

## **Identity and Immigration**

**Cizina Célia Fernandes Pereira Resstel**

Student

Postgraduate Program in Psychology

**Dr. José Sterza Justo**

Professor and Researcher

Postgraduate Program in Psychology

**Marcelo Naputano**

Postdoctoral Researcher

Postgraduate Program in Psychology

**Dra. Mary Yoko Okamoto**

Professor and Reserarcher

Postgraduate Program in Psychology

Departament of Clinical Psychology

Universidade Estadual Paulista UNESP

Assis - Brasil

### **Abstract**

*The general purpose of this research has elected, as object of research, the experience of dekasegi's children (term used to describe Japanese descendants who are born in Brazil and go to Japan looking for a job) about living with two distinct cultures when they follow their parents in long-time work seasons in Japan and when they return to Brazil. For that purpose, interviews were held with dekasegi who have returned to Brazil and their children using a clinical method of investigation, and psychoanalysis were used as a theoretical background. The results indicate that these immigrants' children, according to current trends of production of subjectivation models based on flexibility and difference, develop personal identification with both cultures - Brazilian and Japanese - though not in a well-balanced way. However, while recent subjectivation models experienced by these immigrants' children bring contribution for identity references, they also generate conflicts, tensions, anxieties and challenges.*

**Keywords:** *Dekasegi's children; Return; Identity and Psychoanalysis.*

### **1.Introduction**

Brazil was considered a nation which welcome immigrants frequently since when its colonial period. This process is reverted in the 1980s, when Brazilian Japanese descendants start a mass emigration in the search of better job opportunities. Recently, we have dealt with a new phenomenon in the migration process in Brazil: the regress of dekasegi<sup>1</sup> and their children to Brazil. Many of these children and some of them are even born in Japan are strongly connected to their great-grandfather's homeland, and they bring a Japanese world within. Is it possible to think of a new identity construction? What is the identity of this new contemporary subject? Stuart Hall (2005), in his book *Question of cultural identity* discuss new contemporary identities under a social perspective. Hall (2005) argues that, during much long time, old identities in the modernity looked at the subject as an unified being. Recently, there is a process of identity diversification, deconstructing the former model of centralization and unification. These contemporary identity deconstructions form what Hall (2005, p.7) calls "identity crisis". The change of identity axis follows a number of other changes located either in an economic basis or in the familiar relationship, psychological field and different life fields.

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<sup>1</sup> The term dekasegi refers to the migration moviment started in the 1980s in which Japanese descendants who are born in Brazil migrate temporarily to Japan in the search of better salaries and life conditions.

Especially related with the experience of the regress of dekasegi with resonance in the identity constitution of their children, the challenges for Brazilian science and for public policies of social attention and support to these returned emigrants are still significant.

According to Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt (1999), this migration movement going forwards and backwards has always existed, and in this moment it reaches a critical volume and a real complexity to take part in the emerging social field. These immigrants are individuals who eventually live in both places, speak both languages and keep contact frequently with both nations.

The reverse migration of dekasegi in Brazil have been occurred due to several economic recessions in Japan and a sense of uneasiness emerging in foreigners residing abroad or in those who travel for a work journey in order to save a small capital enough to change their life conditions. The life project of regressing with saved money and running a profitable business enough to guarantee a comfortable future for dekasegi and their families is put in question due to the growing difficulty for saving money in Japan, as well as the difficulty in making successful investments in Brazil, because of the increasing global complexity in business and financial investments. Therefore, dekasegi who are returning to Brazil have become a social issue and starts to attract scientific perspectives for this migration movement.

Making the situation of dekasegi even more complicated, in addition to the echoes of the economic crisis in 2008 observed in the U.S., Japan was affected by strong tidal waves, and one of them caused a serious nuclear accident, making Brazilians even more insecure about the future in this country. Immigrants travel less frequently at each year due to the fear of natural disasters, the increasing economic crisis in Japan and the actions of Japanese government that has been closing doors to the nation and has been applying restrictive regulations for foreign workers as a way to assure more jobs for Japanese workers.

According to the ACEMA's (Associação Cultural e Esportiva de Maringá, or Maringá Sport and Culture Association) former president, Mr. M. Hossokawa, cited by Asari & Tomita (2000), "[...] something that could be an alternative for life has become an issue. In these travels forwards to and backwards from Japan, dekasegi cope with unemployment and lack of professional formation when returning to their homeland. This brings on the pendulum movement" (Asari & Tomita, 2000, p.54).

Matsuo, Cores & Amaral (2010) point out the situation of children in families that moves to Japan when their sons are studying. While in Japan, Brazilian children are enrolled in Japanese schools and take distance from the Portuguese language and the school daily life in Brazil, what is quite different in Japan. Difficulties of school adaptation are so significant that Brazilian schools emerge in Japan in order to assist especially dekasegi's children.

The regress to Brazil is not less problematic. Even though considering Brazil their homeland, children bring within part of Japan and part of Brazil that had been left and not always correspond completely to that country they find out when returning back. Then, these children have hybrid references of themselves, cultures of very contrastive nations in an amalgam of double social subjectivities. If those odd experiences and conflicts are problematic for adults, for children the situation is even less simple, though there are specificities (Resstel, 2014) From this point of view, Asari & Tomita (2000, p.54) argues that "the most bitter experiences have occurred with children who followed their parents and had to attend to schools in both countries". In Japan children under 16 years old are obligated to attend to a school, or their parents might be punished.

The authors point out that dekasegi's children whose studies were suspended in Brazil and had to study in Japanese schools cope with "[...] prejudice and adaptation problems, especially due to not understanding the Japanese language" (Asari & Tomita, 2000, p.55). When returning back to Brazil they face with "issues of emotional and psychological readaptation, in addition to adaptation to school curriculum" (Asari & Tomita, 2000, p.55).

The learning of Portuguese language is pointed as an aspect of significant emotional suffering for these children when returning to Brazil, and it might be an element of catalyzation for further adaptation difficulties, simultaneously. In the strict field of scientific production on dekasegi's issue, studies about their children are also scarce, considering the importance and range of questions that emerge in these infants' experience. Among existing researches, the attention on economic aspects and difficulties in school adaptation is prevalent. This study shall approach another quite complex question: the issue of identity of dekasegi's children, identified in this migration experience.

## **2. Purpose**

The main purpose of the research reported in this article was to verify from dekasegi's children who spent their first childhood in Japan how they feel and understand themselves regarding Brazilian and Japanese culture, that is, how they recognize themselves before both cultures, or which of them is taken as a reference of themselves.

## **3. Method**

In this study we performed a clinical qualitative research. One feature of a qualitative research is a deep study of particularities (Turato, 2003), seeking not plain measurement and quantification, but qualities, significations of an investigated phenomenon. We utilized psychoanalysis as a theoretical reference for reading and understanding of affective and emotional elements in the experience of dekasegi's children. This research was performed with three participants, with age from 9 to 13 years, during a period from 2012 to 2013, and who had studied in Japanese elementary schools. They have spent their first childhood in Japan and returned to Brazil a few years later. The contact with these children was obtained through a Japanese cultural club in a city from Midwestern São Paulo, Brazil, where there is a strong presence of Japanese immigrant's descendants. Three participants fulfilling the research criteria were selected, that is, they were elective in the age range specified and lived in Japan along with their parents. All ethics procedures were followed strictly, and the research was developed with approved opinion of the Research Ethics Committee. Parents were informed about the purpose of the research and were given every condition so that they could decide with wide freedom and reflection, signing, then, the Informed Consent Form. The contact with the children occurred following the parents' agreement, and the teenagers were also informed about the nature and purpose of the research, being completely free to decide whether to take part or not.

As a general research design, interviews with parents (father and mother) were performed, focused especially on the identification of difficulties perceived in their children about school adaptation. With the children, interviews and were utilized in order to understand through those tools the difficulties in school and recognition of Brazilian and Japanese cultures.

Interviews performed with parents and children involved triggering issues regarding the adaptation process and migration difficulties. With consent from the participant, an audio recorder was used in the first interview, and the three questions elaborated about difficulties on adaptation in Japan and when returning to Brazil were applied to parents and children. In addition, weekly interviews with children were developed focusing on the new reality, that is, their experiences in Japan and in Brazil. These interviews were recorded using notes and then digitalized in order to save the originality of the participants' language expressions. The duration of each interview was one hour per meeting. The names found in this research as fictional in order to preserve the identity of the subjects.

## **4. Presentation**

Eiko and Leticia's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Ito, 39 years and 33 years old, respectively, are sansei, that is, third-generation descendants of Japanese immigrants. Mr. Ito made his travel to Japan in 1992 when he was 20 years old, and Mrs. Ito arrived in the rising sun nation in 1997, being 17 years old then. They met in Japan and got married in Brazil. In Japan, they lived in Matsumoto city, Nagano prefecture, and worked as factory workers, warehouse and hotel employees (Resstel, 2014). At the peak of economic crisis occurred in 2008, with employment difficulties, the family regressed to Brazil in 2009. Mr. Ito was unemployed then, as well as thousands of dekasegi. Mrs. Ito was still attached to the hotel. However, her job was not enough to sustain their family since it was a 4-hour part-time job. Difficulties on returning to Brazil occurred even before their departure. The parents are worried about the school routine of their children since they know that the school year in Japan starts in April, different from that in Brazil. Differences between language and school curricula are not enough, because when children finish the school year in Japan, they come to Brazil and find an ongoing school year. Time spent at school changes significantly. Not only school changes, but a whole lifestyle which will affect profoundly cultural identity, especially the children's one. Considering the background in Japan described above, Mr. Ito's family decides to come back to Brazil. This decision was taken by the father. Ms. Haru is 30 years old. She is Goro's mother and Mrs. Ito's sister. Mrs. Haru went to Japan in 2005, when she was 23 years old. She has also lived in Matsumoto city, Nagano prefecture, and worked in an ink cartridge factory. The Brazilian woman became a section chief after some years of working and she also worked as an interpreter for Brazilian and Japanese. Her regress to Brazil occurred in 2012, and she left her partner behind because he should keep working one more year. She returned with Goro and two small children, along with her parents (Resstel, 2014).

Ms. Haru, her children and the whole family felt afraid of the seismic shocks in the Japanese land. Due to the Richter 9 great tsunami occurred in the region of Miyagi, on March 2011, thousands of people died. In addition, the disaster was even worsened with the radioactive leak from a nuclear plant in Fukushima, which deeply affected by the tsunami contaminated in a dangerous level a large part of the environment. Japanese and Brazilian population in Japan had to live in continuous alert state due to possible earthquakes caused by the great tsunami. Furthermore, the economic crisis was still leading to high unemployment rates in the country, with no short-term signs of improvement (Resstel, 2014).

These features ended up encouraging Ms. Haru's family to return back to Brazil. Some of her relatives had already returned. In a serious moment of fear and faithless, the last option was to regress to homeland. For Ms. Haru, it was the most sensible and practicable decision, after living in Japanese lands for seven years. The decision was taken by her, Goro's mother.

Looking at such a new intense change, Ms. Haru counts on time in the process of readaptation in Brazil. She states that she needs more time to deal with this new situation, but agrees that all of this is transitory.

Goro's parents communicate only in Japanese with their children in Japan.

#### **4.1 Eiko Case**

Eiko is 13 years old. She was born in Matsumoto city, Nagano prefecture, central region of Japan. After Eiko's birth, her parents lived for more six months in Japan, and then they came to Brazil, living here for over two years. Before Eiko becoming 3 years, the family traveled one more time to Japan. Her parents say that their daughter states she is Japanese because she was born in Japan. In her birth documents, the Japanese city was recorded, but Eiko is not treated as a natural Japanese by other Japanese, but she is seen as a Brazilian, even though she was not born or has lived for a long time in Brazil (Resstel, 2014).

In Japan, she attended Japanese kindergarten and elementary school. She had just finished elementary school third grade when the family returned to Brazil. In the Japanese school, Eiko had difficulties with the kanji writing, being necessary to attend a cram school for Japanese. In Japanese language, there are other writing forms, hiragana, katakana, and romaji. While living in Japan, communication with her parents occurred in Japanese, and there was no contact with Portuguese language.

Eiko took part in the first interview when she was 12 years and 6 months old. She had all features and behavior traits of a Japanese child: she was shy and delicate as a little Japanese girl. Eiko uses to dress according to Japanese-like teen fashion: sneakers, short skirt and long socks covering over her knees. The volume of her voice was very low, with a trembling and hacking utterance, as if she was not able to make a connection between the spoken words and Portuguese language. Words were spelled with much effort. Her ways of talking and walking were restrained, different from the behavior of a Brazilian teenager. However, Eiko is a daughter of Brazilians born in Japan, then, she is Brazilian (Resstel, 2014).

Eiko arrived in Brazil when she was nine years and nine months old, being not able to speak Portuguese. She soon faced cultural conflicts and adaptation difficulties to integrate to the new and unknown country. She did not consider Brazil as her origin country, but her destination country, which she did not choose to live. Nowadays, her voice is more defined, but adaptation difficulties still persist, especially with Portuguese language and friendship connections. The Japanese behavior is inherent to Eiko's lifestyle (Resstel, 2014).

Currently, Eiko attends elementary school eighth grade. The girl failed the fifth grade because she had just arrived to Brazil, in July 2009. She and her younger sister entered the Brazilian school in August 2009, being not able to speak Portuguese. During this period, their parents hired private classes to teach them. They also were available to study with their daughters. However, Eiko does not speak Portuguese fluently, and she still has difficulties to understand instrumental and abstract modes of Portuguese language. In addition, she feels shame when talking and then she does not have friends and is isolated (Resstel, 2014).

#### **4.2 Leticia Case**

The youngest child, Leticia, is 10 years old, and she was born in Tupã city, São Paulo state. Before completing one year she went to Japan with her parents and returned to Brazil being seven years old. When Leticia came for the first time to be interviewed she was nine. In Japan, she attended kindergarten and started the first grade of elementary school at a Japanese school. In Brazil, she was enrolled in the second grade of elementary school and was able to follow school contents in the Brazilian school, being not reproved. Leticia was alphabetized both in Japan and in Brazil (Resstel, 2014).

The girl is delicate and slim just like a Japanese doll. Her peaceful behavior makes her different from other Brazilian children. She has Japanese physical traits and is used to wear clothing similar to Asian children models. Leticia has made some friends at school. Nowadays she is attending the sixth grade of elementary school. Her parents say that her daughter tells them she has studied in a Japanese school and has learned that country's culture, then she intends to return to Japan. She speaks both languages Japanese and Portuguese fluently.

Unlike her sister, Eiko, Leticia was not reprovved at school. However, although she has learned the new language Portuguese more easily, the girl has still found many difficulties with Portuguese semantics, polysemous words, speech environments, and expressions and slangs. She reports that she cannot understand word meanings and that she gets tired of searching for them in Portuguese dictionaries, experiencing then a frustration she calls "laziness". Both sisters have always studied in Japanese schools and they did not learn Portuguese. At home, their parents communicate with the girls in Japanese. The parents explain that Brazilian schools in Japan do not offer professional teachers neither have physical structure and teaching methods deemed as suitable, being quite different from Japanese schools. Therefore, they decided to enroll their children in a Japanese school. Having a first contact with Portuguese learning, both sisters cried frequently. They claimed that Portuguese is very difficult to be understood and the behavior of Brazilian children frightened them.

### **4.3 Goro Case**

Goro is ten years old now and he was born in Bastos city, São Paulo state. In his first contact, Goro seemed timid, with a disappointed look, as if he was afraid of the new environment. His behavior was of avoiding in the environment as he was in an unknown place. In addition, he did not speak Portuguese and had resistance in making links. In the beginning, he sought for his mother's companion, Mrs. Haru. Since I had an elementary knowledge of Japanese I decided to make use of Japanese. With simple words, I asked him if he was all right. Goro starred at me, surprised with me communicating in the same language he mastered. Since then our conversations were in Japanese (Resstel, 2014). Goro is half-Brazilian and half-Japanese, with African ancestry. He has curly hair and almond-shaped eyes, what makes him physically different from native Japanese boys. His mother reports that his son felt disturbed for having physical traits different from Japanese. He wanted to be like other Japanese boys and felt like an ugly child.

As his parents are divorced he does not make contact with his biological father. In Japan, he felt sad in the Father's Day. His teacher asked him to make a drawing, but he drew his mother's or grandmother's figure instead of his father's one. He filled this absence with female figures. He was enrolled at Kumon school, an institution of private classes education, in order to learn Portuguese and Mathematics, and he persisted in these studies for seven months. His mother decided to alphabetize the boy at a language school before enrolling him at a Brazilian learning institution. Goro has completed the second grade of elementary school in Japan, and was approved for the following year. In Brazil, being nine years old in 2012, he was enrolled in the third grade of elementary school at a private school by his mother's request, since she was afraid of him facing further difficulties. Even though he was enrolled in a previous grade, he has had difficulties in Portuguese, Sciences and History. However, he has obtained an average marks in school tests (Resstel, 2014). Communication at home happened in Japanese. There was no Portuguese communication for him for years, and suddenly he found himself in a strange world, in contact with other language and habits, everything quite different from what he was used to in Japan. The common experience of these three *dekasegi's* children is that they studied at Japanese schools and they developed Japanese language and behavior.

## **5. Case analysis**

### **5.1 Eiko**

Identity is a complex and controversial theme in the current academic discussion, even more when dealing with cases such as Eiko, Leticia and Goro's reports, children carrying personal references and experiences. Eiko was born in Japan, however she is not recognized as a Japanese child. The girl has studied in Japanese schools and had lived with the culture of this nation. She technically feels like a Japanese girl and is deemed so in Brazil but in Japan she is seen as a foreign student. So Eiko is a foreigner in both countries. An ambivalent feeling rises within Eiko, of staying in Brazil and also building a close future in Japan. In the excerpt below, transcribed from one of her interviews, when asked about identity, Eiko reveals her questions to us about belonging to no country, and she has no prompt answer.

*Eiko: Hmm... I think none of them. In Japan my friends kept saying that I was Brazilian too, and in Brazil they say that I'm Japanese. And I can't say which I am, Brazilian or Japanese? (...) I want to go to Japan to do other things, to study a major course, but I also want to stay in Brazil and run (name of her parents' business), (...) So I want to be in Brazil and in Japan (Resstel, 2014, p.207, 244).*

When referring to her lifestyle and behavior, Eiko summons the consanguineous lineage to justify behavior traits she deems as being typically Brazilian.

*Sometimes I get frustrated and sad. Why do my colleagues can and I can't? I also have Brazilian blood. I get depressed because they can and I cannot. (R): What did you want to be capable of? Eiko: To talk more. I don't want to be shy. I want more friends. (R): Do you think shyness bothers you in something? Eiko: Yes. When the teacher asks me to read, I can't. My classmates are going to laugh on me. I get timid and end up not reading (Resstel, 2014, p.255).*

Calling upon family relationships may indicate an attempt to compare oneself with other classmates, with Brazilian students, through an element kinship considered as one of the most basic elements in the constitution of lineage and ancestry. By attributing one feature familiar to her and her classmates, the girl feels as if she shares something deemed as essential in the constitution of individuals and defining each one's behavior.

In another moment of the interviews, the girl explains her identity and cultural differences by saying that she is totally Japanese and her sister is half-Brazilian.

*When we were younger in Japan everything was the same until we became three. After getting a bit older things changed. Leticia has studied some stuff about God. Japanese do not believe in Jesus, but Brazilian do. I followed like the Japanese. When my sister and I write, our letters are quite different. My writing style gets so round. (R): Each person has his or her own way of writing though. Eiko: Hum? Way of writing? (R): Yes, way of writing. Eiko: But I like the shape of my letter, as teachers say that my letter is beautiful (Resstel, 2014, p.265).*

Considering the importance of a religious belief in the formation of identity or an identity core, Eiko indicates another strong reference of herself, linking it with Japanese culture when she assures she is different from her sister due to the difference of religious belief. In addition, she emphasizes the difference between their calligraphy connecting it to the fact that her sister has better assimilated Brazilian culture and she had assimilated Japanese culture. Therefore, Eiko partially recognizes she carries some Brazilian traits such as blood lineage but claims being different from her sister because she is "more Japanese" than the younger child.

After seeing a photograph of Bastos city, portrait of when she had been in Brazil for the first time, Eiko emphasizes that she could feel like a Brazilian by the conditions of that place. However, she cannot remember the whole place, as if part of herself was missing.

*I got a little glad by seeing this photo. When I saw it I could feel I am Brazilian too. (R): How is the photo? Eiko: For example, I lived in Bastos. There were dinosaur bones in a museum. I could remember when I saw the photo. But I could remember only that part recalling Brazil. I couldn't remember other things (Resstel, 2014, p.125).*

Reminiscences of museums and dinosaur bones as being from Brazilian fields where she had spent a few years of her childhood may indicate the recognition of her Brazilian roots. However, they were trapped in a distant past, practically indistinguishable, though representing in some way an identity sign that allows an emerging sensation of being Brazilian as well, i.e. a Japanese girl with Brazilian traits. On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013 Brazil's soccer team and Japan's soccer team had a match at the former's lands for the 2013 FIFA Confederations Cup. At that time, we asked Eiko which team she cheered for. She answered that she did not watch the match because there was not TV signal at her home and then she stayed playing games and reading Japanese magazines.

*(R): Why do you cheer for Japan? Eiko: Because it is my country. (R): Brazil won the match by 3 x 0. Eiko: I think Brazil's team is a strong team. (R): Which team do you think it will win the cup, Brazil or Japan? Eiko: I think it's Japan. They have 30% chances of winning. Japan's team has become strong too. If they lost for Brazil, they're a little bit weaker (Resstel, 2014, p.126).*

Eiko affirms that Japan is her homeland and it has been strengthened, but if Japan loses the second match against Brazil it is because its team is weakened. Eiko's Japanese side is a dominant one, even if Japan is not always the winner.

## 5.2 Leticia

Leticia defines her identity by her birth place, and then she considers herself as Brazilian, as we can see in the excerpt below: (R): *Are you Japanese or Brazilian?* Leticia: *Brazilian.* (R): *Why?* Leticia: *Because I was born here* (Resstel, 2014, p.152). Even considering herself as Brazilian, there are undeniable perceptions that she also has characteristics of people from a distant continent. Leticia's identity issue gains a broader extent when she makes contact with other children at school.

*My colleague called me to learn Chinese together. I said no. Another friend said I'm not Chinese but Japanese. The other girl said it's the same raça<sup>2</sup>. But isn't raça used for dogs? (R): We have many raças, like black, white and Japanese. Leticia: Raça amarela<sup>3</sup>. (R): Didi you get upset? Leticia: I didn't because they were joking around* (Resstel, 2014, p.153).

The connection of concepts of race, ethnicity and nationality enhances misunderstandings and increases difficulties for recognizing a pure, coherent and solid identity. Therefore, Leticia feels a bit confused when facing so many images attributed to her: Japanese, Chinese, amarela, Asian. The only image not transmitted by her classmates is exactly the one that indicates her real origin: the image of a Brazilian girl. The teacher Leticia had just known in her first day of class introduced her to the class as a Japanese child, and not Brazilian. Asian traits impressed on her face are features that define her identity by the other. However, unlike her sister, she feels more like she was Brazilian.

*In my first grade I had the same difficulty: they thought I was Japanese. And the teacher introduced me so. The I thought: Hey, it is not real, inside my heart. So I went to talk to a girl, tried to become friends. (R): What did you talk about? Leticia: I asked about how school was, because I didn't know. She introduced me a lot of friends. (R): When the teacher said you were Japanese, how did you feel? Leticia: (smiling) The girls asked if I was Japanese. I said I am Brazilian. I don't know why she said that. I think the teacher confounded me with my sister. I don't feel like this. My friends think I am Japanese and it is like this today* (Resstel, 2014, p.153). The negation of Leticia's Japanese version vanishes when she says that Japan is her favorite place and it is important to her.

(R): *What does Japan mean to you?* Leticia: *Japan is my favorite place, because it is important to me.* (R): *How about Brazil?* Leticia: *it is a normal place* (Resstel, 2014, p.153).

Leticia seems to differ the recognition of her Brazilian origin since she was born in Brazil, as she explains. She differs the feeling of being Brazilian, manifested when she is at school with her colleagues or when she was introduced by the teacher, from other deep feelings that connect her with Japanese culture. When I asked her which soccer team she would cheer for in the Confederations Cup, such as I asked her sister, Leticia did not hesitate at saying that she would cheer for Japan.

*Are they playing soccer? I cheer for Japan because Japan has become strong. When we cheered for Brazil they lost. That's why I'm going to cheer for Japan. (R): Who is going to win, Brazil or Japan?* Leticia: *Japan. My TV broadcasts Brazilian shows. (R): Which Brazilian TV show do you watch?* Leticia: *None* (Resstel, 2014, p 153).

Her Asian side is revealed by the metaphor of the soccer match as a search for strength and power, such as it happened with her parents and other dekasegi who recognized in Japan an economic opportunity. Even though she still walks between both cultures and recognized herself as part of both, although having different criteria and a strong sense of ambiguity.

## 5.3 Goro

The Brazilian/Japanese names of dekasegi children show how parents have difficulties on defining the identity of their children: Brazilian or Japanese? There is an identity ambivalence leading to ambivalent sense of belonging. We could think of a mixture of both cultures in the formation of identity of these children, creating hybrid identities (Resstel, 2014). When I asked Goro if he was Brazilian or Japanese, he answered: *Brazilian, because I was born in Brazil, in Bastos city* (Resstel, 2014, p.346). In Goro's first contacts with the researcher, although he affirmed being Brazilian by taking his birth place as a reference, his answer looked like a proof of identity for an inquiry of personal identification. Throughout the interviews more diverse and less rationalized expressions of identity references emerged as Goro acquired more confidence and fluency in the dialogues.

<sup>2</sup> The term raça is a homonymous word that means either race or breed in Portuguese.

<sup>3</sup> In Brazil Japanese individuals are sometimes referred as "yellow race". It has a negative meaning.

(R): Which team are you cheering for, Brazil or Japan? Goro: I said it is Brazil. I'm living in Brazil. Now I'm Brazilian, actually. Dad likes to watch soccer matches. I think Japan scored a goal. (R): Who did win the match? Goro: Brazil. I don't know. Brazil won by 2 or 3. Japan scored 1 or 2. (Resstel, 2014, p.356).

The same question about soccer match between Brazil's and Japan's soccer team did not have the same effect in Goro's case compared with the girls' cases. In spite of his notable difficulties with Portuguese language the fact of his answer not revealing any preference for either teams seems to be related with some opacity his cultural identity acquires at his own perspective. Goro assures that he is Brazilian because he is in Brazil and then talks about his father, whom he is departed from due the worker's stay in Japan. After he remembers the match results as if the question was about this, and not about his preference for national soccer teams.

(R): Do you like Brazilian games? Goro: I like more the Japanese ones because they are noisy. The playing field is large (he means Japanese electronic game screen is larger). My school in Japan is big... (Resstel, 2014, p.174)

His mother reports that she had some troubles in Japan due to his son's appearance as he is half-Japanese and half-African descendant. She was frequently inquired about his son, and he felt different from Japanese children due to his physical traits.

Haru: There were so many problems, you know. Just because of my son's appearance. He is half-Japanese and half-African descendant. So, he felt confused by having not narrowed eyes. That was the beginning. Then he asked me: Mom, why don't I have narrowed eyes? For him, Japanese were good-looking, and he was ugly... He was always saying, mom, I can't! I can't because it is difficult. He always built obstacles and then failed to do things. And he concluded: that's because I'm Brazilian (Resstel, 2014, p.206).

For Goro, his image was not complete, i.e. he could not be entire Japanese, as if half part was missing.

## 6. Discussion

According to Mr. Ito and Mrs. Natsu, the issue on the identity of their daughter was cause of worry and discussion in family. While staying in Japan, references on Brazil were a distant matter for their daughter. The girls called themselves Japanese and asked why their parents were not. Eiko and Leticia called themselves Japanese due to their physical appearance. They identified with Japanese culture, and Brazilians were called foreigner or *gaijin* as they had different habits and were deemed weird by Japanese people. They did not feel strangers in Japan.

However, when arriving in Brazil and having first contact with Brazilian culture, especially at school, the girls' identity based on Japanese behavior was questioned by themselves, due to the way how people see them. They start to make a closer contact with their Brazilian origins and, even feeling like Japanese girls, they cannot deny some Brazilian traits. These traits even have surrounded them when they were living in Japan, as they were seen as Brazilian children. And even if they could not call themselves Brazilian, they either could not get totally away from images that connected them to their parents' land, to Brazil, to Leticia's homeland, since she was born in Brazil. Goro's case is not different regarding the hybridism of his cultural and identity references. In Japan he was seen and treated as a *mestiço*, even due his physical appearance inherited from a Japanese mother and an African descendant father. In Brazil he faces a new world which should be more familiar to him due to his Brazilian roots and ancestry. However, he feels completely stranger and has remarkable problems in making integration: difficulties on learning Portuguese, communicating with friends and teachers, making new friends, making contact with Brazilian cultural productions broadcasted in television, and reading Brazilian publication such as books and magazines.

Wherever they are, all the children had to elaborate a hybridism that marked their life experiences as a part of a significantly broad process of identity constitution that surpasses them and may be understood as a process typical of the contemporaneity.

Changes occurring in contemporary societies have altered our own identities, "[...] affecting the idea we have about ourselves as integrated subjects" (Hall, 2005, p.9), leading us to a sensation of loss of ourselves as stable subjects. Ongoing changes that undermine notions of centrality and homogeneity end up altering cultural scenarios of social class, gender, ethnicity, race and nationality, making new changes in our individual way of being in the world. This so-called "identity crisis" is seen as a part of a broader process of change that has moved central processes and structures in modern societies and has affected reference frames that used to give individuals a stable fixation in the social world (Hall, 2005, p.7). Hall follows with his argumentation: "Identity becomes a transitory celebration: it is elaborated and changed continuously in relation with forms by which we are represented or affected in cultural systems surrounding us (Hall, 2005, p.12)".

Language is one of the most important scenarios of this identity hybridism and its conflicts experienced in relation with struggles that mark references of the self for quite different languages and cultures.

According to Grinberg and Grinberg (1984) language may be considered as an important support for identity, since it introduces a subject as a social being. Having no knowledge about the language then may cause a feeling of exclusion from group, leading to a feeling of not belonging to places. What is their borrowed language? Then we are talking about hybrid children or children struggling in the process of hybridization, feeling, talking and experiencing borrowed language and culture?

## 7. Conclusion

If there is still doubts on the relevance of the traditional conception of identity in the current academic discussion, put in question by forms of subjectivation marked by flexibility, heterogeneity, diversification, fractional and horizontal space structures (Maffesoli, 2003), in the case of these young dekasegi it is clearly visible: they do not recognize themselves neither behave according to a solid, fixed and durable core of identity that could be stable in time and space. Even being able to take position in some situations, emphasizing identities attributed to Brazilian or Japanese individuals when suitable, the fact is that they access one or both hybridizations in different situations, such as it happens when they are in Brazil or in Japan.

However, it does not mean to live comfortably with resources from both cultures which they can access against challenges in life, at least for the youngsters in our research. On the contrary, it means to live among conflicts, distress, anguish of someone who can feel and recognize advantages on carrying identifications of both cultures, though one has to pay the price of ambivalence, doubts, questions and double prejudice.

These subjects had then two losses in the migration process: loss of their homeland and a need to return. Regarding the issue of regress, which may be considered a process as complex as the migratory one, children suffer damage in relation with the exclusion in the decision for regress. Moreover, even though being accompanied by family some kind of protective coverage they suffer with the absence of important objects and people around them, such as friends, home, games, toys on which they have constructed their identity (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1984).

Losses caused by this double migratory process lead to a sort of exile for children, and echoes appear very frequently at school, which is constituted as an important social institution. It reveals that, in a process of migration, social environment is a place where the largest changes occur as it is where the most intense transformations take place, in a totally new, unknown medium. It enhances the feeling of not belonging to any place, i.e. the feeling of not belonging completely neither to Japan nor to Brazil.

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