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# "SAUDADES" AND RETURNING: Brazilian Women Speak of Here and There

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## Abstract

This article explores the concept of returning to Brazil articulated by a small group of Brazilian women living in Boston, MA, area. The time each of the women spent in the United States varies considerably. In the interviews they talked about whether they had plans to return to Brazil, and, in this paper, we examine the relationship between their conception of *saudade*, their transnational experience and their desire to return to their homeland. We look specifically at three subsets of women: women who planned to stay in the U.S. permanently; women who said their stay in the U.S. was temporary; and women who were unsure of whether they would stay or leave. This article uses excerpts from the women's stories to illustrate the relationship between the idea of returning to Brazil, the idea of *saudade* and the transnational status.

**Keywords:** Brazilian immigrant women. Return to Brazil. S*audade.* Transnational.

Current immigrant and immigration studies frequently analyze the process of returning to the "home" country or of circular migration as possibilities in the more general immigration/emigration process. "Return" is predicated mostly on the basis of practical or personal financial factors. Although the importance of practical factors is beyond dispute and often co-exist with, for example, perceived economic demands, there is often something more subtle but equally as important: images of home and belonging, musings about here and there, longing and wondering, sadness and joy. The personal ideas are often tied to ideas of home, of nation and of family and even to a specific time in the past, some of which are rooted in culture, politics and experiences of people's lives. The longing, nostalgia and hope are aspects of what Brazilians call *saudade*, which is a focus of this paper.

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More specifically, this paper explores some of the ways a small group of Brazilian immigrant women, living and working in Boston, Massachusetts, area, think about being here and there, their ideas about where they live now in relation to their ideas of home and the connection between *saudade* and staying or leaving. We base the present article on 30 in-depth interviews with Brazilian immigrant women, conducted mostly in 2004-2005. This paper is a small part of a broader project that looks closely at the experiences of Brazilian immigrant women as they negotiate their identities within the U.S. ethno-racial hierarchy.[1]

## The social and political context

The feeling of *saudade* has arguably become both more pronounced and a bit ruptured recently as reports of Brazilians leaving the area of Boston in particular, and the United States in general, have made their way into headlines up and down the East Coast as well as in other places. Since 2006 (MARGOLIS, 2008), especially in the past 18 months, and having started well before the current economic crisis, Brazilian immigrants were reported to be leaving the United States in significant numbers, presumably to go back to Brazil. This out-migration of Brazilians has been labeled a phenomenon by many of the news outlets covering the story. It is important to note that, in many of these reports, some of the writers are sure to include responses from the sending communities and those responses are generally uncomplimentary of Brazilians, demonizing them for all sorts of economic and social ills. With headlines including "Brazilians Giving Up Their American Dream" (NY Times, 12/4/07), and "Brazilians Shun American Dream" (BBC News, 3/25/2008)[iii], one might conclude from the headlines alone that for Brazilians being in the U.S. was merely a matter of economic opportunity, and since Brazilians cannot find the "streets" paved with gold, they are heading back again, presumably to Brazil. To some extent these headlines capture this phenomenon, but they are also ambiguous, and some reports suggest that the extent of the return movement may have been overestimated.

Regardless of the extent, there is no doubt that since September 11, 2001, due to the reluctance of the Unites States to develop a humane and legal route to a legal status, as a result of the current economic crisis in the U.S., the idea of going back home to Brazil is more appealing than perhaps it ever was. However, it may be more of a case of the American Dream - as it has always been-, being quite selective, and excluding many immigrant groups, Brazilians included. At any rate, it is always hard to know if immigrants leaving any country

[1] We began this broader project in 2003.

to go back home are being pushed out or being pulled back home. Another headline, "Walls Closing on All Sides for Immigrants: Economic Crisis, crackdown hit community hard" (Boston Herald, 2/22/09) may more accurately capture what is going on for Brazilians. The anti-immigrant sentiment and the economic crisis leave many people with little hope and few options. Going back to Brazil is one move; heading to other countries is another one.[2]

Although the anti-immigrant ideology, the attacks of 9/11, and the economic crisis wreaking havoc on housing, jobs and credit have certainly motivated many immigrants to leave the U.S and return "home," the idea of returning is a recurring theme of the immigrant experience, at least among our respondents. Even for those women that arrived in the U.S. before 9/11 and the resurgence of an anti-immigrant ideology, "multiple meanings of home" (DAVIS, 2008, p. 25) prompted some women to express deep and compelling images of "here and there." This aspect of the reality of being a 1st generation immigrant is part of the phenomenon of Brazilian immigration to the United States and of all immigrants in general; however, many of the women rendered their experiences in the United States as a tension between here and there, regardless of the exogenous crisis of ideology, politics and economics. Many of them positioned themselves within the broad parameters of what we might call the American Dream, even before its crisis. Thus, we can explore the multiple meanings of home or here and there as they predate whether women have actually left the U.S. or returned "home."[3] In other words, although the events of the last eighteen months or so no doubt affected our respondents' ideas of where home is now, some of them had rather strong feelings of where home was even before the current crisis. The relationship between their ideas of home before the crisis and their ideas of home now remain to be seen. The impact of these larger contextual factors is inextricable with the feelings of *saudade*. Yet

[2] The original idea for this project was to incorporate excerpts from short follow-up interviews with some of the women that were part of our original group. Several factors have prevented that from happening within the time frame of this conference paper. First, because we had maintained strict confidentiality of the respondents, which included limitations on the information we have about where they lived and we deleted anything that might be able to identify their actual place of work (as per guidelines of our internal research review committee) it is hard at this point to track down all of the women or to even get information about whether they are still in the Boston metro area, within the time frame allotted for this conference paper. Second, although we are able to locate some of the women, a systematic re-interview at this point is difficult because of the economic crisis curtailing research money needed to subsidize our colleague doing transcriptions and translations and helping with the re-interview process (fluent Portuguese speaker). Our hope is that we will be able to complete some of the re-interviews over the coming year or at least locate more of the women to be able to make a general comment about where they live their lives now.

[3] We recognize that in Portuguese there is not a word with the connotation of the English word home. "Casa" is closer to house and "lar," can be translated as home but does not have the same connotations; for example, it is not used to refer to nation as home. Nonetheless, through a variety of different types of questions, the women we interviewed were given the time they needed to talk about their ideas of "home."

even before these events many of the women expressed aspects of their auto-biographical self in terms of longing, homesickness and hope.

## Immigrant incorporation in the contemporary era

Transnationalism and assimilation are two primary frames of reference for understanding contemporary immigrant incorporation or settlement in the host country or nation-state. Assimilation is the traditional framework that marked the way immigrants became part of the host country, especially in the United States, and for years, centuries really, its salience was reinforced by the high degree of immigrants that shook off as many markers of difference that they could, and became as much like the host cultures as possible. Although that is an over-simplified description of assimilation and implies that assimilation is of one type, it serves the purpose of standing in juxtaposition with a more current conceptualization of immigrant lives. Transnationalism, often framed as the dichotomy of assimilation, is a more recent way of viewing immigrant settlement or lack thereof. Thus, there is often a tension in the research on immigration, especially about immigrants that come to the United States among those whose gaze at the immigrant is as a group becoming in all ways, and to the extent they can, rooted in U.S. American cultures. Transnationalism may best be understood as “communities, suspended in effect between two countries” (PORTES and RUMBAUT, 2006, p. 131).

Transnationalism is not just about communities, it is also about individuals, families and groups. Technological innovations and the shrinking of space due to greater ease of travel mean nothing unless immigrants embrace these innovations and create “home” in multiple places. Kivisto describes transnationalism (referencing Faist, 2007) as characterized by “situations in which international movers and stayers are connected by dense and strong social and symbolic ties over time and across space to patterns of networks and circuits in two countries” (2003, p. 12). This is essentially a description of people living their lives across country borders, creating a new and different space called a transnational space. Although many of the analysis of the transnational phenomenon imply or even assert the strength of social ties in two countries, as noted in the above quote in Kivisto, the reality of transnationalism, so to speak, is that the dense networks and strong social ties might not exist to the extent the frameworks suggest. Furthermore, the social ties may be much stronger in one country and in one locale than in the other. Consequently, the lived experience of a transnational space may be as much the existence of ties as the weakness of ties; this of

course leads to the role of the feelings of *saudade*. Transnationalism as a frame of reference for Brazilian immigrants has been used quite regularly (MARGOLIS, 2008, 2001; MCDONNELL and de LOURENÇO, 2008; MITCHELL, 2003). Although Siqueira does not mention transnational spaces, she discusses the reality of Brazilian emigrants lives including a "…close relationship with their hometown. They share their families' everyday life through letters, the Internet, and especially phone calls" (2008, p. 175). Siqueira also notes the importance of money flows within families, across borders.

## *Saudade*

It is not surprising that *saudade*, while known in the heart and in the mind, has several definitions. One aspect of *saudade* that is not challenged is how important it is to Brazilians' sense of self. It is also quite powerful among the Portugueses too (FARRELL, 2006; FELDMAN, 2001; GRAY, 2007; LEAL, 2000). Sales and Loureiro (2008) equate it to homesickness. Others define it as longing or homesickness (KUGEL, 2009). One translation equated it with longing or homesickness but with sense of hopefulness about the future. Feldman describes it as "yearning, longing and desire, triggered by separation and absence" (2001, p. 51). Gibson (2008) describes *saudade* as a "desperate longing" (124). Margolis (2008) in describing the effects of September 11$^{th}$ of the transnational experience of Brazilian immigrants, notes that "matar *saudade*s" means "sate their longing for home" (p. 7). Popular culture has also added to how *saudade* is used. In a review of Stephen Bishop (musician) CD entitled "*Saudade*", the word is explained as an "inner heartfelt longing especially for something or someone beyond reach" (Amazon, review of *Saudade*, p. 1). In an Amazon description of a travel book entitled "*Saudade*: The Possibilities of Place" by Anik See, it is defined as "…having no direct English translation. In its simplest sense, it describes a feeling of longing for something that is now gone, and may yet return, but in all likelihood can never be recaptured." In sum, *saudade* can be understood as a feeling more than nostalgia and homesickness, but related to both. It is also a feeling related to longing, which can be for family, place, home, and a specific period of time in the past.

Issue of staying or going back 'home' and even the very definition of home are generally complex, with decisions influenced by a variety of factors. In 2004 and 2005, we conducted interviews with thirty Brazilian immigrant women about many issues, including how they felt about being in the United States, why they were "here", and how they felt about Brazil. The women ranged in age, length of time in the United States, occupation, religion,

income, why they were in the United States, how long they had intended to stay and how they felt about the US and about Brazil and what they thought U.S. Americans thought about them. One rather profound set of responses relates to this issue of Brazilians eschewing the American Dream. Many of the women came to the US in search of a better or different life for themselves and their families—perhaps in pursuit of the American Dream. But all women that we interviewed were most definitely giving to the American Dream as much -if not more- than taking from the "dream." They also had a deep appreciation for Brazil and their lives there, and for life, as they had experienced it so far, here in the U.S. Yet, they varied widely in their ideas about how long they would be in the United States—so much of their ideas for themselves had to do, of course, with their longing for Brazil. If we frame their ideas about staying, going home and longing in the context of today's economic crisis and the walls closing in, we might speculate that many of the women in our study group would have to or plan to go back to Brazil.

## Women's stories about *saudade*, here and there and the American Dream

The excerpts reported below are in no way meant as a foundation from which to generalize about all of the women that generously shared with us their stories, nor are they meant as a general statement about the 1st generation immigrants. Rather, the excerpts were selected within specific categories, e.g., women who have planned to stay in the U.S. permanently, women who believed their time in the U.S. was temporary, and women who did not know how long they would be in the United States. The interview excerpts reveal interesting positioning within the broad spectrum of the women's experiences of longing.

Whether women planned to stay in the U.S. permanently provoked some of the most interesting responses of our study. The women were asked the question in the same basic way: How long do you think you will stay here? The answers are fascinating. To that question, six women said they would be in the United States permanently. What do we make of this sub-group? First of all, they are as varied as the entire group of women we interviewed. They range in age from twenty to sixty-one and their length of time in the United States from 9 months to seventeen years. Despite research that emphasizes practical reasons for such a life altering decision, their reasons for coming to the U.S. also varied. One woman said that coming to the U.S. had always been her dream. For that she explored the country in the encyclopedias, watched movies and learned English. Another came to the U.S. for

reasons that are consistent with the traditional immigrant narrative: economic necessity. Three women explained that their move to the U.S was to reunite with family members that were already here. One said that she came because she had run out of options in Brazil for her and her family. This subset of women does not differ appreciably in the reasons for coming than the reasons given by the women that did not plan to stay. For example, of the sixteen women that at the time were sure that their stay was not permanent: one woman and her family came to the U.S. because she had always heard that schools were better in the U.S.; one came because she thought she could provide a better life for her child; and the majority came for the hope of better opportunities (which is, of course, why many Brazilians are now going back to Brazil; the U.S. is no longer the land of opportunity). One woman came because the opportunity was there to help establish a community of Brazilians. Finally, the third subset includes the women that were unsure of whether they would stay in the U.S. They too varied little from the rest of the respondents. One came for education for herself, one came because her husband came and most came for a different and/or better life. In summary, most women came to the U.S. for a combination of a perception of a different kind of opportunity and family interests.[4]

## Women who planned to stay

As noted above, six women at the time of the interview were convinced that they would stay in the U.S. permanently. This is somewhat consistent with a recent national report that said about 25% of Brazilians that come to the U.S plan to stay or do not plan to return to Brazil. Maria is one of the few respondents that came to the U.S. without much "looking back." She was in her late 30s and had been in the U.S. for the better part of seventeen years. That is not to say she did not experience the longing and nostalgia for Brazil that many of the other women did, but rather that she had long dreamed of being "here", thus coming "here" was not so much the American dream as it was her dream come true. When she heard the news, she said: "I didn't know anybody here. When I did get the visa, my uncle called me from Rio. My mouth went wide open because that was my dream, to come here. But we didn't know anybody here. So I thought how am I going to get there not knowing anybody. "

[4] It goes without saying that whether the women are in the United States legally, in the process of becoming legal or entered the United States illegally may affect, perhaps profoundly, their feelings of saudade, ideas about where home is located, and their feelings about the United States and about Brazil. Whether they are documented also affects crossing and recrossing borders. Despite the richness of responses that may have surfaced if we inquired about their legal status, we made a decision to avoid this issue. Our priority was to have the women trust us enough to discuss the identity issues.

Maria was one of the few women, perhaps the only one, who spoke directly of *saudade*. In response to a question about whether she had gone back to Brazil, she said: "After six years. It was a very long journey, but I wasn't in a hurry because I didn't leave a husband or children back home. I left my parents but my mom came to visit. So by the end of 1993 I went back. I spent a month there. In terms of *saudade*, my *saudade* had more to do with my desire to come here to the US, growing, to be able to help my parents. *Saudade* can be dealt with by doing positive things, because *saudade* one feels all the time." Helping her parents was a way for her to cope with *saudade*. She was able to go to Brazil several times, but never with any intentions of staying there.

In addition to her coping with *saudade* by helping her parents, another remarkable aspect of Maria's decision to come here was that she did not know anyone, did not realize that several Brazilian communities were developing in the Boston metro area, and knew only that she would help a couple care for their baby. Thus Maria did not even have the sense that there would be a community in the United States. Despite her desire to help her parents, she did not see Brazil as place that pulled her back, emotionally or practically. In the end, her visits to Brazil made "here" the place where she recovered from some desolate feelings about her home country: "But when I went back, things were a thousand times worse. And then when I went back again, things were a thousand times worse from my perspective. I never have the sense that things were getting better. Every time, it was always worse. So for me, I would spend the ticket money. I didn't get paid for the month that I would stay in Brazil and on top of that I would come back depressed."

In many ways Maria is an exception both to the other women of our group and to the phenomenon of immigration and longing more generally. There is much poignancy in her story, including the courage it takes to leave one's home and recreate it in another place. She expressed that she did not understand why people would come to the U.S., stay just a few years, and then go back to Brazil. In Maria's case it was clearly not her inability to understand that phenomenon but rather her own unique self and experience. She thought of herself as somewhat "rootless." She goes on to say: "I never had roots anywhere. I consider myself as if I were a gypsy. I don't create roots anywhere. If I have to move from here tomorrow to another country, I will not stay tied up to this place. I am the type of person who enjoys discovering new cultures, people of different religions, of different cultures, different languages."

Although this has less to do with Maria specifically, her comments about other women are quite revealing, at least about how she thinks other women experience being here. She

said: "Brazilian women are very strong. She has to be the backbone/column in order to be able to hold the entire building up. Because she has her children, she has her husband and then she has to face physical work. She is the pillar of the family. And this brings her a lot of stress and depression. Brazilians are very attached to family members. A lot of times people come here and they have no relatives here. They become depressed. Depression is very common here."

Renata, forty-four, in the U.S. for six years, is not likely to go back to Brazil and never intended to go back permanently. Renata came to the U.S. because of the perception of better options "here" than "there." About her view of where she lives, she said: "To be honest, I moved here for good. In my mind, I came with this attitude. Depending on the situation, you adapt and you change in order to get along. As the years go by you get a little harder and more experienced, but as the wounds come, you develop a shield to protect yourself from the difficulties, etc. And so I came. Just as others have done it, I did it." Renata, later in the interview, talks about the ideas of "roots." She, as it was true of many other women, says that family, not necessarily place, are the roots, and it is family that keeps women from feeling isolated. Renata, although talking about difficulties, does not connect them explicitly to being away from home, but rather to being here and lacking a family. Her expression of *saudade* is more about what others seem to give up when they come to the United States: family.

## Women who did not plan to stay permanently

Sixteen women, reflecting on when they came to the United States, were quite definite about the ephemeral nature of their stay in the United States; some, in fact, were unequivocal—they would not be staying, and even a few knew or thought they knew the exact length of time they would stay. It is a fascinating feature of the immigrant life that people could have it so clear, one way or the other, about whether they would return to Brazil. Some seemed to have a "project" of building a better life, starting with a foundation of experiences they had in Brazil, continuing with a temporary stay in the United States that would add to their economic or social capital, and commencing again "back home" in Brazil. For many of the women who believed their stay would be temporary, the transnational status allowed them to continue to produce a life space both in Brazil and in the United States. Depending of the timing of their arrival in the United States and assuming they have access to some technology, most respondents knew nothing other than a transnational space for their experiences. This

certainly facilitated the prospect of a future life in Brazil, and enhanced their idea of Brazil as home.

Due to the confidential way we approached the interviewees, it became almost impossible for us to track down most of them, even those who stayed, because we left almost no paper trail, as required by the institutional review. However, given the relatively small size of the Brazilian communities in Framingham, MA, and elsewhere in MA, we were able to maintain indirect contact with some of the women in our study. We asked some follow-up questions to a couple of women; Flávia is one such woman.

At the time of the interview, Flávia, twenty-two years old, had been in the United States for a little over two years, but she had also been here before as a young child. She came to the U.S. to continue her studies, especially in English language. Although young relative to many of the women we interviewed, Flávia had a wealth of experience that belied her age. Her plan at that time was to stay in the U.S. for two years, thinking that would be enough to finish her education. Now, in 2009, we find Flavia no longer in the U.S, but also not in Brazil. We are reluctant to identify where she is living now for confidentiality reasons. But at the time of the interview she thought she would be in the U.S for an additional six months, and then return to Brazil. Although Flavia was rather instrumental in her responses about returning to Brazil, she has not gone back permanently and doubts that she ever will. Flavia responded that, when she thinks of "home" (note to translation), she thinks of the US. Her longing or *saudade* has more to do with family in Brazil, her mother in particular. But rather than thinking of going "home" to Brazil to be with her mother, Flavia wants to bring her mother to the United States. When asked directly what she misses about Brazil, the only response she had was her mother. So for Flávia, her longing meant bringing "home" to her. As an aside, and related to Brazilians eschewing the American Dream, Flávia is not unlike many other Brazilians. She knows five people that have gone back to Brazil.

Isabel is thirty-eight and has been in the U.S for eight years. She said that she wanted to go back after two years of work here. But eight years later, she is still here. She says "There is. I think that here there is a certain security, for example, I enter into my home and I feel more secure. In Brazil I think I have more fear that someone would try to open the door and enter. One of the things I like about this country is the security, the security when you leave, when you enter your home, where you work. One of the other things I like about this country is the security that comes from the work. I have the money I need to take care of things. So there's a feeling of security in two forms: security from unemployment, and security from violence, and so here I feel secure in those two ways… I'm very grateful to be in this country,

because I've been able to realize some of the dreams I've had in my life, and if I had been in Brazil I don't think I would have been able to accomplish what I have done. I have my own house. I have a car. I'm here with my daughter; she's studying. The church I attend is filled with a lot of warm friendly people. It's a different world here. I know I'm small, but I'm very grateful to be here. I feel that God has really blessed me. I feel that this country has helped me to be able to reach nearly all of my dreams. [laughing] Not all of them, but many of them." Although Isabel's view is related to her dreams, she did not seem to have the same kind of longing for Brazil as home that some of the other women had; in fact, she attributes some nostalgic, romanticized and dream-like qualities to her life in the United States.

Elza, 41 years old, who has been here for fourteen years, planned to stay for five years. "The idea in the beginning was that we would stay for five years, that we would do some work here for the church, to help the Americans, and then return to Brazil. We didn't expect that we would be making a life here. We don't intend to go back. But things change, you know. There's the question of my children, where they will want to live, whether they will want to stay here or go back to Brazil, so the question of your family is big. For me, my family is the most important thing. Wherever they are, I want to be… But could we really address the question of who I really am? Where am I going? What kind of difference am I going to make? I think this is very important, especially for Brazilian women. When a Brazilian woman arrives here, something beautiful happens. In Brazil she is pushed down a lot, unfortunately, but here that doesn't happen. Here the doors open for her." Needless to say, Elza believes that life in Brazil is hard for women. Consequently, although she may experience *saudade*, her remarks imply almost the opposite. Elza's idea of home is family; she is with family, so she is home. It could be that the place is much less relevant.

Lúcia, in her late twenties, who had been here for nearly two years, had decided that she and her family would stay in the United States for six to eight years. When asked why she came, she said the following: "We already had a well-established life. However we had a greater dream, which was to be able to give our kids a bigger opportunity, by giving them a better schooling. Since we had always heard people saying that the U.S had greater opportunities for kids to grow up like...becoming better professionals, to have better schooling. So we decided to come after a better schooling for our kids, in order to give them a better life quality." Later in the interview Lúcia talked more about what she perceived as difficult about life in Brazil and her reasons for rethinking that her stay would be temporary: "But, when you get here, you find out that America it is not only a country where you can make money, but you can also find a more tranquil and peaceful lifestyle. You begin to have a

better life, and then you start to wish for a better future. Then, Brazil, in your opinion, becomes just a place for a vacation but not a place to live and make money. Maybe you would live there when you get old and retire. You might live at the seashore, a tranquil life… But for you to live and make a living, there's no way. Even more when you have kids, there is a lot of violence in Brazil, and it gets worse each day. There's unemployment, a lot of people…Prostitution, drugs, violence and robbery. Everything one can think of is there in the big cities. And the towns are starting to become exactly like this, too. So, it is hard." Lúcia's situation was unusual. As she says, she went from a good life in Brazil to realize her dream for her family of a better life here. Brazil became, for her, a place to visit. Emotional ties to her "home" country do exist, as she made clear later in the interview. They are mainly through family "left behind." It would be interesting to put Lúcia's reflection about more opportunity in the United States in today's context of the economic crisis.

## Women that did not know if they would stay or leave

Marta, one of the "oldest" women in our study, has been in the U.S. for around 15 years. When asked about staying in the United States she said: "Who knows. After 9/11 I thought I was going back, but I didn't. I don't know. Sometimes I wake up and I ask myself, "What am I doing here?" "Today is the day". I think of going back. I think that what scares me about Brazil is work. Badly or well, I survive here. I am afraid of going there and … I think I can get a job in Brazil. I have acquaintances, but I worry about the salaries there. Perhaps it is an excuse so that I remain here. But I am scared of going back and get stuck with a low wage and not have the mobility I have here. I can go to Brazil; I go to Europe. I don't want to stay there like." Although we have not re-interviewed Marta, we do know that she is still in the United States. It may be that the economic realities, which are global at this point, may make her more secure now in relation to Brazil than in relation to the United States.

Marta, in this and in other sections of the interview, expresses many doubts and little homesickness about Brazil, but she is no more sanguine about being in the United States. Although she has invested significantly in life in the United States, she sees life her as being complicated and often hard. The length of time in the United States and the presence of the family may have assuaged feelings of *saudade*. At the very least, experience and family may have made any longing or homesickness for Brazil less conscious. Similarly, her considerable experience in the United States has allowed her clarity on what the United States can and cannot offer.

Cristina, 22 years old and in the United States for five years, was never sure of whether she would stay or go. When asked about her feelings about Brazil, she said: "Yes I do. I miss my relatives, my grandma and my grandpa. I was always very attached to them. But I don't miss it as I have seen other people that get here miss. Some people cry. I'm not like that. I can live here just fine. I have adapted very well. My family adapted very quickly. Because we speak among ourselves, like me and my brother speak, we adapted very well here. So this urge to speak like, to come back to Brazil, we don't have that." Cristina came with her parents and her siblings. Being with her family may have affected how she felt about Brazil. She did not have as many people to miss or as many life experiences.

Later in the interview, Cristina talked about life here and there: "There was a time when I had more family members here in the U.S than in Brazil; my grandma was the one that did all the visiting because she had more sons living here in the U.S than in Brazil. I think that just on my father's family side I had more than 8 uncles living with their families here for more than 15 years. They all returned to Brazil now, but they are coming back because they could not adapt. So, my family will increase once again here in the U.S. They stayed there for one year, but they decided to come back…. But they could not live over there and now they are coming back because of the violence, and all those things. So, they are coming back."

## Conclusion

The eight women quoted in this paper ranged in age from twenty-two to fifty-five. They varied considerably in the length of time they had been in the U.S, from only two years to seventeen years. Their excerpts were not selected because they are representative of the entire group of thirty, but that is not to say that their experiences are atypical. They were selected as storytellers who, in response to our questions on their feelings about here and there, were more expressive.[5] Each of the women quoted above is in one of three categories: women who came "here" knowing they would stay; women who came "here" convinced they would go back "there" or somewhere else; and women who did not know in the future where

[5] Almost four years have passed since we completed the bulk of the thirty interviews. Each time we read them, we notice something new. We had examined extensively reasons for coming to the United States and the length of time each of the women expected to stay. This was the first examination of the transcripts that I noticed just how few women went into detail about their feelings regarding here and there. We have to be careful about viewing the women's stories through our own lens; that is, through our interpretation we do not want to alter the meaning of the women's words. Thus, we must be wary about concluding anything that is not part of the written narrative. That said, one tentative conclusion, made with both caution and respect for our respondents is that perhaps many of these interviews illustrate *saudade* as something more latent: many women, quite understandably, find thoughts of "home" too difficult to talk about?

"here" would be. They were also selected because they made fascinating remarks on *saudade* and returning home. It is impossible to generalize from these results. However, these and other stories point to an undeniable reality that may seem clichéd, but is, nonetheless, poignant and powerful: for most women, regardless of how long they have been here, how long they had planned to stay, and why they came to the United States in the first place, family is the basis of "home," the motive for defining "here and there." Family is inextricable with *saudade*. That said, these excerpts were not selected because almost all of the women centered ideas about family in their perspectives about home but it is important quality about women's lives. Several of the women spoke about being motivated by feelings of security—whether they are more secure in the United States or would feel more secure back in Brazil. It is important to explore more fully the relationship between security, family and *saudade*.

When considering the incorporation and settlement of immigrants, including the group of women we interviewed, one question that surfaces is the relationship between larger social, economic and political factors, the transnational possibility and the respondents' feelings about here and there and "home." The transnational possibility allows for the idea or the dream of a home in two places; with family here and there. Consequently, many women have an emotional connection to both places that can be developed and nurtured on a regular basis. The question is: does that strengthen or weaken *saudade*? A corollary question is whether the transnational possibility means women do not have to make strong ties here because there is, for some, the plan to go home. That dream of going home may strengthen or weaken the longing. There seems to be little connection between the way women think about here and there, ideas of home, and feelings of *saudade* and whether or not the women planned to stay here permanently.

Several other issues need more development. First, what is the role of religion in immigrant lives and *saudade*? Many of the women we talked to identified strongly with a religion and a subset of them talked in the interviews about the importance of church, God, and God's direction for their lives. Second, given the economic and political context of the past couple of years, which encompasses the time since our interviews, is it likely that the quality of *saudade* has changed? That is, for women for whom realizing their dreams meant taking a chance and coming to the United States, is the "dream deferred" connected to a more intense feeling of longing, nostalgia and homesickness and, perhaps, even of hope of a different dream? Finally, the importance of family to quality of life is almost universal, but are these stories showing that it is gendered too?

[i] A google search identifies dozens of articles about the Brazilian return phenomenon. Many of the articles seem sensationalized while others are tempered, reporting on the basis of what seems like solid journalistic investigation in which experts in the substantive area of Brazilian immigration are referenced or quoted. What is not captured, necessarily, by a typical reading of these articles, perhaps in an actual newspaper, is the vituperative, often racist, commentary that appears alongside the internet versions of these same articles. In a shameful, if not wholly unexpected, display of the very reasons that Brazilian and as well other immigrant sub-populations are returning home, the U.S. clearly shows its ideological side, rife with commentary that seems almost threatening if not actually threatening. One of the working assumptions is that immigrant equates with illegal. Although it is true that a significant number of Brazilians in the United States are not yet legal and may never be because of the crackdown, it is also true that many are legal, have the correct papers, and that many of the people not yet legal make a significant contribution to the economy, culture and politics. Yet, that connection of Brazilian immigrant=illegal make some of these news articles quite ominous. For example, in a comment post in response to an article on December 28, 2008, a poster said the following: your kidding right? framingham is a breeding ground for crime since the illegal Brazilians took over the city. you can drive down any side street and get any drug you want in that part of the city. If we had it our way there are 1500+ people in this patriot group, armed, and growing larger and were they to deputise us we would clear out that town in less than a day. All we need is 25 buses and some planes, we will supply the manpower
We suspect that more Brazilians do not leave the area because they either cannot afford to or for better or worse, they have made it home. However, these types of responses lead one to wonder at what point "home" becomes too inhospitable to be thought of home anymore.
The google search also brought up about ten articles on Brazilians leaving the U.S. all published within the last 18 months or so, documenting this movement out from a variety of areas including Boston, Newark, the area covered by the Miami consulate, which includes several southern states, and Charleston, S.C. Each article mentions a similar set of factors: decline of particular industries, most notably construction, decreasing value of the dollar, the increasing anti-immigrant sentiment and the crackdown on "illegals."

# SAUDADES E RETORNO:
# Brasileiras falam sobre o aqui e o lá

## Resumo

Este artigo analisa o conceito de retorno ao Brasil articulado por um pequeno grupo de brasileiras que moram na região de Boston, Massachusetts. O tempo de moradia de cada uma das mulheres entrevistadas varia consideravelmente. Todas nos comentaram se tinham planos de voltar ao Brasil. Neste artigo nós examinamos a relação entre o conceito de saudade, a experiência de ser transnacional e o desejo de retornar ao Brasil. Nossa investigação se baseia em três categorias de expectativas das mulheres que encontramos nos seus comentários sobre "saudade". Os as três categorias são de: um grupo de mulheres que planejam permanecer no Estado Unidos; um em que elas pretendem ficar nos Estados Unidos temporariamente e outro em que as mulheres não tinham certeza se iriam voltar ou ficar nos Estados Unidos. Usamos fragmentos das narrativas das mulheres para ilustrar a relação entre a ideia de voltar para o Brasil, saudade e ser transnacional.

**Palavras-Chave:** Imigrante brasileira. Retorno ao Brasil. Saudade. Transnacional.

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