concept of group and its applicability. Public policies in various areas are designed and applied based on group concepts. What we call a group is complex and demands a broader analysis and understanding far from the almost natural applicability we make of the term. For Bourdieu (Ortiz, 1983), the idea of a group is linked to habitus, which demonstrates the social place we occupy and the social capital we have. This aggregates and disaggregates people, groups are constructed according to a pre-established social identity and marked by the social place that the subject occupies. Occupying a socially recognized place represents belonging to a certain class of individuals, who had and still have access and permission to participate in this environment.

The refugee is a stranger, subject to local, pre-determined values, normally different from their own, which can be a factor of social exclusion. It is of essential importance to understand their relationship with the citizens of the countries that receive them.

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