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DOSSIÊ: ARTIGOS

The educational history of italian and german immigrants in the *Serra dos Tapes* (Pelotas/RS, 1920-1950): similarities and particularities¹

O percurso escolar dos imigrantes italianos e alemães na Serra dos Tapes (Pelotas/RS, 1920 - 1950): similitudes e particularidades

El itinerario escolar de los inmigrantes italianos y alemanes en la Serra dos Tapes (Pelotas/RS - 1920 - 1950): similitudes y particularidades

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes school history records of Italian and German immigrant descendants in the *Serra dos Tapes* (Tapes Mountain Range) district. Research sources consisted of 32 interviews, which integrate the collection of the *Colônia Maciel* Ethnographic Museum, located in the municipality of Pelotas (RS) countryside. For such, theories on collective memory, ethnicity and identity were used. The methodology employed had an oral history focus. The timeline refers to the decades in which the interviewees attended school (1920-1950). Similarities and particularities between the two immigrant groups were addressed. The importance attributed to schooling and religion could be detected in both groups. As for particularities, the Italian group preferred public schools, whereas the Germans opted for community schools which taught in German.

Keywords: ethnic group; schooling; Italian immigrants; German immigrants

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RESUMO

Neste artigo analisam-se as memórias da trajetória escolar dos descendentes de imigrantes italianos e de alemães na região da Serra dos Tapes. Para isso, as fontes de pesquisa estão constituídas por 32 entrevistas, as quais são acervo do Museu Etnográfico da Colônia Maciel, localizado no interior do município de Pelotas (RS). Para isso, utilizam-se teorias acerca da memória coletiva, etnicidade e identidade. A metodologia empregada é a da história oral. O recorte temporal está estabelecido nas décadas em que os entrevistados frequentaram a escola (1920-1950). Serão abordadas as similitudes e particularidades entre os dois grupos. Em ambos os grupos se nota a importância atribuída a escolarização e a religiosidade. Nas particularidades, percebe-se que o grupo dos italianos preferiam as escolas públicas, enquanto os alemães optavam pelas comunitárias em língua alemã.

Palavras-chave: grupo étnico; escolarização; imigrantes italianos; imigrantes alemães.

RESUMEN

En este artículo se analizan las memorias de la trayectoria escolar de los descendientes de inmigrantes italianos y de alemanes en la región de la Serra dos Tapes. Para ello, las fuentes de investigación están constituidas por 32 entrevistas, las cuales son acervo del Museo Etnográfico de la Colonia Maciel, ubicado en el interior del municipio de Pelotas (RS). Para ello, se utilizan teorías acerca de la memoria colectiva, etnicidad e identidad. La metodologia empleada es la de la historia oral. El recorte temporal está establecido en las décadas en que los entrevistados asistieron a la escuela (1920-1950). Se abordarán asimilitudes y particularidades entre los dos grupos. En ambos grupos se nota la atenuación atribuida a la escolarización y la religiosidad. En las particularidades, se percibe que el grupo de los italianos preferían las escuelas públicas, mientras que los alemanes optaban a las comunidades en lengua alemana.

Palabras clave: grupo étnico; la escolarización; inmigrantes italianos; inmigrantes alemanes.

Introduction

This article aims to analyse a set of 32 interviews that compose the collection in the database of the Ethnographic Museum (MECOM) in Colonia Maciel, a district of Pelotas, RS, Brazil. The place was historically colonized by immigrants of several ethnic groups: Italians, Germans, French. During the research, it came to our knowledge about the Image and Sound Database of MECOM, whose collection is divided into three categories: three-dimensional objects, images and oral history collection. The oral history collection is composed of interviews done during the implementation of the museum, between 2000 and 2006. The institution was inaugurated in 2006 and results from a research project by the Laboratory of Teaching and Research in Anthropology and Archaeology (LEPAARQ) of the Federal University of Pelotas. For the authors, the MECOM "aims to research, disseminate and preserve the history of the Italian community in the Pelotas rural area [...]" (PEIXOTO *et al*, 2008, p. 4) [our translation]

According to Cerqueira *et al* (2009), interviews have followed the precepts of oral history and have been done with locals who knew the collective memory of that region. Authors go on to explain the elaboration of such interviews:

[...] 32 interviews have been carried out. Of those, 8 have been done during the first stage of the project (2000 to 2002) and 24 during the stage of implementation of the museum (2005). There are still 12 interviews planned, to be done with members of families with Italian origins who currently live in the urban area of Pelotas. It must be emphasized that in some cases there were two or more interviews with the same person, as they had a great among of information to contribute with the research. (CERQUEIRA *et al*, 2009, p. 80) [our translation]

This way, as we began researches in these oral files, we verified that, among the interviewed, mostly were descendants of Italian immigrants, followed by German ones. Thus, this text aims to analyse aspects related to schooling and education of these two ethnical groups, establishing some comparisons. Also, we aim to approach elements of religiousness in these groups and, whenever it was possible, to relate them to schooling, because, as many studies point out, immigrants gave a lot of importance to both factors: school and religion. Another aspect that was analysed refers to labour. Immigrant communities make sense of labour in their memories, and highlight that difficulties in the early settlements were overcome with the workforce of the settlers. Also, educational institutes in some places are recalled by the interviewed as a result of the communities' collective work.²

In what concerns time, we do not refer any specific period, other than the date when interviewed were possibly alphabetized (1920-1950), considering their birthdates.

² To think about such narratives, we use oral history as a methodology and for that, the research is based on studies by Portelli (2010) and Amado (1995), as well as by Ferreira e Amado (2006). There are strands and authors who consider oral history as a technique or a subject. As a methodology, explained by Ferreira and Amado (2006, p. xvi), it establishes procedures to work and "functions only as a bridge between theory and empiricism" [our translation]. So, it is not only a working praxis, nor a subject that would solve research issues by itself. In what concerns the types of oral history, we use the so-called thematic oral history. For Weiduschadt and Fischer (2009), thematic oral history is specified as producer of narratives about one event, a theme, established within a certain period of time.

Theoretical-methodological route

At this point, we will first explain how interviews were approached. One of the first steps was to organize the database from which the sources of this research came. It is important to highlight that without systematizing information, a database serves for nothing, or almost nothing. It is necessary to create a classification system, according to the research theme we intend to investigate. This way, organizing data was the first task. By quoting Certeau (1982, p. 81), we state that "in history, everything starts from separating, gathering and transform into 'documents' certain objects that were differently spread. This new cultural distribution is the first task." Also according to the author:

[...] it is not just about making those "immense sleeping sectors of documentation" talk and give voice to a silence or give effectivity to a possible. It means to transform something that had its position and role into something else that functions directly. (CERTEAU, 1982, p. 83.) [our translation]

So, one apprehends that research is done by disassembling data to rearrange them in another way, according to the investigation proposal. Kuhlmann and Fernandes (2014), when they expose the construction of a database related to journals, observe that to deeply understanding those journals, it was necessary to gather and classify information. Although authors refer to sources that are different from ours, the need to organize data is correlated and:

> The use of current information techniques leads historians to separate from what they have been attached to in their work up to now: the construction of research objects and thus of units of comprehension; data accumulation [...] and their disposal in places where they can be classified and displaced; exploration is feasible through the several operations to which this material is susceptible. (CERTEAU, 1982, p. 85) [our translation]

It is possible to work on an oral collection from several angles and in diverse fields of knowledge, for the orientation of the approach is related to the researcher's questions to the source. That does not mean that everything can be done without criteria and rigour with all documents, but that working with oral collections is something open to possibilities and these collections are important for future research. In this line of reasoning, Grazziotin and Almeida (2012) theorize about oral documents:

[...] it allows to approximate truths that one wishes to produce on the lived. And it retains the merit of bringing up nuances of the past, that can be forgotten and sometimes are unattainable in other forms of documentation, besides giving visibility to subjects in the construction of history [...] (GRAZZIOTIN; ALMEIDA,2012, p. 36-37) [our translation]

Voldman (2006) differs oral files and sources, by stating that oral files would be the documents produced by researchers and kept for future investigation. This would be the goal of the production of such narratives, that means, to build a database. As for oral sources, they are the ones produced by historians for their own studies. According to this perspective, we can state that the MECOM interviews are oral files.

Grazziotin and Almeida (2012, p. 42), when approaching the theme, write that the oral collection is not characterized by a specific subject, but has several ones, and for that, it can be examinated from different angles. In this interim, the authors question: "How to filter, in this profusion of memories, the ones that are really of interest? How can the researcher separate and gather memories according to the proposed goals of the research?" [our translation] With these questions, we discourse about how the oral collection was used. Interviews had already been transcribed, so we used these transcriptions and not the audios. This way, some questions have guided our research, such as: What is possible to analyse from this set? Which categories can be created and gathered? What to use or not? From this point of view, it was noticeable that before any deep analysis, it was necessary to get to know and put into an inventory all the information and then to think about categorizations and possibilities to study.

The authors (2012, p. 43) also point out that in oral collections, as they are not in a central theme of a specific study, it is common that categories emerge, like a "surprise element". The researcher, at once, loses some control over the subject of interest and builds the process according to memories and oblivion.

Grazziotin and Almeida (2012) write about their investigations, in which they use interviews done by other researchers and then theorize about differences from testimonies collected in a context of one's own research.

So, as opposed to interviews planned with the only goal of answering to specific questions by a certain researcher, the form of oral history in this research goes much more in the direction of evoking questions. Before answering questions, the memories collected are much more related to what the subject had to tell and not to structured interviews, with a conducting wire, the same way as a written document does not exist with the purpose of serving a historian. (GRAZZIOTIN; ALMEIDA, 2012, p. 68) [our translation]

It is noticeable, from these discussions, that such oral collections are useful for more than one researcher and thus, memories have varied themes, that go beyond what the historian searches and what is built in these interviews. This way, we organized what we wished to point in these interviews in eight topics, with references in Grazziotin and Almeida (2012), as they explain how they have worked with interviews that are collections and organized them in tables and categories. It was inspired by these authors that we would systematize these narratives.

As these 32 interviews make up a large set of data, it was necessary to systematize them according to the interests of the study object. So, two tables were created. The first one aimed to visualize the whole, then, the following information was placed in it: interview number, name, date and place of interview, birthdate, degree of schooling/school and descendancy (ethnicity).

The second table consisted in the actual organization of data, that means, what there was in each interview that was significant for this research. So, eight categories have been built: immigration; degree of schooling; Garibaldi School/Teacher Jose Rodeghiero³; nationalization-language; nationalization of teaching; appreciation of education; Italian identity; railroad. With these categories planned, each interview has been fit into these items or not. So, a framework has been built with all categories, as well as all the interview excerpts that referred to them. It is

³ This category "Garibaldi School/Teacher Jose Rodeghiero" was created because our master thesis, from which this article originates, has this school and this teacher as its main subject.

necessary to point that this categorization has been made based on the central issue of this work and that other arrangements and plans with the same material are possible.

In addition to these eight categories, we also organized the interviews excerpts in which it is possible to notice remembrances about religiosity and ethnical groups and also the value of work. As previously mentioned, two tables were built. It was the first one that aimed to visualize the ethnicities of the interviewed. This table gathered not only their descendancy, but also information on the places where interviews were carried out, where they lived, their age, where they went to school, their school journey, their relationship with religiosity and their appreciation regarding work.

From this data and with the main goal of mapping and organizing information, it was possible to think about the analysis of these documents within a research theme. According to Barros (2011), a research problem corresponds to a question about a theme. So, the question we propose here is: which are the differences and similarities between the schooling journey of the descendants of Italians and Germans in the context analysed? It must be recorded that other arrangements and categories may be created, according to what one wishes to investigate. For example, another researcher may use the same data in a different research, because, as Luchese (2014) states, the researcher's questions and subjectivity will be present in the moment of analysing data.

With the data organized, it was possible to observe how many interviews of each ethnicity there were in the set of narratives. So, in a total of 30 narrators⁴, 18 of them were Italian; 7 were German, 1 Belgian, 1 French and there were 3 narratives in which it was not possible to identify their descendancy.

The memories of the descendants of Italian and German immigrants

After the theoretical and methodological path that supported the research, sources could be analysed. The following step was to verify where the interviewed had attended school, at this point already referring specifically to Italians and Germans. Before analysing data, some explanations are necessary. Firstly, it is important to recall that the place in which interviews were carried out (Colonia Maciel) is located in an area of mostly Italian immigration. That explains the fact that there are more interviewed from this ethnicity. However, in the region we also find the descendants of German and French immigrants. This entire region, called Serra dos Tapes, was colonized in the late 19th century by immigrants from Europe. Some settlements received more Italians; others, more Germans and also French. As mentioned above, the goal of this database was to register the memories related to immigration in that territory. Most of the interviewed were from Colonia Maciel, where later the MECOM was created, with the goal of preserving the memory of Italian immigration. Another aspect that is relevant to be mentioned refers to the local school. In Colonia Maciel, since 1929, there is the Garibaldi School, a municipal public school that first received many students with Italian origin.⁵ In conversations with the community and school teachers, some of them told that their relatives did not go to Garibaldi School because they had German origin, so they went to a school that was specific for Germans. At this point, ethnical issues are noticeable.

As this study is permeated with ethnical identity issues, it is necessary to explain what we understand as identity and ethnicity. We use the notion of identity by Hall (2014), who conceives identity as something historically and socially built. Most immigrant groups believe their homeland remains unchanged and share essentialist values, that means, they believe in

 $^{^4}$ It is important to explain that there are 32 interviews but 30 narrators, since one of them has been interviewed more than once.

⁵ Garibaldi School, from 1928 to 1950, is the theme of the master thesis by Castro (2017).

essentially Italian values which have been altered since the 19th century. Woodward (2014) wrote about essentialist and non-essentialist views. The first one, according to the author, does not change over time, meanwhile the non-essentialist view focus on the differences, in what is common in the groups as well as in the changes that occurred throughout time. At this point, it becomes important to think about the imagined communities by Anderson (2008). For the author, the idea of national identity depends on how we understand it. The immigrant groups have an "imagination" about the homeland and the ethnical identity comes from such belief. To be Italian or to be German in foreign lands is highlighted by the narrators of the interviews analysed, including what concerns the school they went to. In some moments, it is possible to notice that the groups mention, searching to distinguish, the schools Italians attended and the schools German attended, passing by religious issues.

It is also possible to use Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012) with their concept of invention of traditions. The immigrant communities, as they arrive in Brazil, reinvent traditions. For the authors:

How far new traditions can thus use old materials, how far they may be forced to invent new languages or devices, or extend the old symbolic vocabulary beyond its established limits, cannot be discussed here. It is clear that plenty of political institutions, ideological movements and groups – not least in nationalism – were so unprecedented that even historic continuity had to be invented, for example, by creating an ancient past beyond effective historical continuity, either by semi-fiction [...] or by forgery [...]. (HOBSBAWM & RANGER, 2012, p. 14)

Besides that, to think about ethnical groups and ethnicity finds support in Poutignat and Streiff-fenart (2011), for whom:

The same way as a real original community is not assumed, the ethnical groups do not assume a real community activity. They exist just because of their members' subjective belief of being part of a community and because of the feeling of social honour that is shared by those who feed such belief [...]. (POUTIGNAT; STREIFF-FENART, 2011, p. 38) [our translation]

So, from these authors, we understand that an ethnical group is formed, more than from physical and biological aspects of the original community, from sharing common aspects and thus the belief in the original community shows to be important. In the sources analysed herein, such aspects are notable when the interviewed recall, for example, that they are Italian and some habits that are typical of this group. Ethnical identity is another variable in this study:

Ethnical identity (the belief in a common ethnical life) is built from difference. The attraction between those who feel like the same species is inseparable from the repulse for those perceived as foreigners. This idea implies that it is not isolation that creates the awareness of belonging, instead, it is by communicating and taking ownership of differences that individuals establish ethnical borders. (POUTIGNAT; STREIFF-FENART, 2011, p. 41) [our translation]

Identity, above all the ethnical one, is established from difference. It is from the other that identity is marked. In this interim, one understands that this work approaches two ethnical groups, who are historically particular. For instance, the German immigration happened much before the Italian one. However, it is possible to make some analysis as one group and comparatively and specifically herein, to observe the school journeys of both groups.

Analysing the narratives in the databases, one remarks that none of the descendants of Germans has studied at Garibaldi School. Indeed, the criterion of distance from the students' residences to the school must not be disregarded. However, it is notable that relations of ethnical identity were established in this context and even though it was a public school, Germans have preferred other educational institutions. For better problematization of the sources, it was necessary to observe where German descendants had studied. We noticed that from the 7 interviewed, 5 attended to Teacher Oscar Fischer's school. It must be highlighted that none of the Italians have studied with this teacher. There is no consistent research about this teacher and his school, however, from the speech of the interviewed, it is apparent that classes were given in both Portuguese and German and that the school was communitarian and private. That explains why Italians did not study with this teacher and why Germans did not go to Garibaldi School, where the language of teaching was Portuguese. As mentioned before, Germans have sought to preserve their language.

Along the study of these interviews, it was possible to observe that the age of the interviewed varied. So, we organized their birthdates in decades. Of some, it was not possible to identify the birthdate, as for the others: 1 was born in the 1910s; 6 born in the 1920s; 5 in the 1930s; 3 in the 1940s and 1 in the 1950s. There is one interviewed, with German origins, who became, in 1977, a teacher at Garibaldi School. But we do not know where he had studied. It is important to mention that at this point, Garibaldi School had already built its new buildings and was no longer a multi-grade school and thus had acquired new characteristics. (CASTRO, 2017). That means that in this moment, 1977, Garibaldi School already had more teachers and ethnical belonging was not so present anymore.⁶

Another data that is worth mentioning is one Italian descendant who has studied in a German ethnical school, in the neighbouring town of Morro Redondo⁷. She told that she was taught in Portuguese, while her classmates were taught in German. In her own words:

I: So the years have passed, recalling it, I would go around a lot with my grandparents. So I went home, I remember, my parents sent me to a school, look what school, then my father moved from Canguçu to Morro Redondo, I was two years old, he left my grandparents' house, married, and I was two and Luis my older brother went living in Morro Redondo. At the time I kinda stayed with gramma, my grandmother who was very sweet, that was gramma Pegoraro this one, Catarina. And then my parents sent me to school, you know, local school (?). At that time there was not, there in Morro Redondo, it was purely Germans, there was no public school, it was German school, so I started to catch German up, it was easy among the others. (MECOM 32)⁸

⁷ Approximately 50 km of distance.

⁶ In this decade, Garibaldi School turns into a graded school, that means, more teachers have to be hired.

⁸ These interviews that make up the collections were used the way they have been transcript, but we chose to refer to the researcher by the letter R and to the interviewed by the letter I. In the interviews of the image and sound database of MECOM, they chose not to identify the subjects, but to name them as "MECOM" followed by numbers.

Further on the interview, she mentions she also learned in German:

R: Did you study it?I: A little, in German, two or three years.R: You studied in German?I: Yes I did, I was taught in Brazilian, calculated in German. (MECOM 32)

At this point, we note that even Italian-Brazilians had sometimes studied, due to geographical contingencies, in German schools. At least in this narrative, the logistic criterion is present. As the interviewed moved to Morro Redondo, she had the option of studying at this German school and so she did, having classes in a different language.

With that, it is notable that there were actually some specificities, nonetheless, some recurrences and permanencies are felt. Of course, this study is located and restrict to these narratives, however, it is possible to get to some considerations without intending to generalize. As previously mentioned, there were some regularities in the school process of Italian and German descendants. One of them is that some Italians have attended Garibaldi School, which has always been public. At this point, Luchese's (2007) reflections become opportune, as she considers that the public, secular and free schools were often required to the government by immigrants.

Regarding that fact, of Italians requiring public schools, it is relevant to think about Garibaldi School. It was always attached to public power and is still functioning up to this day, without interruptions. But is has been preceded by other institutions, like a community school that ended up closed. So, it is possible to problematize that this ethnical group preferred public schools and required them. That is different from what we observe in the immigration process of Germans, for whom school was attached to religion.⁹

For Werle and Metzler (2010), the Brazilian government, worried about teaching in foreign languages, took some measures regarding immigration along the 19th and 20th centuries, like opening public schools. We can think that the creation of Garibaldi School in 1928, by the public power, also served as a way of nationalizing the immigrant group.

Regarding the schooling journey of the Italian descendants that were interviewed, other than the ones who attended Garibaldi, they attended to schools in the neighbouring town of Canguçu¹⁰, or were home-schooled by relatives and older siblings who had studied at Garibaldi. It is important to record that from 18 narrators, there are 5 whose school journey could not be observed. There was only one who went to a private school and she lived in Canguçu, which may have contributed to that. As mentioned before, this ethnical group preferred public schools. From the narratives of Italian descendants, we selected some excerpts to be addressed in this study.

I: This one here, look [shows the photograph] this Egidio, is a relative of this one, Miguel Soares...

R: A teacher aswell?

I: This one did not have a school at the time, he gave classes at the little Church there was in the Sao Jose community, that he was the priest. He was our first teacher [...] (MECOM 1).

I: Yes, everything in Portuguese. The deceased monsignor also gave classes to many students there, he helped a lot the class there. (MECOM 13) [our translation]

⁹ On this theme, see: Kreutz (1994, 1998, 2000); Dreher (1990).

¹⁰ Approximately 55 km of distance.

In these two interview excerpts it is possible to perceive the relation there was between Church and School. Classes were given in the church space, as well as religious leaders taught students. In Italian immigration zones, religiosity, mostly Catholic, was present in community life. In the narrative of the Garibaldi School students interviewed, they have recalled the presence of the priest at the school giving catechism lessons, even though it was a public institution. From that, it is possible to remark the religious presence in this school environment. Weiduschadt (2007) observes, in her master thesis, that schools attached to Lutheran religious institutions were present amongst German immigrants in Rio Grande do Sul state.

Still in the narratives of Italian descendants, we observe memories about learning to read and write at home:

I: There was a time at school that the teacher taught me to read by spelling and my father could not stand that, he did not accept that. So he took me out of school and said he would teach me at home himself. And he did...

[Both speak at the same time]

R: So you learned Italian?

I: I did [very low]. But everything I know I learned from him, he taught almost all his children, just me and my brother, the older one, that I remember that attended school. (MECOM 10) [our translation]

In the set of interviews, it is also possible to note that the school times is present in their memories:

R: Do you remember when you were little?I: Yes, I remember when I was 13 and going to school, it feels likeI'm going. (MECOM 24, emphasis added) [our translation]

R: And what about your childhood, what do you remember most? What has marked your childhood?

I: I don't know, school... (MECOM 25).

Regarding the Germans group (seven narratives), 5 of them had studied at teacher Oscar Fischer's school, where, according to them, they were taught in both Portuguese and German. In the other two interviews, it is not possible to identify where they had studied. One of them, who later became a teacher at Garibaldi, recalls his wife was of Italian origin but did not speak Italian, while he knew German, he just did not use it much.

According to one of the interviewed, Germans cared more for preserving the language than Italians:

R: Don't people speak anymore nowadays?

I: No, some things we understand, they left, kept creating, they kept creating... Italians are different from Germans, that are more traditionalist, Italians are not, they have abandoned, Germans haven't, you can talk to any little boy and they speak German, Italian ones don't... (MECOM 2) [our translation]

Moreover on Teacher Oscar Fischer's school, it was a paid one. According to the memories:

R: Where did you study?

I: I studied in Sao Manoel, at Oscar Fischer's School.

R: Oscar Fischer's.

I: It was the Community school, it didn't belong, let's say, to the City, do you understand? It was private and dad used to pay a monthly fee, he used to pay, I remember it well, 3 thousand *reis* to have right to it. The teacher was also a revered, so we participated of the church and the school.

R: Teaching was in Portuguese?

I: Both, it was in Portuguese and there was a day of the week to study German.

R: So you learned German?

I: At that time I learned, but then I forgot again.

R: Was it actual German or Pomeranian?

I: No, German.

R: And what about your religious training?

I: It was Lutheran. (MECOM 6) [our translation]

R: And at that time did you study here at the colony?

I: Yes, at Fischer School.

R: Fischer School?

I: Yes, very close [...]

R: And was the class in Portuguese?

R: And the class was in Portuguese, not in German?

I: It was mixed.

R: Oh, mixed.

I: Yeah.

R: And the teacher, where was he from?

I: Teacher was Oscar Fischer. He is dead now. (MECOM 9) [our translation]

Interviewed recall that this was a private community school and it was necessary to pay a monthly fee. Immigrants of German origin were interested in preserving their language, so, public school, with teaching in Portuguese, were not very required like they were by the Italians. In these narrative excerpts, one also notes the relation between schooling and religiosity, a very common aspect of this ethnic group. The narrative recollects that Oscar Fischer was also a reverend, so students participated of local school and religious lives. For the descendants of German immigrants, schooling was attached to religiosity and their group was structured around those pillars.¹¹ For this reason, it was also important, for this group, to keep the German language and thus they preferred schools that taught, although not full-time, in German. Considering the birthdate of these interviewed with German origins, it is possible that some of them have studied during the period of Nationalization of Schooling. One of the people interviewed remembers that in a ballroom, it was necessary to raise the Brazilian flag to show they were Brazilian. The same person also recalls that nationalization was felt at school as well. According to the narrative, German was used at school and then forbidden:

¹¹ For more on that, see Weiduschadt (2007).

R: Why did he raise the Brazilian flag?
I: To say he was Brazilian.
R: At school you didn't speak?
[...]
I: At school, once a week we studied German. But then yeah, they have forbidden it At first not we did study it Then it was forbidden

have forbidden it. At first not, we did study it. Then it was forbidden. (MECOM 6) [our translation]

For Weiduschadt (2009), the immigrants of German origin had a schooling organization for their children, with community ethnical and confessional schools in which German language was privileged. So, there was a pressure, in these places, to cultivate the Brazilian nationality. However, according to the author, if there was, on the one hand, the imposition of nationalization, on the other, before the 1930s, there were no inspections at the schools. In was in the 1930s that the Getulio Vargas government would create the conditions and mechanisms to make nationalization effective.

According to Corsetti *et al* (2007), the policies for nationalization of teaching had an impact, above all, over the regions of Italian and German settlements. The ethnical, confessional and communitarian schools, attached to ethnical groups who were interested in preserving their language or dialect, have felt the effects of these laws. Two interviewed with German origins were teachers and evoke their memories of that moment during the interviews, so we will now analyse those memories.

R: Where did you teach?

I: I have taught at many schools. I started at "Oliveira", which is the Ipiranga School. It was near Canguçu. Then inverting. I got sick, this leg annoying me all the time [...] the time was not like now, when there is everything you know? You have comfort to go to school and everything [...] Then after the school Princesa Isabel, that is here in Sao Manoel. Community school. Then there was the Julio de Castilhos School, another Community school. It is nearby. Then there is Santa Helena, here at the (?) too, a community school. One Lutheran, the other Episcopal, then I (?) in Alegrete where I have retired [...] **R:** Yes.

I: This is where I have taught. I have worked for many years.

R: Those community schools, didn't they, they didn't belong to the City Hall?

I: They did. They were... They belonged...

R: They were the government's?

I: The government's. Schools were of the government. It was the government that... The land belonged to the community, the school was... So sometimes they gave the house, the community, to have the school, you know?

R: To the City Hall?

I: Yeah, the City Hall. But then, they made the building. It was na agreement. Between the City and the community. (MECOM 30) [our translation]

From this remembrance, we notice the interviewed has been a teacher at many schools, mostly communitarian ones. There was staff turnovers among schools, especially rural ones, it was something recurrent. Castro (2017) observes in a master thesis that the permanence of teachers in rural schools is aligned to their community engagement and in immigration spaces, ethnical identity aspects were also involved. This interviewed also recollect about her families, emphasizing that many were home-schooled by relatives, which shows the importance given to learning.

Even though this study is specifically focused on the school journey of the descendants of Italians, it is remarkable that in these groups religiosity and labour are related and not detached from schooling. So we will nextly address these two categories.

Religiosity and labour in the context of immigration in Serra dos Tapes

In the interviews analysed, religiosity and the appreciation of labour are recurrent. In general, both German and Italian immigrants give a lot of importance to work. In their remembrances, as they emigrate to Brazil and started their lives in the settlements, it was necessary to work a lot to overcome adversities in the new land and this is present in collective memory and keeps passing on to the following generations. It is worth pointing out that the people interviewed were not the ones who came from Europe to Brazil, but their descendants, and so they recall from what they have heard from their ancestors. These are the others' memories or, in the perspective of Pollack (1992), the events lived through the others. In what concerns the religion of Italians, we can base on the studies by Luchese (2007), who states that these individuals were mostly Catholic and "have brought from Italy a religiosity with practices and values that were different from the ones experienced here." [our translation] This way, they got together in a community effort to build chapels in the colonies. Next to the colony's chapel, other institutions just as relevant for immigrants were created, such as cemetery, school, ballroom. (LUCHESE, 2007, p 91) For the Germans too, religiosity was an essential element. Weiduschadt (2007) observes that they worried about consolidating the German language and also, school and church were related to provide moral and religious values.¹²

So, when analysing the school journey of these immigrants, these elements may not be disregarded, as school was often attached to church. Another interesting point is the relation between the two ethnicities, German and Italian, and their religions, as stated by one of the interviewed:

R: Was there a priest from the start?

I: I think so, because I do remember my deceased grandfather saying there was a priest that stayed at their place when he came to conduct the Mass. The priest used to sleep over there. Sometimes, all the Italians of the farms got together and went there to chat at night.

R: And they were all Catholic?

I: Yes, all the ones with Italian origin were Catholic.

R: Did Germans follow the protestant religion?¹³

I: Yes, Germans had their religion. (MECOM 7) [our translation]

¹² According to Weiduschadt (2007), in the context of Southern Rio Grande do Sul, there were three types of Lutheranism amongst German immigrants. The first option of these immigrants in the mid-19th century were the independent churches, that means not affiliated to any religious order. They picked among the community members the one considered as the best to be the minister. After that, the institutional Lutheran churches were installed: the Rio Grande do Sul Synod, linked to Germany; and the Missouri Synod, proceeding from North America.

¹³ When they say protestant, they refer to lutheranism, which can be of the three types. See footnote 11 above.

In this narrative, the groups' religiosity is explained: Italians attached to Catholic church and German as protestant. The priest who stayed at the houses of the community members also shows the relation between community and religiosity, the importance given to the group's spiritual aspects. Another narrative approaches the relation of the ethnicities and weddings:

R: And about weddings...

I: Well, first it had to be approved by the parents...

I: Yes, and to get married it had to be in Catholic religion, not in the evangelical one, no.¹⁴ But then, with time, that has improved. Even if the bride wanted to get married, she had to be baptized again, the priest did not tolerate it. (MECOM 5) [our translation]

Another interview goes in the same direction:

I: Yeah yeah, Germans liked Italians.

R: Did they party together.

I: They partied together. Sometimes many weddings, but Italians never wanted to let their children get married to a German.

R: Oh, yeah.

I: I got married, I dated a German, but I, God forgive me, then had to change religion. Italians were only Catholic and Germans had another religion. Would my father allow it, no way! (MECOM 10) [our translation]

These memories refer to the closest and the furthest period of colonization, in which the ethnical demarcation was established. Another interviewed evokes a more recent period, in her words:

I: There was a priest who came here and was not catholic. He was a partner of all of our priests, now this is over, the priests are all united. Germans, Catholics, Protestants, they are all together. When there is a party at the Germans' church the Catholics go, and when there is party of the Italians, the priests, how do we say that... evangelical. Because there is the evangelical, the Lutheran and the protestant.¹⁵ I think there is more Catholics and Protestants. (MECOM 10) [our translation]

It is possible to notice the union of churches in a community effort to carry out enterprises and get the institutions they needed:

I: No. We got schools, that school was made by the communities too, Lutherans, Episcopals and Catholics, all the labour, money came, but the work was of the communities. We got a health centre, obviously the labour was not of the community, it was an achievement. The police station, but now there are no officers, was an achievement of the communities too, with a campaign to donate materials, I have donated myself, a thousand bricks, supplies and workforce. And we are very good friends. Every year there is an ecumenical service at the Lutheran church, then an ecumenical service at the Episcopal one and we go to each other's community. (MECOM 19) [our translation]

¹⁴ In this context, when they talk about evangelicals, they mean Lutherans.

¹⁵ There was differentiation for the interviewed, however, all are Lutheran and may vary in the three types.

As previously mentioned, religiosity and schooling are associated elements in the immigrants' context. Another category that is intensively present in these narratives refers to how these groups dealt with labour. What is noticeable, in these moments, is the speech about the difficulties and the workforce of immigrants to win in this beginning of a life. In many of them, the "exaltation" of ancestors who immigrated to Brazil and the difficulties they faced is visible.

It is worth mentioning that we understand that when they arrive in Brazil and in the colonial settlements, immigrants indeed go through several difficulties. What we are problematizing herein is the representation of this, as well as the memory consolidated in the following generations.

In their speech, we notice something recurrent concerning immigration, that means, the discourses about the immigrant and their pioneer spirit that, when arrived in Brazil, worked a lot to get what they needed, including the construction of schools. We notice, in the interviews, a memory about the ancestors in the imaginary of pioneering and community resistance in the early settlements.

At this point, it is allowed to reflect about collective memory. Collective memory (HALBWACHS 2003) is attached to a group and the smaller this group is, the greater the possibility of a group memory. This category of collective memory is observed in this research, through the narratives about the arrival of immigrants in the region and the beginning of life in the place. In these narratives, especially the ones from the database, the remembrances of what the ancestors have gone through during colonization are recurrent, it is a memory consolidated in the people from that place, which is configured as a collective memory of that group. This way, some interview excerpts that converge in this direction were selected:

I: But I will tell a little bit about the history that we started [...] When we came here, with a baby on the lap and another one in the belly, we had been married for two years. The house, I came to work on the land, I gave thirty per cent of what I produced to the master [...]

I: Ah, they came in the middle of the woods, you know. They lived like that, they made... The first house they made was of wood, that means, raw wood. But I don't know how they saw it, how was it, it must be with a hacksaw at that time [...] (MECOM 1) [our translation]

R: How was life in your childhood?

I: Life was good, I never lacked anything...

R: What did you use to do?

I: Oh, I work, since I was a little boy I had worked in agriculture. [...] But we went to school in the morning and to the crops in the afternoon, not like today, today they complain, today the bus comes to the door of your house to pick you up, to pick the student up and take to school, at that time we walked about five or three kilometres to go to school. What is bad today is that you cannot teach a child to have the guts to work. [...] (MECOM 2) [our translation]

I: At that time, we worked a lot [...] Today life is easy, we have machines for everything. There are no oxes that plow the land, there are many who don't work. If they worked as we did growing up [...] (MECOM 7) [our translation]

I: In the childhood, we all worked in the crops. I remember that when we were little, dad used to grab the hoe, put on a small rope and took us to teach how to weed beans and corn. (MECOM 12) [our translation]

R: Do you have memories about what you did in childhood, here in the village?

I: Yes, at that time we used to work in the crops, since I got married, plowing, carrying, all the work that are done in the corps. (MECOM 27) [our translation]

I: Over there is called Ares Alegre, the first district of Canguçu. It is so easy to go there, just yesterday I have passed by. I also chatted with a cousin, he is sick, I would like to go there for a while, they are making a tobacco greenhouse, you can see that Italians are not lazy, you know. (MECOM 32, emphasis added) [our translation]

From these excerpts, it is possible to make some considerations. First, as we have mentioned, the evocations are filled with the representation that work is not only important to these groups, but confers a certain identity to them, that means, the identity construction of the ones who consider themselves "Italians" is grounded in the ethos of labour, in the commitment with the maintenance of the property and consequently with the maintenance of the community.

Memories related to the beginning of life in the colony and overcoming difficulties have been accredited to the settlers work capacity. Immigrants have assigned value of their work of "pioneering" and colonizing the space destined to them. This way, as they have faced many difficulties in the early times, they considered they work was dignified and their descendants share this memory. At this point, it is possible to think about this group's identity, once identity is relational, or so to say, delimited in difference. (HALL, 2014) The affirmation of the identity of immigrants as people who worked much is delimited from the comparison to other groups and then some questions can be asked, like who are they compared to? To the black slaves? To the landowners? To the cowboys? To "Brazilians"?¹⁶ Woodward (2014) explains about identity and difference and for the author, when we state who we are, we also state who we are not. So, the immigrant groups, when they claim they are people who appreciate labour, they do that in comparison to other groups, or so to say, relating their identity to the one of the other.

Another item refers to the narratives that consider the past time as better, that nowadays things are different, especially regarding the relation people have with work, above all rural one. One of the interviewed recalls the time of working was allied with the time of school, one studied in the morning and worked in the afternoon, usually in the crops. Also, in the last excerpt selected for this text, we notice ethnicity when they speak about work, as the interviewed states that "it was work to show that Italians were not lazy." We perceive, herein, ethnical elements, the relation between the group of Italians and labour, a strong characteristic of this group. We may also use the same theorization of the invention of traditions proposed by Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012), as they consider themselves, in some cases, as Italians. In some of these interviews, we find a discourse that refers to "Brazilians and us". These subjects are people who were born in Brazil, descendants in the 3rd of 4th generations from the immigrants who came here and even so, there is a construction of this feeling of being Italian.

¹⁶ Some interviewed call themselves "Italians" or "Germans" and refer to others as "the Brazilians".

As for the set of interviews with the descendants of Germans, the item labour was also recurrent. This group assigned value to their work, to the initial difficulties of colonization that were overcome with the workforce of those who came to Brazil. Also, we observe interviews excerpts in which narrators emphasize the good relationships between Italians and Germans, as both shared the same conceptions about work. Some excerpts meet these affirmations: "I: [...] there was never a problem. Our relationship when we worked together never caused any problem." (MECOM 6) [our translation] The same person, of German origin, recalls learning to make wine with some acquaintance of Italian origin: "R: Who did you learn to make wine with? I: It was Casarin who taught me, the son of the owner of the land, Pedrinho, he was Pedrinho too. (MECOM 6) [our translation] At this moment, it is possible to address the issue of identity of this groups in the space where the interviewed live. There is a geographical proximity of the descendants of both ethnicities. Furthermore, as they consider themselves as people who appreciate labour, the two groups did not find problems in this sense. It is also possible to establish connections regarding religiosity. The interviewed recall that although each had their own religion and attended to different churches, religiosity was present among both Italian and German immigrants.

Continuing with the argumentation about the German's work, we selected an excerpt of a narrative:

R: What was the factory of?

I: Peach, compote, we worked for fifteen years. Cucumber, everything. We had peach jams, we sold kind of everything.

R: Oh! Do you remember until when it worked?

I: Well, we have worked for fifteen years at this factory.

I: Look, I don't know how to remember. It's been a long time... Then we built that factory, that was some work! Then we built this house here. (MECOM 9) [our translation]

I: Here, in this little farm there is down there, in this big building there is over there. This is where we grew up, we have lived there for many years. There are some animals, milk cows, pigs, a lot. And one (?) we gave brans to the pigs, cows, horses (?) Back then this thing of machines for everything did not exist, everything here. It was all done with the hands. (MECOM 18) [our translation]

From these narratives, one perceives the importance given to work also by the German descendants.

Some considerations

This article aimed to analyse a set of interviews, which are collections, and make some comparisons between the memories of descendants of Italians and Germans. In a first investigation, we observed that most of the interviewed were Italian descendants: from 30 narratives, 18 were by Italian descendants and only 7 German ones. These numbers are easily explained considering that interviews were done, above all, in an area of Italian colonization and searched to preserve the memory of the immigrants in that region. However, although most of the memories come from one ethnical group, it was possible to establish connections between narratives of the two of them. We noticed some similarities when studying schooling and education in immigration areas. On the other hand, we also identified peculiarities of each ethnicity.

In what concerns the convergences, one may perceive the importance given to education and schooling by both groups. Regardless of the type of school or home-school, these memories are filled with a need these communities had for school initiatives. The same way, it was possible to notice that religiosity was present in this context and it is also linked to education, with classes being given in churches as well as religious leaders participating of schools. Their relationship with religiosity is a characteristic of the immigrant groups. When they came from Europe to Brazil, they have brought along the values they experienced in their homeland and that has been passed on to the generations that followed. It is important to highlight that Italians were Catholic, whereas the Germans who came to this region were mostly Lutheran. However, what we observed indeed was the presence of religiosity in these groups, and their relation with the school universe. Some of the interviewed emphasize that nowadays¹⁷ there is union amongst churches in the region, as they get together in favour of the needs that come up in the communities.

As mentioned before, in what concerns the school process of Italian-Brazilians and German-Brazilians, from the narratives analysed, it was possible to notice some specificities of each group. In the memories evoked by Italians, many of them have studied at Garibaldi School, a public school in the region, located in the Italians' colony. As for the Germans, none of them has studied at Garibaldi School. Most of them were students that school of teacher Oscar Fischer, who gave classes in German, whereas none of the Italian descendants studied at this school. One of the relevant inferences is related to the German language, which Germans wished to preserve. For this reason, they preferred schools that taught in German, even if it only happened in some days, and because of that they did not attend to Garibaldi. On the other hand, Italians maybe did not have an interest of learning in German, so they did not attend to teacher Oscar Fischer's school. Also, this was a private school and a monthly fee was required from the students' parents and Italians, as some studies have found, preferred public schools.

The text also addressed the appreciation of labour by the immigrants, establishing connections with the relational identity, that means, settlers considered they work dignified as they were pioneers in the colonial lands and this has been passed on to their descendants, who recall such memories as their own. Both among the German and in the Italian descendants', memories are evocated on how difficult life was in the beginning of the settlements and on how difficulties have been overcome through labour. The same way, interviewed considered that the two ethnical groups had good relationships in that area, as they shared the same notions of labour and of religion.

Discussions were touched by reflections on ethnical identity and ethnical group. This way, when one thinks about the school journey of the descendants of Italian and German immigrants, it is necessary to clearly state that remembrances are imbued with a feeling of belonging. However, borders are not fixed nor immutable and in some narratives one can notice that the two groups lived together in harmony in the same spatial or social territory, whereas there are some discourses about particular habits of each one of the groups. It is also remarkable that the groups and religious leaders of three orientations have gotten together in the 1970s, for the construction of the new buildings of Garibaldi School, which shows the importance these groups gave to education and how they organized for that. It is important to record herein that ethnical community schools started to be closed with the compulsory nationalization of schooling from 1938 on, which means that probably the memories of those interviewed about the school of teacher Oscar Fischer referred to a prior period, or that German language has been banned from this school, with classes being given in Portuguese. The concepts of identity and ethnical identity have been used herein according to a non-

¹⁷ It is necessary to remind that interviews were done between 2000 and 2006.

essentialist view, or so to say, understanding that identity is build and that the geographical environment indeed influences it, however, beyond that, establishing social relationships and sharing cultural codes is what makes awareness of an ethnical group. In addition, the memories of the homeland of the ancestors are passed on from a generation to the next, but in this process, there are changes and adaptations, or, as Hobsbawm and Ranger (2012) state it, there is an invention of traditions.

Finally, it is necessary to mention that although this study is located in one region of Rio Grande do Sul state, from this set of narratives it is possible to understand how ethnical groups looked at schooling and then to list similarities and differences between Italians and Germans. Furthermore, it is worth to record the relevance of constituting oral narratives and preserving such collections, which potentialize different researches in different areas of knowledges and from different angles.

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