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Coming HOME: Adaptation (or lack of) of a Brazilian Returnee

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Rio de Janeiro
Junho de 2017

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Junho de 2017

PONTIFÍCIA UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA
DO RIO DE JANEIRO

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Pós-Graduação Lato Sensu em Língua Inglesa

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Monografia apresentada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras da PUC-Rio como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Especialista em Língua Inglesa. Aprovada pela Comissão Examinadora abaixo assinada.

Orientadora: Prof.ª Drª Adriana Nogueira Accioly Nóbrega

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EXTENSÃO

Rio de Janeiro
30 de Junho de 2017

"Because in a sense, it's the coming back, the return which gives meaning to the going forth. We really don't know where we've been until we've come back to where we were. Only, where we were may not be as it was because of who we've become. Which is, after all, why we left."

Northern Exposure

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Professor Adriana Nóbrega, for her kindness, patience and guidance, and for giving me all the necessary help to accomplish this work. I also would like to thank Professor Maria Isabel Azevedo Cunha for showing me that my dilemma could become a monograph, and to thank Professor Mônica Spitalnik for accepting the invitation to be my examiner.

I am grateful for my teachers and classmates for all the ideas we shared, my family for all the unconditional love and encouragement, and for everyone who helped me accomplish this work.

To all of you,
Thank you.

Abstract

Nowadays, with the expansion of globalization, working and living in countries other than one's home country is increasingly frequent, and people are initially anticipated to encounter culture shock upon entry. Nevertheless, existing research on Reverse Culture Shock indicates that returnees are poorly prepared for the inevitable reentry shock coming back home. As Paige (2002, p.147) points out, "Culture shock is the expected confrontation with the unfamiliar; Re-entry shock is the unexpected confrontation with the familiar". Many (including myself) may not even know it exists even when experiencing the signs and symptoms of it. It is a very personal experience and is often based not on major crisis, but on the little things. Being a long-term expat, I felt the reverse culture shock phenomenon, in addition to the lack of information about readjustment problems of Brazilian returnees. The aim of this study is to discuss the adaptation (or lack of) and readjustment issues from the point of view of another Brazilian expat, who took part in this study. The results highlighted a common problem: the personal sense of dislocation and dissatisfaction following repatriation. This study could bring awareness of reverse culture shock in Brazilians, as well as spark interest in further research.

Keywords: reverse culture shock, culture shock, reentry, returnees, expats, home country

Content

1. Introduction

My journey as a Brazilian returnee begun after being a long-term expat. After twenty years, I felt it was time to return home to Brazil. Yet, despite all the happiness of family and friends reunited, it took me just a fraction of that time to realize that it was not going to be as "natural" as I thought. Living abroad has a deep, broadening effect on a person - an effect that I did not realize until my return. During my stay in a foreign country, I assimilated some of the host country's culture, learned new ways of doing things and, gained some new views and opinions about certain topics. It is one of the most exciting and rewarding things a person can do. The time I spent overseas was life changing, but coming home was far more difficult. It has been a source of personal strength, development, self-doubt, and an overwhelming experience.

Most of us expect to feel lost and out of place when arriving in a new country. Many (including myself) are surprised to find they also feel lost and out of place when they return home. When I left, it never crossed my mind, not even once, how I would feel when I returned; actually, I was looking forward to it. After all, repatriation simply means going back home – how difficult can it actually be?

That is easier said than done. Our concept of "home" is built on these ideas of familiarity, routine, communication and identity. Home is more than the physical place in which we live. It is associated with feelings, emotions, and cues that make us feel "at home". Craig Storti, in his book *The Art of Coming Home*, notes that the essence of home can be described in three key elements: familiar places and people, routines, and predictable patterns of interaction. These three elements are associated with the feelings of security, understanding, trust, safety, and belonging. When you return home, there is a slow realization that you do not quite belong there or here and the very definition of home has changed because home is no longer quite as you remember it.

Living overseas has changed my attitudes and feelings, also affected the relationships I left behind many years ago. The honeymoon period did not last long, as cultural differences and the stress of reentry continued to mount. I have been back for three years now, but there are still times I actively resist being home, though things are less punctured than before.

Expatriates are just as broad and varied as the countries they choose to inhabit, but with one thing in common: everybody experiences a reentry shock to some degree. For some it is minor, but for others (like me) not expecting to experience a reentry stress, it is a significant part of their return experience, since the challenges can be even more severe. This after-effect phenomenon of returning home is called Reverse Culture Shock (RCS). This term is used to describe the adaptation that occurs when one is trying to readjust to their own culture after spending an extended period of time in a different culture. It is a difficult phenomenon to pin down and describe because it's the net result of so many little feelings and interactions, but there's no question that it's real. Therefore, most people are quite unprepared for the adjustments they will have to make upon returning to their country and often do not know how to cope with them. What the returnees built themselves up for in coming home just is not there when they return. This discrepancy intensifies the reentry problems. Reentry comes as a shock because it is totally unexpected. In addition, there is an unanticipated sense of loss and isolation resulting from lack of current behavioral understanding of the home country (Harvey, 1982).

While culture shock is well known, RCS is not as recognized and understood. According to multiple studies, the adjustment process of RCS is harder than initial culture shock (Adler, 1981; Storti, 2001; Sussman, 1986; Uehara, 1986), yet, it receives only a fraction of the attention that culture shock receives (Adler, 1981). The trend is that there is a lot of research on culture shock, but RCS is far behind in the research. Nonetheless, the reality that greets the returnees is often underestimated.

Researching about RCS, I came across very few studies that have previously been conducted about readjustment problems of Brazilian returnees. Being one myself, I still feel the RCS phenomenon. As a result of my own experience of the effects of reentry and lack of adaptation to my home country, this qualitative case study looks at the reentry process in order to reflect on the matter: Why "coming home" results in culture shock? How do all of the stresses of RCS manifest themselves in the repatriate? These questions will be explored from the point of view of another Brazilian expat, who took part in this study.

This qualitative research may collaborate with Brazilian returnees that are having interpersonal difficulties adjusting back to their culture, to their social

identities, and to their professional roles. Furthermore, it can bring awareness about the RCS phenomenon in Brazil and sparking interest in further research. In order to do so, this study will be divided into 5 chapters: Chapter 1 introduces the study and its aims; Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical background that guided this research; Chapter 3 presents the research methodology; Chapter 4 presents the data analysis; Chapter 5 presents the final considerations of the study.

2. Theoretical Background

Reverse Culture Shock is a term associated with the phenomenon of returning to one's home country and culture, after living in a foreign country. RCS received scholarly attention as early as 1944 when Scheutz examined the difficulties of returning armed forces veterans, though Austin and Jones (1987) identified earlier sources that indirectly addressed reentry issues, dating from as early as 1935. Moreover, Lysgaard (1955), Oberg (1960), and Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) were the first to describe culture shock and RCS qualitatively as an intercultural adjustment. Their study, which combined interview and survey data of 5300 returning United States scholars, suggested that the RCS pattern of adjustment was similar to the U-curve of adjustment introduced by Lysgaard to describe initial culture shock adjustment. Hence their introduction of the "W-curve" hypothesis by extending the U-curve with a second U-curve, theoretically accounted for RCS experience (Figure 1).

Figure 1 - The Reverse Culture Shock W-Curve
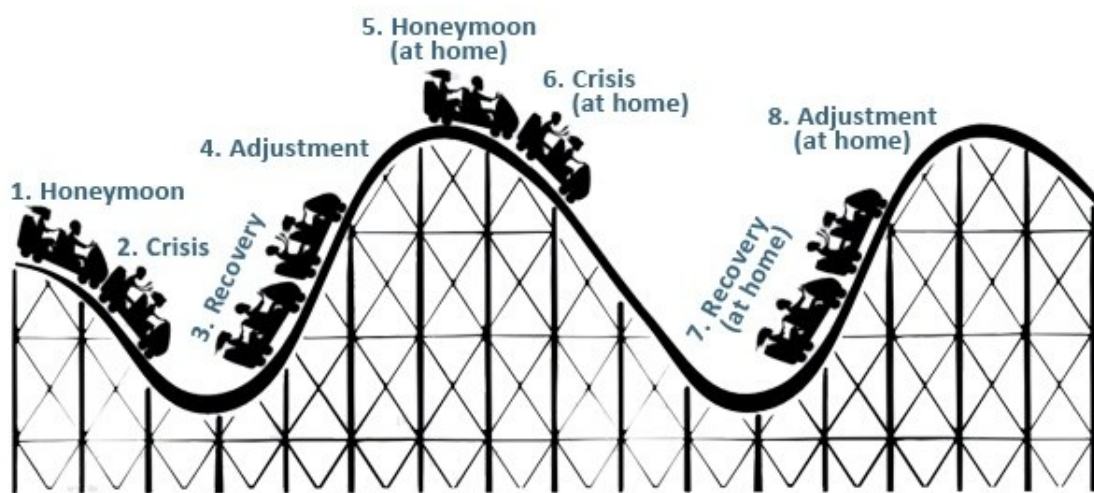
Source: Jeanne and John Gullahorn, Journal of Social Issues (1963, p.33).

The U-curve model describes four distinctive phases of an intercultural sojourn: (1) Honeymoon/Arrival - focus on positive aspects of environment, optimism, euphoria, excitement; (2) Crisis - caused by surprising, mostly

negative, experiences in a new environment, being hostile/complaining all the time about the host country/culture, irritability, frequent frustration, self-doubts, sense of failure, withdrawing from friends or other people and/or activities; (3) Recovery/Acculturation - the learning process of adaptation to a new environment, exploring new ideas, learning to accept and perhaps practice parts of the new culture; and finally, (4) Adjustment - a stable state, achieved if the acculturation process is accomplished successfully.

The W-curve is an extension of the above model and describes the experiences by a repatriate after his/her return to the home country. These four stages are accompanied by strong affective responses, which in turn influence repatriates' readjustment to their home country environment. The W-Curve Hypothesis operates under the assumption that the longer one remains in a foreign culture, the more adapted one becomes to that culture, therefore, causing unexpected culture shock upon one's return home. These stages can leave you feeling like you are on a roller coaster. The main difference was the expectations of the returnees. They often expect no difficulties as they are coming home, expect friends and family to have not changed, and expect the home culture to have remained unchanged and welcoming: (5) Honeymoon (at home) - excited about returning home, happy to see family and friends again. The length of this stage varies, but often transitions to phase (6) Crisis/Reverse culture shock - experience confusing reactions or feeling distant from family and friends, sense of disconnection or inability to articulate all that happened, not feel particularly at home in what used to be very familiar surroundings, frustration, confusion, uncertainty, change in values, goals, priorities, and attitudes, feelings of isolation or depression, negativity towards your native culture. Consequently, the adjustment process (7) focuses on the difficulties of readapting and readjusting to one's own home culture.

The studies dealing with reentry transitions suggest that RCS is as powerful as culture shock and that it causes more turmoil than the demands of the initial cross-cultural adjustment. Frequently, the reentry problems are greater than the initial transfer problems (Loewenthal and Snedden, 1986). For example, in her examination of the reentry process of corporate and government employees, Adler (1981) found that reentry into the original culture was found to be a more difficult transition than the initial move to the foreign culture. Meintel (1973) also

indicates that returnees feel it more abruptly and acutely than the shock of entering the strange environment. If the migration is permanent, a major cross-cultural problem might have been solved, however, when people have been temporary, transient residents and return from the foreign culture to their native culture, they will soon discover that their cross-cultural problems are far from over (Freedman, 1986).

Within the research developed for this study, Gama and Pedersen (1977) were the only instance of the specific problems of RCS experienced by Brazilian returnees from graduate studies in the United States. In the topics related to professional life, a large majority of the returnees mentioned that they found it difficult to adjust to their work settings and felt that professional relationships were serious problems for them. Sixty-eight percent said they had much or some difficulty adjusting to the system. In spite of the small sample (31), it was possible to see that the great majority of the Brazilian scholars interviewed experienced difficulties adjusting back. Lack of intellectual stimulation, lack of facilities and materials, and lack of opportunity are amid the common problems that have created frustration among the returnees. Difficulties were experienced at work, and in reintegrating with home and into the general environment.

Furthermore, Gaw (2000, p.84) defined the phenomenon as "the process of readjusting, reacculturating, and reassimilating into one's home culture after living in a different culture for a significant period of time". In his literature review, he reported the following problematic feelings as to when returning home: academic problems, cultural identity conflict, social withdrawal, depression, anxiety, interpersonal difficulties, feelings of alienation, disorientation, stress, value confusion, anger, hostility, compulsive fears, helplessness, disenchantment, and discrimination. How do all of these stresses of RCS manifest themselves in the repatriate? Often the same way they do in initial culture shock. Aside from the problems mentioned above, returnees may experience a number of mental and emotional side-effects, such as criticality, marginality, exhaustion, resistance, withdrawal, self-doubt and depression. Storti (2001) notes the following effects in his book, *The Art of Coming Home,* summarized here:

Criticality - At the depths of RCS, you may notice yourself making a lot of critical judgments about home. Your renewed unfamiliarity with the home culture

and your unfamiliarity with the routines can lead to unpleasant and frustrating experiences. Furthermore, this frustration can be displaced, often onto others. It becomes easy to be impatient with others and hard to be objective - even when the problems are actually insignificant. You may remember all of the wonderful things overseas, idealizing your experience in the foreign country, and compare them against the least pleasant aspects of being home.

Marginality - Your overseas experience has significantly impacted your identity. As you immersed yourself in a new culture, you broadened your perspective and opened your mind to new ideas. Once you return home, you realize that tensions exist between your new identity and mainstream society. You no longer feel like you fit in. Many families and individuals in the foreign affairs community make a life for themselves when "back home" and are able to function in and adapt to multiple settings, but do not feel completely comfortable.

Overexertion/Exhaustion - Because many of the routines, patterns, and customs of the home culture are new to you, you must consciously pay attention to performing basic functions. Add to that the stress of the logistical tasks of your return, and you may begin to feel overwhelmed by this experience. Exhaustion is a commonly reported effect of reverse culture shock.

Resistance/Withdrawal/Self-Doubt/Depression - As you become discontented with your home culture, a common reaction is to resist adapting to it. Many returnees withdraw or escape, dwelling on fantastical thoughts of the foreign culture and avoiding contact with people from the home culture. With all of the frustrations and disillusionment of "home", it can be easy to question and doubt yourself. Not surprisingly, then, RCS is often accompanied by a dose of depression.

Consequently, a person reentering their home environment will have to make adjustments to reacquaint themselves with their surroundings; they will have to readjust once they are back home. Reentry shock is precipitated by the anxiety which often results when a returnee tries to reestablish themselves in their

own home culture after a prolonged absence. The adjustment period may involve physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and social changes for the individual.

The reentry process occurs when a person leaves their social system for an extended period of time and then attempts to reenter this system. As Martin (1984) indicates, reentry must be viewed in the larger context of cultural adjustment. Expatriates who made any cultural adjustments while abroad, and then return home, will experience RCS in readjusting to their old cultural environment. Returnees interact with the home culture, expressed in the social norms, customs, and values, languages and shared experiences. Thus, as Brislin (1981) stated, the subjective component of cultural adjustment involves returnees' feelings of comfort - a feeling that one is "at home", and refers to the integration of personality with culture.

An equally significant aspect is that when individuals move across geographical and psychological borders, immersing themselves in new socio-cultural environments, they find that their sense of identity is destabilized and that they enter a period of struggle to reach a balance (Block, 2007). This period of destabilization has also been referred to as the "third space", in which the past and present encounter and transform each other (Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1996). An individual's identity is not simply the result of fixed factors such as education, gender, or race. Identity is flexible and can only be described through "cultural hybridity", the varied mixture of cultural influences that shape a person, and truly affect their identity. RCS is known to affect identity, to cause social withdrawal, and interpersonal problems. In assimilating into another culture, returnees change their behaviors and values, bringing much of their new culture with them, struggling with how much to keep of the new identity when they return home. This conflict causes internal stress (Koester, 1984). People who are torn between two cultures may be troubled by fears of losing their identity.

Social Identity is thus the concept to describe a certain sense of belonging, reflecting people's need to define themselves and others. This sense of belonging fulfills the human desire for solidarity, rapport, safety or psychological comfort that comes from sharing things with other people. Tajfel, Forgas, and Turner (1981) defined social identity as that part of an individual's self-concept that came from the knowledge of his/her membership in a social group, together with emotional significance attached to it. Likewise, Djité (2006, p.6) says that

"identity is the everyday word for people's sense of who they are". It is the product of an act of self-definition. This act leads to the generation of a notion of "otherness". According to Duszak (2002), identity constitutes a continuum of "ingroupness" to "outgroupness" in which everyone has the capability of combining several identities. Such feelings of social inclusion and exclusion develop on the basis of our values, beliefs, styles of living, our experiences, and expectations. Also, they tend to be situational, dynamic and interactively constructed. Forgas and Tajfel (1981, p.124) sum up it in saying that "we are what we are because they are not what we are".

Another major factor in identity is language. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) states that identity is a relational and sociocultural phenomenon manifesting in a discourse, rather than a structure expressing fixed social categories. Identity is the social positioning of self and other, and, it is language, that gives us the tools to construct our identities through the processes of social interaction. Social identities are acted out in discourse. This is not surprising, given that language is the main vehicle of expressing the self (Ochs, 2008). Analyzing what is said we make presumptions as to what is meant, and in the course of such interpretation processes, we also make inferences as to what social identities speakers construe of themselves. Language, thus, is central to the production of identity, it is a salient marker of group membership (Giles and Johnson, 1987). While interacting with people, we look for signs of proximity and those of distance. Adopting a linguistic profile on the *us-them* distinction, we could simply say that *they (Others)* are those who cannot speak "our language". This, in turn, may generate feelings of anxiety, distance or even hostility to others. The us-them phenomena fall within the structural relation of social position to language, as discussed by Fillmore (1975) and Levinson (1983). Language is the major indicator of relations of social proximity and detachment. Pointers such as *we* and *they* can turn into symbols of social values of alignment (ingroups) or exclusion (outgroups). The meaning of the "other" forms the second central aspect of the constitution of the "self". We develop our identity not in a vacuum, but rather in and through the constant relationship of the self with other individuals and groups: "Only by comparing ourselves with others can we build up our affiliations and our non-alignments" (Duszak, 2002). Studies point to the fact that without the *they* no *we* can exist, thus in every interaction, individuals

consciously and unconsciously place themselves in relation to others and perform *another* and *self-categorization*. At the same time, Benveniste (1971) observes that *we* is not a collection of individuated "I"s. He suggests that the predominance of "I" is very strong in it, to the point that under certain conditions, this plural can take the place of the singular.

Overall, there are two types of re-adjustment, psychological and sociocultural. Psychological adjustment is related to identity, satisfaction level and the overall well-being of the expat. Sociocultural adjustment is related to how well a returnee fits back into their home culture and interacts with them. This re-adjustment phase is where the symptoms of reverse culture shock manifest. Our modern world is marked by accelerated processes of change, greater geographic and social mobility, and progressive individualization. Thereby each individual's possible identity spectrum has considerably increased: "While earlier the development of identity was much more strongly marked by the position into which one was born, modern man is forced to choose among many possibilities of a self-definition" (Oerter and Dreher, 1995; Baumeister, 1986; Luckmann et al., 1981). The psychological and sociocultural aspects of RCS are crucial to the individual as they relate to his/her general well-being. It becomes necessary to understand more about the re-entry process in order to reduce the adverse effects of RCS.

3. Research Methodology

In pursuance of understanding the adverse effects of RCS, and as a direct result of my own personal experience as a long-term expat, this research will be co-constructed by reflecting not only on my own ordeal but also on the occurrence of another Brazilian returnee faced with a similar RCS situation. In this interaction, we will discuss readjustment issues, cross-cultural adaptation (or lack of) coming home, and interaction in everyday life.

This is a qualitative-interpretive research based on the constructivist approach. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 110) states that the constructivist research is based on people who co-construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, by experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences: "The role of the researcher is to construct an impression of the world as they see it, so that the 'findings' are created as the investigation proceeds". That means we are active creators of our own knowledge.

Besides, given that RCS is a difficult phenomenon to pinpoint and due to the lack of qualitative analysis about readjustment problems of Brazilian returnees in previous studies, a qualitative approach is a better fit for the research needs and questions. Interactions can be hard to quantify, and when something is not well defined, qualitative methods are helpful.

Qualitative research is the systematic inquiry into social phenomena in natural settings. These phenomena can include but are not limited to how people experience aspects of their lives, how individuals and/or groups behave, how organizations function, and how interactions shape relationships. Thus, qualitative research studies can provide you with details about human behavior, emotion, and personality characteristics.

With this in mind, I conducted a semi-structured guided interview with a Brazilian returnee, given a pseudonym of Mary, who was referred to me by another student that saw in both of us the same context. My decision not to interview someone I knew was to facilitate the process and not to be biased. The interview was set out to talk about her personal experiences, views, and motivations.

3.1 Data Construction

The initial contact between Mary and I was made by another student who works with her. This was followed up by a telephone call to confirm and to answer any questions regarding the study and the interview. Later, we set up a time and location for an interview to take place. The interview was done in Portuguese, language chosen by Mary, at her house in Rio de Janeiro, where we met for the first time. The face to face interview was recorded on my cell phone and lasted about 40 minutes. For both of us, this created an opportunity to reminisce about our experiences abroad and our feelings of returning home. We immediately bonded, and she was able to recount stories and being very open on the topic.

Mary is in her 40s, mother of two, who has returned to Brazil after thirty years living abroad. She has lived in the United Stated, United Kingdom, and in Greece for the past decade. She returned three years ago, and she works as an ESL teacher for children and adolescents, the same occupation she had overseas. Common themes were selected as extracts, which were considered patterns in participants' experience, and relevant samples to perform the analysis. The interview was freely transcribed, but not translated in order to keep the original data together with emotional significance attached to it.

As has been previously mentioned, the interview was semi-structured, consisting of open-ended questions followed by guidelines to obtain further information or clarification. The main themes addressed in the interview were:

- Expectations coming back home
- Challenges after returning home
- Re-entry culture shock
- Identity
- Readjustment - professionally and socially

Themes that arose in Mary's responses included: professional issues, pedagogy problems, ownership, social identity, readaptation, and shifts in attitudes and habits of daily life, as it will be discussed in the next chapter.

4. Analysis & Discussion

This analysis will explore the understandings from the interview and provide a discussion of themes that arose from the data. In analyzing what Mary said, we can make presumptions as to what she meant. In the course of this interpretative process, we can also make inferences as to what Mary's viewpoints are.

After 30 years, and a life on the road that took her to the United States, United Kingdom, and Greece, Mary felt it was time to come back home to Brazil. In the beginning, Mary was happy to return: *"No começo é tudo maravilha, adorava até andar de ônibus no Rio de Janeiro".* She was experiencing the initial Honeymoon stage of RCS: euphoria and excitement. But soon she realized that coming home was not what she had anticipated. Her reentry experiences were far more difficult than she expected when compared to their initial culture shock upon arriving overseas: *"Eu acho assim, que a readaptação no país é pior do que a adaptação de morar fora".*

The phases of reverse culture shock are similar to the phases of normal culture shock, though they differ in length and intensity. These stages are essentially a rollercoaster of emotions. Long-term expats, like Mary, often find it hard to adjust once they return home, underestimating the transformational aspect of living overseas for an extended period. Living and working abroad can change people profoundly, in a way, they could never anticipate.

In addition to that, Mary's challenge of returning home is also related to issues such as the pre-reentry expectations and a lack of preparation for reentry, as seen here: *"Não me preparei para voltar, mas mesmo que você se prepare, acho que a gente nunca vai, antes de vir, saber o que é. Por isso que se souber não vem!risos....por isso muita gente vai embora, né?"* Pre-reentry expectations influence the process of re-adaptation to the home-country environment. The confrontation between individuals' expectations of reentry and the reality of the transition are expressed when she states: *"Não, não achava que iria sentir choque cultural. Mas vi que as __pessoas__ aqui não aceitam muito as diferenças, mas a decepção de __você__ achar que __você__ vai voltar pra casa, eu acho que isso é o pior, porque __você__ não se sente em casa. E isso foi minha grande decepção, entendeu?"*

Home was not what Mary had idealized, because time does not stop and people have changed overtime. As a result, caused by unexpected experiences, mostly negative, the honeymoon phase comes to an end.

Mary then moves to the most difficult phase of re-entry: Crisis. Here is where the largest part of RCS takes place - facing confusing reactions, sense of disconnection, not feeling at home, frustration, uncertainty, change in values, goals, priorities, and attitudes, feelings of isolation or depression, negativity towards your native culture. Many of those were faced by Mary, and they can be observed throughout this analysis. Some of the reentry challenges are subtle, and some reveal themselves under certain circumstances, as in the main theme embedded in Mary's response: her professional adjustment. She seems to have a large amount of distress in her professional role as an English teacher: *"Profissionalmente é muito difícil pra mim, porque eu achava que **no Rio**, fossem cabeças abertas, por ser um país mais novo, mas não. Eu trabalhei em tantos lugares na Europa, e seu trabalho é reconhecido, as **pessoas** querem aprender, entendeu? Aqui eu sinto que não. Eu é que tenho que aprender como que é. Eu tenho muito dificuldade, não tem espaço para **você** se desenvolver"*.

Besides, she is also struggling to readjust to the Brazilian work style, as she faces co-workers that misinterpret her words or actions in such a way that communication is difficult: *"Esse é um problema pra mim também, porque às vezes eu falo e parece que estou criticando os professores, mas não é. **Você** vê muito professor reclamando e culpando os alunos, o que na verdade, não é, é nossa reponsabilidade de mudar, de instruir o pensamento **deles**, nem que seja num curso de Inglês, na atitude deles, né?"*

Inability to apply new knowledge and skills is another issue outlined. Mary is aggravated by the lack of opportunity to apply newly gained social, linguistic and practical skills that appear to be unnecessary or irrelevant to her peers. The cross-cultural understanding she gained is an enormously valuable tool, but the frustration of not being able to put it to use, can been seen here: *"A **gente** tem oportunidades de ver outras coisas diferentes, não é ser melhor, mas o que a **gente** faz depois de tanto tempo fora é **você** pegar mesmo as coisas boas. Aqui eu sinto que não. Eu é que tenho que aprender como que é. Eu acho isso muito difícil porque a **gente** vê que a educação no Brasil tá muito atrasada mesmo, entendeu?*

Eu tenho muita dificuldade, não tem espaço para você se desenvolver". Mary's experience is not unusual, particularly for a returnee.

The most frequently mentioned difficulty of readjustment is Criticality (Storti, 2001). Many returnees, including Mary, develop "critical eyes", a tendency to see faults in the society they might never have noticed before. At the depths of RCS, Mary has a lot of critical judgments about "how things are done in Brazil" with a negative meaning, especially in the professional setting as an English teacher. She does not agree with the teaching and learning methods, and believes that students do not have the sense of ownership and accountability that she was able to experience in other countries: "*Aqui no Brasil, a aula é muito mais baseada no professor, a responsabilidade é do professor, então os alunos não pegam responsabilidade, o professor da tudo prontinho pra eles, eu acho que assim o aluno não aprende tanto. Mas assim, **eles** querem ser escutados, reclamam do método de educação, falam que os professores não escutam, mas **eles** não querem ter a reponsabiidade de carregar nada"*.

Mary's reality of being back is not as natural or enjoyable as she had anticipated. Therefore, she becomes especially critical of everyone and everything. As seen here, and all over her discourse, she divides her social world into *them* and *us* based on a process of social categorization, as in-group (us) and out-group (them). The central hypothesis of social identity theory is that members of an in-group will seek to find negative aspects of an out-group, thus enhancing their self-image. As noted when Mary relies on discourse markers like *here (Brazil, aqui)* and *there (Europe, lá fora)* to express her social distance: *"Eu sinto que **lá fora**, pelo menos na Inglaterra e na **Europa**, **eles** aceitam muito mais as coisas novas, do que se aceitam **aqui**. E isso foi minha grande decepção, entendeu? Mas **eles** não aceitam coisas diferentes. **Aqui eles** têm aquele padrão entendeu? E **você** é que tem que "adjust", né? As **pessoas** não conseguem entender. É muito frustrante"*. Mary's social identity is then constructed through the frequent use of both the inclusive *we* ("a gente"), where in fact, the plural is taking the place of the singular *I,* and *they* ("o Brasil, o governo, os professores"). Similarly, outgroupness emerges when Mary stressed on their bad things: *"As pessoas não conseguem entender. É muito frustrante"*. In other cases, she often used the identical marker a number of times ("é muito difícil"), implying in this way her sense of dissatisfaction. These markers (highlighted in her discourse)

seem to verify what we have already pointed out based on our observations, namely that experiences of RCS demonstrate a common problem: the personal sense of dislocation and dissatisfaction following repatriation.

Likewise, feelings of alienation are also a common problem in the crisis phase. Mary does not feel like she quite fit in the way she did before she left. She clearly feels marginalized and different from other people. Her overseas experience has significantly impacted her identity, as per her personal sense of dislocation: *"Tenho dificuldade de fazer amigos, porque a minha vida mudou muito, mas o meu problema mais assim é dentro do trabalho, com amizades mesmo, tem muita fofoca, muita competição. No meu caso, eu não me identifico com as **pessoas**"*. As Tajfel (1979) states, social identity is a person's sense of who they are based on their group memberships, and it is an important source of pride and self-esteem. Mary's sense of identity is destabilized and she strives to achieve a balance: *"Não, não... As **pessoas** aqui não aceitam muito as diferenças não, pela maneira de falar, aquele português assim.....estou tentando reconquistar minha origem brasileira"*. And in here: *"Me incomoda muito o comportamento das **pessoas**, fazendo compras, você não tem razão nunca, né? **Eles** acham que estão te fazendo um favor porque estam vendendo um coisa pra você"*.

Mary makes a great effort to move on into the next stage of RCS: Recovery/Acculturation, to readjust her life at home without losing the ideas and values she formed while abroad: *"estou tentando reconquistar minha origem brasileira, mas também pelo comportamento da gente, porque morar forar tanto tempo, com certeza eu peguei coisas, né?"* This is a process of adaptation and learning to accept, and perhaps practice parts of the home culture. Nonetheless, she struggles back and forth between the Crisis and Recovery phases. Perhaps unsurprisingly, as resistance is another frequent problem revealed in RCS - as she becomes discontented with her home culture, a common reaction is to resist adapting to it: *"A **gente** cansa. Já tentei muito fazer assim, do sistema brasileiro, mas eu não consigo, não sou eu, eu to tentando aprender um balanço. É muito frustante, eu nunca tive tanta reclamação na minha vida."* Along with: *É muito difícil, a **gente** é diferente, em qualquer lugar que a **gente** vai, vai ser diferente mesmo, entendeu, o que a **gente** tem que fazer é aprender, aceitar, mas é muito difícil, porque você viu coisas diferentes"*.

A further issue is that her expectations do not measure up to reality. Her home country now drives her crazy, nothing has changed, but she did, and she has new ideas about the world, about her life path, and she finds it hard to cope with the lack of ownership in Brazil, another continuous subject in her discourse: *"As **pessoas** reclamam muito, mas não tem ação, a minha primeira questão que me deixa chateada é que a **gente** tem a nossa responsabiidade, e as **pessoas** não veem, não mudam, não mudam e tá ficando cada vez pior. E os jovens estão vendo isso, mas acham que não podem fazer nada, ficam jogando a responsabilidade pro professor, para os pais, pro governo. A culpa é do outro. **Você** tem que pegar sua própria responsabilidade. Não é só a responsabilidade do governo, **você** também tem. Mas, é muito difícil, temos uma sociedade que ainda não está aceitando coisas novas".* As Martin (1984) indicates, reentry must be viewed in the larger context of cultural adjustment. Expatriates will experience a RCS in readjusting to their old cultural environment. Mary does not identity nor integrate with her home culture: *"O Brasil tem muita ideia, muita teoria, mas não tem mesmo a prática. O brasileiro reclama de tudo, mas não tem ação. `As vezes **você** tem que sofrer um pouquinho, se **você** está manisfestando contra uma coisa, **você** tem que sofrer, né? Mesmo que as outras pessoas não façam , **você** faz. E eu questiono isso. E eu vi outras coisas que podem ser feitas, mas essas coisas não funcionam, não é que não funciona, mas eu tenho que sofrer muito pra chegar lá, entendeu, é cansativo, é muito cansativo".*

In reflecting on the matter: Why "coming home" results in culture shock? The analysis suggests that for Mary, being a long-term expat, it is very hard to adjust back to her new life in her old home, as she struggles with RCS. Even though Mary has been back for about three years now, she still finds herself in the Crisis phase, which goes in opposition to the majority of the theories that states that RCS lasts about 6 months to a year. It does not mean she will be stuck in this place forever, but the reality is that the range of time looks different for everyone. Taking time will allow Mary to readjust to a sense of what is normal in her "new home" culture, for getting her emotional stability back, and for building her new identities. Also, language gives her the tools to re-construct and reshape her identity, given that now it is marked by a lot of tension in how she manages her social role in her discourse and how she positions herself against those whom she believes not to belong.

The analysis carried out in this study suggests that being a returnee is such a lengthy and deep experience, and it brings enormous personal changes. For Mary, her old norms and values (from Brazil) are now viewed from a new perspective, and every relationship in her life may need to be renegotiated. Like the initial shock upon arrival in a foreign country, RCS leads to reverse homesickness: not infrequently, she reminded herself of the many ways her host country is superior to her hometown, becoming pessimistic about the reality of her own culture. As a result of this idealization of the host country, RCS caused both personal and professional issues for Mary. Some of the challenges that Mary suffers range from linguistic barriers to the inability to find a job where she can really use her new skills. Her unrealistic expectations and the absence of a connection between herself and home also causes RCS. Furthermore, her re-entry process is experienced in a variety of ways - physical, psychological and emotional, and her communication difficulties included both verbal and nonverbal issues. As a result, she feels misunderstood, isolated, and frustrated. All this makes it more difficult to deal with RCS. Besides, Mary is still in need of time to come to terms with the effects of reverse culture shock in her life, and then finally transition into the final phase: Adjustment - a stable state, fully adjusted to life at home, achieved if the acculturation process is accomplished successfully.

Ultimately, it is quite difficult to expect expatriates to return home with no signs of reverse culture shock. It seems that all of us - returnees - go through the similar stages of RCS. Some of us are able to go through the process quicker and with less stress, while others go through these stages and find it difficult to readjust. Reverse culture shock is as important if not more important than culture shock itself, and thus, awareness should be created for the sake of expatriates, families, and the benefit of the home country itself.

5. Conclusion

As has been noted, in today's increasingly globalized world, cross-border mobility has become a reality of everyday life. However, the crossing of cultural bridges comes at a price called reverse culture shock. RCS can be defined as the psychological and social difficulties related to the adjustment of going home after living in another country. The challenges, which arise upon returning home, are related to issues such as the unexpectedness of the difficulties encountered, a lack of preparation for reentry, and grief for the lost expat life. The reentry transition is conceptualized in terms of the feelings, emotional reactions and mental responses of the repatriate. It is known to affect cultural identity, cause social withdrawal, depression, anxiety, anger, fear and interpersonal problems. According to Jansson (1986), reentry can be a slow, terrifying and painful process.

Another problem exists in the word "home". Home is a place where one feels accepted and understood. Home is familiar, predictable, a sense of belonging. While abroad, people create a new home and their perspectives change. Upon returning, they must revisit the norms of the former culture and relearn how to fit in. The strangeness of home can be alarming and upsetting (Storti, 2001), and many people often have a feeling of homelessness, resisting to adjust to the home culture.

There are a lot of changes involved in adjustment, like Mary's feeling out of place in her home country because of her new and different cultural identity. When someone, like Mary, is successful in adjusting to another culture, they take on many of the characteristics of that culture. They develop a new cultural identity. These characteristics can include interpersonal communication (accent, language competence), physical (fashion, hairstyles) and behavioral (posture, nonverbal) attributes. As seen in this study, Mary struggles with how much to keep of her new identity gained abroad when she returned home. She has undergone a profound personal transformation, influencing her cultural identity and sense of belonging. Consequently, some of her home behaviors are forgotten and replaced by the host country equivalents. As a result, she now has to relearn social skills and regain familiarity with a set of home country norms and behaviors. Attitudes of home country individuals towards Mary, as well as the transfer of knowledge upon return, seem to be another factor impacting her

readjustment process. Unfortunately, she frequently faces resistance when attempting to transfer her foreign knowledge to the work organization, negatively influence the readaptation.

All things considered, this study illustrates that Mary has difficulties to readjust to her life in Brazil. Adjusting in the professional life is the most difficult reentry problem for her. She had a high level of expectation about the workplace structure and about her role as a English teacher which was not met. There seems to be a great degree of discrepancy between what she expected to see in Brazil and what she found. Reentry is an emotional experience during any given time. Even though a process of healing has been endured and although a time period for restoring oneself cannot be determined, it is a process that troubles those who choose to undergo this journey. What appears is that Mary, whether she had good or bad experiences, still battles the effects associated with reverse culture shock, as it seems that she is trapped in the Crisis stage.

The present case study could add up to the understanding of RCS and re-entry adjustment issues of Brazilians returnees, addressing a gap in the literature, since only one research related to this context could be found. Furthermore, it could also lead to more questions and future research that should be done in the area of RCS, contributing to shed light on a frequent matter that deeply affects people returning home and one important question is what can be done to ease reentry for those who lived abroad for longer durations. When one looks for information about reverse cultures shock there is considerably less research done on it.

In this co-constructed process, several issues and emotions were uncovered, not only for Mary but also for myself. I could see in her words and expressions that we both share the same type of experience, feelings, and thoughts. More than anything, it helped me realize that I was not alone. Few people in the home culture are likely to be familiar with the concept of reverse culture shock. Therefore, people often respond to me - a returnee - having difficulty readjusting by directly suggesting to "get over it" as though it were a conscious act on my part or that I could control my emotions if I wanted to. Thus, although there are always lots of reasons to look forward to go home, reentry into your home culture can seem both as challenging and as frustrating as living overseas. Contrary to the expectation that going "home" is a simple matter of

resuming your earlier routines and reestablishing prior relationships, reentry has its own set of special social and psychological adjustments. In my own experience, RCS is also far more difficult than the initial culture shock. There is an overgeneralization as a product of my feelings, as well as an idealization of my experiences in the foreign country. Nostalgia is often experience by expats, and sparks such excitement and affection emotions. You start to idealize life "in the host country" and compare to your home culture to what is familiar. You dislike what you see and you reject it as inferior. You may even develop some prejudices towards your own culture, making it harder to adjust. RCS is generally made up of two parts: idealization and expectations. We focus on the good from our past, cut out the bad, and create an idealized version of the past. Secondly, we incorrectly assume that our previous world has not changed. We expect things to remain exactly the same as when we left them. The realization that life back home is now different, that the world has continued without us, and the process of readjusting to these new conditions causes soreness and psychological grief. We mourn our life overseas. As if a part of yourself has died.

When you are going through the adjustment, it is normal to experience the transition as both positive and negative. You may even feel like you are on a roller coaster - one minute excited to be home and proud to share all you have learned, and the next bored or frustrated and feeling out of sync with those people who have always been closest to you.

Partly, this process is difficult to deal with because there is not really any process for you to do so. No one really thinks about the after - only the going. There are things that you can do to prepare yourself for going somewhere new, but who mentally and physically prepares themselves for going home? No one is really prepared for it - at least I was not and even now, despite being back for quite a while, I am still re-adjusting and getting re-acquainted with life here. I realize now that "you cannot come home again". I am never going back to being a certain way, and I need to find out how I fit in here. If you feel the same, know you are not alone!

For better or for worse, RCS is giving me the opportunity to become a better version of myself and to rediscover a familiar place through new eyes.

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7. Appendix

Interview

1. Como tem sido sua adaptação?

Eu acho assim, que a readaptação no país é pior do que a adaptação de morar fora. No começo é tudo maravilha, adorava até andar de ônibus no Rio de Janeiro. Profissionalmente é muito difícil pra mim, porque eu achava que no Rio, fossem cabeças abertas, por ser um país mais novo, mas não. Eu trabalhei em tantos lugares na Europa, e seu trabalho é reconhecido, as pessoas querem aprender, entendeu? Aqui eu sinto que não. Eu é que tenho que aprender como que é. Eu acho isso muito difícil porque a gente vê que a educação no Brasil tá muito atrasada mesmo, entendeu? A gente tem oportunidades de ver outras coisas diferentes, não é ser melhor, mas o que a gente faz depois de tanto tempo fora é você pegar mesmo as coisas boas... Aqui eles querem que você trabalhe no método que é deles, é tudo pronto, entendeu? Eu tenho muito dificuldade, não tem espaço para você se desenvolver... Lá as escolas do governo educam mesmo, educam o pai, educam o filho... As pessoas não estão muito prontas para coisas novas aqui.

2. Qual uma diferença que você sentiu na sala de aula?

Aqui no Brasil, a aula é muito mais baseada no professor, a responsabilidade é do professor, então os alunos não pegam responsabilidade, o professor da tudo prontinho pra ele, eu acho assim que o aluno não aprende tanto. Mas assim, eles querem ser escutados, reclamam do método de educação, falam que os professores não escutam, mas eles não querem ter a responsabilidade de carregar nada.

3. E a adaptação, socialmente?

Tenho dificuldade de fazer amigos, porque a minha vida mudou muito, mas o meu problema mais assim é dentro do trabalho, com amizades mesmo, tem muita fofoca, muita competição, porque você também arruma amizade dentro do

trabalho, mas se você vive num clima assim, que tipo de amizade, não existe um "group work" honesto.

4. E no dia a dia? Comportamento das pessoas?

Me incomoda muito o comportamento das pessoas, fazendo compras, você não tem razão nunca, né? Eles acham que estão te fazendo um favor porque estão vendendo um coisa pra você. Acho que é um pouco falta de profissionalismo, treinamento também, né? Não acho que as pessoas sejam piores não, acho que as pessoas aqui são muito mais legais mesmo, `as vezes isso me dá uma revolta, até com os alunos, que eu vejo tem muita capacidade, são pessoas que pensam, que questionam, tem coração bom, mas não vai pra frente, entendeu? Se acomoda, não sei. Não pegam responsabilidade, e volta pro tema da criança na escola. A criança na escola não tem responsabilidade, passa pra outro, é o professor. Ninguém assume. Acho que as pessoas não aprendem a pegar a responsabilidade pelas coisas que você faz tomar ação. Esse é um problema pra mim também, porque às vezes eu falo e parece que estou criticando os professores, mas não é. Você vê muito professor reclamando e culpando os alunos, o que na verdade, não é, é nossa reponsabilidade de mudar, de instruir o pensamento deles, nem que seja num curso de Inglês, na atitude deles, né?... e é muito assim professores de um lado, alunos do outro. Isso é muito triste. Se você conversar com os adolescentes, eles falam: "a gente não estuda pra aprender, a gente estuda pra passar de ano".

5. Como você faz para lidar com isso no dia a dia?

A gente cansa. Já tentei muito fazer assim, do sistema brasileiro, mas eu não consigo, não sou eu, eu to tentando aprender um balanço. É muito frustante, eu nunca tive tanta reclamação na minha vida, mas eles falam: "a gente gosta dela", mas eles se sentem inseguros porque eu não chego pra eles e dou tudo pronto. Daí pra eles não é aprender, porque não decorou você tá entendendo?

6. Em relação a você, o que mudou nesses 3 anos?

A gente voltou por algum motivo, é assim que eu penso, senão já tinha ido embora. É completamente diferente você é diferente mesmo. Você é diferente lá também, isso me ajuda muito a voltar. Diferente a gente é em qualquer lugar.

Mas a decepção de você achar que você vai voltar pra casa, eu acho que isso é o pior, porque você não se sente em casa. No meu caso, eu não me identifico com as pessoas, mas eu aceito. Porque eu ja vivi várias coisas.

7. Você achava que iria sentir tanto esse choque cultural?

Não, não... As pessoas aqui não aceitam muito as diferenças não, pela maneira de falar, aquele português assim... estou tentando reconquistar minha origem brasileira, mas também pelo comportamento da gente, porque morar forar tanto tempo, com certeza eu peguei coisas, né?

8. Você se preparou pra voltar?

Não, mas mesmo que você se prepare, acho que a gente nunca vai, antes de vir, saber o que é. Por isso que se souber não vem! risos... por isso muita gente vai embora, né?

9. O que voce diria sobre sua experiência no geral?

Eu penso muito assim... quando a gente chega num país novo, a gente aceita porque a gente sabe que vai embora um dia, e que o país não é nosso. E é, mas o que passei aqui também, apesar de ser difícil, tudo, tem algum aprendizado, porque tem coisas boas, tem coisas que a gente se sente bem. Depende do que a pessoa acredita... da coragem. É muito difícil, a gente é diferente, em qualquer lugar que a gente vai, vai ser diferente mesmo, entendeu, o que a gente tem que fazer é aprender, aceitar, mas é muito difícil, porque você viu coisas diferentes... por exemplo, eu vejo pra mim na educação, eu vejo que o Brasil tem um problema na educação, que as pessoas reclamam da educação, que as pessoas não estão satisfeitas, e não faz nada. E eu vi outras coisas que podem ser feitas, mas essas coisas não funcionam, não é que não funciona, mas eu tenho que sofrer muito pra chegar lá, entendeu, é cansativo, é muito cansativo. E o medo das pessoas mudarem, eu realmente não sei. As pessoas reclamam muito, mas não tem ação, a minha primeira questão que me deixa chateada é que a gente tem a nossa responsabiidade, e as pessoas não veem, não mudam, não mudam e tá ficando cada vez pior. E os jovens estão vendo isso, mas acham que não podem fazer nada, ficam jogando a responsabilidade pro professor, para os pais, pro governo.

A culpa é do outro... tem mudança, mas é frustrante, é muito frustrante. Eu sinto que lá fora, pelo menos na Inglaterra e na Europa, eles aceitam muito mais as coisas novas, do que se aceitam aqui. E isso foi minha grande decepção, entendeu? Porque eu achava que as pessoas eram mais abertas. Mas eles não aceitam coisas diferentes. Aqui eles têm aquele padrão entendeu? E você é que tem que "adjust", né? As pessoas não conseguem entender. É muito frustrante. O Brasil tem muita ideia, muita teoria, mas não tem mesmo a prática. O brasileiro reclama de tudo, mas não tem ação. `As vezes você tem que sofrer um pouquinho, se você está manisfestando contra uma coisa, você tem que sofrer, né? Mesmo que as outras pessoas não façam, você faz. E eu questiono isso. Você tem que pegar sua própria responsabilidade. Não é só a responsabilidade do governo, você também tem. Mas, é muito difícil, temos uma sociedade que ainda não está aceitando coisas novas.