

# Mobility and Exogamy: The New Challenges of Immigration in the Azores

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**ABSTRACT**— *After more than 25 years after the entry of Portugal into the European Union and completed the rebuilding of the islands of Faial and Pico, the entry of immigrants in the Azores continue to occur, albeit with different intensities. The turn of the century and the complexity of international migration systems have led to new migratory flows, being, therefore, the ideal of a multicultural and multiethnic society. In about two decades, the growth in the number of foreigners in the Azores – of 2.814 in 1991 to 3.402 in 2011 – and the diversification of their ethnic origins had direct consequences in the family context, more specifically on the numbers of exogamous marriages: 41 cases in 1998 to 61 in 2012, even if in 2010 had been recorded 84 exogamous marriages. So, similar to what happens in areas marked by the phenomenon of immigration, where immigrants take themselves as agents of change in family structures are concerned, we intend to reflect, among other aspects, on the economic context, especially from the mid 90, led to the phenomenon of immigration in the Azores and about their impact on marital and family dynamics islands, using for this purpose, the theoretical contributions of the theory of Segmented Assimilation.*

**Keywords**— Azores, Immigration, Exogamy, Assimilation

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The multiplicity of paths of entry into marital and partner choice is a factor that tend to restate some of the traits of modernity currently assigned to contemporary Western family, with particular attention to Portugal where social transformations, framed in structural change processes profoundly marked the modernization of family life. Referring to recent decades looked under the marital behaviors, the significant rise in cohabitation, the decline in marriage rates, increased of divorce, births outside marriage and the average age at first birth, or even decrease the average number of children per woman [1-2]. These and other changes - the fall is operated at the level of values, which transferred into private life the idea of equality of opportunity and greater individual autonomy and freedom - are the result of significant changes in the mode of organization of conjugal family life with the growing importance of legitimizing modernist ideals of gender equality, the rule of democratic affectivity or family life [3-6].

The move away from traditional values associated with marriage and the coexistence of a plurality of normative models of marital and family are elements that marked the modernization of Western contemporary conjugal decades. The passage of the Modern Western world of organic logic for a mechanical logic made some remarkable trends emerge in contemporary times with reflections in the mentalities, customs, in the forms of relationship between men and women and in their own architectures and familiar geographies Although the processes of change and social composition have modified the occupational and functional structure of the Western family in recent decades [7-8], we argue that the changes of the values and the concessions about the role of women, of sexuality and of conjugality were relatively more significant and intense. The multiplicity of paths, of entry on conjugality and choice of partner are elements that tend to reaffirm some of the traits of modernity that are currently assigned to contemporary Western family, with particular reference to Portugal and Azores where social transformations, framed in structural processes of change, marked deeply the modernization of family life [9-10].

In the Azores the process of modernization of conjugality and family life is a reality. We see significant changes in the birth rate, marriage, mortality and divorce with direct reflections on scale of the Azorean households: "have, generally speaking, a small size, most significant being the family settings of two, three or four people, with a greater representation of the first two cases"[11]. Therefore, we believe that the diversity of family models can be explained by the ways in which groups or individuals interpret societal norms produced in a particular historical context. This assumption leads to a theorization of ideal models-types of family, where there are positively correlated with marital and family behaviors and socio-cultural transformations. On the other hand, we cannot ignore the existing articulation between interactions in marital family and social contexts, pointing to the couple and the family as the composite result

of relations among its protagonists and the social contexts of existence [12-15].

Directing our focus for the organization and training modes of conjugality, in particular to the standards which guide the modern family and the Azorean diversity and plurality, we here introduce an element that we believe to be new in the sense that has marked the Azorean family and has led to confront distinct structures and dynamics of a past not too distant: we refer to the growing immigrant population entry in the archipelago following a new positioning in the context of international migratory dynamics [16-18]. The constant entry of immigrant population, indispensable to the Azorean society in strong economic growth, a result of the transfer of structural funds of the European Union and the need of manpower for the reconstruction of the islands of Faial and Pico after July 1998 seismic crisis, how to prove data regarding number of building permits granted between 1998 (1807) and 2002 (2516) – the highest in the last two decades –, led the Azores archipelago a new positioning in the context of international migratory dynamics.

The Azores archipelago is one of the two autonomous regions of Portugal, composed of nine volcanic islands situated in the North Atlantic Ocean, and is located about 1,360 km (850 mi) west of Portugal. Its main industries are agriculture, dairy farming (for cheese and butter products primarily), livestock ranching, fishing, and tourism, which is becoming the major service activity in the region. There are nine major Azorean islands and an islet cluster and they extend for more than 600 km (370 mi) and lie in a northwest-southeast direction. According to the 2011 Census, population in the Azores was 246.746 at a density of 106 habitants per square kilometer (270/sq mi). More than half (56%) are established on São Miguel island.

## **2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY**

Nevertheless the studies already carried out in the Azores about this issue, the investigation of the most linked to family and family dynamics are still unfulfilled, at least in a systematic manner. The exogamy is an essential parameter when we intend to measure the distances and proximities between immigrants and national social and between different ethnic groups, regardless of the nationality of its members [19-21]. What we intended to analyze in this paper is the patterns of marriage immigrants in light of a multidimensional optical where, the perspective of the assimilation theory have a central importance. More than draw up an extensive and detailed portrait that is representative of the marital dynamics in the Azores, a holistic approach we seek to identify key traits and diversities of the Azorean family life. Thus, starting from the family dynamics generated in migratory context, at the same time we know who lives in conjugality and with whom, we intended measure the degree of integration of foreigners on Azorean society. Therefore, the findings of this paper are based on a literature review and in official statistical information produced by Statistics Portugal Information (INE).

## **3. IMMIGRATION AND MARRIGE**

We intend to analyze the importance of the immigrant population in the Azores in the emergence of marital structures other than those traditionally assigned to the dominant model of organization and family composition in the archipelago. The relevance of this approach is justified in the light of the contributions of Segmented Assimilation theory, where several authors have considered the existence of exogamy as an important indicator of social and economic integration and assimilation of immigrants in the host communities [22-23]. In this sense, the relationship between economic and marital assimilation, even though not being exclusive, appears to operate on a type of adaptation and of structural differentiation where a set of compositional variables, among them economic, determines the process of integration of immigrants in host society. This happens because the exogamics relations trends to establish ways of incorporate cultural customs, language and knowledge of the local labour market, as a result of contacts and established relations [24-26]. Therefore, the exogamy is a factor of socio-economic and cultural shift enhancer. Of a single model of a family pass to one diversity and plurality of conjugality models where, besides other elements, the constant entry of foreign population and their stay in different Azorean islands assumes an important explanatory role of new conjugal and family processes and architectures.

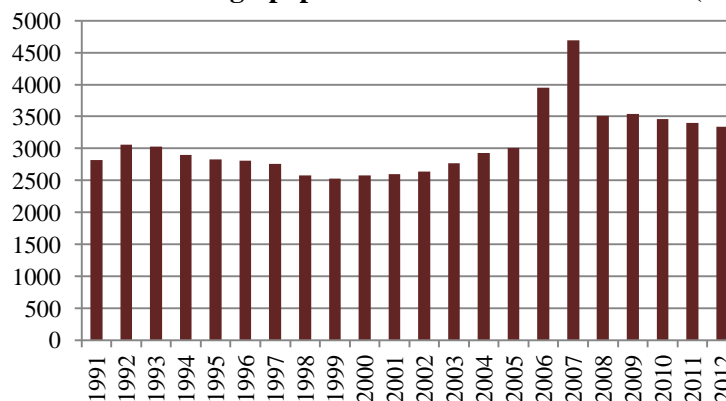
Taking as its starting point the fact that we are dealing with rational actors who weigh the various alternatives and choose the most suitable for your needs migratory destination, the growing presence of foreign population in the Archipelago result of the power of attraction exercised by some of the islands in the framework of regional, national and international labor market, especially in the area of construction, following the reconstruction effort of the islands of Faial and Pico after seismic activity in the year 1998. Despite the conclusion of these construction projects and considering the current socio-economic crisis, the archipelago continues to present a relatively high level of attractiveness in comparison with those recorded in other regions of Portugal or countries of origin of immigrants.

Analyzing the evolution of the foreign population resident in the Azores since the beginning of 90s we observe that

this was marked essentially by three distinct periods: a first up to 1999, in which we have seen the decline relatively sharp foreign population; a second, between 2000 and 2007, characterized by strong growth, especially in the last two years; followed by a third, characterized by the decline in the number of foreign residents, although more pronounced than the registered in the first period. In 1991, the effective foreigners accounted for 1.18% of the total resident population, relatively far from the value recorded in 2001 and 2011 – 1.07% and 1.37%, respectively.

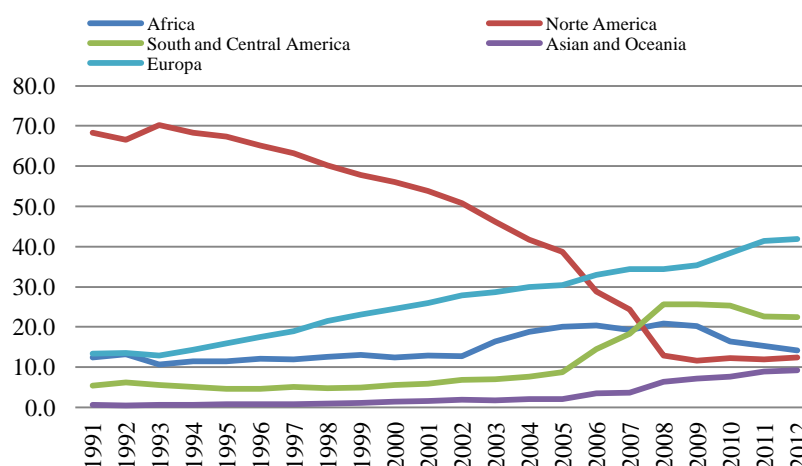
The geographical origin and nationality of immigrants is a important aspect when we intend to characterize and study the immigration flows in Azores. Therefore, the most immigrants living in the Azores in 2012 became from European continent (41.9%) and Central and South America (22.4%). Two decades before, the values were distinct, being those of North America (68.3%) – mainly Americans and Canadians – that assumed greater relevance in the regional context, with Europe and Central and South America to not exceed jointly more than 19%. Similar to what happened over the last two decades, the African continent's natural make up the third largest group of foreign residents, accounting about 15% in 2012. Overall, in each period, noted that the hegemonic position assumed by the foreign of North America in the 90s was gradually being toned down to the point where, in the period 2008-2012, have been overtaken by foreigners from the European continent. In the opposite direction, in the last decade we observe a relative growth of the foreigners from Central and South America, with the brazilians representing in 2012 around 92% of this flow and 20.8% of the total number of foreigners in the Azores.

**Chart 1: Evolution of the foreign population resident in the Azores (1991-2012) (%)**



Source: SEF (vários) – *Relatório de Atividades*

**Chart 2: Foreign population resident in the Azores (1991-2012), by birth region (%)**



Source: SEF (vários) – *Relatório de Atividades*

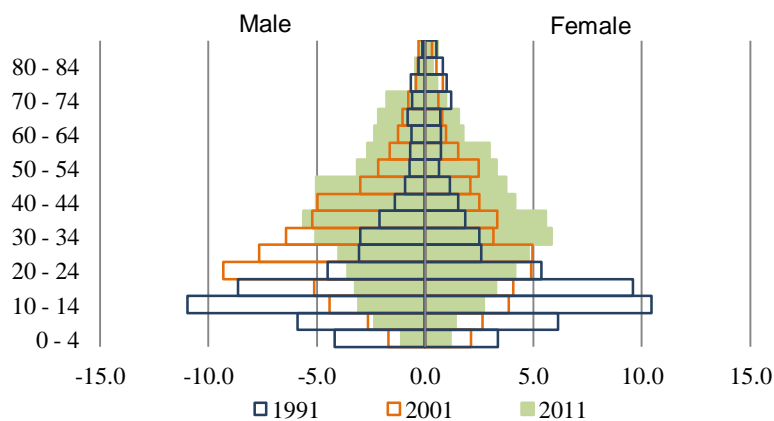
Looking now to the age structure of the foreign resident population in the Azores in the last three *Census (1991-2011)*, one of the aspects that stands out has to do with the global overall masculinity. However, in 2011 we have an imbalance between sexes particularly evident in between the ages of 20 and 35 years, where the women's are an

important part of flows, most likely a result of processes of family reunification or seek employment opportunities in specific sectors of the Azorean economy:

*“We find that the immigrants from Central and South America, mostly Brazilians, can be found primarily in the intermediate occupations, especially services and sales and the mid-level professions, which account for 50% of these immigrants. There are still a considerable number of industrial workers, at 17% and even those in high-ranking positions, at around 11%. The Asians show less dispersal and most of them are in services and sales, at 63%. The situation of European Union nationals is very different and much more varied. They are the group with the highest percentages in more highly qualified occupations, although they have the greatest weight, over 30%, in services and sales.”[27]*

Between 1991 and 2011 significantly reduce the importance of the young population and increases the old ones. Contrary to what was observed in 1991, where the population aged 0-14 years was 41%, in 2011 the percentage value does not exceed 12%. The old ones have accounted for 9% in 2011, unlike in 1991, which did not go beyond 7%. Currently the foreign workforce in the Azores has been particularly aged than once.

**Chart 2: Age structure of the foreign population resident in the Azores (1991-2011) (%)**

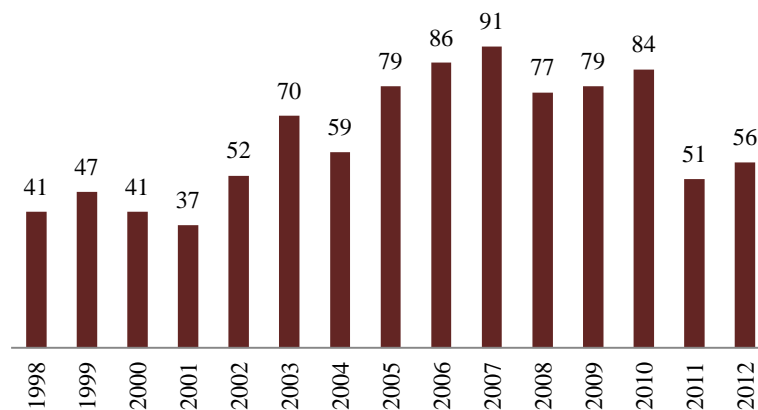


Source: INE – *Censos* (1991; 2001; 2011)

If in other social contexts the emergence of forms of composition and exogamic family organization may not be new – i.e. United States of America, France, Mexico or Canada – in the specific case of the Azores, an increase of marital relations based on exogamy quickly gained importance from the beginning of the nineties of the twentieth century, with the increase in the number of effective foreign residents and with diversification, as we have seen. Distinguish patterns of immigrants are the result of the conjunction of three social forces – marital preferences of candidates, the influence of the social group to which they belong and the constraints of the matrimonial market place-which affect the opportunities generated. The different possible combinations of these forces to each other may lead to marital experiences distinct compared to the past, because the family is, as we say, the product of a social construct where the presence of constant values and norms define from the outset, its members and their interpersonal relationships with the surrounding socio-economic space.

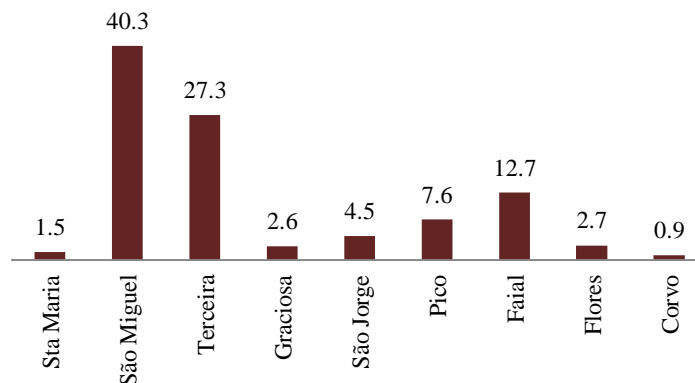
If we consider the global values of marriages in the Azores in the period 1998-2012, the general trend is for these occur mostly between Portuguese citizens, although the more recent years reveal other reality: besides the smallness of exogamic marriages (around 850 since 1998), we past of 2% of marriages in 1998 to around 6% in 2012. When we consider the weight of exogamic marriages in total foreigners residing in each one of the islands, it appears that the tendency is for the concentration of marriages between foreigners and nationals in the spaces where the economic attractiveness is greater: cases of islands of São Miguel, Terceira, Faial and Pico.

**Chart 3: Exogamic marriages in the Azores (1998-2012)**



Source: INE – *Estatísticas de Casamentos*

**Chart 4: Exogamic marriages in the Azores, by island, (1998-2011) (%)**



Source: INE – *Estatísticas de Casamentos*

Whereas the mixed marriages are one of the more socially effective vehicles for cultural hybridization and to the emergence of phenomena of interculturality, which sought to understand was the extent to which the exogamy is interethnic a strategy of immigrants or a consequence of the process of assimilation. However, the demographic, cultural and economic characteristics that the immigrants requires a multidimensional analysis where the greater or lesser propensity to select exogamic relationships is conditioned by the marital preferences of candidates (national and foreigners), by the influence of the social group to which they belong and the constraints of the matrimonial market place. These aspects besides not detailed here, based in a study conducted in 2010 we can affirm that “the phenomenon of exogamy has proved particularly among younger immigrants [...]. In the case of immigrants who live in inbreeding should be noted that, in addition to the percentage of singles on arrival be less and the majority being married, the main changes were observed in the "singles". It was concluded that immigrants in exogamy are mostly unmarried, relatively young upon arrival and with a relatively long residence time. On thus that chosen endogamic relations, despite performing permanence in the region relatively close to the immigrants in exogamy, the biggest differences are recorded in the age and the marital status on arrival – about 37% has more than 34 years and 56% are married.” [28].

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The increasing growth of effective foreign entry in the Azores in the last two decades has been accompanied by increased geographic and ethnic diversity of migratory flows and the development of new family structures. Although the values regarding exogamy in the Azores do not translate linearly and one-way explicit strategies for integration and a total assimilation process, we consider that can and should be regarded as privileged in these dynamic measurement indicators. More than a single linear path to be traversed, the immigrants will experience a segmented assimilation, influenced by individual and contextual factors affecting determinants or potentiate the exogamy. In addition to the

contact opportunities build between immigrants and ethnic and inter-ethnic community engaging over time of residence play an important role in the integration process: some will be absorbed by the middle class of each one of the islands of residence, others will be permanently excluded and marginalized, and others remain in ethnic enclaves where several dominant culture resistance forces persisted [29-30].

Therefore, we argue that exogamy plays an important role in the process of economic integration and assimilation of immigrants in the sense that enhances the learning processes of socio-cultural characteristics of the Azorean community, by means of more or less intense interpersonal relations established. Inter-marriage is a consequence of the assimilation process and, in some cases, it may be its cause as well. The integration involves not only the individual but also the Azorean society as a whole. In this sense, exogamy represents the most intimate form of interaction and integration of immigrants in the Azores and, perhaps, the most interesting challenge for the Azorean traditional family structure and composition.

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