BRAZIL, A COUNTRY FOR ALL? THE FACES OF HOSTILITY IN THE NARRATIVES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENT REFUGEES

BRASIL, UM PAÍS DE TODOS? AS FACES DA HOSTILIDADE EM NARRATIVAS DE ESTUDANTES UNIVERSITÁRIOS REFUGIADOS

BRASIL, ¿UN PAÍS PARA TODOS? LAS CARAS DE LA HOSTILIDAD EN LAS NARRATIVAS DE ESTUDIANTES UNIVERSITARIOS REFUGIADOS

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ABSTRACT: The present article aims to analyze the formation of the experience of cultural differences and the acceptance difficulties faced by refugee students in a federal public university. The study adopts a qualitative and exploratory approach, using individual narrative interviews with the refugee students themselves. From the collected narratives, it is observed that conditioned hospitality emerges as a significant obstacle in the refugees' journey, intertwined with memories that highlight the persistent presence of structural racism and xenophobia. The presence of migrants in the Brazilian territory, although in some cases facilitated by university access policies, is affected by feelings such as guilt, shame, and fear, which directly impact their strategies for adaptation and survival in the country. These challenges extend to the realms of work, education, and health. The constant threat of extradition remains latent, both in the racist discourses and attitudes that permeate Brazilian daily life and in institutional practices that segregate bodies considered "foreign".

KEYWORDS: Refugees. Narratives. Intolerance. Hospitality. Human formation.

RESUMO: O presente artigo tem como propósito analisar a formação da vivência das diferenças culturais e as dificuldades de aceitação enfrentadas pelos estudantes refugiados em uma universidade pública federal. O estudo adota uma abordagem qualitativa e exploratória, utilizando entrevistas narrativas individuais com os próprios estudantes refugiados. A partir das narrativas coletadas, observa-se que a hospitalidade condicionada se revela como um obstáculo marcante na jornada dos refugiados, entrelaçada com lembranças que destacam a presença persistente do racismo estrutural e da xenofobia. A presença dos migrantes no território brasileiro, embora em alguns casos seja facilitada por políticas de acesso à universidade, é impactada por sentimentos como culpa, vergonha e medo, que afetam diretamente suas estratégias de adaptação e sobrevivência no país. Tais desafios se estendem às esferas do trabalho, da educação e da saúde. A constante ameaça de extradição permanece latente, tanto nos discursos e atitudes racistas que permeiam o cotidiano brasileiro quanto nas práticas institucionais que segregam os corpos considerados "estranhos".

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Refugiados. Narrativas. Intolerância. Hospitalidade. Formação humana.

RESUMEN: *El presente artículo tiene como propósito analizar la formación de la experiencia de las diferencias culturales y las dificultades de aceptación enfrentadas por los estudiantes refugiados en una universidad pública federal. El estudio adopta un enfoque cualitativo y exploratorio, utilizando entrevistas narrativas individuales con los propios estudiantes refugiados. A partir de las narrativas recopiladas, se observa que la hospitalidad condicionada se revela como un obstáculo significativo en el camino de los refugiados, entrelazada con recuerdos que resaltan la persistente presencia del racismo estructural y la xenofobia. La presencia de los migrantes en el territorio brasileño, aunque en algunos casos sea facilitada por políticas de acceso a la universidad, se ve afectada por sentimientos como culpa, vergüenza y miedo, que impactan directamente en sus estrategias de adaptación y supervivencia en el país. Estos desafíos se extienden a los ámbitos del trabajo, la educación y la salud. La constante amenaza de extradición permanece latente, tanto en los discursos y actitudes racistas que impregnan el día a día brasileño, como en las prácticas institucionales que segregan a los cuerpos considerados "extraños".*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Refugiados. Narrativas. Intolerancia. Hospitalidad. Formación humana.*

Introduction

Contemporary migrations have gained increased visibility in recent years in different national contexts as they have intensified in various regions of the world through different routes. Data from the *Alto Comissariado das Nações Unidas para Refugiados* (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, ACNUR), reveal that in the year 2021, 89.3 million people were forced to migrate due to wars, conflicts, and persecution. This represents an 8% growth compared to 2020, more than double the figure from a decade ago.

Additionally, 4.6 million migrants applied for official refugee status, characterized by forced displacement and the impossibility of return, while 27.1 million were already recognized as refugees and displaced persons, individuals who were compelled to migrate but may return to their places of origin. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that since the closure of the 2021 global report, the Russo-Ukrainian war and other humanitarian emergencies have increased the number of migrants to 100 million, meaning that 1 in every 78 people on Earth has been forced to flee their home country (Acnur, 2022).

Regarding Brazil, in the year 2021, 29,107 requests for recognition of refugee status were received. When added to the 268,605 already registered since 2011, these requests totaled 297,712 applications for permission to reside permanently in the country. Concerning the

number of recognized refugees in the country, there are over 60,000 people, primarily from Venezuela (48,789), Syria (3,682), and the Congo (1,078) (Junger *et al.,* 2022).

Given these numbers, it becomes relevant to address various aspects, including the processes of welcoming migrants. According to Giroto and Paula (2020), migration affects not only those who move geographically but also their descendants and other individuals who come to form their social circles. Migrants and refugees interconnect different locations globally through the encounters their trajectories afford, bringing into contact different ways of being and existing in the world, transforming lifestyles and spatial dynamics (Rocha *et al*., 2012; Weber; Darsie, 2020).

According to Truzzi and Monsma (2018, p. 20, our translation), migratory flows "geographically reposition individuals carrying unique elements of history and culture through diverse societies, which end up re-signifying themselves in a complex process of social interaction." Such complexity often results in migrants and refugees not being well-received, causing feelings of discomfort and anxiety, as they are frequently perceived as economic, political, and cultural threats. At other times, they are rendered invisible or acknowledged as necessary or convenient, particularly in the context of labor relations.

According to Ribeiro (2021), individuals in displacement, upon arriving in new countries, face violence related to discriminatory practices and hatred. The author argues that this occurs due to intolerance, which either subsides or intensifies based on various cultural and educational intersections. In light of this, it is essential to emphasize that tolerance, the opposite of intolerance, should not be confused with hospitality. Hospitality goes beyond the bounds of what is tolerable, marked by the imposition of restrictions that affect the privacy of hosts (Derrida, 2004). Through tolerance, the host tends to position themselves above the guest, giving rise to "conditional, circumspect, and cautious hospitality" (Derrida, 2004, p. 138, our translation).

Discourses resulting in a kind of condescending concession, therefore, should be heard with caution, as they express tolerance and not hospitality or welcoming, since "we accept the foreigner, the other, the strange body up to a certain point, and thus with restrictions" (Derrida, 2004, p. 137, our translation). In this perspective, Ribeiro (2021) argues that if this relationship can function as a trigger for intolerance within the same territory, among speakers of the same language who share the same customs and cultural goods, it intensifies in the presence of migrants and refugees arriving from other countries, speaking different languages and practicing customs and values distinct from the indigenous populations.

This reality calls for reflection on the ways in which discourses involving migrants are constituted and strengthened. In this context, this article analyzes the construction of the experience of cultural differences and hostilities faced by refugee students at a federal public university in Brazil.

From Hospitality to Hostility: Strangers Knocking at Our Door

The word "hospitality" represents the act of a warm welcome, but it can be considered "a word of troubled and disturbing origin," as it can be associated with hostility since its inception (Derrida, 2000, p. 3, our translation). The understanding of hospitality is not limited to a simple explanation, as it can be understood and practiced in two ways: conditionally or unconditionally. In the first case, acceptance of the other occurs within the boundaries of law, politics, and anthropology. In the second, it emerges spontaneously and absolutely. One of the main challenges faced by contemporary migrants and refugees is being welcomed through unconditional hospitality. According to Lessa Filho and Vieira

> [...] absolute hospitality requires that we open ourselves in our own home – in our territories, in our deepest frontiers – and that we offer ourselves not only to the foreigner but also to the absolute Other (*Autre absolu*), unknown, anonymous, and that by giving ourselves in such a way, we let them come, we let them arrive and have a place in the place, that we offer to them, without demanding reciprocity, not even their name (Lessa Filho; Vieira, 2020, p. 248, our translation).

For unconditional hospitality to exist, it "cannot pay a debt or be demanded by duty" (Derrida, 2003, p. 73, our translation), because if someone welcomes the other out of obligation, the foundations of hospitality cease to exist, as it is not offered and thought beyond the debt to the newcomer (Lessa Filho; Vieira, 2020). In this way, migrants and refugees may or may not rely on gestures of hospitality to recognize themselves as part of the new places they seek to build. However, even so, they remain strangers, which can justify the easy transition from hospitality to hostility, for example, when cases of aggression against migrants in the country are reported (Rosa, 2019).

What makes the logic of reception merciless, as Derrida (2000) warns, is that the idea of hospitality is often conditioned by rights, debts, and obligations, causing the one who receives, hosts, or grants asylum to remain in a commanding position, a fact that nullifies unconditionality. Thus, faced with the impossibility of achieving an ideal version of reception,

the arrival of the other is conditioned to legal hospitality, which is regulated by the laws of the State that establish the positions of foreigner and host (Rosa, 2019).

In this incapacity to recognize the foreigner as similar, the "refugee crisis" has spread from the rupture of a pact in defense of the other and the inability of hospitality (Lessa Filho; Vieira, 2020). The unconditionality of hospitality implies accepting that the refugee entering a space can change everything in place and even destroy something that is already established (Derrida, 2004). However, such a possibility can also occur in conditionality, norms, and laws, as it is preferable to believe that the conditionality of hospitality protects everything that can be destroyed by those who arrive.

Furthermore, the discomfort in the face of the unexpected arrival of visitors seeking hospitality is aggravated by the linguistic diversity present. In this sense, Bandeira (2018) emphasizes that refugees, when embarking on the journey into the unknown, are always accompanied by what is characteristic of their families, their talismans, their faith, and what they have learned and can teach. Beyond the identity and cultural baggage, the refugee brings along with them their hunger, profession, history, and their inability to remain in their country, as they, dispossessed of any possibilities, cannot face the social, political, and environmental situations of their country. Therefore, it is necessary to deal with this and think, from their arrival, about how the aporias, paradoxes, and ambiguities engendered in the confrontation of conditional and unconditional hospitalities also present themselves as hostilities.

In this context, the laws of hospitality demand that refugees understand and speak the language of the country they are trying to enter in every possible sense.

> [...] Among the serious problems we address here, there is that of the stranger who, awkward in speaking the language, always risks being defenseless against the right of the country that welcomes and expels him; the foreigner is, above all, strange to the language of the law in which the duty of hospitality, the right to asylum, its limits, its norms, its police, etc., are formulated. He must request hospitality in a language that, by definition, is not his own, the one imposed by the homeowner, the host, the king, the lord, the power, the nation, the state, the father, etc. They impose the translation into their own language on him, and this is the first violence (Derrida, 2003. p. 15, our translation).

For Derrida (2003), this is the paradox of hospitality, that is, the right to hospitality based on a pact with the State that presupposes conditions or duties. In this sense, the right to migrate becomes unthinkable in the rationality of the Nation-State and the power to control who enters and who leaves its territory (Redin, 2013). In absolute hospitality, however, it is

necessary to break with the hospitality of law and justice, as it no longer requires a pact to guide entry (Derrida, 2003).

In the same direction, Derrida (2004) argues that hospitality cannot have any legal or political status. However, unconditional law could not exist without the conditional laws of hospitality. Unconditional law needs the conditional laws of hospitality, or else it would remain in utopia and would have no way of becoming effective because "to be what it is, the law needs the laws that, however, deny it, threaten it, in any case, sometimes corrupt or pervert it" (Derrida, 2003, p. 71, our translation).

On the other hand, the laws of conditional hospitality could not be laws of hospitality if they were not inspired/guided by the law of unconditional hospitality. In this vein, the two laws, the conditional and the unconditional, are at the same time opposite, contradictory, and inseparable (Derrida, 2004). Therefore, for the author, the desire to be unconditionally welcomed does not absolve the responsibility to negotiate the laws of conditional hospitality since it is necessary to balance the desire for unconditional reception and the need for dependent reception. Thus, a close relationship between hospitality and hostility emerges, which often can go unnoticed.

According to Teixeira *et al*. (2022) and Rocha, Gama, and Dias (2012), narratives of migrants and refugees, when questioned about issues involving hospitality practices in the countries that receive them, sometimes reveal situations of hostility, even if subtle. The set of studies presented by the authors is marked by testimonials permeated by feelings of gratitude from migrants but, simultaneously, by situations that represent certain hostilities faced in their daily lives.

In this direction, attentive observation and listening to the ways stories, experiences, and daily dynamics of migrants and refugees are told can identify the faces of hostility amid narratives that, most of the time, emphasize hospitable movements. Furthermore, such situations can also be expressed through cultural intersections that bring subjects closer together or drive them apart so that experiences related to this aspect become indicators of hospitality or hostility.

Methodological Strategies

This research is qualitative and exploratory, conducted with refugee students who entered undergraduate courses at a Brazilian federal public university through the Calls for Admission of People in Refugee Situations in Undergraduate Courses in 2018 and 2019. Initially, a survey of students with approved applications under the respective Calls was conducted, totaling 26 potential interviewees.

After identifying potential collaborators, the Snowball technique was used to establish contact with the group of interest, characterized by the constitution of a non-probabilistic sample based on the indication of potential participants by critical informants, documents, and/or the participants themselves. From this specific type of sampling, it is impossible to determine who the research participants will be in advance; however, the technique proves useful for studying certain groups that are difficult to access (Vinuto, 2014).

Thus, key informants were identified through initial contact in groups and/or courses where the lead author participated. The first contact occurred individually and personally, and new participants were recommended over time. Therefore, the participant group was finalized with three Haitian individuals, two Venezuelans, and one Congolese.

Research data were produced through individual narrative interviews. The interview proves to be productive in this context, especially because it allows a focus on experiences and stories narrated by the interviewees, constituting meanings of what it is like to be a refugee student in a public university. According to Andrade's perspective (2012), narratives do not appear neutrally, as they are intrinsically imbued with historical, social, and cultural elements.

From this standpoint, the individual does not emerge as the pure origin of their own words but rather as an intrinsic component of a broad discursive and sociocultural network that determines the possibilities and limitations of their expression. Thus, the post-structuralist assumption is embraced that the production of the subject occurs in the realm of language, discourses, texts, representations, enunciations, modes of subjectivation, in power and knowledge relationships, in other words, "in the discursive forces that name and govern it" (Andrade, 2012, p. 174, our translation).

The six interviews took place between June and August 2021. Due to the social distancing caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews were conducted online through the Google Meet platform. All interviews were recorded and transcribed with prior authorization from the participants. Transcriptions were provided to the participants for

evaluation and information reformulation when necessary. However, all participants authorized the use of transcriptions in their original versions.

Throughout the entire study, ethical procedures outlined in Resolutions No. 466/12 and 510/2016, which regulate research involving human subjects in Brazil (Brasil, 2012; 2016), were observed. Data confidentiality was ensured, and participants were guaranteed the use of chosen names, regardless of whether they were their registered names or not. The option to withdraw from the study at any time was also assured. Before conducting the interviews, the Free and Informed Consent Form (FICF) was read and duly signed. The Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul approved the research under the number CAAE 45217521.3.0000.5347.

Cultural Differences and Faces of Hostility

Five of the six interviewees identified themselves as Black and reported having a religion and/or religious belief. They were between 23 and 35 years old, with five being single and one married. From a residential perspective, three lived in Porto Alegre (RS), two in the University Student House (CEU), and one with family. The other three students resided in the metropolitan region of Porto Alegre, with two paying rent. All had been in Brazil for over three years, averaging about 4.5 years, and five had already started higher education in their home country. It is important to note that all students entered through the 2019 call, and due to the pandemic, they began their courses in 2020, already in the Emergency Remote Teaching (ERE) mode.

In this context, it is noteworthy that the Venezuelan students, when discussing their impressions of Brazil and their daily lives, pointed out the joy of the people, the musicality, and dance as factors that bring the two countries closer. Food, for them, was also perceived as a cultural trait that connects the countries. Similarly, the Haitians reported familiarity with Brazilian cuisine, although they understood the region's climate to be very different, as it is much colder compared to their country.

> Well, in the cultural aspect, what relates the most is the people's joy. There's Carnival, and there's also Carnival there (...). The food isn't very different. We eat a lot of beans, so it's not very distant from Brazilian and Gaúcho culture (Dulce, 2021, our translation).
> What I missed the most was entering a place and listening to salsa. (...) I think it was more a matter of music. I love bossa nova; there are a lot of Brazilian

> or Latin American songs that have both Brazilian and Spanish versions (Alexandra, 2021, our translation).
> When I arrived, the culture was a bit challenging for me; I didn't like it, and I wasn't getting used to the cold. The way of eating (...) is not very different. There's also rice and beans and polenta (Baely, 2021, our translation).
> I think they are somewhat similar cultures; in terms of food, the proximity is much stronger. The base of food in Haiti is rice, beans, and meat as well (...). The difference is the language and the weather, which here in Rio Grande do Sul gets slightly cold (Rogério, 2021, our translation).

As can be seen from the excerpts, cultural elements (language, food, way of life) are remembered as important by the migrants. However, the deepest memories in the narratives concern the longing for families and friends left in the home country or even in other places. For them, these memories evoke various feelings:

> [...] the strongest [**what I miss the most**] would be my family because nowadays I'm here with my sister [...], my brother is still in Chile, and my mother is in Haiti; we're a bit scattered, and that doesn't sit well with me. I wish we were together and miss that a lot (Rogério, 2021, emphasis added, our translation).
> I **missed it when** I was there [in Haiti], missed my mother and father, who were already in Brazil. When I also came here, I missed my friends (Chidelson, 2021, emphasis added, our translation).

It is common that in narratives of migrants and refugees located in different countries, the longing for family becomes a sentiment frequently recounted. Beyond the family ties that are mentioned, feelings of belonging or non-belonging to the places they grew up and live in, more precisely, to the experiences that connect them to spatial segments and social groups, are evident. Therefore, it is possible to consider that the conditions for refugee students to have contact with their relatives, whether through temporary displacements or digital connections, may indicate certain hostilities experienced in Brazil (Teixeira *et al.*, 2022).

In this sense, the set of public policies to support refugees, beyond entering the university system, should be capable of providing conditions for the full enjoyment of life and matters that promote the quality of life. Certainly, it is a presumptuous argument, but one that proves relevant in promoting what is recognized as unconditional hospitality (Derrida, 2000).

Associated with the longing for family and friends, the linguistic question becomes present; after all, this difficulty is felt in all aspects of life for those who migrate and need to be independent in their daily lives: in transportation, in the healthcare system, in the market, in stores, on the street, at the university. This language issue hindering life in the new country is apparent in the narratives below.

> I learned the language on the street. I learned to sell underwear and socks. And after that, I went to work in a café. So, I always had a lot of contact with people. [...] Then I left the café and went to work in a store [...] in customer service, like a call center. [...] I think this helped a lot in developing certain skills. [...] Once, I was in the café, placing an order, and I had to say it was for two spoons. And I wrote 'spuun' with 'U and U.' It was supposed to be 'spoon,' but I wrote it as I heard. [...] Gradually, and with Portuguese courses and reading, it improved [...]. There's still many things I write wrong, but the phone's autocorrect helps (Alexandra, 2021, our translation).
>
> I say that my goal was to study, and I knew I had to live in Portuguese, so I had two options: either study Portuguese or study Portuguese. The first two months were the most difficult, the most complicated of my life. I remember a story where I went to a bakery in Curitiba, and I said, 'Miss, how are you? I want five countries.' I said it lovingly. I wanted five breads but said countries (Zuri, 2021, our translation).

As observed, language is a challenge; however, for those who did not consider language a major problem, at the time of the interview, most refugee students had been in Brazil for some time, and many had already taken Portuguese courses. They understood that language is learned in coexistence and the struggle for survival, and for any eventuality, there are reliable and easily accessible translation apps (especially on mobile phones).

Also, throughout the narratives, in line with Bandeira (2018), it became apparent that a lack of language proficiency is not a significant problem. The greatest difficulty is homesickness or the desire to be in one's own country, which is accentuated in many ways, including linguistically. Here, there is more difficulty in finding friends to share life and family stories in their native languages, as Rogério reveals in the following account:

> *I would like to be in my culture, in my country, speaking and expressing myself in my languages, without fearing what I am going to say if it will be wrong or not [...] (Rogério, 2021, our translation).*

Rogério's desire demonstrates that, in addition to missing the culture of his home country, migrants sometimes fear speaking incorrectly due to linguistic difficulties. Thus,

> [...] the foreigner remains silent: does not know the right thing to say, how to say it. The foreigner remains silent: does not know the right thing to say, when to say it, or how to say it. Fears using the wrong word for simple and everyday situations or using too many or too few words. Fear being judged poorly, having their accent evaluated, and being asked questions they won't know how to answer. He knows how to start a conversation but does not know how to continue it, so he chooses not to start it. They want to say something

interesting about a subject they know little about but prefer not to try because it may sound inappropriate. Therefore, the foreigner listens (Jaffe, 2015, p. 102, our translation).

However, the fear of speaking and the baggage, at times laden with traumatic and distressing experiences from pre-migratory experiences, were not the greatest challenges regarding acceptance. The narratives of refugee students emphasize the impact of discriminatory experiences upon arriving in Brazil. When asked if they perceived Brazil as a welcoming country for migrants/refugees, the discussions were somewhat polarized, with some finding Brazil hospitable and others not. Alexandra, for example, highlights the lack of support and information when seeking documentation from the Federal Police:

> *Well, I don't think so! [...] For example, when I went to the Federal Police, I kind of knew a little Portuguese, but they didn't [have the goodwill] to communicate in my language, for instance. And I never had any guidance from there. I went there and said, 'It's asylum.' But I never had anyone telling me, 'Oh, you can also apply for residency, or there are these options for your case.' Show me an entire catalog [...] of what would be more suitable for me! (Alexandra, 2021, our translation).*

Rogério, on the other hand, speaks about acceptance, bringing two aspects: Brazilian legislation and the "culture" of Brazilians, as described in the account below.

> *There are two sides: Brazilian legislation, what it says about immigrants, and how Brazilians culturally view migration. But, in general, legislation, or the laws concerning migration, I understand that it is a welcoming country, but people's opinions are not always like that (Rogério, 2021, our translation).*

In the excerpt above, Rogério refers to believing that, based on current legislation, Brazil welcomes migrants. However, for the student, the acceptance of the Brazilian people is not as evident. It should be noted that, despite Brazil being a leading figure in Latin America regarding migration laws, having proposed some public policies, such as facilitating access to universities and the 2017 Migration Law, advancing the recognition of rights, including social rights, there are still spaces of exclusion (Bertoldo, 2020). In other words, even though there is an explicit recognition of equality in the right to education under Article 4, X, and access is considered a principle under Article 3, XI, the condition of the immigrant and their foreignness are structurally exclusionary (Bertoldo, 2020).

As the only narrative that presents legislation, even if "in a general way," as a welcoming practice, it is likely not fully supported by legal regulations, as Bertoldo (2020) suggests that

there is a material inequality between migrants and nationals in practice. This discussion about acceptance, based on legislation, also demonstrates a condition of subjection to the rules of the state, where legal status is a determinant for access to fundamental rights. It allows entry and access, temporarily, with some rights, in a relationship of submission and subjection under a condition of conditioned hospitality (Derrida, 2003).

In contrast, Baely and Chidelson perceive Brazil, without reservations, as a welcoming country for migrants:

> *I can say that, yes, Brazil is a welcoming country, but it is not prepared to receive these immigrants. I don't know if you understand what I mean, but it is indeed a welcoming country (Baely, 2021, our translation).*
> *Very much! I think so, including, I am part of Bará [...], which supports refugees and students at the university. Therefore, in my book [Looking at Another Ocean], I said that it is easier to live when the country reaches out (Chidelson, 2021, our translation).*

However, despite Baely and Chidelson's narratives emphasizing that Brazil is a welcoming country, contradicting this image of a cordial country towards diversity, all the students verbalized personally experiencing or knowing a migrant who experienced discriminatory attitudes due to race, ethnicity, nationality, and social class.

The fact that the destination does not always demonstrate acceptance and respect for diversities, as reported, causes the migrant to experience double violence – he is undesirable at departure and arrival. Eco (2020, p. 42) emphasizes that "we cannot stand those who are different from us because they have a different skin color, because they speak a language we do not understand, because they eat frogs, dogs, monkeys, pigs, garlic, because they are tattooed." The issue is that feeling invaded, the host tends to protect their right to hospitality, often exhibiting xenophobic attitudes towards the foreigner: "I begin by considering the foreigner undesirable and virtually as an enemy, anyone who tramples on my chez-moi, ipseity, my sovereignty as a host. The guest becomes a hostile subject from whom I risk becoming a hostage" (Derrida, 2003, p. 49, our translation).

One of the definitions of the term xenophobia is described by Albuquerque Júnior (2016) in the book "*Xenofobia – medo e rejeição ao estrangeiro* (Xenophobia – Fear and Rejection of the Foreigner)". According to the author,

> The word xenophobia comes from Greek, from the articulation of the words *xénos* (strange, foreigner) and *phobos* (fear), meaning, therefore, a fear, rejection, refusal, antipathy, and a deep aversion to the foreigner. It implies

> mistrust and prejudice towards people strange to the territory, the environment, and the culture to which those who judge, observe, and consider themselves as being in their place belong. Xenophobia implies spatial delimitation, territoriality, a community where an inside and an outside are established, an interiority and an exteriority, both material and symbolic, both territorial and cultural, making the one who comes from outside that territory or culture a stranger who is refused, rejected to a greater or lesser extent (Albuquerque Júnior, 2016, p. 9, our translation).

According to the author, the foreigner is often viewed with suspicion and strangeness because their culture, attitudes, and values are not aligned with those of the people receiving them. Corsi (2020) argues that the foreigner is seen with a certain deficit of humanity, lacking physical characteristics, gestures, movements, and performances similar to those who perceive them. Some consider the different beings as inferior, leading to feelings of rejection.

Chade (2022) mentions a sixteen-page letter sent by ten special rapporteurs from the United Nations (UN) and mechanisms of the Organization on dismantling the myth of Brazil being welcoming to foreigners. This letter, delivered to the government of Jair Bolsonaro in April 2022, reports numerous human rights violations against immigrants and refugees, especially Africans, Haitians, and Venezuelans.

Moreover, among other things, the article highlights that, in the last 20 years, there have been multiple manifestations of racism and xenophobia, including murders and arbitrary detentions of Africans and Haitians, the burning of university residences supporting African migrants, and public expressions of racist and xenophobic sentiments, including hate speech and graffiti against the presence of African migrants in Brazilian cities.

As seen, immigrants frequently appear in the media, reporting the violence, mistreatment, neglect, and all forms of prejudice they endure (Corsi, 2020). What is reported fails to fully capture all the hardships faced by these groups in Brazil lately. Worse yet, we only become aware of more incidents being reported, although structural racism has existed in the country since its colonization (Almeida, 2018).

In this context, Ribeiro (2020) emphasizes that xenophobia, racism, and discrimination based on origin are social and political problems almost always linked to the theme of migrations in Brazil. According to the author, the degree of urgency and connection between these forms of violence varies in different times and places, and their linkage is not always evident, depending on sociopolitical, cultural, geopolitical, or historical conditions. However, the manifestation of these phenomena in Brazil:

> [...] as an ethnological-racial, often religious, basis and revolves around dichotomies of white and non-white, Christian and non-Christian (Muslim, Umbandist, etc.), poor and non-poor. This means that even when directed towards a foreigner, aversion to a black foreigner is not at the same level as an aversion to a white foreigner of European or North American origin, conceived in the Brazilian collective imagination as a 'gringo,' as I have been pointing out in recent research (Ribeiro, 2021, p. 345, our translation).

Cases of violence against the black migrant population in Brazil could be considered mere expressions of xenophobia, based on society's uncertainties and insecurities regarding foreigners (Appadurai, 2009), were it not for the frequent reports from black migrants about racist insults in the workplace, government institutions, and even on the streets, as repeatedly witnessed in the media.

For Anunciação (2017), the recurring cases of violence against black migrants in Brazil, while deconstructing the myth of racial democracy, draw attention to the issue of latent structural violence in Brazilian society. According to the author, disguised under xenophobic discourse, these aggressions reveal much about our history as a nation, as they are directed at black migrants. In the narratives below, the students describe the discomfort of racist experiences, drawing comparisons between being black in Brazil and being black in their country of origin.

> *Another thing that we also weren't accustomed to is the issue of racism. In my country, the majority are black. I suffered in my country because of money. There are people who are richer (...) and people who are poorer, just like here in Brazil. But because of my skin color, I never suffered in my country. Unfortunately, I had some contacts and bad moments; someone assaulted me (...), and we suffered, but I saw that here it's common, it's part of people's culture (Baely, 2021, our translation).*
>
> ***Another thing is the fact that you are black here.*** *We come from a place where everyone is the same color:* ***the president is black, the minister is black, the teacher is black, the doctor who attends to you is black, and everyone there has almost the same color as you,*** *maybe a little lighter, but you are all black, and you know that everyone is equal. And you arrive, and your color already stands out (...). Your color bothers you (...), you enter a store, and they look at you badly, go to a place where you find more white people, and sometimes you feel bad because of your skin color. At first, I didn't understand. Now, after entering the health field course, I have learned much about racism. A light came on in me: "My God, I went through so many racist acts, and I didn't know it was racism" because I didn't grow up with it. I've never been a victim of racism until I got here! And how would I know that the lady was racist to me because she followed me in the store, showing me the cheaper things, "Here are the cheapest things; this is for you." She was racist to me, she was! It makes you want to curse the person (Zuri, 2021, emphasis added, our translation).*

As previously discussed, racism takes different forms of manifestation, depending on the political and social history. In Brazil, due to a history of slavery and the extermination of blacks and indigenous people, beyond defining skin color stereotypes and prejudices, the naturalization of racial differences is embedded in the structure of social relations that determine the superiority of individuals perceived as white over those perceived as black. Racism, as presented in the excerpts above, denotes its expression in the form of aversion and hatred towards individuals with certain physical characteristics (skin color and hair type). This manifests through direct racial discrimination, such as the disdain for certain individuals determined by racial condition, and indirect discrimination, as a process marked by supposed neutrality that culminates in disadvantages for racialized individuals.

Almeida (2018) also indicates that manifestations of racism can reach different levels of underestimation, exclusion, and denial of the identity of the black individual, even reaching physical violence, indicating that in the hegemonic circle of Brazilian society, structural racism remains unprecedented. In the narratives above, the discursiveness of the black body is constituted by the difference in being black in their country of origin and here in Brazil.

Narratives like Baely's, which bring discrimination associated with work and/or employment, carry not only the fact that migrants ask but "steal" jobs from Brazilians, as is evident in the following excerpts:

> *Some people think that immigrants come to **steal jobs** and not to create, especially people from poor countries, like Africans and Haitians, who suffer more from this bullying (Rogério, 2021, emphasis added, our translation).*
> *Normally, the immigrant is seen as a person who will **steal the job** of a native (...), but we have our skills and abilities, so integration would be best for common advancement, collective progress, and not individual progress (Chidelson, 2021, emphasis added, our translation).*
> *When you go to ask for a job, you say you are an immigrant, they get a little like (...) because he is an immigrant, did he come to steal or to do something else? (...) I'm saying this because I went through it (Baely, 2021, our translation).*

Eduardo Galeano, back in 2015, exposed the figure of the immigrant from a society that has great difficulty accepting the difference. The foreigner, analogous to the figure of the Devil, representing evil, manifestly expresses the separations and segregations imposed by those in power on minorities they find undesirable as they hinder their power projects. He says:

> The blame-o-meter indicates that the immigrant comes to steal our job, and the danger meter indicates it with a red light. He is poor, young, and not white;

> the intruder, the one who came from afar, is doomed at first sight due to indigence, inclination to chaos, or skin color. And in any case, if he is not poor, not young, not dark, he is still unwelcome because he arrives willing to work twice as much for half the pay (...) (Galeano, 2015, p. 116, our translation).

In this sense, the fear of the immigrant justifies the alienation and blame, making him the main culprit, according to xenophobic sentiments, for the increase in unemployment, violence, and other contemporary ills. The statements below appeared associated with other types of discrimination, which usually hark back to violence and exploitation in the workplace, such as receiving lower wages compared to other employees performing the same function or working more hours than they should, with no extra payment whatsoever:

> *They want you to work much more than others, to do double or triple the work, and they pay very low, almost half of what other Brazilian employees receive. And when they fire you, they don't pay much. They know you don't know the labor laws here, and they take advantage of being immigrants. It seems like they offer the worst jobs to black people. Here in [city], I saw Brazilians, who are also black, doing the worst jobs, even if they have the skills and knowledge. Unfortunately, they don't respect it in this region. (...) Now, they are adapting because there are many immigrants here (Baely, 2021, our translation).*
> *Low-paying jobs are offered to Haitians and Senegalese. They put the person there because the Haitian will wash dishes. (...) Moreover, they don't even earn the salary that a regular attendant would earn. (...) It happens a lot with foreigners and immigrants who are here, doing a job that sometimes pays R$ 1,500.00, and sometimes they end up earning R$ 1,000.00 or R$ 800.00 just because they are foreigners, and on top of that, they are black (Zuri, 2021, our translation).*

In this sense, the interviewees' perception of the offer of worse jobs and salaries for refugees is sometimes associated with black Brazilians seeking work. According to Soares and Ybarra (2020), with the progressive increase in unemployment and labor and pension reforms, the effective informalization of employment, labor rights, and signed professional cards, work precarization becomes historical data that will be exchanged for intermittent work and telecommuting.

The authors, based on UN data, emphasize that in these new challenges for wage workers, discrimination indices are relevant, for example: "Blacks earn 41% less than white people"; "women receive 74.2% less than men," and there is also evidence of a "9.3% increase in children aged 5 to 13 in child labor." All this context culminates with "the increase in

migration that subjects some people to unacceptable human situations and the persistence of rural and urban slave labor" (ONU, 2016, p. 33, our translation).

Baely also emphasizes the issue of less qualified jobs, which he calls "worse jobs." In this regard, Faria, Ragnini, and Bruning (2021) state that the jobs found by migrants are mainly informal and precarious, involving activities that require low qualifications. Even in the case of migrants with qualifications (training and experience), entering the labor market is difficult. According to Medeiros *et al*. (2020), a decreasing relationship exists when comparing salaries by gender, education, country of origin, and color. The authors also suggest that income differences are sensitive to the nationality variable, that the immigrant's origin also seems to influence occupational status, and that the labor market seems more receptive to foreigners of a certain origin and with specific characteristics, to the detriment of others.

The faces of intolerance are evident everywhere, as shown by the narratives presented. Even though Brazil is seen by some as festive and lively, which might be confused with the practice of a welcoming country (smiling and embracing migrants/refugees), most of the narratives presented here reinforce that Brazil is not for everyone. In practice, the smile is not as easy, and the embrace, when it exists, is not as comforting. All of this aligns with structural racism, evident in speech, lack of opportunities, and the issue of skin color, which complicates the stay of migrants in the country.

Final considerations

The present article analyzed the construction of the experience regarding cultural differences and hostilities faced by refugee students at a federal public university after their arrival in Brazil. According to the presented narratives, it is possible to identify that feelings of gratitude for hospitality are intertwined with stories marked by practices of hostility, often associated with prejudices that have been discussed in the country for years.

Cultural similarities, such as food, dances, and rituals, bridge the geographical distances experienced by refugee students in Brazil. Simultaneously, through culture, the research participants perceive emotional distance, particularly in relation to language and the absence of family. The hostility felt and verbalized in the presented accounts materializes the discrepancy between the lived and proclaimed hospitable Brazil. A significant "it depends" emerges as a response to the question of whether this country welcomes well those who seek shelter, security, and protection. Furthermore, it is poignant how racism and xenophobia structure the experience

of university students in Brazil. These forms of relation with the foreigner, the stranger, and the migrant (unwanted) permeate these bodies and provoke effects and forces that are the opposite of what is understood as unconditional hospitality, activating the constant threat of extradition.

This research aimed to advance the understanding of experiences related to cultural differences and hostilities faced by refugee university students in Brazil. The research process has limitations that indeed serve as stimuli for future investigations. Some areas for further exploration include understanding the human development of refugees in other educational contexts, such as basic education and social movements. Additionally, there is a need to consider other profiles of refugees to broaden the understanding of the overall experience. The proposition of longitudinal research that can track these experiences over time emerges as a significant challenge to be addressed based on this research.

The tensions presented can contribute to the proliferation of discussions that transform these realities, strengthening hospitality practices and respect for differences. It is understood that a more significant number of research studies and publications on the topic can enhance such transformations, especially within educational environments.

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CRediT Author Statement

Conflicts of interest: There are no conflicts of interest associated with this research.

Ethical approval: Throughout the study, ethical procedures outlined in Resolutions No. 466/12 and 510/2016, which regulate research involving human subjects in Brazil (Brasil, 2012; 2016), were observed. Data confidentiality was ensured, and participants were given the option to use chosen names, regardless of their official records. The right to withdraw from the study at any time was also guaranteed. Before interviews were conducted, the Informed Consent Form (ICF) was read and signed. The research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul under protocol number CAAE 45217521.3.0000.5347.

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