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"My Life was Filled with Constant Anxiety": Anti-Immigrant Discrimination, Undocumented Status, and Their Mental Health Implications for Brazilian Immigrants

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Abstract Immigration reform and the various costs associated with undocumented immigration have been in national headlines in the past few years. The growth of Latinos as the US' largest ethno-racial minority has sparked debates about the "browning" of the United States and led to an increase in anti-immigrant discrimination. While some researchers have documented the effects of racial discrimination on the mental health of ethno-racial minorities in the United States, less has explored how anti-immigrant discrimination and undocumented status influence the mental and psychological well-being of Latino immigrants, more specifically Brazilian immigrants, in the United States. Relying on data from in-depth interviews conducted with 49 Brazilian return migrants who immigrated to the United States and subsequently returned to Brazil, this paper will examine how their experiences living as racialized and primarily undocumented immigrants in the United States influenced their mental health. Specifically, I demonstrate that respondents experienced ethno-racial and anti-immigrant discrimination and endured various challenges that had negative implications for their mental health. This paper will also discuss additional factors that researchers should take into account when examining immigrants' mental health and the challenges immigrants encounter in a racialized society with increasing anti-immigrant sentiment.

Keywords Immigration · Brazilian immigrants · Mental health · Discrimination · Racism

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Introduction

Immigration reform has been a subject of debate in academia, government, and the broader public in recent years. Given that individuals of Latin American ancestry comprise a large percentage of the current immigrant population and that Latinos are now the largest ethno-racial minority in the United States, the immigration debate has largely been racialized as a "Latino" issue. Furthermore, researchers have documented a rise in (ethno-) racial and anti-immigrant discrimination among Latinos, both US- and foreign-born, as local law enforcement officials and civilians around the country have attempted to enforce stringent immigration policy directed at undocumented immigrants. Policies such as the recently passed SB-1070 law in Arizona and civilian groups like the Minutemen who "police" the United States–Mexico border have facilitated an atmosphere in which individuals who look "illegal" or "Latino" are unfairly singled out for discriminatory treatment (Massey 2009). Undocumented Latino immigrants especially bear the brunt of such discrimination, live in fear of being deported, and have very few (if any) civil rights, which can affect their physical and mental health.

Some researchers have examined the influence of racial discrimination on the mental health of ethno-racial minorities in the United States, especially US blacks and Latino ethnic groups such as Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Dominicans (Ayón et al. 2010; Sellers and Shelton 2003; Williams 2000; Williams et al. 2003; Araujo and Borrell 2006; Moradi and Risco 2006; Holt et al. 2006; Stuber et al. 2003). However, fewer studies have explored how anti-immigrant discrimination and undocumented status influence the mental well-being of less-visible Latino immigrants, more specifically Brazilian immigrants, in the United States. Relying on data from in-depth interviews

conducted with 49 Brazilian return migrants who immigrated to the United States and subsequently returned to Brazil, this paper will examine how their experiences living as racialized and primarily undocumented immigrants in the United States influenced their mental health. Specifically, I demonstrate that respondents in this study experienced ethno-racial and anti-immigrant discrimination and endured various challenges that had negative implications for their mental health. This paper will also discuss additional factors that researchers should take into account when examining immigrants' mental health and the challenges immigrants encounter in a racialized society with increasing anti-immigrant sentiment.

Literature Review

Racial and Anti-Immigrant Discrimination and Mental Health Among Latino Immigrants

Given the history of US racial and ethnic relations, it is not surprising that much research has documented extensive racial discrimination aimed at color of the people in the United States (Feagin 2000; Araujo and Borrell 2006). Research conducted among immigrants, especially non-white immigrants, has also indicated that they experience anti-immigrant discrimination (Pulido 2007; Araujo and Borrell 2006). Since the September 11 attacks, there has been a rise in racialized anti-immigrant sentiment against individuals perceived as non-American (Pulido 2007; Huber et al. 2008; Jonas 2006; Jared 2002). Likewise, the increase in immigration from Latin America and the debate on immigration reform have fueled more animosity toward Latinos regardless of their citizenship and/or immigration status in the United States (Pulido 2007; Huber et al. 2008; Jonas 2006; Jared 2002).

Such experiences of racial and anti-immigrant discrimination often influence the mental health of Latino immigrants (Rubio-Goldsmith et al. 2009; Flores et al. 2008; Moradi and Risco 2006; Alegria and McGuire 2003; Araujo and Borrell 2006). In their review of existing studies on mental health among Latino immigrants, Araujo and Borrell (2006) demonstrate that the majority of this research has shown that racial and anti-immigrant discrimination is associated with poor mental health and negative life chances, which can also affect physical health. Other factors cited in studies on Latino immigrants argue that immigration-related factors such as documentation status, English language proficiency, and length of time in United States may also influence mental health among this group (Nicklett and Burgard 2009; Moradi and Risco 2006; Araujo and Borrell 2006; Finch et al. 2000). Additional studies have noted an "immigrant paradox"; in that, immigrants sometimes have better physical and mental health outcomes relative to native-born Americans of the same ethno-racial background (Alegria et al. 2007; Williams et al. 2007; Ayón et al. 2010). The longer an immigrant remains in the United States and becomes acculturated, the incidence of negative health outcomes increases (Alegria et al. 2007; Williams et al. 2007; Takeuchi et al. 2007). In their study examining the relationship between immigrant social status and depressive episodes, Nicklett and Burgard (2009) find that having Latino ethnicity, being women, residing in the United States for a longer time, and experiencing a downgrade in social status (compared to their previous status in the country of origin) are associated with greater odds of a depressive episode. Araujo and Borrell (2006) also argue that such research has focused more on Mexicans, but has yet to account for the racial and ethnic diversity of the Latino population. While Dominicans and Puerto Ricans have been the focus of more recent studies, there is still considerably less known about Central and South American immigrants and their mental health outcomes in the United States (Moradi and Risco 2006; Holt et al. 2006; Stuber et al. 2003; Araujo 2004; Gomez 2000; Espino and Franz 2002).

Brazilian Immigrants in the United States

Brazilian immigrants remain an understudied Latino immigrant group in the United States for a few reasons: (1) their numbers are smaller relative to other groups; (2) they are primarily undocumented; and (3) they have difficulty in self-classifying using existing official US ethno-racial categories (Margolis 1994; Marrow 2003; Siqueira and Jansen 2008; Jouet-Pastre and Braga 2008). These factors may also explain the inability to accurately estimate the size of the Brazilian immigrant population in the United States, which limits researchers' ability to accurately and representatively incorporate them in survey research. While the 2000 US Census reported that there were about 250,000 foreign-born Brazilians in the United States, the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2008) estimated that 800,000–1.5 million Brazilians are living in North America, primarily in the United States. Thus, Margolis (1998) has often referred to Brazilian immigrants as an invisible minority in the United States.

Despite having a smaller population than other Latino immigrant groups, Brazilian migration to the United States increased significantly in the 1980s, due to Brazil's transition from a military dictatorship to a democracy and a very unstable economy with very high inflation (Margolis 1994; Sales 1999; Jouet-Pastre and Braga 2008). Additionally, while some Brazilian immigrants are able to legally enter the United States with tourist visas, they become

undocumented by overstaying and illegally working with those visas. Finally, US ethno-racial categories pose a challenge for Brazilian immigrants who come from a country where most people acknowledge having racially mixed ancestry, and an official census category, "pardo," allows Brazilians to officially classify as racially mixed. The rigidity of US categories is difficult for Brazilians and allows less flexibility. Furthermore, the official "Hispanic" category is inapplicable to Brazilians, who despite being from Latin America are Portuguese *and not* Spanish-speaking. Thus, Brazilians generally resist the "Hispanic" label, although they realize that most Americans externally classify them in this category (Margolis 1998; Marrow 2003; Martes 2007; Joseph forthcoming).

With regard to demographics, Brazilian immigrants have generally self-classified as racially white, have working and middle-class origins in Brazil, and are more highly educated than the general Brazilian population (Margolis 1994; Goza 1999; Sales 1999).[1] While men predominated in the earlier migration stream to the United States, Brazilian men and women have been migrating to the UnitedStates in equal numbers in recent years (Jouet-Pastre and Braga 2008). Although Brazilians from various parts of Brazil have migrated to the United States, the majority come from a small city in the state of Minas Gerais called Governador Valadares and migrate to the northeastern United States (Margolis 1994; Martes 2000; Siqueira 2009; Marcus 2009). Governador Valadares (GV) has historically been the largest immigrant-sending city to the United States from Brazil, and the city has been socially, economically, and culturally influenced by US migration. Nearly 80% of local residents, known as Valadarenses, have family members or friends in the United States (CIAAT 2007). A strong culture of migration exists in the GV so much, so that many Valadarenses aspire to migrate to the United States and speak of life in the United States as a "dream" (Siqueira 2007, 2009).[2]

Additionally, a strong history of return migration to GV from the United States has been documented with estimates ranging from 30 to 50% (CIAAT 2007; Siqueira 2009). The goal of Brazilian immigrants, especially those from GV, is to "Fazer a America," which translates literally to "making" or "doing" America. This process consists of migrating to the United States for 2–5 years and working in (primarily) unskilled jobs to earn and save as much money as possible for the return migration to Brazil (Martes 2008; CIAAT 2007; Siqueira 2009; Marcus 2009). Migrants hope that the money earned in the United States will allow them to buy a house or car and/or start a business. In essence, Brazilian migrants view the US migration as a project of upward social mobility, which they believe will allow them to have a better quality of life in Brazil post-migration that would not have been possible had they not migrated to the United States. Their ultimate goal is to accomplish the American dream, not in the United States, but in Brazil after the US migration.

Data and Methods

Data for this study is based on semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with a sample of 49 Brazilian return migrants in the city of Governador Valadares, Brazil, between October 2007 and October 2008.[3] The interviews were conducted for a larger project that explored how US migration influenced the racial conceptions of Brazilians who migrated to the United States for an extended time and subsequently returned to Brazil. Interviews were conducted in Brazilian Portuguese, lasted on average for 60 min, and consisted of open- and closed-ended questions that explored the following themes: (1) self-ascribed racial classification throughout the migration process; (2) perceptions of race in Brazil and the United States; and (3) experiences of discrimination in Brazil and the United States. Although the focus of the project was on return migrants' racial conceptions, broader issues related to migration and the difficulty in living as undocumented immigrants surfaced as additional relevant themes in the interviews.

Each interview was audio-recorded, transcribed, and then imported into NVivo qualitative software for data analysis. For in-depth data analysis of the larger project, I used line-by-line coding, which means I closely read each transcribed interview "line-by-line" and placed all words, phrases, and sentences related to race, discrimination, health, and challenges related to migration (e.g., exploitation, being undocumented, deportation) under thematic codes of the same name (Emerson et al. 1995). For this particular paper examining mental health and discrimination, the thematic codes I utilized were as follows: (1) comfort level in the United States; (2) difficulty in living

[1] Though many Brazilian immigrants self-classify as white due to Brazilian standards of white racial classification, they are generally externally perceived as nonwhite and Hispanic by Americans (Margolis 1994; Martes 2007; Joseph forthcoming).

[2] Due to the devaluing of the US Dollar and more stringent policies for obtaining visas to the US, Valadarenses are also now migrating to Portugal, Spain, Italy, and New Zealand (Siqueira 2009).

[3] While the data was collected in 2007 and 2008, respondents provided retrospective accounts of their experiences before, during, and after the US migration. Retrospective reporting is a limitation of the study. However, it is common in social scientific research and understood that participants' memories of events may degrade over time (Trivellato 1999; Wellman 2007). In analyzing, interpreting, and reporting the results, I was very attentive to concerns about retrospective reporting among respondents.

undocumented in the United States; (3) working in the United States; (4) perceived quality of life (individual and overall) in the United States compared to Brazil; and (5) experiences of discrimination.

After this exhaustive coding process, I reread all of the interview anecdotes under each thematic code to make sure that each interview anecdote actually was properly classified under each particular thematic code. I took notes during the process to develop an idea of how prevalent each thematic code was for the entire sample of return migrants. I then used NVivo's counting application to calculate the number of return migrants whose qualitative anecdotes were listed under a thematic code (e.g., experiences of discrimination) versus the number of return migrants whose anecdotes were not listed. This allowed me to calculate the percentages of respondents who specifically mentioned some aspect of their mental health and experiencing some type of discrimination while living in the United States. Furthermore, since I collected data on each respondent's racial classification, I also utilized NVivo Matrix application to generate crosstabs between respondents' racial classification and experiences of discrimination.

The sample of return migrants had 26 women and 23 men between the ages of 20 and 57 years who lived in the United States for an average of 8 years. The majority lived in the northeastern US states such as Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York and returned to GV between 1989 and early 2008. With regard to education level, 83% of return migrants had at least a high school diploma. Most respondents worked as housecleaners, babysitters, dishwashers, "busboys/girls", and/or in construction while living in the United States. Forty-five percent immigrated primarily to work or due to having family in the United States. Before immigrating, 80% intended to return to Brazil. Even though 63% of returnees obtained tourist visas before immigrating, only 24.5% acquired a green card or US citizenship. While the majority legally entered the United States, most returnees became undocumented by working and overstaying tourist visas.[4] Despite the respondents' differences in gender, age, and time period in the United States, there was consistency in the findings with regard to experiences in discrimination and perceptions of its influence on respondents' mental health.[5]

Respondents were recruited primarily using local contacts (e.g., Brazilian immigration researchers, organizations) and snowball sampling, which were very effective, given GV's extensive US migration history and the role of

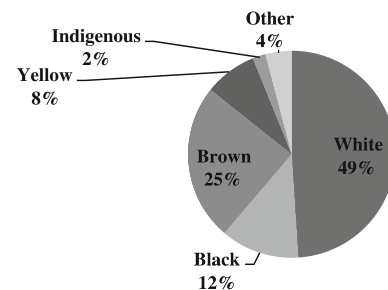

Fig. 1 Race in Brazil pre-migration (Brazil census)

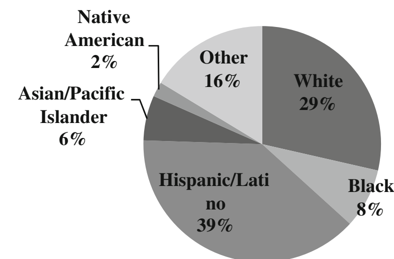

Fig. 2 Race in United States (US census)

social networks in migration. To account for the various experiences people might have had with race in the United States based on their appearance, I interviewed a phenotypically diverse sample of individuals with various skin tones and hair textures. Since this paper explores return migrants' mental health and experiences with discrimination while living in the United States, below I show respondents' retrospective categorical racial classification in the United States and how those compare with their' racial classifications in Brazil before the US migration. The racial categories in Fig. 1 are official categories from the 2000 Brazilian Census, while the racial categories in Fig. 2 are derived from the 2000 US Census.[6]

These figures demonstrate differences in categorical racial classification for respondents based on whether respondents were living in Brazil or in the United States. Whereas a large majority of return migrants retrospectively self-classified as white in Brazil before the US migration (49%), there was a large decline in respondents who self-classified as white while living in the United States (29%). The figures also show that the majority of respondents self-classified as "Hispanic/Latino" in the United States (39%). Thus, it appears that respondents who self-classified as

[4] Individuals who enter the US with tourist visas are not permitted to work with those visas.

[5] I used NVivo's matrix function to explore potential differences based on these demographic differences and found none.

[6] Though the US Census asks individuals of Hispanic origin to classify ethnically as Hispanic and also racially (e.g. black, white), I combined the categories "Hispanic/Latino" in the question about categorical racial classification in the US since: (1) literature on Brazilian immigrants indicates that they have exposure to both terms in the US and (2) some returnees used the terms interchangeably during pre-test interviews (Martes 2007).

white in Brazil before migrating shifted to the "Hispanic/Latino" category upon migrating to the United States.

While the focus of this paper is not on these shifts in racial classification, I will briefly comment that such a shift occurred because respondents were aware of the different norms for white racial classification in Brazil, where one can have racially mixed ancestry and self-classify as white, and the US, where having racially mixed ancestry generally excludes individuals from the white racial category (Davis 1991; Telles 2004). While living in the United States, respondents also learned that they were externally classified by Americans as "Hispanic/Latino," which influenced their self-classifications and had implications for their experiences of discrimination in the United States.

Results

Experiences of Discrimination

Because respondents were conscious of their racialized and predominantly undocumented status while living in the United States, many discussed their personal experiences of discrimination in the United States. Twenty-four respondents (50%) reported that they had experienced discrimination of some form while living in the United States and felt this discrimination stemmed from their racial classification, lack of English language proficiency, or being perceived as Hispanic and undocumented.[7] Thus, respondents felt this discrimination was due to racist and/or anti-immigrant sentiment. Although the other half of the returnee sample did not report directly experiencing discrimination, they reported observing or knowing other people (e.g., Brazilians, Americans of color) who experienced discrimination. Using this data, I generated matrix crosstabs in NVivo to examine experiences of discrimination by categorical self-ascribed racial classification and found the following percentages for respondents who reported experiencing discrimination while living in the United States: white—57%, black—75%, Hispanic/Latino—47%, and "other"—33%.[8] The quotes below demonstrate examples of racial and/or anti-immigrant discrimination respondents experienced.[9]

> Where I worked with Brazilians, I have a friend that lived in the US for 20 years who told me,—you are black, whites won't like you here. He told me this… [and later] this is what happened to me, a white guy wouldn't give me a job because I was black. But, he didn't tell me… he told me he didn't have any money [to hire another worker]. But, he didn't say it was because I was black, he didn't say anything. But, my friend got the job and told me he [the boss] didn't like blacks. Why didn't he like the work of a black? I am a good worker, I'm honest, I don't fight, I don't say anything. But, there was a problem with him [the boss].
>
> –Fernando, black, 42 years, Massachusetts

> I think like this, they [Americans] constantly watch you in the store, when you go in a store, as soon as you arrive and you don't know how to properly speak English, people would laugh at us. And, I felt bad, they were the type of people that followed me around to see, I wasn't going to steal anything.
>
> –Bianca, Morena, 29 years, New Jersey

> So, I felt a little bit of discrimination…when I worked as a salesperson, one time I did business with an older [white] American man. Because I had lived there [in the US] for many years, I didn't have [speak with] an accent…some guys that I worked with called me on the radio [walkie talkie] and said—I need you to do a job for us [in Spanish]. So, when I answered him in Spanish, this old guy took the contract…he looked, got his check, and asked me—are you Hispanic? And I said—no, I am Brazilian, but I have lived here for many years. So… he tore up the check and the contract and said—get out of my house, you Hispanic son of a b****… He heard me speaking Spanish [with my friend]…and said—get out of my house, Hispanics aren't welcome in my house. I didn't know if I should laugh or cry and I got nervous…I had never experienced anything like that [before].
>
> –Rafael, white, 31 years, Florida

Fernando, Bianca, and Rafael's quotes demonstrate how their status as presumed non-white and undocumented immigrants facilitated discriminatory treatment from Americans while living in the United States. Fernando's quote is a clear case of racially-based discrimination since

[7] There were two open-ended questions that directly asked participants about discrimination in the US. The first was "did you at any time experience what would be considered racism in the US?" The second question was "at any time in your social relationships, have you felt discriminated against in the US or Brazil? If so, do you think you were discriminated against because of your race or skin color?" I reviewed each respondent's answers to these questions to calculate the percentage of return migrants who experienced discrimination and what type of discrimination respondents experienced in the US.

[8] A larger percentage of respondents who self-classified as black reported experiencing discrimination relative to those in other racial categories because far fewer respondents self-classified as black ($N = 4$).

[9] Each quote was translated from Brazilian Portuguese and includes the respondent's pseudonym, self-ascribed racial classification when the interview occurred, age, and state of residence while living in the US.

he mentions learning that he was not hired for a job because the employer did not like blacks. Fernando recognized this is as employment discrimination and was disappointed about not receiving the position since he was a "good worker."

While Fernando's quote explicitly exemplifies racial discrimination, Bianca and Rafael's quotes suggest that they may have experienced a combination of racial and anti-immigrant discrimination. In both quotes, the respondents make reference to the role language played in their interactions with Americans. Bianca mentions being ridiculed due to her lack of English proficiency, which marked her as an immigrant, and at times resulted in her being under surveillance whenever she went shopping. In Rafael's quote, his use of the Spanish language in front of a client was the basis of discriminatory treatment. Because the client did not like Hispanics, his presumption that Rafael was Hispanic resulted in Rafael losing a potential client. Rafael was so stunned by the client's behavior that he was unsure how to respond, because he had never had an experience like this.

The experiences of discrimination mentioned in Fernando, Bianca, and Rafael's quotes are similar to those experienced by other Latino immigrants, especially Mexicans, who have traditionally been perceived as undocumented, and therefore presumed to not be American (Finch et al. 2000; Holt et al. 2006). Respondents in this study were cognizant of how highly marginalized Latinos are in the United States and how this may have yielded negative social interactions with Americans. Thus, race, ethnicity, language, immigration status, and "looking" illegal were factors related to respondents experiencing anti-immigrant discrimination while in the United States.

Challenges of Living as Racialized (Undocumented) Immigrants: Implications for Mental Health

In the interviews, many return migrants spoke of the difficulties they encountered while living in the United States. Such difficulties stemmed from their undocumented status, which often resulted in workplace exploitation, fear of deportation, and a general sense of unease while living in the United States. One return migrant named Gustavo discussed how he never really "felt at home" or "sentir em casa" while living in the United States:

> I think that life for those who go to the US and want to return, which was my case, going just to earn money and return to have a normal life here, is, my life in the US was [filled with] constant anxiety, you never felt at home. It wasn't our country, a culture very different isn't it? It's very different…I was always anxious and you're always looking around you. You're never happy, let's say, because of the distance, isolation, the difficulty, and fear. As an immigrant in the US, I was always afraid. We [Brazilians] could not get driver's licenses, we were always afraid of the police even though we did nothing wrong. We were so afraid that we'd die of fear when we saw a police car. So, this left us feeling anxious all the time, a constant fear.
>
> –Gustavo, white, 37 years, Massachusetts

Notice how Gustavo mentions living in constant fear and with anxiety various times in this particular anecdote. He also discussed how this caused worry and distress in other parts of his interview and even looked physically drained when talking about this. Because 76% of respondents self-identified as living undocumented in the United States, many of them shared an experience similar to that of Gustavo's and were never able to let their guard down and simply "live" while residing in the United States. Other respondents also spoke of living in fear and felt they were ethno-racially profiled by law enforcement officials, because of their undocumented status. These respondents specifically mentioned concerns about being dragged them from their beds in the middle of the night and being deported, which led to sleepless nights, despite exhausting labor-filled days, for many migrants. For Gustavo and other respondents, this fear was constant and certainly had implications for their overall well-being and especially their mental health.

Another way I attempted to derive an understanding of the mental health of respondents in the data was by reviewing their responses to a question I posed about their overall quality of life while living in the United States. Brazilian return migrants had mixed opinions about their experiences, some of which revealed more about the challenges of living in the United States. The 39% ($N = 19/49$) who described their quality of life as positive mentioned their satisfaction with having stable and better-paying jobs (than in Brazil) and had suitable living conditions. Within this 39% are the respondents who reported that they had obtained green cards or US citizenship during their time in the United States. Therefore, my data indicate that stable or legal documentation status was associated with more favorable reports of quality of life in the United States.

On the other hand, nearly 27% ($N = 13/49$) described their quality of life as mostly negative, and another 24.5% ($N = 12/49$) described their quality of life as both positive and negative.[10] These respondents discussed having a poor quality of life due to: (1) working long hours in physically strenuous jobs, (2) negative interactions with other

[10] The remaining 10% ($N = 5/49$) provided responses to this question that could not be described as neither positive nor negative.

Brazilians, and (3) living as undocumented immigrants. Finally, a major theme that also had mental health implications for return migrants overall was having different quality of life expectations for the United States and Brazil. Each of these issues will be addressed in more detail in the following paragraphs.

Implications for Mental Health: Physically Strenuous Jobs

During their time in the United States, female migrants primarily worked cleaning houses, waiting tables, and as babysitters, while male migrants worked in landscaping or construction and washed dishes in restaurants. Nearly 33% of all respondents specifically discussed how physically taxing their US jobs were—the days were long, the breaks were few, and the pay was minimal. Undocumented migrants experienced the additional burden of being exploited by employers who threatened to report them to Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Such demanding work schedules often facilitated poor diets that contributed to weight gain and lack of sleep, which yielded other potential health issues for respondents, as can be seen in Felipe's quote below.

> In my first and second year, I worked 18, 19 h a day, slept very little, and almost had a car accident on the highway in the snow because I was so tired. But, it was my choice, I wanted to work like that because a lot of people [Brazilians] say "ah, here [in the US] we live like dogs". A lot of people say this, "we live poorly in the US" but, no, you live the way you want to live. If you want to work 10 h, you work 10 h. If you want to work 8 h, you work 8. If you want to work 20, the problem is yours…the American thinks like this: "it's up to you, you work however much you want to work, you live the way you want to live." So, I wanted to work [alot] my first and second year. I didn't want to have a life, I wasn't interested in anything, I didn't want to watch TV, I just wanted to work.
>
> –Felipe, white, 34 years, Massachusetts and Connecticut

Felipe and other migrants used the following Portuguese phrases to describe their work: "trabalhar atê cachorro" (working like a dog), "estava doida para trabalhar" (working like crazy), and "trabalhava quase dia e noite"(almost worked all day and night). Felipe's quote also alludes to an obsession that *temporary* Brazilian migrants have with earning money in the United States at any physical or psychological costs, which could contribute to various physical and mental health problems. Magaña and Hovey's (2003) mixed-methods study of Mexican migrant farm workers in the Midwestern United States found that these migrants identified rigid work demands, hard physical labor, and employer exploitation as stressors. Magaña and Hovey also found that rigid work demands were significantly associated with high levels of anxiety and depression symptoms for these migrants. While Brazilian migrants in my sample were not Midwestern farm workers, there are relevant parallels between their employment experiences and those of the Mexican migrant farm workers in Magaña and Hovey's study: being undocumented, experiencing discrimination, and being geographically isolated from relevant social support networks. Because Mexican migrant farm workers identified similar employment stressors (that were significantly associated with depression and anxiety) as Brazilian migrants, it is likely that Brazilian migrants also experienced depression and anxiety from their work demands.

Implications for Mental Health: Negative Interactions with Other Brazilians

Many respondents also attributed their negative quality of life in the United States to sharing living quarters and expenses with other Brazilians. This was often done to save more money for their lives in post-migration Brazil. Fernanda's quote below expresses her negative experience living with other Brazilian temporary migrants:

> The Brazilians that I lived with, we shared a house. So for me, this type of living was the worst, the most painful because it is difficult when everyone is thinking only of themselves. There is a lot of egoism, I think everyone is anxious to earn and save a lot of money to the point that it drives people crazy. And I thought that above everything, you have to live. They all complained because the water [bill] was expensive and we had to split it. So, there was lots of arguing and fighting, one Brazilian to the other, constantly because of food, money, and working…most of the time, I was crying and complaining about missing home.
>
> –Fernanda, black, 30 years, Florida

Here, Fernanda describes in detail how stressful this living situation was for her and the others involved to the extent that it "drives people crazy." Instead of there being a sense of camaraderie due to shared nationality and migration status, Fernanda suggests there is an obsession with earning money that supercedes common nativity ties.

Other return migrants also reported having negative experiences with fellow Brazilians in the form of employment exploitation and a sense of superiority from documented Brazilians aimed toward undocumented Brazilians. Furthermore, return migrants felt that Brazilians

from other parts of Brazil, particularly São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, were condescending toward Brazilians from more rural parts of Brazil, such as Governador Valadares. Research on social support theory has argued individuals with meaningful social relationships (e.g., relatives, friends) that provide psychological and other types of resources that tend to have better physical and mental health than individuals who do not (Cohen and Wills 1985; Leavy 1983; Kessler and McLeod 1985; Berkman et al. 2000; Brummett et al. 2001; Uchino 2009). Research conducted on Latino immigrants also supports this theory (Cislo et al. 2010; Finch and Vega 2003). However, among this sample of Brazilian return migrants, their connections with other Brazilian immigrants in the United States did not always provide the positive social support that could ameliorate the stresses associated with being racialized undocumented immigrants in the United States. On the contrary, the negative interactions that occurred between Brazilian migrants in the United States may have negatively influenced their mental health.

Implications for Mental Health: Being Undocumented

The burden of being undocumented also created a poor quality of life for respondents who mentioned the following Portuguese words throughout their interviews: sofrimento (suffering), angustia (anguish), não sente em casa (not feeling at home), dificuldade (difficulty), presa (imprisoned), saudades (longing for family and Brazil), and depressão (depression). Each of these terms symbolizes stressors in their daily lives that directly and indirectly influenced their mental health.[11] Sergio's quote below demonstrates his recognition of how these challenges affected Brazilian migrants' mental well-being.

> First of all, you are in a place where you don't have the same prerogatives as people who are active [US citizens], which is difficult. There was always the insecurity that at any moment, something could happen to my family [in GV] and I was away… It wasn't that we didn't have options, but we didn't have access. Our lives were very restricted, we had to work more and play less…So, it was a life that was very different from here [in GV] in that you have the chance to gain and save a little more money and get some things in the US, but the price is very high. There's the question of health, psychologically speaking, you have to consider all of this. It's not only that you have to work physically hard and the long hours. [But] you don't have access to health[-care], doctors, you can't go for a doctor's appointment, to the dentist, the psychologist. So, when you take all of this into account, the cost is very high.
>
> –Sergio, Moreno, 46 years, Connecticut

Notice how Sergio references the challenges, both physical and mental, that come with living in the United States. He discusses the lack of access to basic health care and provides an analysis of the costs and benefits, especially the psychological ones, of the migrant lifestyle for Brazilians in the United States. His perception is similar to Gustavo's in that both men express a discomfort with living in the United States, because they are away from home and experience anxiety due to concerns about their documentation status and the well-being of their families. Sergio and other respondents were aware that their physical and mental health were being affected, but saw such "suffering" as temporary, since they would eventually return to Brazil, where they hoped to lead a more leisurely lifestyle.

Implications for Mental Health: Different Quality of Life Expectations for the United States and Brazil

While respondents worked incredibly hard and made numerous sacrifices during their time in the United States, Sabrina's quote below demonstrates her perception of life in the United States and Brazil as clearly separated based on her expectations for what she hopes to gain from each country:

> Here [in Brazil] you don't earn as much, but you live in Brazil and there [in the US] you earn more money, but you don't have a life. Because, [in the US] a person lives just to work. Generally, a person [migrant] that goes there, goes to work. And I feel this way, that now [that I'm back in Brazil] I am living.
>
> –Sabrina, black, 31 years, Florida

Although this quote is from Sabrina's interview, nearly all return migrants' interviews indicated a recognition that there are two types of lifestyles that Brazilian migrants can have: (1) one in the United States that is work-driven and stressful and (2) one in post-migration Brazil that is relaxed and peaceful. Brazilian return migrants clearly separated the two lifestyles and adjusted their expectations for those lifestyles based on where they were geographically situated. While living in the United States, the migrants' goals aligned with a desire to work and earn as much money as possible, despite living in constant fear and with anxiety, to

[11] While some of the words and behavior of respondents could be indicative of standardized symptoms in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV), respondents did not report being clinically diagnosed with any mental disorders or seeking professional treatment while living in the US or after returning to Brazil.

obtain upward social mobility in Brazil post-migration. This meant enduring various physical and psychological challenges and sacrifices in the name of “not having a life”, so that they could resume *living* after returning to Brazil. For return migrants in this study, the perception is that such temporary sacrifices are worth it in order to have what they hope will be delayed and permanent gratification after the return migration is complete. Thus, life in the United States means to “work like a dog” and endure the fear of deportation, isolation from loved ones at home, and depression, while post-migration life in Brazil symbolizes a reprieve from the stresses of living as undocumented racialized immigrants in the United States.

Among return migrants in the sample, there is a perception that life in Brazil after completing the return migration means being able to relax mentally and physically and enjoy the fruits of one’s strenuous labor from having lived in the United States. Although the focus of this paper is on return migrants’ experiences in the United Sates, I will briefly comment that the return to Brazil was not as ideal as most returnees had hoped it would be. For the 11 returnees that were deported or returned to Brazil due to deportation fears, most were unable to reach their financial goals before returning. In a few of these cases, return migrants reported feeling that their lives were made financially and socially worse due to the US migration. The difficulties associated with emigration and return migration resulted in family separations, (e.g., divorce), estranged relationships with left behind relatives (especially children), and the accrual of debt for migration-related expenses.

Additionally, due to the lack of employment opportunities in Governador Valadares, return migrants experienced difficulty in finding employment, and the rising cost of living in Brazil made any funds earned in the United States less valuable. Of the 49 return migrants I interviewed, only four reported their primary reason for returning to GV as due to reaching their financial goal.[12] Thus, all of these factors in addition to experiencing difficulty in readapting life in GV likely created additional stress and anxiety, among other potential mental health issues for return migrants. However, it is beyond the scope of the data to speculate on the mental health of the migrants after their return to Brazil.[13]

[12] The other primary reasons for returning: (1) documentation status concerns, or fears of or actual deportation: 25% ($N = 11$); (2) family reasons: 57% ($N = 28$); and (3) miscellaneous reasons: 12% ($N = 6$).

[13] The data does not indicate or suggest whether or not returnees’ mental states changed after returning home and/or if any of them sought assistance or treatment from mental health professionals.

Discussion and Conclusion

While living in the United States, most Brazilian return migrants in this study experienced racial and anti-immigrant discrimination and various challenges that had implications for their physical and mental health. Because of their presumed non-white racial background, primarily undocumented immigration status, and lack of English proficiency, their access to less physically strenuous jobs was limited. Within such jobs, respondents worked long hours and also encountered discrimination in the form of exploitation from employers aware of their undocumented status. In addition to this, respondents’ living conditions and being away from family members in Brazil also caused additional distress. Thus, the combination of discrimination experiences and challenges of being an immigrant took a considerable toll on the physical and mental well-being of respondents in the form of weight gain and loss, lack of sleep, anxiety, fear, and depression, as indicated in Paulo’s quote below.

> I think every experience is valid even though I experienced the worst depression ever. I had depression in the US, I gained and lost 26 lb in two and a half months. I didn’t leave the house, I didn’t want to work. I was disengaged from everything.
> –Paulo, white, 28 years, South Carolina

Although the data for this study does not include the traditional measures of mental health used in survey data, the findings demonstrate that discrimination is prevalent, and the qualitative experience of being a racialized and undocumented immigrant in the United States facilitates various stresses among this group that can affect their mental health. While the sample for this study is small and the findings are not intended to be generalizable beyond this group of respondents, these qualitative findings do shed light on how such challenges may cause anxiety, fear, and depression for Brazilians and other immigrants who share similar demographic characteristics. As exemplified by Magaña and Hovey’s (2003) study, there are many similarities between Brazilian migrants in this study and Mexican migrant farm workers. Likewise, there could be additional similarities between Brazilian migrants and other Latino immigrants, since both groups are of Latin American descent, externally classified as Hispanic, have varied documentation statuses, and experience ethno-racial and anti-immigrant discrimination. The country’s current economic situation affects immigrants’ employment opportunities and discussions about immigration reform, which have the potential to increase anti-immigrant sentiment, may continue to negatively influence immigrants’, especially Latino immigrants’, mental health.

These findings also raise further questions about other factors that have mental health implications for immigrants. For example, how does having a homeward-bound or transnational orientation affect mental health? The majority of respondents in this study intended to return to Brazil before migrating (80%) and actually completed the return migration. However, their perceptions of their experiences in the United States are different from Brazilian and other immigrants who: (1) are still in the United States; (2) migrated with the intent to permanently remain in the United States; and (3) intended to return to their country of origin, but are still in the United States and have not completed the return migration. These Brazilian return migrants had such high hopes for their post-migration Brazilian lives and were willing to endure various challenges in the United States. However, knowing more about the state of their current mental health in Brazil and how it compares to their mental health in the United States may also further demonstrate the relevance of a homeward-bound orientation for migrants.[14] Measuring and incorporating the strength of transnational ties in mental health research on immigrants is also important, because previous transnational migration studies have shown how such ties reconfigure migrants' negotiation of gender relations, religious practices, and political involvement in immigrant-receiving and immigrant-sending countries (Levitt 2007; Pedraza 2005; Fox 2005; DeBiaggi 2002; Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002). Thus, the frequency and extent to which immigrants maintain transnational communication with family and friends in the country of origin may also mediate the challenges associated with being a racialized and undocumented immigrant and their effects on mental health outcomes in the host society.

Similarly, incorporating Brazilian immigrants in survey research can significantly enhance researchers' knowledge of how race, ethnicity, documentation status, and being on the move transnationally can influence immigrants' experiences in the United States. Given Brazilian immigrants' increasing population, documented history of being temporary and permanent migrants to the UnitedStates, and tendency to reside in areas where there are high concentrations of other Latino groups, their inclusion in survey research can also shed light on how ethnic differences and transnational ties influence the health outcomes of Latinos in the United States. The findings presented in this paper illustrate the depth of how Brazilian immigrants' experiences may be relevant for understanding the challenges that other (racialized Latino) immigrants have in this country. As the United States continues to grapple with immigration reform amid contentious economic and healthcare debates, it will be essential to incorporate less visible immigrants in such policy discussions and social scientific studies. Including Brazilian immigrants in that discourse will be an important step in that direction.

[14] The research on permanent return migration for other ethnic groups in the US is very limited although a few studies have been conducted on West Indians and Asian Pacific Islanders (Conway and Potter 2006; Plaza and Henry 2006; Iredale et al. 2003). However, these studies have not explicitly examined return migrants' mental health.

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