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"Differences of habit and language are nothing at all if our aims are identical and our hearts are open" (Albus Dumbledore)

Introduction

Since the reform of the *Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act* in 1990, Japan has seen an increment of migrants coming from different countries. The law made possible for many migrants to obtain a working visa and secure a job legally (Sassen 1998, 60). Those migrants constitute a supply of labor force for small and medium size factories. Among them, Japanese descendants who were born and raised in South American countries such as Brazil are a particular case due to the ethnic component of their identity. Their migration is marked by push-pull events in Brazil and in Japan.⁽¹⁾ On the one hand, the unstable economic and social circumstances, especially the failure of the *Plan Collor* that provoked a strong economic crisis on Brazil during the 1980s, were important *push* factors for many people to migrate in order to secure jobs abroad. On the other hand, the raising economy of Japan was a significant *pull* factor to start the migration process of Latin Americans. Known as *decassegui*⁽²⁾ (temporary migrant workers), thousands of Japanese Brazilians arrived to Japan, rapidly becoming the third largest foreign resident population after Korean and Chinese populations (MOJ 2008).

According to (Sakai 2006, 66), in the last fifteen years most of the existing academic research has used a "structural approach" rather than analyzing politic, economic and socio-cultural aspects from the daily lived experiences of the Japanese Brazilian

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migrants themselves. Nonetheless, the works of Ishi (1999, 2003), Linger (2001), Roth (2002), and Tsuda (2003) among others are examples of an academic approach that sees those aforementioned aspects from the perspective of the Japanese Brazilian migrants themselves. Lately there is also academic research focusing on the specific situations of second generation of Japanese Brazilians in Japan at schools and on the issues of language acquisition (Shimizu and Shimizu 2001, Megumi 2008).

In order to understand Japanese Brazilians and their daily lived experiences as migrants we need to take into account multiple variables. Following that approach, this article addresses migrant's daily lived experiences by intersecting faith, gender, partnership and family formations among Japanese Brazilian individuals who attend the Roman Catholic Church in Japan. By looking at their reality, I also connect the daily lived experiences of the first and second generation of Japanese Brazilian migrants in Japan. The encounter between cultures in Japan, particularly in terms of marriage and transnational and transcultural families -- the so-called "international families"-- is a growing concern in academic work. By focusing on the case of Japanese Brazilian migrants, I unpack the multiple realities that their transnational and transcultural families face while in Japan.

This will be done in three sections. First I will explore the intersection of gender and faith among Japanese Brazilian migrants and their families, paying attention to the role they play in their migration experience. Second, as most of my Japanese Brazilian interviewees report that they reconnect with their Christian faith while in Japan, I will concentrate in the experiences of *finding* faith. Of special interest is to explore how those experiences are related to gender role expectations and the sexual division of labor within a community of faith such as the Roman Catholic Church in Japan. Finally, I will focus on transnational and transcultural partnerships and families, particularly paying attention to the situations that their offspring -- the second generation of Japanese Brazilian migrants in Japan-- face amidst larger society.

Although the case of marriages between a Japanese citizen and a non-Japanese migrant has become evident, these are not the only cases. Japanese Brazilian migrants also date and/or marry people from many other cultures. This adds new nuances to the transnational and transcultural formation of partnerships and families. Throughout this article I will use gender as an example of how society constructs social and cultural norms and how that construction is conditioned by religious beliefs.

1. Intersecting Faith, Gender and Migrations

1.1. The role of faith among migrants

Faith and gender are both based on the cultural socialization of the migrants' place of origin. According to Herskovitz (1948):

Culture is essentially a construct that describes the total body of belief, behaviors, knowledge, sanctions, values and goals that mark the way of life of a people. (...) In the final analysis it comprises the things that people have, the things that people do, and

what they think (p. 625).

Culture, thus, travels with the migrants, and it is neither forgotten nor exchangeable (Tanner 1997: 25-29). Instead of choosing *either/or* culture, Japanese Brazilian migrants negotiate different cultural aspects between their place of origin (Brazil) and the host society (Japan). In fact, in order to live out a faith experience or perform one's own gender identity a cultural framework is needed. Faith practices are deeply rooted in cultural settings, as Hirschman (2003) explains:

Immigrants, (...) have spiritual needs, which are most meaningful when packaged in a familiar linguistic and cultural context. In particular, immigrants are drawn to the fellowship of ethnic churches and temples, where primary relationships among congregants are reinforced with traditional foods and customs. Immigrants also have many economic and social needs, and (...) churches, temples, and synagogues have a long tradition of community service, particularly directed at those most in need of assistance. The combination of culturally attuned spiritual comfort and material assistance heightens the attractions of membership and participation in churches for new immigrants (...) (p. 2).

This also points out to social networks that are necessary for the survival of the migrants in the new society, whose cohesion is done through the interaction of cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and gender aspects.

Although both gender and religious experiences are of special interest in the daily life of Japanese Brazilian migrants, their study still remains minimal.⁽³⁾ Nonetheless, the intersection of gender, religion, and migration reveals the complex situation of Japanese Brazilian migrants, especially when their cultural performativity may collide with the cultural and social expectations of the Japanese society.

In the process of adaptation of Japanese Brazilian migrants into the Japanese society, the role of faith-based communities is becoming increasingly important, especially since they offer support and facilitate ways of belonging. Different Christian or Buddhist branches as well as new religious movements originated both in Brazil and in Japan are present among the lives of Japanese Brazilian migrants. Faith-based communities in some cases are the first place to be contacted by a migrant upon arrival to Japan, thus increasing her/his participation in that organization. This is a characteristic shared with other migrants around the world. Their participation in faith-based communities also leads to new commitments to their religious beliefs. On this Hirschman (2003), drawing from his studies in the United States, affirms:

Customary religious practices, such as attending weekly services, lighting candles, burning incense in front of a family altar, and reciting prayers are examples of communal and family rituals, which were brought from the old country to the new. However, these activities often take on new meanings after migration. The normal feeling of loss experienced by immigrants means that familiar religious rituals learned

in childhood, such as hearing prayers in one's native tongue, provide an emotional connection, especially when shared with others. These feelings are accentuated from time to time with the death of a family member or some other tragedy. (...) [R]eligious beliefs and attachments have stronger roots after immigration than before (pp. 6-7).

Faith experiences were one of the main focuses on my research among Japanese Brazilian migrants who currently attend the Roman Catholic Church in Japan. However the way they live their faith is in accord with the cultural expectations of their place of origin, Brazil. This is an important aspect to take into account when analyzing the situation of transnational/transcultural individual's life and families. Although religion is a universal experience, its expression in the daily life of migrants is mediated by culture. Moreover, sociologists such as Durkheim (1912: 15-16) as well as anthropologists such as Malinowski (1984: 21) and Geertz (1973: 90), although coming from very different perspectives, agreed that religion takes a critical part in the definition of morality as well as in the process of social decision-making.

1.2. Reifying hetero-patriarchy?

Although religion and gender are possible through a cultural mediation, their connection remains occluded to the individuals themselves, who are not always aware of this. In fact, most of the times, the cultural and social constructions of gender are legitimized and reinforced through specific religious beliefs. Hetero-patriarchy is a social construction that has granted social privileges to heterosexual males (Godelier, 1986: 231). Furthermore, religious beliefs have also benefited from hetero-patriarchalism by framing the Divine in masculine terms, a fact that was hindered until the arising of Feminist Theology (Schurler-Firenza 1994, 130, Radford Ruether 1993, 117). In analyzing the cultural interaction of Japanese Brazilian migrants, we observe that belief systems such as the Roman Catholic Church impact in their performativities of gender by molding expectations and legitimizing those expectations within the religious corpus of faith. Although transversal to all Christianity, the process of migration and the creation of ethnic communities within the Roman Catholic Church in Japan intensify the cultural impact on partnerships and families.

A clear example can be found in the sermons of many Roman Catholic priests. In accordance to cultural and social expectations already ingrained in Roman Catholicism, these sermons tend to reproduce the hetero-patriarchal sexual division of labor. Yamanaka (2003a: 169) has described this in terms that "father" equals "bread-winner" and "mother" equals "homemaker" and "family caregiver", even when women at factories work side-by-side with men in order to contribute to the family's economy while living in Japan. Although the sermons from priests are helping some families to face the issues of incorporation into Japanese society, they are simultaneously reinforcing the hetero-patriarchal system and its cultural mandates that enfold the religious beliefs.

Another example of this can be found in the thematic masses. January is the month for *Missa da Sagrada Família* (the mass of the Holy Family) at Roman Catholic parishes. Based on the family experience of Jesus and his parents, families in the audience are encouraged to live their faith by his example. In almost every mass that I participated in, one of the chosen songs was *Oração Pela Família* (Prayer for the Family), written by Brazilian

Father Zezinho. This song reads in one of its stanzas:

That the man would carry over his shoulder the grace of [being] a father; / that the woman would be a heaven of tenderness, embrace [*aconchego*] and affection [*calor*]. / And that the children would know the strength that emerges from love (Zezinho 1997, translation mine).

The background for this song is the hetero-patriarchal ideology, which praises the sexual division of labor by framing it on a dyadic system through which females and males are characterized and, therefore, forced to comply. For example, while males are understood as “fathers”, whose characteristics are to be “strong” and “tough”, females are understood as “mothers”, whose quality resides in their internal “emotions”. This deprives both groups of the other’s stipulated characteristics. In extreme cases this may disavow either males who openly “express their feelings” or females who are “strong and tough”. Throughout the song, traces of this ideology can be observed, as in other stanzas this song also situates the relationality of females and males through the notion of the nuclear hetero-sexual family:

That husband and wife would have the strength to love without limits./ (...) That the children would learn in their laps the meaning of life. / That the family celebrates the sharing of hugs and bread (Zezinho 1997, translation mine).

Once again, the tone of the song presupposes that the social and cultural mandates for males are to be “fathers”, for females to be “mothers”, and together to have a “family.” There are two other festivities that bear the same tone: *Mother’s day* and *Father’s day*. In a greeting card distributed to fathers in one of my fieldwork sites, we read a poem entitled “Pai” (father): “To be a father is to be a companion, constructing within the familiar nest the greatness of the children, in order to undergird [*aliçerçar*] the [moral] values that build the society” (translation mine).

Consequently, the assumption that males should be “fathers” and females should be “mothers” relegates to a second place those who do not fulfill these social and cultural mandates. For example, single mothers, single fathers, or other types of families different from the hetero-patriarchal nuclear family are not contemplated in this type of religious discourse. Furthermore, expectations like this create a disadvantage. What is required from females and males may be, at times too large or impossible to fulfill. Latin American Liberation Theology, to which Brazilian Roman Catholicism is deeply indebted, has already stated that the creation of ideal models of motherhood, of fatherhood, of parenthood, or of family have the consequence that real human beings may not be able to live according to the demands of such ideal types (SFT 1997: 74).

Notwithstanding, both families and Church agents are striving to build a better life in Japan while enduring the challenges of living in a different culture and society. In some cases, the Church is really a space for cohesion among family members. However, we would benefit for our analysis, and for the Roman Catholic Church in the creation of its pastoral work, if a deconstruction of the hetero-patriarchal ideology underlying faith and gender

discourses is done in order to unpack its cultural basement.

2. The Faith of Japanese Brazilian Migrant Women

Agreeing with Hirschman (2003: 6-7), the majority of the Japanese Brazilian migrants that I interviewed reported that they did not attend church in Brazil. For most of them their connection to the Roman Catholic Church was a result of the cultural expectation or a social custom. Those who remained active at Roman Catholic Church in Brazil were not always aware of the cultural grounding of their own faith. In other words, the performance of this faith is, and certainly remains in Japan, framed within the gender expectations and the cultural wrappage in which that faith is contained. This impacts their interaction with both Japanese nationals and other migrants in many ways, especially in the negotiation of spaces and the inclusion of multicultural elements within the religious ceremonies of the Roman Catholic Church in Japan.

Most of my Japanese Brazilian interviewees expressed that they had “found again” [*reencontrado*] their faith while in Japan. For example Rosinha, a woman in her early 40s who migrated to Japan with her family is now very active at the Roman Catholic parish close to where she lives. In Brazil, she married a Japanese man who, at the time, was working for a Japanese company that has offices in São Paulo. They had two children, who attended elementary school in Brazil. Short after that, her husband was transferred back to Japan and she followed him along with their children.

Although Rosinha is not the typical migrant worker, as she is a housewife whose visa is supported by her husband, who is a Japanese citizen, she is representative of those migrants who found their faith while in Japan. In fact when I met Rosinha, she was accompanied by her elder son, a young man in his early 20s who is also very active at the Roman Catholic Church activities. During our conversation, Rosinha talked about her faith as follows:

In Japan I have found faith again [*reencontrado*]. I was born Catholic in Brazil, but did not really have faith. Now I have faith [...] I have knowledge of Jesus, and I am happy! If I have a problem, I have Jesus. Therefore, if I have problems, I know I will overcome them.

The experience of having found faith again while in Japan has served Rosinha to face the struggles to adjust and live in a foreign society. Faith has become her strength.

Along with some priests and nuns whom I also interviewed, Rosinha voiced her worries about the lack of commitment to the Christian faith of some of her fellow [Japanese] Brazilian migrants:

Many Brazilians only think of earning more and more money in Japan [...]. They do not think about religion. But I believe that almost 70% of the people sooner or later “find again” [*reencontram*] their faith while in Japan.

Conversely, Rosinha as well as many other Japanese Brazilian migrants share the same reality. Their experience as migrants in a different country mark their activities and choices; immersed in the struggles to work and survive in an adverse society may dilute their possibilities for leisure time. Although for most of them, their primary goal is to work, soon after discovering a community of faith, they focus on a broader panorama that includes their cultural and ethnic needs. In other words, most of the times, this finding of faith in Japan is a response to the social and cultural needs that migrants face, which is made possible by the very presence of already established ethnic communities within religious organizations, especially the Roman Catholic Church in Japan. Even though finding faith is a valid and sincere religious experience, that experience is simultaneously conditioned by the need of migrants to interact in spaces of socialization and networking. Furthermore, those spaces are culturally informed, allowing Japanese Brazilian migrants to voice their inner needs within a known and safe environment and in a language that is familiar to them.

Some of my Japanese Brazilian interviewees have even discovered a religious vocation. Stella, a woman in her early 30s, will become a nun. She found her religious vocation after her arrival to Japan and through her participation at a local Roman Catholic parish. Stella came to Japan in order to earn the money necessary to pay for her university loan. After graduating with a Master degree, she and one of her eldest siblings sought a job in Japan through a broker company. She worked hard at a factory for nearly eight years and she finally paid her loan. However, in the process, she decided to become a nun. She narrated her conversion experience:

After a year [in Japan] I had a very strong and special encounter with Jesus, and that is why all my plans have changed, because they are not the same as before [coming to Japan]. It was something so strong that for approximately a year and a half I quit my job at the factory and I dedicated my time to serve the community, to serve the Lord. I visited people who were in prison, I visited people who were sick, and I also did social work.

Because of this experience of “encountering Jesus”, her whole life goals and priorities changed. Therefore, in her fifth year in Japan, and under the guidance of the local parish priest, Stella began a three-year discernment process for her vocation. In 2007 she finally entered a convent.

Rosinha and Stella seem to be examples of other Japanese Brazilian migrants in my study, in which I interviewed 27 women and 23 men. Most of them share a similar experience: moving from being a non-practicing Catholic in Brazil to being a committed one in Japan. Rosinha and Stella are also significant examples of a wider network of Brazilian women who dedicate their free time to serve in the Roman Catholic Church through several social ministries.

Furthermore, they are two different examples of the reality of women within the Roman Catholic Church. On the one hand, Rosinha incarnates those women who marry, form a family, and dedicate free time to serve in the activities of the Roman Catholic Church while honoring the sexual division of labor by taking care of their children and their husbands.

On the other hand, Stella's vocation as a nun implies the renunciation of her sexual activity (chastity) along with the possibility to form a family (celibacy). It also entitles the re-assignment of her gender role under the male-oriented hierarchical structure of the Roman Catholic Church. Both cases, along with the stories of other Japanese Brazilian women, reveal that faith and gender do occupy a strong place amidst a community of faith. Although the Roman Catholic Church has a strong male leadership, the daily activities of the Church, as well as the more *domestic* activities (such as cleaning the sanctuary and setting the altar and the flower arrangements, or preparing the coffee after mass), are mainly done by women such as Rosinha. Moreover, within the clerical strata of the church, those domestic activities are carried out by women such as Stella. These gender roles reinforce the sexual division of labor, thus revealing once again how gender is greatly influenced by the understandings of a religious belief.

3. The Universe of Families

As seen in the previous section, Japanese Brazilian women and men are expected to fulfill the social mandate of forming a family. There is a saying that "every family is a world in itself". If this is true, that is, that every family constitutes a world in itself, then analyzing different families is to be in the presence of a whole universe of multiple worlds interacting with each other. So different are the circumstances and history of every family formation, that it is impossible to comprehend their singularities through a universal lens. On the contrary, we practically need to take a case-by-case approach.

The role of Christianity in influencing the formation of families among Japanese Brazilians who attend the Roman Catholic Church in Japan is remarkable. This is in accord, in fact, with the role Christianity has played throughout its history. The present definitions and expectations of gender roles, the sexual division of labor, or the norms pertaining to decency and morality were not created in a vacuum. They were socially, historically, and culturally constructed over time. In fact, a historical account shows us that the particular cases of Western-European and (North) American constructions concerning gender, sexuality, and/or bodies were adopted by Christianity after the Protestant Reformation, thus reinforcing them. On this Nussbaum (1997) states:

(...) [E]ven the most cursory excursion into comparative anthropology and social history makes plain that the "nuclear" family unit headed by a heterosexual couple, dwelling in its own private little house, and committed to intimacy concern for one another and the well-being of children is so far from being "natural" that it has hardly ever existed outside of Western Europe and North America after the Protestant Reformation (p. 31).

The construction of ideologies of gender or the sexual division of labor within Christianity would start with the beginning of the Reformation. Nonetheless, throughout its history, Christianity has assumed and negotiated with the socially sanctioned constructions of

gender and sexuality of each era in order to mold gender expectations, body constructions and notions of morality in Western countries.⁽⁴⁾ The contemporary Western notion of the nuclear monogamous heterosexual family was a product of modernity, defined over time to its actual form around the European capitalist first industrial revolution (ca. 1750).⁽⁵⁾ Adopted by Christianity, which accompanied the rise of capitalism, that notion of nuclear heterosexual family became socially understood as “sanctioned by God”. In the end, this construction could not be questioned, as it was taken as *natural* in the Western world. Soon, Roman Catholicism and Protestantism enforced this notion worldwide, having their ministers, priests and nuns as the agents who reproduced the hetero-patriarchal ideology among the new converts. In consequence, the notion of the modern nuclear family became *the* model for families not only in Western world but also for other societies.

This cultural and historical aspect is important to be remembered when we talk about transnational and transcultural families as Japanese Brazilian migrants will bring those notions to Japan along with other cultural and social behaviors learned in Brazil. This is an experience shared with other migrant groups. In some cases, for example, coming from cultures where multiple frameworks of partnership and family co-exist such as polygamy; individuals may behave very differently to what is expected by the host society where they migrate, especially when the legal system does not provide for that type of families.

3.1. Partnerships: Different types and intersections

In my fieldwork I encountered different types of Japanese Brazilians as well as other Japanese descendants who were not Brazilians. Their families were very particular cases. The universe of families is complex and varied. However, once in Japan, many of those different complexities tend to be overlooked when we only think about transnational and transcultural families as formed by “one individual of Japanese nationality and one individual of non-Japanese nationality.” Reality shows us that this is just one of the many cases that we encounter in the field. They all share the experience of being Japanese descendants or being married to a Japanese descendant. But because of their country of origin, mother tongue, and culture of origin, they are very different from each other. For example, I met a family formed by a Japanese descendant woman from Brazil and a Japanese descendant from Peru. Their child was attending Japanese public school. So at home they interact in three different languages: Portuguese, Spanish and Japanese.

Even coming from the same country or speaking the same language is not a guarantee that culturally and socially individuals would interact with each other in the same way. Globalization have accelerated the process of contact among different cultures through transnational and transcultural migrant families, but the issues arising from those cultural interactions still remain as a challenge. Japanese Brazilians are also affected by this situation when they fall in love with someone from a different country or from a different culture. Furthermore, their notions of family could be different from the standards amidst Japanese society.⁽⁶⁾ In this sense, a long discursive tradition of Japan as a mono-ethnic and a monoculture society (Yoshino, 1992; Befu, 2001) may impede the visible importance of the different cultural traditions among these transnational and transcultural partnerships and families.

As the families usually begin with a couple, it is particularly important in every case to pay attention to how culture impacts the way both individuals interact with each other in their relationship. In other words, the love between two individuals or their willingness to be together does not always result in the formation of either a partnership or a family. Cultural and social expectations are to be made visible in order to negotiate the different aspects of their lives and, in doing so, are able to remain together. The interaction of religion constitutes a specific set of negotiations that would be necessary for the couple to deal on a daily basis, for example having an altar at home or doing prayers. Having children will also add the situation of making decisions about how to raise them, and deciding which corpus of beliefs or aspects of both religions should be emphasized for their education.

The Roman Catholic Church's teachings already express this concern. The document *Erga Migrantes Caritas Christi* (The love of Christ towards migrants) (2004) is one of the most important resources that reflect the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church about transcultural and transnational families. On the one hand, for example, it welcomes and encourages multicultural societies when it expresses:

The passage from monocultural to multicultural societies can be a sign of the living presence of God in history and in the community of [hu]mankind, for it offers a providential opportunity for the fulfilment of God's plan for a universal communion. This new historical context is characterised by the thousand different faces of humanity and, unlike the past, diversity is becoming commonplace in very many countries. Therefore Christians are called to give witness to and practise not only the spirit of tolerance - itself a great achievement, politically and culturally speaking, not to mention religiously - but also respect for the other's identity. (pp. 14-15)

This quotation offers a first element that is the respect for the culture and identity of the other/s. It is important that this document mentions a phenomenon of the 21st century, which is the fact of increasing multicultural societies. Not even Japan has remained exogenous to this process, as multiculturalism is becoming more and more visible.

However, in terms of interreligious marriages, the document does not view this with positive eyes:

With regard to marriage between Catholics and non-Christian migrants, this should be discouraged, though to a varying degree, depending on the religion of each partner, with exceptions in special cases (...). It should in fact be remembered that, in the words of Pope John Paul II, "In families where both parents are Catholic, it is easier for them to share their common faith with their children. While acknowledging with gratitude interfaith marriages which succeeded in nourishing the faith of both spouses and children, the Synod encourages pastoral efforts to promote marriages between people of the same faith" (p. 50).

The ideas expressed in this quotation tell us about the challenge to the Roman Catholic Church, which is to reconcile its openness for universal fellowship with the specific

case of multi-religious marriages, where that fellowship should also be reflected. In this sense, transnational and transcultural marriages constitute a site where the spirit of true ecumenical fellowship may be tested and enhanced.

3.2. The children of transnational and transcultural families

Within the space of the Roman Catholic Church, the value of a community of faith is recognized by many transnational and transcultural families as an important aspect of their lives. Still that space is usually filled with cultural expectations rooted not in the Japanese society but in the culture of their homeland. Yamanaka & Yamanaka (2007) are contributors to *Peregrinos* bulletin, a Portuguese-language newspaper for Roman Catholics residing in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area. They talk about their expectations as parents:

Faith is a very important factor in the life of children. Their participation in a Catholic community is the starting point for them to become better Christians. It is here that they will learn they cannot live isolated from or indifferent to the circumstances of life, that they have to share their ideas and assume commitments without injuring [*ferir*] or hurting [*magoar*] anyone, always respecting others while being respected. We will be a much happier father and a much happier mother if our daughters would act with the proper values that our family deserves and if they understand that even when sometimes we make mistakes as parents, the love that we dedicate to them is true and everlasting (p.3, translation mine).

This statement reflects how parents who attend the Roman Catholic Church consider faith to be an important factor in their lives and in the lives of their families along with their cultural background. However, situations become even more complex when faith experiences are tied either to cultural or to ethnic/racial expectations that the second generation of transnational and transcultural families should follow. In an article entitled "Vocation of the Brazilian Family", Sakamoto (2007), another contributor to *Peregrinos* bulletin, states:

Our vocation in this country [Japan] is to teach the importance of the family in the context of Brazilian and Christian customs. It is important that our children maintain their identity as little Brazilians [*brasileirinhos*], commemorating with happiness all our traditional festivities (p.1, translation mine).

Despite the good intentions of the writer, it may be difficult for the second generation of Japanese Brazilian migrants to completely maintain Brazilian traditions, as it is also difficult to maintain all Japanese traditions. The second generation resides in a hybrid space where the option *either/or* may not be the healthiest choice. They have inherited either by birth or by residence, two cultures, two languages and two different set of traditions. How could a child curtail half of her/his identity in order to choose? The question is not a minor one and requires attention. Furthermore, in a secular society like Japan, the second generation may not value a religious faith in the same way that their parents or other adults around them do.

The second generation of Japanese Brazilian children bears on its shoulders the cultural and social expectations of adults, whether they are Brazilians or Japanese, which in turn impacts in the way that they construct and perform their identities. In general terms, the notion of identity is a fluid construction that varies across time and geography. On this, Taylor and Spencer (2004) state:

Identity is a work in progress, a negotiated space between ourselves and others; constantly being re-appraised and very much linked to the circulation of cultural meanings in a society. Furthermore identity is intensely political. There are constant efforts to escape, fix or perpetuate images and meanings of others. These transformations are apparent in every domain, and the relationships between these constructions reflect and reinforce power relations (p. 4).

There are several elements in this quotation that are important: First, it points out to the fluid character of identity as a “work in progress”, as something that is not yet finalized but as evolving, changing, and transforming continuously. Second, it also frames identity as a *negotiation* “between ourselves and others” as a multiple process of definition and re-definition. Third, it remarks the *political character* of the process of identity construction. Lastly, it connects the process of identity construction to the intricate *network of power relations* to which subjects are (inter)related. In fact, it is at the intersectionality of nationality, class, race/ethnicity, gender, and religious beliefs where those identities are to be located. Japanese Brazilian migrants are constantly *be/coming*, negotiating their identities within the Japanese society and also balancing the many performances already contained in their socialization in Brazil. Brooker (2003) states on this:

Contemporary identities can therefore be fluid or consciously delimited any number of factors are likely to be under negotiation in either case; whether religion, nation, language, political ideology or cultural expression (p. 131).

All these elements are necessary to be kept in mind when thinking about the identity negotiation of Japanese Brazilian migrants in Japan, especially the second generation. In my analysis I take the “social constructivist approach”, of which Bailey (1999) describes as an “(...) approach [that] could be termed *constructivist*, as social identity is ‘constructed’ in a dynamic between the group and the social-political context” (p.22).

Japanese Brazilian migrants perform manifold negotiations in order to construct and re-construct their identities within the larger Japanese society. The conditionings of faith, gender, and their interactions within social networks such as the Roman Catholic Church are most evident in the dilemmas faced by the second generation. Nonetheless, their struggles to construct their identities are not all the times clearly understood.

In one of my observations I came across the director of a Brazilian school. We met at a meeting of Brazilian teachers, but she was also invited because of her job and because of the fact that she was fluent in Portuguese. At a moment of the conversation, she expressed her conviction that “the second generation of Japanese Brazilian children should be proud

of their nationality." She said that "they should be proud of being Brazilians, because they are not Japanese." She was upset with the children for "not showing enough pride in their Brazilian nationality." Furthering some questions into our conversation revealed that she never thought that many of those children were born in Japan to Japanese Brazilian parents or to other transnational and transcultural families, and despite the fact that they may not bear Japanese nationality; yet Japan is the only country that they know.

For example, some of these children at their homes may have spoken their first words in Japanese while eating Brazilian food. They may even speak to their parents in Portuguese and to their friends at kindergarten in Japanese. Because of those experiences, it is no longer possible for many of them to distinguish which part of them is "Japanese" and which part of them is "Brazilian". It was evident from our conversation that the children in that school have to conform to the defined identity that this school director has already placed upon them and, in consequence, they were expected to act accordingly. It seems that she never asked the children what they were feeling or thinking about this, or how they identified themselves either culturally or ethnically.

Most of the second generation of Japanese Brazilian children would probably remain in Japan while their parents still debate whether to return to Brazil. For most individuals of the first generation of Japanese Brazilians in Japan, their migration process may have become circular, that is dividing their lives back-and-forth to the home country (Brazil) and the host country (Japan). Tsuda (1999) defines this as a migration which is structurally "embedded" in Japanese society:

(...) [I]mmigrants with families become long-term settlers not only because of increased living expenses and the resulting inability to meet financial goals. They become increasingly committed to the host country as their connections and involvement in the surrounding community intensify and their children become fully assimilated members of the majority society. Therefore, short-term economic changes in Japan or Brazil that reduce the economic incentives for settlement have a very limited effect on the stability of the Japanese-Brazilian population in Japan, which is no longer determined by purely economic motives, but by social concerns that keep immigrants firmly embedded in Japanese society (p.716).

The question of identity may lead us to also consider that these Japanese Brazilian children may not define their lives according to the adults' personal convictions or even in response to either their cultural or their social expectations. However, the expectations of adults in both the Japanese society and within the Roman Catholic Church do certainly have an impact on the second generation's self-understanding while in their youth. Nonetheless, this constitutes only half of the situation; the other half resides in the possibilities for agency which the second generation may or may not be able to exercise. In this sense, the experiences of the second generation of Japanese Brazilian migrants may follow the same pattern of that of the descendants of Koreans and Chinese born and rise in Japan (Murphy-Shigematsu 2003, 200, 214).

Conclusion

The implications of the variety of transnational and transcultural families among Japanese Brazilian migrants are multiple for both the Japanese society and the Roman Catholic Church in Japan. The basic realization is that no homogeneous treatment can contain the manifold situations of Japanese Brazilian migrants in Japan. In this article I have analyzed different aspects of the numerous issues that transnational and transcultural partnerships and families face in their daily life amidst Japanese society. By concentrating on the intersections of gender and faith experiences I have pointed to dynamics where religious beliefs, gender role expectations, and the sexual division of labor interact with each other. They are socially, culturally and contextually constructed.

I have also shown how gender role expectations and the sexual division of labor among Japanese Brazilian migrants within the Roman Catholic Church in Japan are based on particular beliefs ingrained in the religious corpus of doctrine. This was done through examples from songs and institutional dynamics where those gender role expectations and the sexual division of labor affect transnational and transcultural partnerships and families. This was especially clear in the cases of women who have “found” again their faith while in Japan, and because of that religious experience, committed to different levels of service inside the Roman Catholic Church in Japan.

I finally focused on the issues faced by the second generation of Japanese Brazilian migrants in Japan. With no doubt, it could be affirmed that they suffer the strongest consequences of different cultural and social dynamics, as well as the gender expectations and religious commitments that are already laid before them and that may not help them in constructing their own identity. This is especially necessary when even the members of the family come from different cultures and societies or speak different languages. This was present both in the discourse of the Roman Catholic faithfuls as well as in the discourse of the Brazilian school director. Attention to the multicultural and multiethnic realities of the second generation of Japanese Brazilians migrants is necessary in order to empower them amidst the Japanese society.

The Roman Catholic Church has a tremendous challenge in order to provide pastoral care for Japanese Brazilian migrants and their transnational and transcultural families, especially in a language and in a way that would respect their different cultural backgrounds. The reconciliation of these issues within the Roman Catholic Church in Japan depends upon healthy communities of faith that are able to embrace this multicultural spirit on a daily basis. For that, priests, nuns and lay people should be educated constantly in the different aspects of cultures and their inter-relatedness within every community of faith. This constitutes an element to be explored in further research. Transnational as well as transcultural couples and families are a contribution to this process. The case of Japanese Brazilian migrants and their families is an example of this. Understanding their situations amidst the Japanese society is simply to learn how to embrace human diversity, having identical aims and keeping our hearts open.

Notes

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- (1) Regarding push-pull theory see Ravenstein 1885, 1889, and Todaro 1969.
- (2) This is the Portuguese spelling for the Japanese term.
- (3) In most of the academic bibliography about Japanese Brazilian migrants, gender is rarely discussed or addressed. With the exception of a few scholars such as Keiko Yamanaka (1996, 1997, 2000, 2003a, 2003b) and Karen Tei Yamashita (2001) gender is an unusual topic. In terms of religion, there are a few exceptions such as the works of Regina Yoshie Matsue (2006a, 2006b), and Rafael Shoji (2008a, 2008b), which reflect the role of religion among Japanese Brazilian migrants in Japan.
- (4) Christianity was able to even impose its own views on the Roman Empire after its proclamation as religion of the state (ca.380C.E.). (See Brown 1998).
- (5) Butler questions if any kind of kinship is always already heterosexual and concludes that "(...) sexuality is already thought in terms of marriage and marriage is already thought as the purchase on [heterosexual] legitimacy" (Butler 2002, 18).
- (6) On the issue of Japanese notions of family and love, see Hamabata (1990).

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