

**IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS IN THE CITY:  
COLLABORATION, COMPETITION, AND SURVIVAL  
IN SÃO PAULO**

by

Sophie le Blanc

A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science & International Relations

Fall 2016

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*To those who seek a better life,*

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## **ABSTRACT**

This dissertation explores immigrant entrepreneurship in the garment industry of São Paulo, Brazil. While few know, Brazil is the fourth largest producer of garments. Most of the production is directed at local consumption, through mostly small and medium size retailing stores and producers. I research two communities in particular: Bolivians and Koreans. Entrepreneurs from both communities form the backbone of the industry, yet their activity has recently come under governmental scrutiny. Because of cases of slave-like labor involving undocumented Bolivian workers, the government has started enforcing labor laws and conducting workshop inspections. The impacts of those inspections on the targeted immigrant groups have seldom been researched. In fact, very little has been written about Koreans and Korean entrepreneurs in Brazil. This dissertation seeks to answer the following research questions: How do immigrant entrepreneurs in this industry perceive and adapt to a situation where they are accused of abuses by a very bureaucratic state? What factors influence their perceptions?

To answer those research questions, I conducted qualitative research in São Paulo from March to July 2013. I collected information from observation and 50 interviews involving 52 entrepreneurs, community organizers, and government agents. To guide my research and analysis, I used a Global Production Network, adding works on social and political capital. Further, a feminist ethic guided my data collection and the overall writing of the dissertation.

Among the main findings, I argue that there are factors beyond financial interest that explain how the Korean and Bolivian communities react to accusations of abuse and heightened control. Those factors are related to the production network, social and political capital. In particular, Koreans lack political capital despite their earlier arrival in the country. In contrast, Bolivians have access to a network of immigrant associations drawing largely from leftist inspirations. This dissertation also establishes that labor law enforcement is not improving conditions of work because both communities find other ways to get around them. Finally, I argue that both communities do not perceive that the government is trying to improve the situation *per se*, but rather fight abuse as one visible aspect, without consideration for either communities' wishes or needs. The government's actions stem from deeply held beliefs and a history of controlling immigration to Brazil. Abuse is perpetuated while the government dismisses the ambitions and agency of vulnerable sectors of the population.

## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The garment industry has become synonymous with abuse in the few main producing countries, like China, India, or Pakistan, the three biggest producers of garments in the world (IEMI, 2012: 21). Many disasters spring to mind such as the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire of 1911 or more recently, the Rana Plaza building collapse in 2013. A low entry cost operation that historically attracted many immigrants in Western countries, the garment industry has captured the imagination of the sweatshop where workers toil away for many hours earning little to nothing in miserable conditions. This narrative can also be found in places little known for their garment industry such as Brazil. Although the fourth largest producer in the world, Brazil exports very little of its production, in favor of a considerable internal market whose needs grow as fast as the average income. Like many other nations, Brazil's garment industry is associated today with many issues of abuses, primarily among its Bolivian-born workers. The industry remains dominated by small and medium-sized businesses where work conditions are often poor and precarious. The government, several grassroots organizations, and more prominently the media have qualified such conditions as slavery or slave-like labor. In light of strong denomination as "slave-like labor", it bears examining the lives of those held responsible for such conditions of abuse, the entrepreneurs who own workshops, and those who own stores.



## **1.1 Why this Inquiry?**

When I first started this project in 2009 as a requirement of my Master's program, research on Bolivian immigrants was sparse. My research question at the time was what factors contributed to the insertion of Bolivian immigrants in the industry. It constituted probing research into a seldom studied topic. Since then, and as Brazil has invested heavily in its post-secondary education, many researchers, in particular MA students and PhD students, have looked at the Bolivian community under the umbrella of abuse, poverty, and exploitation. Very few have questioned the rhetoric of abuse and disempowerment of Bolivian workers. In 2009, I endeavored to talk to entrepreneurs about their own experience in the industry. Although I knew of the abuse often cited in the community, I preferred focusing on what enabled Bolivians to enter the garment industry. What I uncovered led me to approach storeowners, which in this case belonged for the most part to the Korean community, in order to understand the relationships between the two communities. Willing to go beyond the idea of abuse and more into the experience of each entrepreneur, I set out to understand the challenges they faced daily, as well as their response to the controls started by the very bureaucratic Brazil. How do immigrant entrepreneurs in this industry perceive and adapt to a situation where they are accused of abuses by a very bureaucratic state? What factors influence their perceptions?

This inquiry arose from an uneasiness with the dominating narrative on the situation of immigrants in the garment industry in São Paulo. It reveals important lessons towards understanding production networks and the role of immigrant associations as intermediaries with the government. My research represents a unique case where Bolivian entrepreneurs' voices are heard along with Korean entrepreneurs'. The research community has neglected entrepreneurs and in particular

the Korean community as a whole. This project intends to address that gap in the literature.

### **1.1.1 Review of the literature**

Former Father Sidney Antonio Da Silva first studied the Bolivian immigrant community as a sociologist, then an anthropologist. *Costurando Sonhos* (1997) and *Virgem/Mãe/Terra* (2003) represent the first two books systematically reporting on the Bolivian immigrant community in Brazil<sup>1</sup>. Galetti has a chapter of a book published in 1995. Research on Bolivians takes three angles: cultural studies, population studies, and socio-historical studies. Da Silva belongs to cultural and socio-historical studies. In *Costurando Sonhos* (1997) he denounces the conditions of work and the racism surrounding the Bolivian community. In *Virgem/Mãe/Terra* (2003), he looked into cultural and culinary practices (also in Da Silva, 2002), religious syncretism, dances, and festivals that happen in São Paulo, in particular in the church where he worked (Da Silva, 2012; Silva Alves, 2012).

Patarra and Baeninger (2006) engage in population studies and estimate the flows of migration and statistical estimates about the number of immigrants actually present in the country. Considering the lack of reliability of Brazilian statistics, it is understandable that this topic was particularly popular. Cymbalista and Xavier, in turn, looked at the urban distribution of Bolivians in São Paulo, to compare it with other cities (2007). They found an atypical distribution where Bolivians were not limited to a couple of neighborhoods, but instead lived in many areas of the city

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<sup>1</sup> Before that, he published an article in *Travessia* (1995), the journal published by the Church.

(Cymbalista and Xavier, 2007: 130). Bolivians are mostly concentrated in São Paulo, but there are some enclaves of populations along the border too. Fusco and Souchaud (2009) look at exogamic unions among Bolivians at the border with Bolivia while Peres and Baeninger (2009) explore the distribution and socio economic profiles of Bolivian women at the same border (2009 see also Guimarães Peres, 2012; Marques, 2012). Another popular population line of research concerns the routes Bolivians take to arrive in Brazil (see Moskovics and Corral, 2012; Xavier, 2009; Freire da Silva, 2009; de Freitas and Baeninger, 2010). In particular, there have been many questions and speculations about the involvement of Koreans in bringing Bolivians to Brazil, as the main reason the Bolivian population got involved in the garment industry (Galetti, 1995).

The bulk of research on the Bolivian community focuses on descriptions of the abuse and the involvement of the Korean storeowners in that abuse (Buechler, 2004; Galetti, 1995; Tavares de Freitas, 2009; Tavares de Freitas, 2012; Da Silva, 1998; Da Silva, 2005; Freire da Silva, 2009; McGrath, 2010; McGrath 2013). Some studies focus on racism experienced in Brazil, in particular as racism is experienced in schools and health services (Da Silva, 2005; Simai and Baeninger, 2011; Camillo da Silva, 2009; Simai and Baeninger, 2012; Manetta, 2012; Martinez, 2010). A Municipal report contains important data and analysis about abuse of Bolivians in the garment industry (URB-AL, 2007). Kontic wrote one important research document on the garment industry and the involvement of both communities in it (2001). Some of the research provide overviews of the characteristics of the Bolivian community, mentioning abuse and precarious conditions along the way (Rizek et al, 2010; Antico, 1998; Cacciamali and de Azevedo, 2006).

Conversely, the literature on Korean immigration to Brazil is very small<sup>2</sup> (see the following exceptions: Choi, 1991; Choi, 1996; Buechler, 2004; Kim, 2009 a; Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros, 2000; de Freitas, 2004; de Freitas and Baeninger, 2010). Like most studies centered on the Bolivian community, Buechler (2004) addresses directly the involvement of Koreans in the garment industry without having interviewed any Koreans save Choi, a former M.A. student who wrote the main research on the topic (1991). One research is focused on racism against Koreans in São Paulo in comparison with other communities (Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros, 2000). Yoo Na Kim, a young journalist belonging to the Korean immigrant community published several books on the Korean community, most of them historical such as *A Jovem Coréia: Um Almanaque Sobre uma das Imigrações mais Recentes do Brasil* (2008) (The Young Korea: an Almanac on One of the More Recent Immigration in Brazil) or *50 Anos de Relações Diplomáticas Brasil-Coréia* (2009 a) (Fifty Years of Diplomatic Relations Brazil-Korea). Both address business, cultural, and historical details of the Korean immigrant community. Kim has definitely produced the most material, even though it is not academic work, on the community (see in addition Kim, 2009 b; Kim, 2010; Kim, 2011). Similarly, Sônia Maria De Freitas (2004) explores the contributions of the Korean community to Brazil (see also Guimarães, 2006 and Im et al., nd).

Some researchers have focused on religion and the Korean community (Silva and Park, 2008; Araujo, 2005; Shoji, 2004). One M.A. thesis looks specifically at the changes in Korean women's gendered roles with immigration in providing religious

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<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, more researchers have studied the Korean community in Argentina, including two sociology studies (Mera, 1998) and (Courtis, 2000).

counseling (Won, 2005). Considering the importance of religion in the community (split between Protestantism, Catholicism, and more marginally Buddhism), it makes sense that it has become a topic of interest. Studying the descendants of Korean immigrants represents another avenue of research (Yang, 2011).

## **1.2 Situating this Inquiry**

In this dissertation, I focus on entrepreneurs and rely on secondary information to expose the conditions of workers. I contend that this still fits within a feminist research ethic. Bolivians in particular have been over-researched during recent years. Several scholars have tackled this phenomenon where researchers enter a field to conduct interviews, sometimes with questionable ethics without giving back to the community (see in particular Sukarieh and Tannok, 2012). My research slightly differs from theirs since, for instance, I did not use any professional respondent finders and I did not know any. However, at several conferences, Bolivians spoke up about their tiredness of being always the topic of research without feeling like their situation had substantially improved. Brazil lacks a national organization overseeing research, like the IRB in the US. This has led me to observing questionable ethics in the field<sup>3</sup>. I believe it is in part responsible for the disappointment many Bolivians express towards another interview, another research being done. By focusing on the seldom heard narratives, those who became entrepreneurs, I wish to at least partially avoid

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<sup>3</sup> Some of those included a discussion where a professor encouraged her student not to disclose her status as a lawyer to her respondents (in public administration); the widespread failure of securing oral consent for doing interviews; and failure to respect anonymity through the use of respondents' real names in published research and failure to ask consent before exchanging respondents' names and location to other researchers.

contributing to the excessive research on the Bolivian community. I cannot be absolutely absolved from contributing to their distrust of researcher. After all, I am a Westerner taking my research and impression with me. I tried to focus on a topic seldom researched, and I followed guidelines from the IRB on how to behave ethically. I answered questions about my own research when respondents wanted, even brought other research materials to Pedro when he asked to see what has been previously written on his community. At the moment, I can only fall short of wishing for long lasting improvements in the communities I studied.

### **1.2.1 Epistemology**

I adopt a feminist epistemology that is founded on the idea that different perspectives exist and do not allow for the existence of an objectivity existing outside of the researcher. Any work is subject to the subjectivity of the researcher, the readers and the participants in the study. Knowledge is always intersubjective, as it is created by the researcher and those s/he researches (Buch and Staller, 2007: 190). The readers also come to this knowledge creation with their own sets of expectations and understandings. Although it is not possible to attain objective truth, research can still be rigorous, following good procedures of work.

Using interviews as the basis of my research (see following section), further brings forth the question of objectivity. Jacoby provides a very interesting discussion over the discourses and perceptions respondents may build about themselves and their lives (see Jacoby, 2006). I agree with her statement that her “sense of collecting data on fieldwork is that experience should be understood, not as truth, but simply as a telling of one’s story, a narrative that represents the choices and priorities of the particular individual or group.” (Jacoby, 2006: 162). Stern furthers this by stating that

“experience to be always mediated through discourse; a narrative recalling a memory is the closest one can come to being privy to another’s experience.” (Stern, 2006: 185). This dissertation tells a story, the story of two communities from the perspective of a subset of members. This story remains as close as possible to perceptions and feelings expressed by some of the involved actors. My feelings and interpretations also brought its own subjectivities to the research. I tried to be as fair as possible to the data without pretension of objectivity. My study has limitations, but I believe it still brings up a lesser-heard and important insight into the garment industry of São Paulo and the lives of Bolivian and Korean immigrant communities.

Some might wonder how my project that looks at entrepreneurs, people who are usually in positions of power, fits in within feminist ethics. Indeed, feminist research often strives to look at those individuals or groups that are marginalized in society. Those groups are usually seldom studied. Immigrants from the Korean and Bolivian communities definitely fit more into marginalized groups than say white Brazilians. Their immigration status and their race puts them in a vulnerable situation in Brazil. Yet, there are some nuances. For instance, because of different economic status, many Koreans fare better than many Bolivians. Both communities have their exceptions of course.

To study the margins, they have to be identified. The abuse existing in the Bolivian community has been studied extensively. So much that the community feels over-researched as I addressed earlier. A research project focused on abuse would be difficult to do without putting more pressure on the community. Besides, there are nuances of abuse and difficult conditions. In the garment industry, workers suffer the most egregious abuse. But their employers, particularly in small businesses, are not

free from difficult conditions. Those should be better understood to enhance knowledge about what perpetuates abuse and what constitute obstacles to change the conditions aside from “ignorance” or “lack of profits.”

Furthermore, as I will explain later, most of the entrepreneurs who perpetuate conditions of abuse were once workers themselves. The fine line between worker and employer complicates who is classified as abused. Exploring their livelihoods and conditions of life contributes to the understanding of abuse. It is part of a reality, and part of the future for some select workers who are currently suffering from abuse. Because entrepreneurs are not quite on the top, a bottom-up solution needs to acknowledge the blurring limits between workers and entrepreneurs, and the transition that often occurs between the two occupations. It is thus important and crucial to involve in a research project all the margins, instead of seeking the most abused of the abused. It is important to acknowledge the reality that small actors have a role to play in the community and in the industry. Including those seldom studied populations can integrate itself in a feminist understanding of research ethics. There must be a way to study entrepreneurship in the garment industry that does not fall prey to blaming or to ignore abuse in favor of economic productivity. I tried to get through those dilemmas in this dissertation.

### **1.3 Methodology: Making Sense of Stories**

This dissertation relies on both primary and secondary sources. This study follows a feminist ethic of giving voice to marginalized populations. Jacoby explains “Fieldwork involves a series of methodological choices that allow the researcher to enter briefly the lives of those being researched and to generate knowledge by observing behavior, asking questions, and analyzing data.” (Jacoby, 2006: 153). Using



qualitative methods such as fieldwork lets the researcher examine human experience and perceptions (Jacoby, 2006: 155). To ensure that the voices of those I studied were heard, I collected information in Brazil from March to July 2013<sup>4</sup> in São Paulo, Brazil. I conducted observation in my daily dealings with immigrants, immigrant associations, some areas where both communities regularly gather (for instance, the Feira da Madrugada, the Church Nossa Senhora da Paz, the school Polilogos, the neighborhoods of the Bras and the Bom Retiro). I also interviewed 52 respondents over the course of 50 separate interviews. All interviews were semi-structured, starting with an open-ended question, followed by a set of pre-defined questions asked in the relevant order of the discussion. As Jacoby argues, “choosing the interview requires taking experience seriously as an element of knowledge, something that quantitative aggregated data does not encompass.” (Jacoby, 2006: 161). Interviews allow researchers to “incorporate the feelings, fears and hopes of the participants in terms of how they feel larger structures and discourses (...) in their daily lives.” (Jacoby, 2006: 161). I felt it important to use methods that would let people’s voices be heard.

Twenty-seven of the respondents were men and twenty-five women. A full list of the respondents, their pseudonyms<sup>5</sup> and affiliation is listed in Appendix A. Among

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<sup>4</sup> I did a field research in 2009 from February to July as part of my M.A. degree in Political Science at the Université du Québec à Montréal. I interviewed twelve respondents in the Bolivian and Korean community. At the time, I had the approval of my department for ethical concerns as there was no larger, national organization for the ethical work of researchers. I used some of the insights I gathered at the time, although I do not cite any respondents of that preliminary research in this dissertation.

<sup>5</sup> All names, unless indicated, are pseudonyms chosen at random from a list of most popular names in Brazil to respect the anonymity of the respondents. Respondents belonging to the Korean community all have Brazilian names that they use. Hence, my

the entrepreneurs I interviewed, there were eight Bolivian men, three Bolivian women, five Korean men, and nine Korean women, for a total of eleven Bolivian entrepreneurs and fourteen Korean respondents. Twenty-five of the interviews were with entrepreneurs. The remainder of my respondents came from different sections invested in the garment industry or the life of both immigrant communities. In an ideal world, I would have interviewed the same number of men and women from each community. Getting access to the respondents proved more difficult than expected at first. In particular, Bolivian women were mostly unwilling to talk to me. This distribution also reflects particular gender divides in each community: there were few Bolivian women at the head of workshops. When they owned their workshops, they were usually single women with children<sup>6</sup>. Conversely, I interviewed extensively more Korean women than Korean men because of their division of labor (and probably their cultural practices): men take care of finances, women do design and research.

Twenty-five interviews were recorded but for the rest, I took notes on a paper pad. I left the choice to my respondents as to whether they wanted me to record the interview or not<sup>7</sup>. I transcribed all recorded interviews. Two were in English, the

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use of Portuguese name is not misplaced. Similarly, I used Portuguese names for Bolivian immigrants that could be used in Spanish.

<sup>6</sup> Rosa's pastor told me that many of the Bolivians attending his church were women, and many of them were single mothers. There were many who owned their workshops among the single mothers.

<sup>7</sup> I made this choice to ensure my respondents were comfortable talking to me. On one occasion, a respondent changed her mind when I started the recording device and I switched to taking notes. Considering that some of the information they gave me was sensitive, for instance admitting to breaking the law, I felt that it was a more ethical decision to let it up to each respondents. Although I do not have their own words, I think that overall I stayed true to their stories.

majority were in Portuguese, and some of the rest were in a mix of Spanish and Portuguese, commonly called *Portunhol*<sup>8</sup>. I did all translation during my note taking and retranscription, as well as any quoted excerpt from an interview that did not take place in English. In this dissertation, when I quote a respondent, it means I recorded their interview. I paraphrase respondents I did not record, while trying to keep the meaning as faithful as possible. The interview guide can be found in Appendix B. Although I started all interviews with entrepreneurs with the first question, asking them to build a life story (“Can you tell me about how you got into the clothing industry?”), I asked the remaining questions in no specific order, letting the first answer guide the order and relevance of questions to ask.

I used two kinds of primary sources: entrepreneurs who talked about their own experience in the industry, and people working in associations or the government surrounding immigrants or the industry. Respondents belonging to the second group sometimes related their own experience as entrepreneurs or workers in the industry. I never conducted any formal follow-up interview, although I did have informal conversations with respondents as I would visit them again (for instance Pedro) or meet them at events (Ruth Camacho and others).

Since I adopted a feminist ethics of research, as much as possible, I practiced self-reflection on my experience as a researcher (see Stern, 2006). By choosing to interview entrepreneurs rather than workers, I changed the dynamics of the interview.

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<sup>8</sup> I am fluent in Spanish, but living in Brazil at the time, I was also guilty of adding in some Portuguese words in conversation. I was not the only one doing this: most of my Bolivian respondents also had adopted some Portuguese words in their Spanish. It did not hinder comprehension at all since I speak both languages fluently.

As I will show later though, many Bolivians still considered themselves as workers. As a white, young educated woman from the Western World, I represented at times a source of imperialism, at others, a dream of education that they did not achieve because of limited means or family pressures. I did not fool myself like I did in 2009 into thinking that being an immigrant myself, we would relate more easily. I took great care to preserve anonymity, even when pressed by members of the community. It meant though that for the most part I could not conduct snowball sampling: respondents were very reluctant to talk to friends about having been interviewed. It became clear that to find respondents, I would have to go through established authorities within each community<sup>9</sup>. This of course indicates some bias in the respondents as they usually were, to a certain extent, connected to prominent figures in the community. Although I tried to apply self-reflection and analyze the power differentials between my respondents and myself (Stern, 2006: 190), but in many ways I have failed to perfect this. The time restrictions, safety reasons, have all been obstacles to a truly revised power differential between myself and my respondents.

My research squarely fits within qualitative methodology. I will present some quantitative numbers in the first three chapters, but those need to be taken with a grain of salt. Brazil is pretty unreliable in terms of the gathered data. This is particularly true as the events I study tend to belong to informal circumstances: some immigrants remain undocumented and thus unaccounted in official records, the same goes for

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<sup>9</sup> In one case, one of my Korean contacts gave me a lot of literature, but made clear she did not want to be involved in my research. After two months struggling to find any respondents, I contacted her again and she indicated several women in the community, from whom I obtained fantastic interviews.

parts of the garment industry that stay hidden from governmental accounts. The interviews I conducted and analyzed form the bones of this research.

I meant for my research to have a broad inductive influence. However, it is not purely inductive, since I had an idea about what framework to use before leaving, coming from my first field research in 2009, and the project proposal I defended several weeks before leaving. My research questions changed after looking at the interviews and observations I conducted. Although inductive methods are not strictly feminist, they are part of feminist toolkits as it lets the population researched have a voice. I have tried to treat the interviews fairly and let them speak, in particularly in the analysis chapters seven and eight.

The beginning of the dissertation is deeply influenced by a retelling of history through secondary sources. Later in the dissertation, secondary sources of history give way to primary sources as I integrate the responses I gathered from respondents during my field research. I conducted the very last interview over Skype from my home in Newark, Delaware. During that interview, my respondent, a worker at the Ministry of Justice, concluded our discussion by asking me not to take an imperialist stance in this dissertation. I have tried my best to interpret this injunction while staying fair to my data. To do so, my analysis draws heavily from my respondents.

In order to guide the analysis of my interviews, I used NVivo first then Dedoose<sup>10</sup>. I used both deductive and inductive codes for this research. Since I am committed to qualitative research, I do not present results of coding in a quantitative way in this dissertation. Instead, I used the coding process to find emerging themes

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<sup>10</sup> I switched application halfway through mainly for convenience as Dedoose can be used from any computer.

that were not evident with a casual reading. Some of the deductive codes were: “abuses”; “religion”; “family”; “help”; “immigration story.” Some of the inductive codes were: “health”; “corruption”; “future of fashion”; “history of a neighborhood”; “dangers”; “education.” Those inductive codes were very valuable in my research as they helped me establish links I had not foreseen after the research.

#### **1.4 Main Argument and Outline of this Dissertation.**

My dissertation seeks to answer the following research questions: How do immigrant entrepreneurs in this industry perceive and adapt to a situation where they are accused of abuses by a very bureaucratic state? What factors influence their perceptions? Considering the difficulty in obtaining information from outside of Brazil, the end of my field work also marks the end of the research, in 2013.

Throughout this dissertation, I make several arguments. Argument one: there are factors beyond financial interest that explain how the Korean and Bolivian communities react to accusations of abuse and heightened control. Those factors are related to the production network, social and political capital. Argument two: controls are not improving conditions of work because both communities find other ways to get around them. The Feira da Madrugada for instance is an area where control is spotty at best, corruption reigns, and the same conditions of work are perpetuated. Argument three: both communities do not perceive that the government is trying to improve the situation per se, but rather to fight one visible aspect: abuse, without consideration for either communities’ wishes or needs. The government’s actions stem from deeply held beliefs and the history of controlling immigration to Brazil. Abuse is perpetuated while the government dismisses the ambitions and agency of vulnerable sectors of the population.

In chapter two, I will do a brief review of the literature along with establishing the framework I use in the dissertation. In chapter three and four, I look at the history of migration to Brazil, as it develops, it grew on the roots of colonialism. Brazil developed as a white settler colony and used immigration policies to import a workforce. The government made very deliberate decisions regarding the racial composition of the desired immigrants. Once in Brazil, many were expected to work for a single employer in abusive conditions. They mostly escaped to big cities and built their own business and economy. Koreans followed a similar path in Brazil whereas Bolivians came in unregulated and unrequited. They went directly to the garment industry in São Paulo. The government, pressured by immigrant associations, has worked to provide legal documentation to Bolivian immigrants. Many however, still decide to go without, something the government tries to fight in an effort to regain control of a migration that was not desired. I devote chapter five to the study of the garment industry in Brazil and I start establishing the global production networks entrenching São Paulo and its immigrants. Brazil possesses an important internal market dominated by small and medium establishments. The presence of informality makes it a thriving ground for immigrant businesses.

In chapter six, I outline the role of the government in the industry, and in particular its recent involvement in stemming abuse in the garment industry. Responding to international and internal pressures, the government has been involved in fighting the abusive conditions of work found in immigrant owned workshops. They focus on immigrant businesses even though such conditions exist in other workshops. Finally, chapter seven and eight analyze the interviews, highlighting the role of social and political capital in the reaction of each community to the recent

bureaucratic scrutiny. Financial capital is decidedly unevenly distributed between Bolivians and Koreans (as well as within each community). Koreans in general have more financial means than Bolivians, mostly due to their longer success in the garment industry. However, differences in social capital trickled down to differences in political capital, a crucial element at a time of political interest in the industry. The discourse has been largely shaped by leftist organizations as one of the cruelty of Capitalism on the most desperate individuals: new immigrants to Brazil. Through the experience of Brazil as one where immigrants were deprived of their agency to be overworked on fazendas, the entrepreneurship component of the industry has been mostly dismissed in favor of a dialectic of destitution and abuse of workers. As such, entrepreneurs have struggled to identify as more than powerless workers, and have not sought out professionalization. In chapter nine, I conclude the research and briefly look at the worries and predictions of entrepreneurs on the future of the industry and their involvement in it.



## Chapter 2

### IMMIGRANT ENTREPRENEURS, GLOBAL PRODUCTION NETWORKS, AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

#### 2.1 Introduction

Bolivian and Korean immigrant entrepreneurs in the garment industry in Brazil stand at the confluence of many important issues. Although most research is focused on abuse of workers, my interest lies in looking at characteristics of their lives intertwined with entrepreneurship. Because of the informality of their work, immigrants have relied over decades on informal networks to know who to hire, where to buy material, and learn how to sell their production. In order to understand how entrepreneurs from the Bolivian and Korean community adapt to government regulation and abuse inquiries, it is important to look at frameworks that put networks that they build in the forefront. To this end, I will employ a framework called Global Production Networks, along with the concepts of social and political capital to examine the case study.

Scholars have extensively researched the topic of immigrant entrepreneurs, particularly in the 1980s and 1990s although it lost some of its attraction in the past decade. I will start this section by doing a brief review of the literature, which will help define the terms I will use in this dissertation. I will then look at how Global Production Networks literature has emerged and how it can be directed to the study of immigrant entrepreneurs. I will finish this chapter by providing deeper insight into social capital. Social capital is mentioned in the immigrant entrepreneurs literature and

similar concepts were used to develop GPNs. It is central to understanding why and how the networks get built.

## **2.2 Immigrant Entrepreneurs**

I want to start with a short review of the literature on immigrant entrepreneurs, the unit of analysis of my research. Immigrant and ethnic entrepreneurs have been the subject of a rich literature. Concepts about immigrant entrepreneurs were meant to illuminate why ethnic and immigrant communities organize economically around their own community. In that literature, emerging from sociology, geography, and anthropology, immigrant entrepreneurs have been studied for the ethnic advantages they hold. Those advantages have been suspected to stem from particular ethnic and class resources, that are sometimes called social capital, a concept I will explain in the last section of this chapter. Many concepts have emerged to encompass that reality. Most studies of ethnic entrepreneurship focus on two main questions: “Why are some immigrant groups more likely than others to engage in entrepreneurial activity [...] Is the ethnic entrepreneurship an effective means for social mobility, or what specific outcomes does entrepreneurship yield?” (Zhou, 2004: 1048). My study does not examine why both Koreans and Bolivians have high rates of entrepreneurship. However, I do address the outcomes of entrepreneurship. Most concepts take for granted the preference for co-ethnic labor. In an economy where immigrants are used as cheap labor, ethnic work can provide better conditions, and greater opportunities for a living wage. Gold tentatively explains that “In the realm of ethnic entrepreneurship, an important benefit is the ability to control competition and manage conflict among ethnic entrepreneurs and between ethnic employers and laborers” (Gold, 1994: 115). Co-ethnicity becomes an economic advantage as it provides strong ties for economic

support as much for immigrant entrepreneurs starting their businesses as for workers finding a job with relatively good salaries. Relationships between employees and employers are also supported by paternalistic attitudes. Ethnic and class resources have been thoroughly explored by the immigrant entrepreneur literature.

Ethnic entrepreneurship is, according to Light and Bonacich, “self-employment within the immigrant group at a rate much in excess of the general rate. Ethnic entrepreneurship denotes ethnic minority specialization in self-employment without, however, imposing the requirement of foreign-born origin” (1988: 18). Immigrant entrepreneurs and ethnic entrepreneurship is often used interchangeably. Ethnic entrepreneurship opens the possibility for non-immigrant minorities to be included in the concept. Rath argues that some researchers use ethnic entrepreneurs to emphasize the ethnic qualities of the group, to the detriment of broader institutional understandings (Rath, 2000: 5). In the case in question, immigrant entrepreneurs help emphasize the immigrant qualities of the two communities in question as well as the broader institutional context involved. Technically, in this study, some Korean entrepreneurs might be second-generation immigrants: some of them might be born in Brazil of Korean immigrants parents. Immigrant entrepreneur encompasses both communities under study.

Ethnic entrepreneurs hold a particular place in immigrant communities. Nancy Green describes entrepreneurship as a dream held by many immigrant workers, particularly in the clothing industry (1997: 5), where many try to save money to open their own shops. Of course, it is not a dream that all immigrants will achieve. Nancy Green argues that only 5% of the workers become entrepreneurs (1997: 5). In fact, most entrepreneurs in my field research were once workers. Steven Gold explains that

Israeli entrepreneurs expect their Israeli employees to be on the job to learn the techniques and knowledge necessary to open a shop (Gold, 1994: 124). Kim described a similar phenomenon happening among the Korean community where Korean entrepreneurs fully expect that their Korean employees will be become competition soon because they want to become entrepreneurs (Kim, 1999: 589). In the literature, while entrepreneurs seem to assume that their co ethnics want to access entrepreneurship status, they do not seem to expect workers from other communities to rise to that status. In my research, it is accepted that many workers, regardless of their origins, will want to become entrepreneurs.

Although research has thoroughly evaluated the resources found within a community to explain their levels of entrepreneurship, relatively little work has been done on the relationships between ethnic communities and their impact on immigrant entrepreneurs. Yet, ethnic communities do not live in a vacuum: when they try to organize and survive in the economy, they do so in a context where other ethnic groups are trying to survive too. Although ethnic segregation might have been a reality at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, immigrant neighborhoods are increasingly diversified. Existing research about intergroup relationships focuses on a binary understanding: either cooperation or competition. Most of the competition literature has focused on the accusations in black neighborhoods that immigrant entrepreneurs come to take the place of black entrepreneurs (Lee, 2001; Portes and Zhou, 1999; Waldinger, 1996). Economic opportunities are rare in this economy, and African Americans' opportunities would be decreased by the rise of ethnic entrepreneurs in their neighborhood. Usually researchers conclude that immigrant entrepreneurs do not impact African American entrepreneurship rates. This research refers to questions

about why cities failed to successfully integrate African Americans while they seem to be quite beneficial for immigrants (Waldinger, 1996: 301). Waldinger instead focuses on his concept of labor queue. Ethnic succession determines potential conflicts (Waldinger, 2000: 140). If the succession is smooth, and the ambitions of those at the bottom remain consistent with the offers, no conflict will happen (Waldinger, 2000: 140). This succession happens like a “ladder effect” (Waldinger, 1996: 307): if there is space for a new community, then it is going to be filled. According to Waldinger, it is not a process of cooperation or the voluntary passing down of skills and knowledge about the sector, but rather it is the arrival of a set of workers looking for any type of work that happens to be available. However, if the demands for work do not fit the opportunities of rising higher on the social scale, conflict with the ethnic group in place will arise (Waldinger, 2000: 141). Waldinger does not address outsourcing and its impact on the labor queue.

On cooperation, most studies focus on interactions among members of the Latino community. Language is viewed as a strong identifier of a common culture or needs. Dominicans got help from other Spanish-speaking immigrants in New York City – Puerto Ricans (Waldinger, 1996: 129). Even here it is unclear whether the help only consisted of the passive opening of jobs for Spanish speakers, with employers being used to the Caribbean culture. When some communities find resources to help each other, in the end, “immigrants and ethnics participate in a segmented system, in which one group’s ability to mobilize resources through social structures serves as a strategy for limiting another group’s chances for advancement” (Waldinger, 1996: 256). Zhou describes the coexistence of Koreans in Koreatown with the growing

Latino population of the neighborhood as one of avoidance: Latinos go to work their own way, and Koreans keep to their own tasks (2004: 1042).

One instance of relationships between ethnic communities is related to the employment of workers from another community. Immigrant economy, a much less used concept, refers to cases where “one immigrant group hires workers from a different immigrant group” (Schrover et al, 2007: 531). This concept refers to entrepreneurs who hire workers from other immigrant communities, a growing phenomenon. Indeed, not all communities stick to employing their co-ethnics. For instance, Koreans in New York City were not limiting themselves to co-ethnics and employed the newest immigrants (Waldinger, 1996: 263). The newest immigrants are usually willing to accept any employment conditions. As I will explain later in the dissertation, in this case study, Koreans used to employ Bolivians directly in their workshops. However, today, Bolivians are the ones hiring other Bolivians.

Other research shows that co-ethnics can be liabilities in the search for jobs (Chin, 2001). Chin points to the complex reality where binaries of good or bad do not exist, but various shades of grey rule outcomes and behavior. Working with non-coethnic bosses can be a way to “circumvent the weaknesses of being deeply embedded in social networks because of their negative effect” (Chin, 2001: 282). Sometimes co-ethnic workers require higher wages than workers from other ethnicities (see Kim, 1999; Gold, 1994). The balance of benefits versus costs becomes unfavorable. Kim describes situations where co-ethnics become unreliable workers whose sole purpose is to open a similar business (Kim, 1999: 586). Because of the scarcity of co-ethnic labor, its costs and the rising competition, some immigrant entrepreneurs resort to hire from other communities. In New York City, Korean

entrepreneurs have hired Mexicans and Ecuadorian workers instead (Kim, 1999: 587). Kim suspects that it is through common grounds as immigrants that this cross employing among different communities happened (Kim, 1999: 590). This, however, does not solve the issue at hand: namely how do entrepreneurs from different ethnicities cooperate in economic endeavors, and if it goes further than that. More researchers should examine the phenomenon of cross community employment or economic cooperation.

In the clothing industry, an industry that outsources a lot, immigrants have been central to the industry for many decades (Dicken, 2007: 257). Although studies looking at entrepreneurs who hire non-co-ethnic workers have multiplied, they still do not address another important aspect: immigrant entrepreneurs from different communities are being brought together by the phenomenon of outsourcing. Relationships between entrepreneurs who own their own means of production appear to be different than relationships between workers and employers. Exploring the dimensions of such relations will help to understand how immigrant entrepreneurs relate to one another. Furthermore, since they are hiring those other “hidden” immigrants, how they fare in the economy and their strategies to survive can give us insight into that part of the economy.

Initially, in my initial research project I proposed to study the links between both immigrant communities. This was meant to fill a gap in the literature. This gap of course still exists, but considering the data I collected and the events at the time of the field research, I slightly switched focus to study how both communities survived in the current economy. I will address their relationships in several of the chapters though. In

the immigrant entrepreneur literature, many economic theories<sup>11</sup> are used to explain why there is a concentration of immigrants in entrepreneurship. Among the theories are references to social capital, cultural capital, and ethnic capital. I think that in the case at hand, the specificities of production of clothes (outsourcing, several steps of production from design to retail) another outlook is necessary. I also offer questions that are different from the main questions that appear in the literature on immigrant entrepreneurs. I use instead a framework developed by geographers to address the organization of production in various steps located in various geographical locations and divided among various businesses.

### **2.3 Global Production Networks**

To put order into the production of garment, I will use the Global Production Networks (GPN) framework<sup>12</sup>. It is a useful framework to understand the complexity of production, even as localized as it is in São Paulo, there are global influences and linkages to world production of garments. Furthermore, in this dissertation, I explore the relations between two immigrant groups in the garment industry as they struggle to survive. Because both groups are involved in the garment production, and for the most part in hierarchical relations, GPN helps investigate relations between producers.

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<sup>11</sup> The dual labor market is one such theory that informed a lot of Portes' work, particularly in ethnic enclave theorizations.

<sup>12</sup> Geographers at the University of Manchester have originally theorized global Production Networks.



The GPN framework comes after two other main theorizations of world production: Global Commodity Chains (GCC) and Global Value Chains (GVC). GCC can be traced back to Immanuel Wallerstein, a world system theorist. In this framework, power differentials are at the heart of the inquiry. Wallerstein is also interested in patterns of economic expansion and contraction. He argues thus that GCC are influenced by moments of contraction and expansion of the global economy and also by political forces (Bair, 2008: 347). In expansion periods, integration of the production occurs while in contraction periods, integration is abandoned in favor of outsourcing (Gereffi et al, 1994: 5).

Wallerstein was not of course the only contributor to GCCs. The framework was pretty quickly adapted to a more liberal project: Gereffi then becomes a figurehead of the approach that then “promotes a nuanced analysis of world-economic spatial inequalities in terms of differential access to markets and resources” (Gereffi et al, 1994: 2). The theory gets further from its radical roots by giving more attention to firms (Gibbon et al, 2008: 316). GCC researchers developed typologies to describe the variety of chains of production; the distinction between buyer-driven chains and producer-driven chains is one of the most popular. This typology reflects the distribution of power within chains deriving from competition on a global scale. Each mode of governance is associated with specific needs of capital and technology. Buyer-driven chains are more often labor-intensive industries– like the clothing industry – whereas high levels of technology characterize the producer-driven ones (Gereffi, 1994: 97). State policies are considered influential on the forms and geographical distribution of the chains (Gereffi, 1994: 100).

On the other hand, GVC's main focus is now on the governance of the chains and particularly the approach

highlights the concrete practices and organizational forms through which a specific division of labour between lead firms and other economic agents involved in the conceptualization, production and distribution of goods in global industries is established and managed (Gibbon et al, 2008: 319).

The geographical inequalities between countries are long forgotten in favor of the managerial account of global (private) governance of production. GVC researchers are not interested anymore in a holistic interpretation of production chains, but rather with small specific links between nodes (Gibbon et al, 2008: 326). While GCC presented two modes of governance, GVC offers five different governance types: markets; modular value chains; relational value chains; captive value chains and hierarchy (Global Value Chains, 2009). GVC researchers took the GCC research very far from its Marxist origins to give it a bigger focus on firms and their management of a global production. The status quo of global production and the global inequalities it fosters are not questioned but accepted.

It is out of those two main conceptions of global production that the GPN analysis gets developed to open the black box of the firm (Coe et al, 2004: 469). GPN aims to grasp "the global, regional and local economic and social dimensions of the processes involved in many (though by no means all) forms of economic globalization" (Henderson et al, 2002: 445). Even though their agenda might be closer to the original theorists of GCC, GPN researchers recognize the limitation of conceptualizing the world in geographical conceptions of core, periphery and semi-periphery. According to Dicken, the new global production is embedded within a "global-integration, local-responsiveness framework" (2007: 137) where the local is

both the national and the regional (Dicken, 2007: 138). For instance, the workforce is often local – even though my research interest shows that it is not always the case. The local level is the place of the interaction between the local work needs and capacities and firms needs (Coe et al, 2004: 472).

Research questions from this tradition are: “how are GPNs constructed and how do they evolve? What are the underlying governance structures driving this evolution? Who, ultimately, benefits and loses through incorporation in or exclusion to GPNs, and in which places?” (Hess and Yeung, 2006: 1197). GPN researchers are interested in the possibilities to modify production organization to influence development for instance. This is in particular the case for those who study the labor involved in GPNs. McGrath argues that labor and labor relations have been underrepresented in the GPN literature (2012: 34). In particular, a review of the literature shows no breaching of the immigrant entrepreneur literature with GPN works.

GPN researchers accuse both GCC and GVC of insufficiently taking into account the institutional regulatory contexts (Bair, 2008: 355). As such, GCC and GVC researchers would be overlooking the role of states in regulating the functions of GPNs within their own boundaries (Bair, 2008: 355) or within a region (Dicken et al 2001: 96). According to GPN researchers, regulations have various objectives in terms of development, profitability and growth and affect deeply GPN (Henderson et al, 2002: 446). GCC are too focused on the internal governance questions between buyer-driven and producer-driven chains (Henderson et al, 2002: 440). Dicken acknowledges that immigration policies along with industrial policies matter for examining the role of the government in GPN (Dicken, 2007: 184).

Although the state is recognized as a major actor, GPN analysis lacks in understanding of the historical context of state development. A colonial past, for instance, influences greatly politics all over the world, and in particular in a developing nation. Relationships with past colonizers and wealthy nations usually run more complex because of this history. Dicken rather focuses on current changes to the role of the state (Dicken, 2007: 173) and on the state as a container of certain work cultures (Dicken, 2007: 176). This transformation, according to Dicken, remains linked to the current economy, with very little historical background or understanding of historical influences to governmental attitudes. In this dissertation, I will pay attention to the past of Brazil where colonization and immigration policies intertwine. I will not be investigating in depth the influence of international forces on Brazil's attitude on the fight against abuse. The data I collected was insufficient to push the analysis far enough<sup>13</sup>. I will, however, look at the immigration past of Brazil, and make an argument on how it influences today's politics over new immigrants.

Power distribution and development remains an interest from the first studies of GCC. Some GVC researchers actually criticize GPN for being too close to GCC to distinguish one approach from the other (Bair, 2008: 356). Dicken, one of the most influent researchers of the GPNs, does not reject all of the GCC tradition. He nevertheless criticizes the strong focus on chain governance overlooking (1) the relational structure between actors in the chain, (2) territoriality, and (3) institutional

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<sup>13</sup> A postcolonial analysis of the topic would be interesting and I trust uncover even more than what I found. However, to do a comprehensive postcolonial research, I believe that four months of field research were insufficient. Considering the obstacles to finding respondents, I could not choose a gender balanced set of respondents.

frames (Dicken et al, 2001: 98-99). GPN researchers actually consider their approach as a synthesis of the previous traditions. The GPN approach “brings together the different strands of the analysis of value in an integrated form” (Hess and Yeung, 2006: 1195). According to Hess and Yeung, GPN comes from four traditions:

(1) the value chain framework in strategic management since the early 1980s; (2) the networks and embeddedness perspectives in economic and organizational sociology since the mid-1980s; (3) the actor-network analysis in science studies since the mid-1980s; and (4) the global commodity/value chain analysis in economic sociology and development studies since the mid-1990s (2006: 1193).

From the first tradition, heavily influenced by Michael Porter, GPN takes the concepts of value, spatial organization of production activities and production as service and industry (Hess and Yeung, 2006: 1194). In this tradition, chains constitute a sequence of processes adding to a product value (Henderson et al, 2002: 439). From the second tradition, also known as new economic sociology, GPN researchers use the concept of network as relations geographically spread (Hess and Yeung, 2006: 1194). They also borrow the conception of value creation. Embedded networks, another used concept, constitute a rejection of an economic understanding of transaction costs. Instead, they underscore the idea that economic relations are also social relations.

The state is central in GPN analysis: “the state is a central actor within this production network rather than just providing an institutional context for it” (McGrath, 2012: 32). Non-state actors also matter greatly in GPN (McGrath, 2012: 34). McGrath’s study of the cane sugar industry in Brazil through a GPN framework emphasizes the importance of the government in the GPN. Similarly, Brazil takes an important role in the industry.

The interest in power relation within GPNs comes from the literature on actor-networks (Hess and Yeung, 2006: 1194). The duality local/global where the global dominates the local is rejected in this literature (Dicken et al, 2001: 104). GPN's purpose is to articulate power relations between agent and structure where the structure does not always take precedence over the actor. From both GVC and GCC approaches, GPNs keep the interest in the networks' spatial configuration (Hess and Yeung, 2006: 1194). They are still also interested in the influence of the GPNs on the economic development (Hess and Yeung, 2006: 1194).

GPN researchers do not use the concepts of commodity, chains or value in their frameworks. The emphasis on networks rather than chains provides a way to emphasize the social character of production. Products are not just material processes; they are social too (Henderson et al, 2002: 444). Going further, relations between firms are social: firms themselves have to manage jobs and workers. GPN opens the black box of the firm to look at the importance of individuals. People make those connections and matter to the network. In this study, immigrant entrepreneurs are the ones I will examine closely.

Conceptualizing networks instead of chains shows that relations are not only vertical: they also are horizontal and diagonal (Henderson et al, 2002: 442). Researchers also look at processes of value creation, improvement and capture within networks (Henderson et al, 2002: 449). Networks are both relational processes and structures (Dicken et al, 2001: 94), they are complex organizations at various levels of economic activity. This conceptualization helps understand actors' autonomy better (Henderson et al, 2002: 445).

Power is not only a capacity or a resource, it is also relational (Hess and Yeung, 2006: 1199) and a practice within the network (Dicken et al, 2001: 93). Firms, institutions and collective agents (non-governmental organizations, unions, etc) are power holders (Henderson et al, 2002: 450-451). However, research should not simply focus on the enumeration of power-holders, but should go towards an analysis of the exercise of power. McGrath concludes that intermediaries' power is limited in the network (2012: 40), something that applies to this case study and I will address later. Power is not unilateral: win-win situations are possible (Hess, 2008: 455). Power distribution is not only important within the network but also between the outside actors that influence the networks. For instance, the transnational nature of some actors weighs on their ability to influence the transnational networks (Henderson et al, 2002: 448).

GPNs are not limited to production; distribution and consumption matter too (Dicken, 2007: 19). Consumer needs and wants to spend money for products influence marketing and retailing strategies but should not be confused with demand (Dicken, 2007: 19). Once again, the process is not purely economic since it encompasses social aspects. Indeed, socio-cultural processes have to be accounted for in the purchasing choices of consumers. This is particularly true in the clothing industry. As I will present later, it is an industry long characterized with ever-changing fashions and a history of campaigns against sweatshops.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Definitions of sweatshops vary across the literature. Overall, the terminology is used to describe work places with poor hygiene, overcrowded conditions, where workers work long hours for little pay. In this dissertation, all utterances of the word sweatshop refer to historical or international conditions. I chose to stay away from that term with regards to the conditions of work of Bolivians in Brazil in order to stay away from the "abuse" literature on the topic. The definition is controversial and

I will look in particular at the state as a major actor along with non-state actors such as immigrant associations and their role in the production network. Immigrant communities in general have a role to play in the GPN. The study will not look too closely at consumption, but rather will focus on production and distribution. Relations between the communities (nodes of production) and the government will be the focus of the study. In order to do this, I will look into social capital as a major element within immigrant communities that help knit communities together, and in this case, production networks.

#### **2.4 Social Capital**

The concept of social capital has been around for over a century, but it started gaining popularity in the 1990s. It has acquired many followers in the recent decades, but the first mentions of it can be traced back to a work by Hanifan in 1916, to refer to “those tangible assets [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit” (1920: 78). The term capital refers to assets while social refers to interaction among humans. Particularly interesting to sociological studies, social capital relates to the bonds that we make with others. In two words:

“relationships matter” (Field, 2003: 1). Who you know and who knows you will have an impact on whether you can accomplish some goals. They “serve as central building blocks of the larger social edifice” (Field, 2003: 1). Relationships form the essence of society. For Putnam (1995), meeting in person is crucial in defining social capital. For

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cannot be applied to all Bolivian workshops. In this dissertation, I thus chose to use the less politically charged term “workshop” instead of “sweatshop.”



Putnam, “social capital, in short, refers to social connections and the attendant norms and trust” (Putnam, 1995: 664-665). Halpern (2005) defines social capital as “these everyday networks, including many of the social customs and bonds that define them and keep them together, are what we mean when we talk about social capital” (2). Humans are social beings, and their interactions produce something that is not a material economic benefit. Social capital is a facilitator of interactions (Halpern, 2005: 4).

Often informal, social capital is related to cultural capital (developed extensively by Bourdieu, see Bourdieu, 1977 and Bourdieu, 1980), or to economic capital – financial assets that can be used in times of needs. The idea is that relationships with acquaintances or family constitute a pool of resources that can be called upon by the individual when in need. Just like economic capital, social capital is available to individuals. It is however, not measurable as easily as economic capital. First of all, it is not substantial. It is an immaterial capital that is not put safely away in a bank. It is made of a series of relationships. Most probably, individuals may not know who will be the most important to help them out in an endeavor. They might go to several acquaintances before finding the one who would be able to help them out. Putnam is a major figure of the social capital literature. Coming in from a political science perspective, it is not surprising that his perspective encompasses political participation in the definition of social capital. Social capital can be a source of efficient political participation (Putnam, 1995). Putnam warns that social trust differs from political trust (1995). Although a community might be rich in social capital, this may not translate into trust in political institutions and consequently very little political activism. Institutional capital is not available to immigrants because of their

particular status within a country. But social capital does play a role in terms of informal institutions or the practice of corruption.

It is important to see that social capital interacts with other forms of capital like human capital and financial capital. Human capital is the “knowledge, skills, competencies and attributes embodied in individuals that facilitate the creation of personal, social and economic well-being” (OECD, 2001: 18). Social capital is a factor that can help make good use of the human capital already present in some individuals. For instance, very few Koreans or Bolivians actually worked in the clothing industry before immigrating to Brazil. Human capital and social capital are differentiated as in the former refers to capacities and skills, and the latter refers to the social networks. A person can get a job not because of what they know, but rather who they know (Putnam, 2000: 20). Social connections play a big part in the capacity to secure a job. This is true particularly in immigrant communities, and even more in informal communities, where the job market does not necessarily involve a resume, or a formal application.

Although Global Production Networks offer a sturdy structure to my framework, it falls short of completeness. Scholars of GPN have found inspiration in Granovetter’s work. Granovetter demonstrated that economic relations are embedded in social relations, similarly, relationships between immigrant entrepreneurs reach outside of economic behavior. They are loci of socialization. Trust and social networks matter in terms of business arrangements (Granovetter, 2000: 251). In short, Granovetter’s work is embedded in the concept of social capital. The immigrant entrepreneur literature also noticed this and has used social and political capital.

Consequently, I integrate social and political capital into my dissertation as a crucial element supporting my arguments.

Granovetter studied what he defined as strong and weak ties to explain the strength of the networks. Strong ties are those between family and close friends. Weak ties are relationships existing between acquaintances. Ascribed ties are perceived as a help in developing trust and business effectiveness (Waldinger, Aldrich and Ward, 2000: 375). However, ascribed ties do not go past ethnic boundaries as they are conceptualized in the literature. Although ethnicity and kinship matter (Granovetter, 2000: 269) in building trust in economic relationships, other groupings might matter too. Granovetter recognizes that cultural qualities are constructed and possibly manipulated to an extent. Indeed, “‘construction of identity’ for political and economic purposes” is possible (Granovetter, 2000: 260). Once again though, the immigrant group remains the main unit of analysis. Strong ties should still be able to develop in the production networks through the process of embeddedness. Networks can be built around other common identities through institutional procession or particular parameters of ties and social capital. A lot of the network theories have been interested in quantitative analysis of social networks (see Carrington, Scott, and Wasserman, 2005; Wasserman and Faust, 1994) probably stemming from the links with behavioral sciences (see Ostrom and Walker, 2003). However, GPN researchers have been more interested in the qualitative qualities of networks.

Granovetter understands “embeddedness in social networks as being grounded in social phenomena such as bounded solidarity and enforceable trust, and as such it is potentially a kind of social capital” (Rath, 2000: 15). Bounded solidarity refers to coethnicity and its responsibilities in terms of helping the other co-ethnics.

Enforceable trust is also associated with co-ethnicity where one member of a community has much to lose if s/he breaks trust. The quality of social capital and the strength of networks influence economic outcomes. Portes has shown that the availability of social capital is important to determine why some immigrant groups have higher rates of entrepreneurship than others (Rath, 2000: 16). In the case at hand, we already know or can assume that social capital is high, but what may not be clear, is if this social capital comes only from interethnic sources or if the interactions between the two groups created another kind of social capital.

Putnam shows that kinship relationships do not work as well for social capital as acquaintances and group membership (Putnam, 1993: 33). Much immigrant literature focuses on family relationships, rather than acquaintances. It is understandable that things operate differently among immigrant entrepreneurs as the concentration in the same industry is often higher than in the rest of the population. While it is true that immigrants often open a store or a workshop and hire family first, the networks they build are set alongside acquaintances lines more often than not because they help determine desirability. Desirability (Bourdieu, 1977: 503) is a central tenet of social capital. It means that relationships matter in terms of recommendation. To find a contract, many immigrants look for a good contractor through their friends, or friends of a family member. Those informal networks also exist along with more formal networks of immigration through coyotes and recruiters.

It bears noticing that social capital is a concept that was developed by the Western elite. In Putnam's case, although the idea started through a study of Italy's local government, it is clearly a study of the American case. Looking at it through a feminist perspective brings to question some of its tenets. For instance, although

Bourdieu studied its forms in terms of elite and inequalities, many of the following scholars dropped that aspect. Although it seems clear that lower social classes have their own forms of social capital, more interest should be put upon the inequalities of social capital. On the same aspect, the attribution of lack of social capital by many authors to the rise of criminality warrants more inquiry. Defining criminality and the aspects of government that let or encourage such actions merit more attention. Social capital also may be distributed differently according to such factors as gender, ethnicity, skin color, etc. Halpern reports many critics of social capital accuse proponents of social capital as advocating the economicization of sociology (2005: 31). Many economists have similarly criticized the concept for being overly sociological and hard to measure (Halpern, 2005: 31). Difficulties of measurement stem from the immateriality of social capital. It also stems from the variety of definitions that are used in the literature.

Social capital can form along some networks that are pretty exclusive. This is a criticism often given to the Korean community in Brazil. The OECD notes “Relatively homogeneous groups may be characterized by strong trust and co-operative norms within a group, but low trust and co-operation with the rest of society” (OECD, 2001: 42). Immigrants build this social capital over decades, and it remains in use mostly to the benefit of other members of the community. This is typical of strong bonding and low bridging (OECD, 2001: 42). Bridging refers to ties that go across communities like religion. Social capital has been described as a “source of adaptive advantage” for new immigrants (OECD, 2001: 42). This is true for new comers who can rely on existing networks to find employment for instance, or help when they need it. The

OECD points out that in this situation, it is important to bridge to wider networks so that wider networks can open up for immigrants (OECD, 2001: 67).

Institutions can provide social capital. When groups form, social capital is often created. New members will benefit from it. It is important to note that the lack of trust in the government's institutions means that most immigrants do not benefit from that kind of social capital. Although governmental institutions possess social capital, this capital is not always available to all, and in particular to immigrants. In this case, the history of colonization and governmental control of flows of immigration matter in the availability of social capital for immigrants.

Importantly, individuals do not necessarily acknowledge social capital much less try to assess how much they have. This concept is much more of a theoretical construct than economic capital. Few people count the amount of social capital they possess at night. Thus, social capital is an indicator that is hard to measure (OECD, 2001: 43). Putnam has an extensive list of indicators to check for social capital. His indicators follow a wide based survey (see Putnam, 2000). In the current situation though, I have to distinguish between general social capital, and social capital as it applies to the clothing industry, each community, as well as their interactions. Obviously, there is no such widespread set of indicators. Applying surveys systematically to large immigrant communities in Brazil is a very complicated endeavor. In the research project *The New Face of Discrimination* (2000), the researchers struggled to have a good percentage of returns on the surveys they distributed in major locations of the Korean community. Add to this the high levels of undocumented immigrants, particularly in the Bolivian community, and general wariness about the authorities, undertaking a project with such a scale would be

impossible. Considering the lack of access to reliable data, the lack of access to listings of associations or groups in each community, and the qualitative nature of this scientific enquiry, social capital will be measured in this dissertation as a qualitative measure emerging from interviews and observations obtained during the field research.

Furthermore, the OECD recognizes that “much of what is relevant to social capital is tacit and relational, defying easy measurement or codification” (2001: 43). It was of course not possible to include the concept as such in the interviews. I used the answers to the following questions as indications of social capital “What resources did you have when you set up your shop? What kind of support did you get, from whom? What kind of impact did the other community have on your intentions and capacities to open a shop? How did you get the funds? How did you learn the necessary knowledge to open a shop?” Of course, some answers also showed social capital such that during coding, themes like help, family were indicators of social capital. Social capital is the basis of immigrant communities. In this project, social capital is involved in the process of production networks.

Upon completing the research, political capital took on specific importance. Some questions in the interview guide actually measured this: “Are you active in an organization linked to your community? What is your experience in that context? How does your experience influence your economic activity? Do you or have you ever lobbied for a change in legislation? Have you ever met with others regarding that issue?” Codes that represented political capital were “associations for immigrants”; “politics”; “corruption.” To a lesser extent, human capital also plays a role in the industry and the immigrant communities. Originally, the interview guide did not

specifically contain questions about human capital, but entrepreneurs in particular included discussions of education in their answers. As such, the codes “education” and “future of fashion” in particular represented human capital.

Social capital is an asset in conflict resolution. Because it sometimes involves less legal means of conflict resolution, social capital can be attributed to negative social behaviors. Some researchers report social capital in terms of a criminal perspective (Field, 2003). Halpern points out that many have understated the negative aspects of social capital (2005: 22). Putnam argues that “social capital, in short, can be directed toward malevolent, antisocial purposes, just like any other form of capital” (Putnam, 2000: 22). To Putnam, this means that crime will happen where social capital ties are weak or inexistent (Putnam, 2000: 308). Social capital would be the important requirement to save someone from a life of crime. However, in an earlier work, Putnam mentions that “youth gangs” and the “Michigan militia” also possess social capital (Putnam, 1995). For without social capital, collective action would be much more stunted, and hence those groups would be less efficient. Putnam is known for his negative interpretation of current American society and the disappearance of social capital (an idea particularly developed in *Bowling Alone*). I believe researchers ought to define crime as it might be simply cheating on taxes like many respondents in my research report. In that case, social capital might be crucial in learning how to do that cheating well. Dealing with the drawbacks of corruption is also important to negotiate the risks. This takes a habit and some help. The main issue with the traditional definitions of crime is that most researchers come from a Western perspective on what constitutes a crime. In a developing nation, crime on a daily basis might get a different definition.



International institutions tend to use academic concepts that bring forward what makes some groups more economically successful than others. Just like with immigrant entrepreneur, social capital is not an exception. Several international institutions have bought into the concept. They see it as a useful way to formulate new social policies<sup>15</sup>. For the World Bank, “social cohesion is critical for societies to prosper economically and for development to be sustainable” (1999). The increasing popularity of microcredit initiatives is a sign of social capital (Field, 2003: 129). The OECD too has used the concept of social capital to promote development policies. In a report titled *The Well-Being of Nations: The Role of Human and Social Capital*, the OECD (2001) promotes several policies geared toward improving social capital. It considers social capital as an asset that improves “wealth, well-being, and job search activities” (2001: 67) and is a source of increased productivity (2001: 52). The document underscores the lack of current research on social capital and what governmental policies could help (2001: 68).

However, designing policies based on social capital appears complicated. First of all, lower income communities, or in our case, immigrant communities, usually distrust government institutions (Field, 2003: 129). Trust forms the center of social capital, and it remains unclear that government or organizations can create or transfer trust in groups (Field, 2003: 137). Some researchers thus question the ability of using concepts of social capital as tools for progress. In particular, some point out that social capital can only leverage what resources already exist (Portes and Landolt, 2000: 547). Organizations thus need to look into resources that accompany social capital rather

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<sup>15</sup> Some say that by focusing on social capital, policy makers excuse themselves from profound social reform.

than just focusing on building trust and relationships in society. In this dissertation, I will not argue for the development of more social capital, but rather for the government to take existing networks into account when trying to change practices.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

This dissertation borrows from several separate theories. While the immigrant entrepreneurs' literature is vast, it mostly addresses questions of why entrepreneurship arises in the first place. It also fails to look at relationships between immigrant entrepreneurs from different communities. Consequently, using Global Production Networks will help grasp the complexities of the production network just as it fits São Paulo. The researchers who constructed this framework originally used the work of Granovetter in an effort to define the relationships between production nodes. His work that contributed to the concept of social capital helped define relationships qualitatively. I will show that differences in social capital impact access to political capital for both communities, leading to attitudes that differ towards abuse and labor law enforcement. Social capital remains an important resource in immigrant communities, even when 1.5, second or third generations start working. It is particularly the case when looking at immigrant entrepreneurship: networks still matter to descendants of immigrants. Social capital shapes production networks.

Finally, the history of colonization and immigration constitutes an aspect that affects the role of the government in the production network, and it also affects some of the resources that exists in Brazil upon which social capital builds on. I explore this history in the next two chapters in order to bring light to the current situation and the governmental attitudes towards immigration. While discriminatory policies over the origins of immigrants are not perceived favorably anymore, the government maintains

pressure over the Bolivian community over the issue of abuse. It leads to two outcomes: evading attention by pushing production to less known areas, or by increasing imports from countries less concerned with abuse issues. The remainder of the dissertation will examine the research questions<sup>16</sup> using the framework I outlined in this chapter.

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<sup>16</sup> How do immigrant entrepreneurs in this industry perceive and adapt to a situation where they are accused of abuses by a very bureaucratic state? What factors influence their perceptions?

### **Chapter 3**

#### **IMMIGRATION IN BRAZIL: HISTORY AND LEGACY**

In this chapter, I will present the colonial experience of Brazil as it relates to immigration and the ethnic composition of its population. It is important to understand this history as it informs the perceptions of decision makers about the identity of the nation. It also informs the opinions of the population, which in turn, influence the lives of immigrants and their treatment. The colonial experience has also informed the treatment immigrants of different origins get in Brazil by treating white Europeans better than other immigrants, in particular those coming from Africa. The dictatorship has also added some more depth into immigration policies and the value given to immigrants from wealthier countries priority over those from poorer nations.

Being a predominantly white settler nation, Portuguese-descent populations obtained a better status in the government than any other groups. The racial organization of the economy and the government has had lasting impacts on racial relations in Brazil. It was a driving factor in the establishment of settlement policies for immigrants as their origins were controlled by the government, although not always successfully. The legacy from the colonial years has mattered in how the population perceived new immigrants as they arrived before World War Two.

By the end of the chapter, the reader should have a strong understanding of the importance of varied migration to Brazil. This colonial past influenced attitudes on immigration then and now, in particular, Brazilian attitudes towards whiteness and the

desirability of some immigrant communities over others. Similarly, the attempts to control strictly who came in and in what numbers also mattered a lot to the formation of the Brazilian state.

### **3.1 Creating a Racial Democracy in a Colonial State**

Colonization has had everlasting impacts on the world, and in particular on former colonies. Different types of colonization impacted countries in different ways. Postcolonial studies comprise a whole literature devoted to the long-lasting effects of colonization and the new forms it takes in the world today. Settler colonies where colonizing powers deliberately transferred population from the mother nation to the colony, affected local populations in profound ways. In the Americas, in particular, the mass immigration of white Europeans was accompanied by the decimation of indigenous populations and the forced enslavement and transfer of African populations. Those population flows affect the racial composition of those countries today, but also social conditions such as inequality, abuse, and extreme exploitation were commonplace. Brazil is not to be forgotten among white settler colonies as it received the most enslaved Africans (Curtin, 1990: 46). I present in this section the unique characteristics of Brazilian colonialism and enslavement.

#### **3.1.1 Colonization and slavery**

Brazil was founded as a colony in 1500, but was actively populated and settled as a full-fledged colony starting in 1530<sup>17</sup>. For the first three decades, Brazil had few

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<sup>17</sup> Martim Alfonso de Souza led an expedition that strived to establish a colony and started what is referred as the colonial period in 1530-1533 (Fausto, 2001: 18).

exports that could interest traders (Curtin, 1990: 49). It is hard to come across reliable data for the number of natives that lived in what is now Brazil (Fausto, 2001:15). Estimates vary as widely from 2 million to over 5 million (Fausto, 2001: 15). As in other colonies in the Americas, the enslavement of indigenous populations was mostly a failure (Curtin, 1990: 52). Instead millions died following the spread of disease due to violent conquest of indigenous territories (Taylor, 2001: 39).<sup>18</sup> Today the indigenous population of Brazil is very small and located in the Amazonian region and in the coastal states. Only around 300 to 350,000 were identified as Native in the 2001 census (Fausto, 2001: 16). The colony thus had to face the problem of not having a big enough workforce to exploit the wealth of the land, in particular for the production of sugar. The answer to this lack of workforce was the same as in many other colonies in the Americas: the trafficking of enslaved populations from Africa.

Over the course of the slave trade, starting in 1549, a little over 9 million African slaves were taken from Africa (Curtin, 1997: 75). From those, about 3.5 million African slaves were brought to Brazil, about a third of the total, and more than any other country (Marx, 1998: 49). Several explanations account for this reality. Because of proximity, the trip to Brazil was shorter than the one to the Caribbean leading to lower death rates for the enslaved Africans (Curtin, 1990: 52). The official slave trade ended in 1850 to be replaced by clandestine shipments of enslaved Africans by Portuguese sailors in minor Brazilian ports (Sheriff, 2001: 13). Slavery in

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<sup>18</sup> It is important to note that merchants constituted the bulk of the first settlers contrary to the Spanish America where military power was sent ahead of settlers, and resulted in a violent extermination of local populations (Curtin, 1990: 51).

Brazil is often represented as less harsh than in other American nations, however, it was actually much more severe than its representations suggest.<sup>19</sup> Marx holds that

arguments for and against Brazil having a humanitarian form of slavery are inconsequential in light of the overriding fact that slavery in Brazil was astonishingly deadly. All told, Brazil imported ten times the number of slaves brought to North America; a steady supply of new African slaves was needed to compensate for high mortality rates. Brazil's slave population lived under conditions that made reproduction of their numbers impossible. Brazilian slaveholders unable to keep their slaves alive benefited from Portugal's dominance of the slave trade to import new slaves cheaply in large numbers (Marx, 1998: 52)

Indeed, life expectancy of enslaved populations in Brazil was very low (Marx, 1998: 49). This meant that the nation needed a constant flow of enslaved labor from Africa, which was facilitated by being part of the Portuguese empire and the geographic closeness to the African continent (Marx, 1998: 49).

The first instances of population control were very obviously manifested through the trafficking of enslaved Africans through the colonial years and the beginning of independence. Other instances were also visible as Dom João V forced Azoreans to settle southern Brazil in 1748 (Lesser, 2013: 8). This transfer of population from the Azores to Brazil mimics well the trafficking of slaves to Brazil. Like other settler colonies, such as Australia and New Zealand, Brazil was used to expel criminals from Portugal (Lesser, 2013: 10). Soldiers and criminals' wives or orphans were also sent to Brazil with little choice in the matter (Lesser, 2013: 10). Colonial Brazil was built on the transfer of population and control over who can enter

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<sup>19</sup> Interestingly, the Brazilian dictatorship is often considered less violent than others in South America. However, that dictatorship remained a very violent time period with a lot of torture and disappearance. The youngest victim of dictatorial torture was not even two years old. I will explain this later.

the country. This control over population was actually only part of a larger policy of tightly controlling the territory. Dom João VI authorized non-Portuguese ships to dock in Brazil, opening up commerce in 1808 as he settled temporarily in Brazil escaping Napoleon's invasion in Portugal (Lesser, 2013: 8).

Brazil abolished slavery in 1888, the latest of all the American states. At the time of the abolition, there were three times as many freed slaves as they were slaves (Marx, 1998: 51). Abolition was thus progressive, with laws implemented that limited some rights and opened up the possibilities to pay for freedom (Marx, 1998: 51). Once the soil in the North East was exhausted at sugar plantations, many enslaved Brazilians shifted southward to coffee plantations in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (Sheriff, 2001: 14). The transition from enslavement to salaried work was not smooth, however. Sheriff reports that

Convinced that newly liberated plantation workers would no longer work for their former masters, planters and politicians convened to recruit labor, mostly from Europe, through subsidized immigration (Sheriff, 2001: 14).

Yet, despite that fear, many liberated slaves remained working in the same plantation, suddenly competing with subsidized immigrants for work (Sheriff, 2001: 14). The next section will go in details on this shift between enslaved labor and white immigrants from Europe.

Brazil, a white settler colony located for the most part in the tropics brought many images to white Europeans' minds. The idea of discovering the supposedly wild continent appealed to many *naturalistas* in the 19<sup>th</sup> century coming from Europe to explore the vast expanses of Brazil (Oliveira, 2001: 7). It appeared that in the Brazilian imaginary the effects of miscegenation, the results of reproduction between individuals considered of different races, were also one of voyeuristic interest towards



African slaves and their descendants (Oliveira, 2001: 9). Exoticism was thus part of the attraction of colonial Brazil to prospective immigrants.

While I will examine white immigration in the next section, it is important to look into the concept of racial democracy as it is rooted in the colonial beginnings of Brazil.

### **3.1.2 Racial democracy**

19<sup>th</sup> century theorists argued that miscegenation would bring out all the negative traits from each race, ultimately preventing Brazil from becoming an international power (Oliveira, 2001: 10). To counter this argument, Brazilian theorists came up with the theory of whitening, where constant miscegenation through three or four generations would ultimately lead to a white population (Oliveira, 2010: 10). The substitution of the African slave workforce for white European immigrants in the big coffee plantations, called *fazendas*, was a very good option to make sure that miscegenation would help bring Brazil to an international standing. Racial democracy was born and with it the will to hide racial inequalities in the nation.

Brazil has developed a founding myth based on the beginnings of its colony. In this myth, the Brazilian population is a mix of the Portuguese, the Black African slave, and the Amerindian. This miscegenation supposedly ended any sort of racial hierarchy in the country, since everyone is a bit of all three “races”: no one would create strict hierarchies based on having non-white blood because it would be against their interests and the interest of their children. The myth is at the base of the “racial democracy”, a concept best exemplified in the writings of Gilberto Freyre, a famous Brazilian novelist (Sheriff, 2001: 4). Brazilian history, according to his writings, was a blend of European, African, and Amerindian cultures (Sheriff, 2001: 4). Willing a

shift from mostly racist discourses in the country at the time, Freyre reinvented the national narrative to include a more tolerant Portuguese people who had been confronted with the Moor's invasion from Northern Africa, and thereby displayed less prejudice towards different cultures (Sheriff, 2001: 5). However, Freyre ignored the cruel rule of Portuguese colonizers in Africa as well as their participation in the slave trade (Marx, 1998: 30). This moral superiority in the Brazilian population is key to avoid problems other states have with racism (Sheriff, 2001: 5).

However, racial democracy is nothing but a myth. Brazil's systemic discrimination against dark skinned individuals took a different form than in other colonial nations. Indeed, Marx explains that "Brazil (...) with relatively little intrawhite conflict, was less pressured to reconcile whites via racial domination, and the state instead embraced the ideology of "racial democracy", even amid continued discrimination" (Marx, 1998: 2). Although many bought into the myth of racial democracy outside of Brazil, today this lack of racism has been widely contested as data shows that Afro-Brazilians have lower status in society (Sheriff, 2001: 6).

Racial discrimination in Brazil takes thus different forms than what we are used to in the US where segregation was a major event in the country's history. In Brazil, segregation or apartheid would have been made impossible because of the extent of miscegenation, where it was hard to establish strict racial categories (Marx, 1998: 9).

Racial democracy is fundamental, not simply as a founding myth, but in the everyday life of most Brazilians (Sheriff, 2001: 7). The discourse is not questioned in the media, and my interactions with Brazilians have shown acceptance of this discourse, at least outside of academia. In history, Brazil was faced with denying entry to African Americans who had heard the praises of the racial democracy and wanted to immigrate in the 1920s (Lesser, 2013: 144). This discourse is pervasive in the

minds of immigrants, and of my respondents. In my interactions with some recent immigrants to Brazil, such as Haitians, the racial democracy values were repeated to me. Jean told me that he came to Brazil because his skin color would not matter there. It seems that racial democracy went well beyond Brazilian borders and has affected the perceptions of international society on their policies even today. The criticism in academia that Sheriff points to has, however, failed to impact international perceptions about the country.

Racial democracy has been at the heart of the absence of discussion on race in the country. Assuming that there is no racism in Brazil has been more of a detriment to a national discussion on racial inequalities than a help. Marx argues "Ironically, the lack of official racial domination then becomes an obstacle to effective collective action forcing redress of real inequality" (Marx, 1998: 6). Movements for afro descent Brazilians have not been very powerful in Brazil and have not been numerous. Talk of a quota system in Brazilian public university for minorities of Afro-descent was not well received by the population who did not understand why there was a need for them when race does not matter in Brazil.

This myth not only hides current inequality, it also excludes the numerous immigrants that came in the country in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. It also serves to justify racial hierarchies, or more to the point, to hide them. Sheriff acknowledges this vision is not in black and white of race in Brazil (2001: 29). The current discourses have multiple words for skin color.<sup>20</sup> And as I will develop in the next chapter, immigrants had to sometimes prove their whiteness to get accepted in the country.

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<sup>20</sup> In the 1970s, Brazilians were allowed to self-report how they perceived their skin color, and about 134 different categories were reported in the census (Garcia-Navarro,

### 3.2 Immigration in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century: the “Whitening Solution”

When slavery ended in 1888, after years of progressive decline in the number of enslaved Brazilians, the transition to an immigrant workforce had already started. Most of the sugar cane production enabled by the enslavement of African populations was located in the North East of Brazil. However, decades of work depleted the soil and made most lands unproductive. Meanwhile, coffee became a popular crop after independence, with plantations starting mostly in the states of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, the South East<sup>21</sup> of Brazil. The switch to a coffee-based agriculture occurred while slavery was still widely practiced in Brazil. Slaves were thus transferred within the country to the West of São Paulo (Beiguelman, 1981: 9). In 1870, slavery seemed to be doomed in Brazil as laws were increasingly making the transfer of slaves from one state to another very difficult (Beiguelman, 1981: 13). As I will describe in the rest of this section, Brazil thus turned to a white European organized migration starting with Germans and Swiss immigrants<sup>22</sup>, followed by Italians.

Overall, between 1880 and 1915, the Americas received around 31 million immigrants, Brazil coming in at third place with under a tenth of those immigrants, 2.9 million (Oliveira, 2002: 22). In 1891, after the overthrow of the imperial regime, the government passed a law that declared any resident of Brazil, Brazilian (Oliveira,

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2015). Today, only five categories are left for Brazilians to fill out (Garcia-Navarro, 2015).

<sup>21</sup> Although it is in the region South-East, this period is often referred to as the development of the “West” as it follows the cultivation of coffee Southward then Westward (Beiguelman, 1981: 7).

<sup>22</sup> Swiss immigrants founded a city, Nova Friburgo, which although still existing saw a high proportion of immigrants dying in the first years due to harsh conditions (Lesser, 2013: 17).

2002: 18). It is hard to come by reliable data on the amount of immigrants that came to the country. Different sources estimate that about a third of immigrants coming to Brazil at the time were Italians, followed closely by Portuguese, following further away come: Spanish, Germans, Russians, Japanese, Austrians, and Syro-Lebanese (Oliveira, 2002: 23-24). In this section, I will be examining the transition in plantations and small immigrant settlements consequently focusing on German and Italian migration. More than half of all immigrants went to the city of São Paulo (Oliveira, 2002: 24).

Table 1: Number and origins of immigrants between 1884 and 1933.

Nationality	1884-1893	1894-1903	1904-1913	1914-1923	1924-1933	Total
Germans	22,778	6,698	33,859	29,339	61,723	154,397
Spaniards	113,116	102,142	224,672	94,779	52,405	587,114
Italians	510,533	537,784	196,521	86,320	70,177	1,401,335
Japanese	-	-	11,868	20,398	110,191	142,457
Portuguese	170,621	155,542	384,672	201,252	233,650	1,145,737
Syrians and Turkish	96	7,124	45,803	20,400	20,400	93,823
Others	66,524	42,820	109,222	51,493	164,586	434,645
Total	883,668	852,110	1,006,617	503,981	717,223	3,963,599

*Source: IBGE Brazil (2015)*

In this table, I assembled the numbers of immigrants who came to Brazil between 1884 and 1933. Those numbers were found on the website of IBGE, the reliability of such numbers is not clear, as there are different versions appearing in different publications. The exact numbers are not as important though as the clear

knowledge that migration to Brazil was diverse. Italians, Portuguese and Spanish immigrants formed the bulk of immigration, along with significant numbers for Germans, Japanese, and Syrian/Turkish immigrants. Although Portuguese and Spanish immigration were often overlooked because of cultural proximity, I will explore here in particular Germans, Italians, Japanese, and Syrian/Turkish immigrants that form the main communities of interest in the narrative of Brazilian immigration pre-World War Two.

Substituting a white population for a black population was a desire that started at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the Portuguese court in Brazil but took a while to get translated into policies (Lesser, 2013: 9). From that moment, it was clear to elites that abolition would ultimately take place, but “most did not believe that freed slaves could be productive wage laborers” (Lesser, 2013: 26). Black populations were not productive and did not contribute positively to the nation. Along came the idea of whitening, which “meant that the population could be physically transformed from black to white through a combination of intermarriage and immigration policies” (Lesser, 2013: 12). While in the previous century blacks were considered a hindrance to Brazil, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, evolution theorists argued that miscegenation could be a good thing as it led to a population increasingly white (Lesser, 2013: 13). The new Emperor signed a letter to start the substitution of immigrants for slaves (Lesser, 2013: 27). French, British, and US citizens were first targeted as ideal immigrants to Brazil, but those hopes were quickly dashed as the economy in those states was booming at the time (Lesser, 2013: 9). Brazil received few immigrants between 1820 and 1875, as the real boom happened between 1875 and 1895.

In many ways, Brazil's history of immigration and organization of immigrant flows mirrored similar wishes in the United States. The US "undertook to violently eliminate most of the original dwellers, imported a mass of African workers whom they excluded from their nation altogether, actively recruited Europeans they considered suitable for settlement" (Zolberg, 2006: 1). The details of how they achieved such policies and what types of policies were adopted vary of course. But overall, both nations had similar attitudes towards the absolute belief that they could control who would get to be a part of their nation, and their role and contribution. Zolberg calls the American governmental control of immigration, and the origin of immigrants the "visible hand" (Zolberg, 2006: 153). Brazil's history of controlling the flows of populations into its borders can be put in parallel with the US, and the "visible hand" could be applied too.

Before white immigration was exclusively targeted, unfree labor from Asia was seriously considered in the form of coolies<sup>23</sup> from China (Beiguelman, 1981: 14). The new West, where new coffee plantations were being settled was firmly opposed to the Asian immigrants (Beiguelman, 1981: 23). Brazilian authorities before independence looked abroad at other countries' experiences with Chinese labor (Lesser, 2013: 46), including the US experience in bringing in a large flow of Chinese immigrants for the construction of the transcontinental railroad (Zolberg, 2006: 175). Chinese immigration started in 1849 in the US, providing Brazilian authorities with several years of experience to study the effects of such a migration. In Brazil, debates took place between the elites and the plantation owners as to whether Chinese blood

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<sup>23</sup> Coolies were a form of indentured workers widely used to procure cheap labor in South Asia (Zolberg, 2006 : 176).

would contribute to the Brazilian nation in a positive way (Lesser, 2013: 49). Ultimately, the representatives adopted racist attitudes towards Chinese immigrants, which were picked up by Chinese envoys, discouraging any further Chinese immigration from both sides<sup>24</sup> (Lesser, 2013: 50). Similar racist attitudes developed in the US and in particular in California, prejudicing Chinese and other Asians as inassimilable (Zolberg, 2006: 177).

While Chinese immigration was dismissed as not being white and failing to contribute to the whitening of Brazil, white Europeans were instead sought after. There was no real consideration for immigrants. Instead, “immigrants were often hailed as saviors because they modified and improved Brazil, not because they were improved by Brazil” (Lesser, 2013: 2). Immigrants, by being white would help outnumber black descent Brazilians, and their descendants would contribute to produce whiter Brazilians in the long run. In order to become a “country of the future”, Brazil needed to become whiter (Lesser, 2013: 7). In 1890, further Asian and African migrations were banned in Brazil (Lesser, 2013: 144).

The first immigrant groups that were brought to Brazil were from Germany<sup>25</sup>, first from Northern Germany, then from the South of the country and Switzerland (Beiguelman, 1981: 30). Germans were sought after as the perfect immigrant with a strong work ethic and white credentials. The Emperor’s wife was from Austria and probably had a hand in this as she thought Central Europeans constituted superior

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<sup>24</sup> Today, the chamber of commerce China-Brazil says that around 120,000 Chinese nationals live in Brazil (Martins, 2012).

<sup>25</sup> The first Germans to immigrate to Brazil arrived in 1808, after the Portuguese Crown arrived in Brazil (Seyferth, 1999: 273).



white populations (Lesser, 2013: 28). The migration as it was encouraged was a family migration<sup>26</sup>, where several family members came to live in Brazil. There were two different movements in the organized white immigration that happened in parallel. One involved settling immigrants in family groups in Southern states to populate “empty” lands. The other sent immigrant workers to plantations. Those were integral part of the transition between a slavery system and a free labor economy (Lesser, 2013: 34).

Before *fazendeiros* started considering the German workforce as a suitable substitution, Germans started arriving in Brazil in “colonies” starting in 1824 (Seyferth, 1999: 276). The preferred model by the government at the time was for small farms handled by immigrant families (Seyferth, 1999: 277). 1870 to 1885 marked the last stretch when the government organized migration to Brazil around the model of small landowners (Alvim, 1999: 387). This meant that subsequent immigration, in particular from Italy, came directly to *fazendas*. German migration was mostly oriented towards agriculture and many colonies remained relatively isolated from the rest of the country. The colonies were not very successful at first with long distances to major centers and very low conditions of living leading to early death (Seyferth, 1999: 277). Brazil came to be known for the bad conditions it offered its immigrants (Lesser, 2013: 44). Lesser actually argues that conditions in Argentina were better, which explains why the country received more immigrants overall (2013: 64).

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<sup>26</sup> About 2,000 people from the Azores were forced to settle in Southern Brazil by the crown in the 18th century in order to populate the coast (Seyferth, 1999: 277).

Conditions in the *fazendas* were not much better. The *fazendeiros*, the farm owners paid the passage across the Atlantic in advance for those families (Beiguelman, 1981: 8) who in turn had to refund the farmer through the profits they made over that year (Beiguelman, 1981: 31). As in many other similar settings, prices set by the *fazendeiros* were way above market price, which made it harder for immigrants to repay their debt, and keep a profit to better their lives. Furthermore, those plantation owners were more used to having enslaved workers and poor workers with few options than immigrants who were looking for a social and economic betterment. In total, until 1940, around 235,000 to 280,000 Germans immigrated to Brazil (Seyferth, 1999: 274). As usual with a lot of data from Brazil, there is not necessarily accepted data in part because return migration was an important phenomenon at the time. Germany ultimately restricted migration to Brazil in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century as the German authorities came to learn of the harsh conditions of life there (Lesser, 2013: 46).

On the *fazendas*, the transition to a coffee culture was fueled through enslaved workers and new immigrants. The end of slave trafficking in 1850 (Oliveira, 2002: 14) put pressure on the farmers to find a substitute for a workforce that was easily supplied, but not cheap anymore as legislation passed to enforce registration of enslaved workers. Curtin argues that the plantation model in the Americas was one of deficit: plantations “normally had a net natural decrease in population – among slaves and masters alike” (Curtin, 1999: 25). This means that first slaves, then immigrants were needed to always replenish the workforce in the plantation. As new immigrants settled in the coffee plantations, starting care for coffee trees, enslaved labor did a lot of domestic work in the house and took care of the new crops (Beiguelman, 1981: 42).

At the beginning of the coffee plantation, national workers were preferred for perilous work while slaves, whose trade had been prohibited early on, were kept for essential functions (Beiguelman, 1981: 8). Slave owners had to protect their investment once the slave trade was abolished (Marx, 1998: 53), and thus slaves were not enrolled in life-threatening and dangerous work. National workers also avoided work they perceived as slave like, still doing the dangerous work of deforestation of the forest to make way for the new coffee crops (Beiguelman, 1981: 42). However, national workers occupied positions that immigrants refused to do, putting them lower in the hierarchy (Beiguelman, 1981: 24). The hired national workforce represented no investments and was thus more disposable. 1870 marked the end of the transfer of slaves and former slaves between states in order to encourage the immigration solution (Beiguelman, 1981: 12).

Importing families of immigrants was useful for the farmers as they obtained cheap labor in the form of female members of the family as well as children (Beiguelman, 1981: 10). In order to attract immigrants despite the low salaries, arrangements in the new coffee plantation including sharecropping<sup>27</sup> to give immigrant families the opportunity to cultivate land in between the rows of coffee, helping their subsistence in addition to their salary (Beiguelman, 1981: 9; Lesser, 2013: 40). The decade of 1870 marked a renewed interest towards immigrant labor as pressures on the government to subsidize the trips were finally successful. This was to the benefit of both the farmer and the immigrants as the latter did not need to contract

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<sup>27</sup> Some argue that immigrants could keep all the production in those lands while Lesser argues that half of the production from that land was to be given to the plantation owner, and the immigrants could keep the other half (Lesser, 2013: 40).

heavy debt to come in Brazil while the former did not need to ensure continuity of work to get back his investment (Beiguelman, 1981: 35). In 1886, the *Sociedade Promotora de Imigração*, Immigration Promotion Society was created (Beiguelman, 1981: 36). It emphasized the merits of family migration, providing farms with cheap and abundant labor from women and children. Spontaneous migration and migration of individuals with no families was discouraged (Beiguelman, 1981: 38).

The arrangement also had drawbacks for the plantation owners. Immigrants possessed freedom of movement, which made the subvention by the farmer of the trips across the Atlantic little profitable over the long run (Beiguelman, 1981: 10). Since the *fazendeiros* were used to a slave labor, which at the beginnings of immigration was still in full swing, conditions of work were harsh and immigrants protested the few profits they were able to make on the *fazenda* (Beiguelman, 1981: 31). Immigrants wanting to escape the hard conditions of work moved to urban centers, São Paulo in particular, which, during the heights of Italian migration, became a little Italy in itself. São Paulo became an economic center as immigrants came *en masse* to make their living there. This pushed farmers to ask for a change in the system where they would not have to pay for the trip of the families willing to work for them (Beiguelman 1981: 31). Responsibility turned to the government and public funds started subsidizing immigrant migration to the country (Beiguelman, 1981: 10). This did not change the overwhelming trend of escaping the *fazendas* and immigrants became the leading workforce of the city as it becomes a major industrial center in the country (Beiguelman, 1981: 47).

The concentration of immigrants in São Paulo created resentment in the Brazilian workforce towards communities having access to better farming conditions

than themselves and managing a socio-economic ascension more successfully (Beiguelman, 1981: 46). In the city, tensions between the Italian community and Brazilians rose very high, showing some elements of rising xenophobia in the population, particularly in the decade of 1890s (Beiguelman, 1981: 46). The resentment towards Italian immigrants focused on their overzealous nature and pretention of social ascension (Beiguelman, 1981: 54). To counteract this escape to the city, conditions to remain in the *fazenda* were added to the law.

The turn of the century saw the end of immigration as Brazil experienced a deficit in migration as return migration, particularly of Italians, rose. The *fazendeiros*, used to slave labor, did not make the transition smoothly between slave work and salaried work. Used to exploitation and a lack of complaints, having to deal with workers who expected a certain amount of respect did not go over so well. The Italian government sponsored most of the migration from Italy. However, upon seeing that many of its citizens were having a hard life filled with abuse in the coffee *fazendas*, the Italian government ended its program with Brazil in the hopes of ending the abuse<sup>28</sup>. The decree Prinetti in 1902 prohibited further subsidized immigration to Brazil (Beiguelman, 1981: 51). All told, Italians represented about 42% of the total immigrants that came in Brazil between 1870 and 1920 (Alvim, 1999: 383). Most of them were concentrated in the state of São Paulo, although there was significant presence in the southern states of Santa Catarina, Parana and Rio Grande do Sul (Alvim, 1999: 394). After 1902, Southern Italians were still interested in leaving Italy,

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<sup>28</sup> It is to be noted that Italian immigrants wanted to be associated with whites and sometimes violently distanced themselves from African descent workforce on the plantations (Lesser, 2013: 77).

but most of them chose the US over Brazil after word of mouth told of the harsh conditions of work and decline in salary occurring as the industry profitability diminished (Beiguelman, 1981: 49).

Nationalistic tensions became particularly important in the decades of 1910 and 1920, culminating in the Vargas government policies restricting migration in the constitutions of 1934 and 1937 (Oliveira, 2002: 19). Similar tensions were felt in the United States starting as early as the mid 1880s, but culminating only in the Literacy Act of 1917, imposing a literacy test on prospective immigrants (Zolberg, 2006: 203). In the US in particular, tensions arose with Roman Catholic immigrants who threatened the way of life of older Protestant immigrants (Zolberg, 2006: 199). In Brazil, a Roman Catholic nation, tensions about immigration started with German immigration as some criticized the government and colonial legacy for creating isolated “colonies” evolving into autonomy from the rest of the country causing the “German danger” (Oliveira, 2002: 14). Germans, Slavic populations and Asians were singled out as problematic immigration failing to integrate in the country as well as Portuguese and Spanish immigrants had (Oliveira, 2002: 20). The Estado Novo, the name of the regime created by president turned dictator Getulio Vargas, later forbade the teaching in foreign languages targeting immigrant groups from Italy, Germany, Poland, and Japan, while pushing a nationalistic agenda in schools (Oliveira, 2002: 21). When World War Two<sup>29</sup> started, German, Italians, and Japanese groups were accused, like in other nations, and in particular in the US, of being part of the Axis (Oliveira, 2002: 20). Brazil became a belligerent on the Allied side, sending troops to the Italian front.

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<sup>29</sup> During World War 1, some Germans are interned in camps (Lesser, 2013: 79).

Meanwhile, policies towards Jewish populations seeking refuge in Brazil were ambiguous, leading to research looking at anti-Semitism in the Vargas regime<sup>30</sup> from 1937 to 1945 (Mizrahi, 2005: 45). Although not official, the Vargas regime left secret instructions to deny visas to Jewish prospective immigrants (Mizrahi, 2005: 54). At the time, Jews were associated with communism (Mizrahi, 2005: 51). Brazil had received important numbers of Jewish immigrants when Peron adopted anti-Semitic policies in the 1920s in Argentina pushing some of the Jewish population to leave principally for British Palestine, but also for Brazil (Mizrahi, 2005: 48).

### **3.3 Immigration Outside of the Government's Planning: Jews and Arabs in Brazil**

In contrast with Germans and Italians, Jewish, Syrian, and Lebanese immigrants comprised spontaneous migrations not subsidized by the government or *fazendeiros*. Both immigrant groups are often used to symbolize very successful migration and social ascension in Brazil. They did not pass through agricultural migration, instead focusing on trade and ultimately both concentrating on urban settlements. Lesser argues that “Both groups were unsubsidized and thus unexpected, challenging the elite’s belief that immigration policy alone would create a new kind of Brazil” (Lesser, 2013: 117). Both communities will play a role in the garment industry in Brazil in the 20<sup>th</sup> century; Lebanese and Syrians are still involved in this industry today. I will first go through the history of Jewish immigration and then through that of Syrians and Lebanese.

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<sup>30</sup> Jews start to be framed as undesirable as early as 1921, with a formal elimination from the Brazilian identity in 1934 (Mizrahi, 2005: 5).

### 3.3.1 Lebanese and Syrians

*Turcos* in South America were immigrants from Lebanon and Syria who first immigrated while their nations was under the control of the Ottoman Empire, leading to a widespread referral as “turcos”, although they actually held Ottoman passports (Karam, 2013: 80). Syrian and Lebanese communities were known for peddling all through Brazil. At the beginning of the migration, there were three centers: the Amazon area, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (Truzzi, 2005: 15). In the Amazon, Lebanese and Syrian immigrants got involved in the rubber trade, but did not just focus on it and became peddlers in the area too (Truzzi, 2005: 16). A majority ultimately settled in São Paulo where they were concentrated in the neighborhoods of Sé and Santa Ifigênia, as well as the 25 de Março, helping make this street the traditional hub of small commerce and peddling (Truzzi, 2005: 24). German immigrants had mostly left the neighborhoods and Italians were starting to vacate it (Truzzi, 1999: 325). Today, the 25 de Março remains an important neighborhood and trade hub in the city.

According to Truzzi, most neighborhoods had a center of Lebanese and Syrian traders (2005: 45). Syrian and Lebanese immigrants were escaping the bad conditions of work on the *fazenda* as well as the exploitation found in the factory work in the city (Truzzi, 1999: 321). About 90% of the peddlers were from Syrian and Lebanese origins in 1893 in São Paulo (Karam, 2013: 81). They did not work on fazendas as agricultural workers, preferring instead small commerce (Truzzi, 2005: 31). For doing this, they were targeted by the same Vargas government as undesirable, even detrimental to the nation of Brazil (Karam, 2013: 81). It is hard to find good data today, but it is estimated that about 1 million Brazilians are descendants from those



Lebanese and Syrian immigrants (Truzzi, 2005: 25). It is important to note that an important number of Lebanese went back to Lebanon (Lesser, 2013: 129).

Patterns of help within the community were common (Truzzi, 2005: 41) just as they are found in other ethnic entrepreneurs today. Of course, this brought some mixed effects as Truzzi rightly points out that some of the biggest fortunes were made on the back of smaller and more recent immigrants (Truzzi, 2005: 46). In 1921, most Lebanese and Syrians in São Paulo had businesses in the garment industry (Truzzi, 2005: 38). But it is important to note that today, this community working in the garment industry is actually coming from the immigrants of the Lebanese civil war (75-90), composed mostly of Muslim Shia Lebanese as opposed to the majority Christian Lebanese and Syrians immigrants of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Truzzi, 2005: 49). This immigrant group worked in majority in the jeans industry<sup>31</sup> and settled in the Bras, on the Rua Oriente, which is today a center of the garment industry (Truzzi, 2005: 49). Karam argues that today *turco* remains associated with two behaviors: corruption<sup>32</sup> and deviousness as well as a flair for business (2013: 80). This is particularly visible in the way the *Feira da Madrugada* is discussed. Lebanese are pointed out as the owners of many of the *shoppings* and associated with the mafia that is running the informal market.

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<sup>31</sup> In my first field research of 2009, I had met one of those entrepreneurs. Their production pattern differs from the Korean community as they seldom hire Bolivian workshops, preferring to outsource outside of the city of São Paulo. The main justification that was provided at the time was that the work of jeans fabric is different from regular fabric, and involves different machines, which are usually not owned by Bolivian workshops.

<sup>32</sup> A scandal in 1999 involving a Lebanese government representative shed light on this stereotype as he tried to pay for murdering the small street vendor who denounced his corruption (Karam, 2013: 84).

### 3.3.2 Jewish immigration

The Jewish community in Brazil is important and comes from a variety of countries. Portuguese settlers of the Jewish faith were present in the country since the very beginning of the colonization (Mizrahi, 2005: 9) but most of them were new Christians who converted to escape persecution in Portugal. During colonial times, Jewish communities worked in the sugar industry (Mizrahi, 2005: 12). Moroccan Jews were the first to immigrate to Brazil and settled in the Para to work in the rubber trade (Lesser, 2013: 119). Jewish immigrants are noticed from 1810<sup>33</sup> until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the 1920s witnessing the highest immigration rate (Mizrahi, 2005: 13). While Jewish immigration to the United States became massive in the 1880s (Zolberg, 2006: 221), Jewish immigration before 1905 in Brazil was primarily comprised of Jewish traders interested in the rubber trade and the emerging ports in the country; in contrast, most of the immigration after 1905 until the 1960s involved Jewish immigrants fleeing pogroms, persecutions, poor living conditions in Slavic nations, and from Arab countries where they were not welcome anymore after Israel was founded (Mizrahi, 2005: 14). Migration in the second half of the nineteenth century was also motivated by the re-emergence of anti-Semitism in Europe (Mizrahi, 2005: 26). When the US started implementing quotas on its immigrants in 1924, many were redirected to other American countries, including Brazil (Mizrahi, 2005: 28). Persecution means that contrary to the other immigrant groups arriving before World War Two, most Jewish immigrants stayed in Brazil, lacking opportunities to go back home (Lesser, 2013:

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<sup>33</sup> Jewish immigrants in 1810 were mostly from the Britain and were attracted to the opening of trade in Brazil (Mizrahi, 2005: 15). This opening was facilitated by the presence of the Portuguese Crown and its court in Rio, attracting many foreigners to the nascent opportunities found in Brazil (Mizrahi, 2005: 15).

129). Brazil does not have the largest Jewish immigrant community in South America. At the end of 1992, Argentina and Uruguay had larger Jewish communities than Brazil (Mizrahi, 2005: 29).

Jewish immigrants were mostly concentrated in urban centers (Grün, 1999: 360). Those who arrived at the turn of the century without any particular skills ended up in the peddler business, buying from Lebanese and Syrians who had ascended into wholesale (Lesser, 2013: 131). Historically, Jewish immigrants are closely associated with the garment industry and to a lesser extent to real estate (Mizrahi, 2005: 74; Grün, 1999: 360). In fact, they are today perceived as the immigrant group in charge before Koreans took their place in the 70s and 80s. I met with a real estate agent in São Paulo who explained how Jewish immigrants used to own most of the buildings in the Bom Retiro, but are today less present as they are being replaced by Korean owners. Older Koreans remember working for Jewish storeowners in the 1970s, including Luciana, one of my Korean respondents.

Jewish and Lebanese/Syrian immigrants were often used as scapegoats for social problems as their arrival was unexpected and their success in cities was also unforeseen (Lesser, 2013: 132). This mounting racism and stereotypes in the mid-1920s, “led politicians to begin to wonder if Brazilian immigration policies should emulate restrictions in place in Argentina, the United States, and many other American republics.” (Lesser, 2013: 136). Linked again to the Vargas area, known for its anti-Semitism, the government used negative feelings towards immigrants to fuel nationalistic feelings (Lesser, 2013: 136). In the 1930-1935, the shift towards restriction on immigration started again as ideas of whitening surged again in the

population and restrictions were put on poor immigrants (Lesser, 2013: 137). Secret instructions were made to limit Jewish migration in the country. As a result,

Foreign entry to Brazil was cut by more than half between 1930 and 1931, with the figure remaining below the 1930 mark until 1951. The shift from inclusionary to exclusionist meant that finding immigrants useful to Brazil's agricultural growth was no longer the priority. Rather, the main concern was that undesirable immigrant groups were to be identified and kept away (Lesser, 2013: 137)

It was not to be the end of migration for rural areas in Brazil. And it was not the end for "Arabs" in Brazil. Indeed, after World War Two, there was a shift in how they were perceived, and their economic success became instead praised (Lesser, 2013: 138). Although it is hard to pinpoint an exact explanation for the success of both groups in Brazil, Lesser argues that "Both groups had the advantage of not being plantation workers and not being considered black." (Lesser, 2013: 140).

### **3.3.3 Conclusion**

So much space has been spent in this dissertation addressing immigration history in Brazil for several reasons. First, it is important to understand how a settler colony perceives migration and the historical control that was imposed on it over the centuries. Second, immigration in Brazil is intimately linked to the enslavement of a great proportion of the population as well as the use of immigrants to pressure the demands and prices of the local workforce. Third, racial relations in the former colony have also meant that from the very beginning there are preferred immigrants, in particular the white immigrants that will become part of Brazil and heighten the racial profile of the country. In particular, the immigration groups that flowed into the country in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century were mostly destined for the South-Eastern

states, and in particular São Paulo. They even first lived in the neighborhoods where current immigrants live and have business today.

### **3.4 Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Arranging Migrations from Asia**

In addition to European immigrants, Brazil is home to an important contingent of Asian immigrants, in particular historically Chinese and Japanese immigrants. Because of racism, both governments staved off most organized Chinese immigration. Although Japan sent immigrants to the whole American continent, Brazil is the country with the largest immigrant group of Japanese and their descendants.<sup>34</sup> In the 1990s, it was estimated that Japanese immigrants and their descendants represented 1.2 million people (Sakurai, 1999: 201).

Considering the heightened interest of the Brazilian political elites in whitening the country, the arrival of the largest community of Japanese outside of Japan may seem contradictory. It took a lot of negotiations and pressures for the Brazilian government to accept a Japanese immigrant workforce in the country (Sakurai, 1999: 206). It took a series of particular circumstances that make the Japanese immigration finally appealing to Brazilian political elite. First, the international prices of coffee rose at the turn of the century, pushing coffee growers to expand their plantations (Sakurai, 1999: 206). Meanwhile, as I have developed earlier, the Italian government puts limits on the emigration of its nationals to Brazil in 1902, forcing coffee growers to accept Asian migration in the country to make up for the loss of workforce (Sakurai, 1999: 206). The national discourse changed to see

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<sup>34</sup> Today much of the research is being conducted on the return immigrants, also called *dekasseguis*.

Japanese immigrants “as everything that Europeans were not: quiet, hardworking, and eager to become Brazilian” (Lesser, 2013: 152). For Japan, Brazil became an interesting destination as the other traditional destinations closed or became fraught with obstacles in the US, Canada, Mexico, and Peru (Sakurai, 1999: 206). Since Brazil seemed to always be looking for immigrants, Japan started looking at it in a new light (Lesser, 2013: 151). Conditions were ripe for both governments to see their interest in the success of this new migration. Japan was very involved in the success of this migration to Brazil<sup>35</sup>, contrary to many other governments who sent immigrants to Brazil (Sakurai, 1999: 202).

Japanese immigrants were part of a continuation of governmentally organized migration targeted towards agricultural work. Because Italian and German immigrants in the *fazenda* protested their conditions of work, and were associated with anarchism, authorities started looking at non-European options that would be more docile and ready to become Brazilians (Lesser, 2013: 15). Japanese immigration to Brazil started in 1908 with the arrival of 781 immigrants in the port of Santos (Sakurai, 1999: 201). Japanese immigrants experienced similar abusive conditions on the *fazendas* but contrary to other immigrants, their government was much more active in fending off abuses. For instance, Japan took part in negotiations to end strikes and ultimately created Japanese only plantations where the focus was off coffee production (Lesser, 2013: 157). Japan had more at stake than other preceding nations as it wanted to ensure there would be no return migration (Lesser, 2013: 157).

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<sup>35</sup> Protection starts in 1896 when the Chamber of Deputies in Japan adopts a law to protect emigrants (Sakurai, 1999: 204). This law is supposed to help Japanese citizens abroad.

Brazil offered to receive Japanese immigrants in the state of São Paulo, for the coffee plantations (Sakurai, 1999: 208). Immigrants were not to come alone; rather families had to have at least three people<sup>36</sup> (Sakurai, 1999: 208). Following the model promoted to European immigrants, Japanese immigrants were tied with a two-year contract to the plantation owner and had the possibility to cultivate small parcels of land between the coffee trees for consumption and sale of surplus (Sakurai, 1999: 208). Japanese workers on plantations were quickly perceived as very good workers with a great work ethic (Sakurai, 1999: 214). Subsidies from the State of São Paulo were cut in 1913 to encourage a “better” race to immigrate: Europeans (Sakurai, 1999: 214). But this policy had to be put on hold as World War 1 put a damper on the immigration of Europeans (Sakurai, 1999: 214). 1924 to 1941 represented the height of Japanese immigration to Brazil with 137,572 immigrants coming into the country (Sakurai, 1999: 215). Quotas adopted in 1934 during the Vargas Era were particularly severe for Japanese (Sakurai, 1999: 216). Japanese immigration jumped up after World War Two again with US entry is barred, Brazil becomes again promising (Lesser, 2013: 183).

Japanese immigrants found quick success and social ascension in Brazil (Sakurai, 1999: 217). Contrary to the US (Zolberg, 2006: 231), they experienced less hostility from the Brazilian population. The Japanese community is considered to have successfully integrated in Brazil after three generations. Their economic success in the fields and in the trade of agricultural products have contributed enough to the country

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<sup>36</sup> Families are perceived as an advantage for workforce retention by plantation owners (Sakurai, 1999: 208).

to accept them as Brazilians. Some Japanese are in the swimsuit business in São Paulo.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have outlined the relationship between colonialism and Brazil's actions on migrations. A long-standing history of controlling who comes in the country, regardless of their consent at first, has had a profound impact on how the state has perceived and managed migrations. While Brazil was a colony, it promoted, organized and fought for mass forced migration of an enslaved population from Africa. When the country obtained its independence, it remained an empire dominated by the son of the King, now an Emperor, sharing the same Portuguese heritage. As pressures on the slavery system increased, new avenues were researched to replace the enslaved workforce. The organization of German immigration towards agricultural work shows the willingness to devise a population of immigrants that fit a certain model: white and linked to the agricultural world. Despite this preference, Brazil had to deal with organized immigration that brought less desirable immigrants like Italians, and Japanese later in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Italians suffered a lot of abuses in the farms where they were supposed to work. Many ultimately left for the city to escape the lack of independence and extreme exploitation they suffered. Afterwards, Brazil had to deal with unorganized and uninvited immigrants in the shape of Jewish immigrants, Syrians and Lebanese. Despite their later economic and social success in the country, those immigrants also had to deal with discrimination in Brazil. The narrative portrays their hard work as a necessary first step before attaining social economic success that characterizes their communities nowadays. This narrative became a key to understand the success of following immigration waves post-World



War Two, in particular, the success of the Korean community, and the presumed future success of Bolivians. This history of the role of government in migration influences the Global Production Network as it relates to the garment industry. In the following chapter, I will examine more closely the two immigrant communities at play here: Koreans and Bolivians.

## **Chapter 4**

### **IMMIGRATION IN BRAZIL: CURRENT TRENDS**

Brazil's past with colonization and heavily organized migration has had consequences and legacies in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Through the beginning of the century Italians, Jews, Arabs and Japanese immigrants continued settling in Brazil. After World War 2, immigration patterns began to change as immigrants came from new countries. That is how Koreans, Bolivians and other South Americans, Chinese, and immigrants from a variety of countries in Africa as well as Haiti began to settle in the last few decades in the country. Korean immigration was the last bi-nationally organized migration, followed by a series of unplanned and often unwelcome immigration.

In this chapter, I will first look into Korean immigration, then Bolivian immigration as they are the main focus of the dissertation. Following the investigation into these two communities, I will examine the current immigrant legislation and its application. The outdated law is applied unevenly in Brazil, but efforts were made to facilitate the immigration of some, in particular from neighboring countries. In the last section I will write a short overview of more recent trends of migration and their reception.

#### 4.1 Koreans in Brazil

The literature on Korean immigration to Brazil is very small (see the following exceptions: Choi, 1991; Buechler, 2004; Kim, 2009 a; Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros, 2000). However, the community of Korean immigrants and their descendants in Brazil is estimated to be around 40,000 people. As usual in Brazil, immigrant population estimates remain contested. Lesser refers to about 100,000 Korean immigrants in Brazil without including their descendants (Lesser, 2013: 183). Government numbers are closer to 50,000 based on registered Koreans in consulates (Lesser, 2013: 183). Whichever number is closer to reality actually makes this community bigger than Korean communities in any other South American nation (for studies on Koreans in Argentina, see Mera, 1998; Courtis, 2000). In comparison, Argentina only hosts around 30,000 Koreans<sup>37</sup>, Uruguay, Chile, and Paraguay each have communities of around 2,000 individuals (Ortola, 2010: 11). Most Korean immigrants and their descendants (90%) live in São Paulo (Lesser, 2013: 185). Their integration in Brazil was facilitated by the history of the Japanese community in the country. They first established themselves in the Japanese neighborhood of Liberdade and the adjacent Glicerio.

Korean immigration to Brazil can be distinguished in three different waves. The first one includes Korean prisoners of war who were transferred to Brazil under UN supervision after the Korean War ended (1950-1953). Some of those nationals

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<sup>37</sup> Courtis notes about 43,000 in Argentina in 1992 (2000: 16), but about 32,000 in 1996 (2000: 18). Many of my Korean respondents who lived in Argentina reported a lot of discrimination against the Korean diaspora. Courtis (2000) reports similar issues in her work on Koreans in Argentina. Some Korean respondents left Argentina during the economic downturn.

were key in negotiating the agreements that led to the second wave of Korean migration to Brazil: the governmentally sanctioned migration of the 1960s (Choi, 1991: 33). The Third Wave happened once governmental agreements ended and the immigration flows did not subside from the 1970s to today.

The first Korean immigrants recorded in Brazil were relocated under international supervision as part of the agreements on the end of the Korean war in 1953. Indeed, of the 20,000 anti-communist fighters, a majority decided to relocate in South Korea, very few chose to go back to North Korea, about 88 remained in limbo in India. They were sent to several countries around the world including Argentina, India and Brazil under the supervision of the UN, tasked with finding host nations that would accept them permanently (Choi, 1991: 30). On January 6th 1956, around fifty Korean POWs settled in Brazil. They formed a small community whose influence was key in the negotiation of governmental agreements between the South Korean military dictatorship and the Brazilian regime to oversee the emigration of families towards the Brazilian countryside.

During the second wave of migration to Brazil, the government was once again involved in organizing the settlement of Korean immigrants in Brazil. This time, the South Korean military dictatorship that came to power in May 1961, was interested in sending people abroad<sup>38</sup>. South Korea in the 1960s was not as developed economically as Brazil and that economic development would have to go through a demographic

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<sup>38</sup> This coup was supported by the United States and brought the General Park Chung Hee in power until 1979 (Curtis, 2000: 15).

control of its population (Choi, 1991: 15). In order to develop<sup>39</sup>, the government, a military dictatorship, favored sending nationals to other states and as such organized migrations, particularly on the American continent. The government passed a law in 1962, the Law of Emigration (no 1030) to encourage emigration from South Korea. For prospective immigrants, Brazil's economic prospects were much better than South Korea, confronted with the rebuilding of its heavy industry (Park, 1999: 694). At the time, Brazil appeared to be the future, with a lot of economic promise (Kim, 2008: 49), a state that had little chance to become communist in any predictable future (Choi, 1991: 36). Luiza explained that her "parents decided to leave Korea and start a new life here because we had a lot of legends like (...) "if you go to Brazil you have a lot of (...) natural resources and wealth and the diamonds, emeralds were just like on the street." The second wave of migration represents the last attempt by Brazil to direct migration specifically to rural areas.

Civil society was also involved in the organization of migration to Brazil. The Korean Emigration Association, created in 1961 helped prepare migration to Brazil. On March 15<sup>th</sup> 1962 an emigration law is adopted in South Korea (Choi, 1991: 28). It signals the start of legal emigration of Korean citizens to South America (Park, 1999: 673). Following this law, and the agreement with Brazil, 92 South Koreans belonging to seventeen families arrive on February 12<sup>th</sup> 1963 in the port of Santos (Sang Hung,

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<sup>39</sup> In 1985, 55% of the population was under 25 years of age (Choi, 1991: 9). According to Park (1999), most immigrants were originally from North Korea: the emigration policy was set to lower political tensions following the coup (1999: 674-675). The civil war had also left many families separated and homeless (SCIE, 2006: 29). Many people had to start over. Choi argues that emigration was also a solution to unemployment and a way to gain foreign currency rather than build relationships with anti-communist states (Choi, 1991: 39).

1978: 1). Most of the families belonged to middle class (Park, 1999: 674). Brazil accepted Korean immigrants on the condition that they would work in the countryside as farmers. As I have shown beforehand, this insistence of integrating immigrants under the guise of farming is not new. In the Korean case, big *fazendas* do not exist anymore, and instead have been transferred to big businesses. Instead, this migration is more similar to the border settlements offered to Germans. Plots of land were sold before their arrival in Brazil. Once they arrived, the literature and my interviews show that in many cases this land did not exist (Park, 1999: 675). For Eduardo, the problem was that the land his father bought was not accessible on land.

In my case, when we arrived, my parents bought a fazenda in Goiana, 170 km from Brasilia. But when it was sold to us, we were not told we could not get to it, there was no road, no access. [...] Several of us were lied to. [...] we bought a fazenda in Goiana, when we arrived, a real estate representative who was going to work with us, in the Rio de Janeiro port, recommended that we stop and stay in Rio because there was no way to get there. There was no road. So we went to São Paulo, because they recommended that we should not go.

Others tried to cultivate the fields that they bought but were mostly unsuccessful. It was not a surprise since other immigrants had tried agriculture in those areas before without success. In fact, the previous farming migrations received more governmental help than the Koreans obtained (Choi, 1991: 34). Koreans had to pay their passage and buy the lands before arriving. Most experiences proved disastrous: either the land was infertile, or the available machinery was deficient. Most Korean immigrants actually had no experience in agricultural work, which made the transition even more complicated (Kim, 2008: 50). Several other waves of families moved to Brazil, until both governments agreed on severing the agreement

considering the existing problems. Brazil stops all Korean farming immigration in 1969 and South Korea ends emigration to South America in 1977 (Galetti, 1995: 137).

The third wave of Korean migration started in the 1970s, after both governments ended authorized and organized migration towards Brazil. Consequently, in the 1970s, Koreans could only legally immigrate to Brazil if they had obtained a college education as well as a signed contract with a Brazilian employer (Galetti, 1995: 137). This effectively restricted immigration of Koreans to Brazil, pushing a lot of the flow towards unregistered migration. Despite governmental efforts to end the Korean migration, the migration flow did not subside until much later, notably the 1990s.

Choi points out that Brazil was often a second choice for prospective Korean immigrants (1991: 24). The US was often the preferred destination, and some used Brazil as a stepping-stone to immigrate to the US. Marcelo, a Bolivian respondent, referred to this situation as his employer offered to take him to the US for work arguing that he would make more money there. Marcelo declined, but his Korean boss left for the US. Others, like Antonia have moved to the US temporarily to work in the garment industry but have ultimately come back to Brazil, where they felt life values were closer to their expectations. Lesser describes this phenomenon as he observed Koreans in Bom Retiro speaking several languages including English (Lesser, 2013: 185). Other Koreans had Brazil as a destination to re-unite with some family. It is worth noting that there are exceptions to this rule as several respondents came to Brazil with their family having achieved a work permit by one of the parents.

Most Korean immigrants thus could not fly in directly into São Paulo, their main destination at the time. Instead, Bolivia and Paraguay became transit states (Park,

1999: 674). Embassies in those two states would deliver visas on the spot to Korean nationals (Lesser, 2013: 183). From there, entry to Brazil would be done without formal documentation from Paraguay and Bolivia (Lesser, 2013: 183). This is an important stage in Korean migration as it gets weaved into the founding myth of the start of Bolivian migration to Brazil. Koreans waiting to get their visa approved would have started to talk to Bolivians about their plans to open garment workshops in São Paulo, and recruited the first Bolivians directly in the country. In my field research in 2009, one of my respondents denied this fiercely as he remembered his time in Paraguay being spent mostly in a hotel room. This also fails to account for the lower and much tardier migration from Paraguay.

Whether or not the initial Korean immigration was motivated by political reasons, problems with the social system of South Korea played an important role in current migrations to Brazil. Indeed, intense competition to enter and succeed in college drives some families to leave South Korea in the hope of a greater social ascension in other states. Personal success in South Korea is evaluated through college education (Galetti, 1995: 138). Korean immigration has definitely subsided since the 1970s. Today, many Koreans come to Brazil as workers for big Korean multinational corporations that have started implanting their activities in Brazil.

#### **4.1.1 Koreans' insertion in the garment industry**

As Korean families failed to thrive in rural areas, or realized that the sellers took advantage of their ignorance, they moved to the city of São Paulo to find some other occupation. Some of them had lost all their savings in buying land or equipment and needed to find an occupation at all cost (Sang Hung, 1978: 1). Koreans often looked for jobs within their community, working for immigrants with greater



economic means in order to obtain better work conditions and salaries (Sang Hung, 1978: 1). This pattern reflects similar patterns among Arab and Jewish immigrants in urban settings (Lesser, 2013: 131). Choi reports that when Koreans sought employment with Brazilians, they usually received lower salaries than nationals (1991:116). Others started their own businesses at higher rates than the general population, a typical phenomenon of immigrant entrepreneurs. However, those who opened grocery stores usually were forced to leave this occupation since the language barrier was hard to overcome as well as the cultural difficulties of hiring Brazilian employees (Galetti, 1995: 139).

The beginnings of the Korean *colonia* in São Paulo were particularly marked by poverty and the search for a remunerating activity. There is a narrative in the Korean community related to how they started working in the garment industry. In the 1960s, very few members actually had any experience in that area. Once in São Paulo, Korean immigrants who had failed to thrive in agricultural work, found themselves selling clothes and other Korean items they had brought with them on the trip as a way to make money (Kim, 2008: 56). This is reminiscent of the peddling systems favored by Lebanese and Syrian immigrants at the turn of the century. Park argues that success came from the higher quality of Korean garments (1999: 677). Exoticism is something not negligible too. Women were highly involved in those sales as they became successful since door-to-door sales were easier when women got involved, as many Brazilian may not open their door to male sales representatives by that time. Once their initial stocks gone, some Koreans started producing their own garments, by hiring close family and fellow nationals as demand rose (Choi, 1991: 103). The first signs of this activity appeared around 1968, about five years after the first immigrants

arrived in Brazil (Park, 1999: 677). The growth in small workshops in Korean dwellings started in 1975 (Galetti, 1995: 139). Some Koreans sold their own production, while others worked in outsourcing with Jewish clothes retailers who dominated the neighborhoods of Bras and Bom Retiro. Luciana in particular described her work with the Jewish owners of a garment store for whom they were working. She remembered in particular spotting foldable beds in the hallway of the back of the store, assuming that Jewish storeowners had similar hardships as her family did. At the time, the literature and my respondents mention the neighborhood as being neglected, stores are not being particularly taken care of. When Koreans started renting those stores, they revitalized the neighborhood, renovated the stores (Kim, 2008: 67). Until the end of the 1980s, Koreans still owned the sewing workshops and mostly employed fellow Korean immigrants (Galetti, 1995: 140).

Kontic argues that the survival of the garment industry in São Paulo was linked to changes in quality and production introduced by the Korean immigrant community (2001). The 1980s, the great expansion decade of Korean stores, were marked by the rise of commercial centers with chain stores threatening to take over small garment stores (Kontic, 2001: 64). Small businesses like those owned by Koreans had to adapt to this new reality. In addition, Koreans never got involved in the production of textiles unlike Jewish and Italian immigrants in the broad garment industry of Brazil. The textile industry is in worse shape than the garment industry today, a gamble that has paid off for Koreans.

In the 1980s, Koreans had to adapt their new business to several challenges, including the growing success of malls and big chain retail garment stores. Offer increased in those years as the Northeastern migration brought in a lot of prospective

sellers and employees (Kontic, 2011: 81). In order to compete, Koreans focused on creating fashion and design to sell attractive and changing clothes, a sector that was still underdeveloped in the country at the time (Kontic, 2001: 82). Koreans are often noted as being the ones to introduce shorter production cycles in the industry, which transformed into just-in-time as time passed. According to Lucas, a respondent from my 2009 field research, those production cycles today are usually between two and three months. This is referred to as the *modinha*, or small fashion, stylish clothes taken from current trends and sold at accessible prices. Jewish store owners used to buy entire stocks of trendy clothes, while Koreans would just copy and produce on a small scale popular items, doing away with big stock that do not sell (Galetti, 1995: 140). Today, most stores operate in just-in-time production.

Koreans started to develop their own fashion lines, and today even small stores send at least one employee (often the wife in the owner's couple) abroad in the US or Europe to learn about fashion trends and bring back ideas for clothes in Brazil. It is important to note that Koreans have focused on women's fashion, which does not include jeans in Brazil, which is dominated by descendants of Lebanese and Syrian immigrants. Women's fashion constitutes a sector where trends change often and clothes consumption is higher than male fashion. Rural-urban migrations from the poor North Eastern region<sup>40</sup> of Brazil flowed to the biggest cities including São Paulo from 1930 to 1980. In São Paulo, *Norderstinos* settled in immigrant neighborhoods and some of them started working in the garment industry.

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<sup>40</sup> An important part of the rural migration can be related to intense drought in the North East, which contributed to many deaths and extreme poverty all throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century (See Villa, 2001).

## 4.2 Bolivians in Brazil

Bolivia is a poor landlocked country situated at the heart of South America. It was at the center of several wars, losing access to the ocean, and losing important expanses of land over the centuries. Bolivia is also one of the countries with the highest indigenous population, with about 74% of the population of indigenous origin (Da Silva, 2005: 8); Evo Morales, its first president of indigenous roots, got elected in 2005 on a platform to give power back to indigenous populations. In my interviews, most Bolivian respondents did not identify as indigenous. During interviews with my respondents, the question of identification brought about a comment from Pedro telling me that he did not have indigenous origins because he always wore clothes and had running water. Phenotypically Bolivians have facial traits that remind Brazilians of indigenous groups. Bolivia remains a very unequal nation with big differences in quality of life based on both geography and race. Bolivia is one of the poorest countries of South America. Bolivia's HDI is of 0.675 in 2012, ranking the nation at 108 out of 187 countries and territories (UNDP, 2012: 2). Bolivia has made great strides since 1980 in terms of life expectancy<sup>41</sup> and education<sup>42</sup>, but has seen little growth in GNI per capita.

Bolivians, not unlike Koreans, evince a particularly high concentration in São Paulo, and in the garment industry. In the megacity of São Paulo, very few Brazilians of indigenous descent are present, making Bolivians even more visible. Bolivians as they arrived in Brazil, were a key part in the flexible production implemented by

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<sup>41</sup> Life expectancy in Bolivia rose from 52 years in 1980 to 66.9 years in 2012 (UNDP, 2012: 2).

<sup>42</sup> Actual years of schooling rose from 4.5 years to 9.2 years (UNDP, 2012: 2).

Koreans. Although Bolivian immigrants are very visible in the city, both because of their physical presence and because of the media coverage, Brazil is not the preferred destination of prospective Bolivian emigrants. Argentina has received more South American immigrants since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Da Silva, 1997: 55). The Argentinian census places around 233,000 Bolivians in the state (Bastia, 2007: 658)<sup>43</sup>. In 1976, an Argentinean anthropologist named Buenos Aires, the second city of Bolivia (cited in Cortes, 2001: 119). Unlike Brazil, Bolivians first migrated to rural areas in Argentina before moving to urban grounds (Da Silva, 1997: 55). Migration significantly increased in both Argentina and Brazil in the 1980s. There is a definite feeling in most of my Bolivian respondents that the president is a good influence on the country and is bringing the economy around. However, the economy is still struggling and many Bolivians have chosen emigration over staying in the state. Brazil may not be the preferred destination, but Bolivian immigrants are still extremely significant in Brazil.

The first wave of Bolivian migration started in the 1950s<sup>44</sup>. Most of the immigrants at the time were professionals or students who were escaping the conditions in Bolivia, where a dictatorship dominated from 1964 to 1982. Although Brazil was also a dictatorship, the country was a destination for many immigrants from the Southern Cone to escape their dictatorship. As with many events in Brazilian

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<sup>43</sup> In comparison, the Brazilian Federal Police only identifies 50,000 Bolivians in Brazil, way under the estimated 200,000 by immigrant groups.

<sup>44</sup> Several scholars state that there were some Bolivians in Brazil before that, mostly looking for education and staying after the end of their studies (See Da Silva, 2005: 16).

history, the Brazilian military dictatorship is often framed as less violent than others. However, violence was still very important to the survival of the military rule<sup>45</sup>. A rise in immigration can be seen in the 1970s to fulfill employment generated by the military regime construction projects (Galetti, 1995: 141). In the 1970s, immigrants thus tend to be of wealthier social background.

By the 1980s, immigration had shifted overwhelmingly to Bolivians from lower social classes, often young men with few qualifications and low levels of education started to move to Brazil in search of opportunities (Da Silva, 2005: 15). Bolivians hail mainly from the regions of La Paz, Cochabamba, Oruro, Potosi, Santa Cruz and Beni (Da Silva, 2005: 17). Unlike Koreans, Bolivians, at first, did not necessarily have a plan of working in a specific environment since the government did not sponsor them. Many of my older respondents who arrived in the 1980s explain their migration to Brazil by saying that they were young and adventurous. They sometimes followed family or a love interest to Brazil, but a lot of times they were men migrating alone. Today, there is a greater gender balance in the migrating community.

The increase of migrations of Bolivians in the 1980s coincided with the Korean takeover of the garment stores in the Bom Retiro and Bras. From the 1980s, demand for garments thus rises in the community and Koreans start replacing an exclusively Korean workforce with Bolivian workers (Galetti, 1995: 141). Although community leaders often point out that Koreans stopped in Bolivia before immigrating to Brazil, most respondents came without having had first contact with Koreans in

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<sup>45</sup> In 2014, the youngest victim of torture committed suicide. He was in his forties and had been tortured when he was only a year old (Becker, 2003).

Bolivia. As the 1980s progressed, increasing numbers of Bolivians come to Brazil with a contract to work in a garment workshop. Local newspapers and radio ads run to promote workshops in Brazil (Da Silva, 2005: 19). My observations and discussions with immigrant community leaders show that about half of the Bolivians come in with a contract from a workshop they do not know, the other half comes in through family relationships: either a sibling, an uncle/aunt or a cousin hires them for work. This migration is marred for many by the abuse they experienced once in the workshops.<sup>46</sup> I will go into details about the abuse in chapters five and six.

Looking for a workforce ready to endure an intense workload similar to what Koreans experienced, Bolivians immigrant became an interesting alternative to Brazilians who were often more aware of their employment rights<sup>47</sup> and culturally did not necessarily put work above all else. Korean storeowners saw similarities in Bolivians: hard workers who were ready to work in precarious conditions to make the most money possible. Later in the dissertation, I will explain how the comparison is not necessarily a good one. In the 1990s, Bolivian immigration reached new highs as immigration to Argentina became more difficult (Cymbalista and Xavier, 2007: 123). At that time, the Bolivian community got more established and there were the first signs of getting integrated in the Pastoral do Migrante, a Scalibrinian Roman Catholic Church specialized in helping immigrants in São Paulo. Marcelo explained to me that

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<sup>46</sup> Marcelo in particular, felt that his friend had misled him, as his first pay was barely enough to buy a Coke and a *salgado*, a traditional Brazilian savory pastry running around \$1-\$2 a piece.

<sup>47</sup> Getulio Vargas is the founder of workers' rights in Brazil, although elected on a populist program, with tendencies towards authoritarianism, the law he passed is the still the base today of the extensive legislation on workers' rights.

when he first came to that church, focused on serving immigrants, the *latinos* there were from Chile.

Since Bolivia and Brazil share borders, most Bolivians enter Brazil by road. Puerto Quijano in Bolivia is one important point of entry. Because of increasing numbers of Bolivians seeking tourist visas for Brazil and overstaying the visa, conditions for entry got more difficult and the visa length also got shorter (Da Silva, 1997: 86 and Câmara Municipal de São Paulo, 2006: 23). Although there is a shared border, many Bolivians are taken by coyotes through Paraguay to enter Brazil, in particular around Foz de Iguaçu. This particular point is a highly touristic attraction, which helps deflect a focus upon buses filled with Bolivians. They can sometimes cross without attention from the border authorities. While some Koreans in the community have lived in other countries (Argentina, Germany, Paraguay) before or during their stay in Brazil, most Bolivians stay principally between Brazil and Bolivia. They actually travel more often back in Bolivia than Koreans did at the beginning of their migration.

In the Vargas era, racism and xenophobia were a big part of the political climate for immigrants. Da Silva argues that this climate of rejection of immigrants is still important today where immigrants, even before arriving in the country are stigmatized as “criminals” (2005: 2). This is particularly true for Bolivians as they are often associated with drug trafficking. The existence of a very restrictive immigration law dating from the dictatorship is a factor playing into this perception, as national security is an important part of the legislation. I will elucidate this further in the following section.



### **4.3 Regulations and Policies on Immigration since World War 2**

Immigration in Brazil has often oscillated between acceptance and rejection, respect and exploitation (URB-AL, 2007: 14). Until 1820, immigration and travel to Brazil is nearly unregulated with no passport requirements for those coming into the country (URB-AL, 2007: 15). In 1820, a passport is required to come to Brazil, but this regulation is lifted again in peace times from 1890 to 1926 (URB-AL, 2007: 15). As I have explained earlier, during Vargas era, the dictatorship played off racism and passed several laws starting in 1930 to limit and control the origin and destination of immigrants in the country (URB-AL, 2007: 15). Although Vargas is seen as the father of the welfare state in Brazil, his government played a big role in fostering xenophobia in the nation, in particular towards Jewish immigrants. Secret policies were enforced unsystematically to prevent certain groups from coming into the country. As Lesser states though, “Brazilian immigration policy was never straightforward. Sometimes secret policies were more important than official ones” (Lesser, 2013: 147). Legacies from being a settler colony influence this history of control over immigration, and in particular over the origin of immigrants.

After World War 2, the immigration of Koreans is the only organized migration, a remnant of the settling era. After the end of Vargas’ government in 1945, quotas were dismantled but migration did not pick up until 1950 (Lesser, 2013: 179). The main change impacting today’s migrations comes in 1980, when an amnesty law was adopted to provide legal status to the immigrants in the country in irregular situation. Following this amnesty, the government adopted the immigration law 6815/80, titled “Estatuto do Estrangeiro” that is still valid today. The first two articles of the law mention national interests and national security, two themes associated with the military dictatorship in Brazil (law 6815/80). The military authorities used national

interest and national security to justify many controversial policies, in particular, policies that do not respect human rights. Of particular interest in this law is the mention of defending national workers as a main objective to respect when considering the status of immigrants in the country (Art 1, law 6815/80). In article 106, immigrants are prohibited from creating political organizations (Art 106, law 6815/80). Immigrants are also barred from participating in professional associations as well as unions (Art 106 and Art 108, law 6815/80), a hindrance according to immigrant interests. This casts immigrants in a negative light and prevents them from organizing and defending their economic interests.

Furthermore, according to the law, only qualified immigrants with a work contract are able to obtain a temporary visa of work in the country. Of course, neither Bolivian nor Korean communities fit that bill, as many do not have the qualifications expected by the government although they usually have an offer of work in Brazil. This strict approach to immigration disregards the reality of the bulk of immigration to Brazil. Immigrants still arrived in Brazil and most often overstayed their tourist visas. Consequently, after 1980, Brazil has used amnesties to regulate the situation of many immigrants. Amnesties have been used at regular intervals in 1980, 1988, 1998, and 2009. Amnesties are meant to deliver proper temporary documentation to immigrants who are residing without documentation in the country. Immigrants with proper documents even if temporary visas are not eligible for amnesties. I present the results from the 2009 amnesty in Table 2.

Table 2: Number and origins of beneficiaries of the 2009 Amnesty

Data of the 1 <sup>st</sup> phase of amnesty	
Bolivians	16,881
Chinese	5,492
Peruvians	4,642
Paraguayans	4,135
Koreans	1,129
Lebanese	1,042
Africans*	2,700
Europeans*	2,390
Total	41,816
Receiving state of the amnesty application	
São Paulo	34,000
Rio de Janeiro	2,400
Paraná	1,500
Total	37,900

\*The data does not specify the country of origin, only the continent.

Source: CDHIQ, 2011:11.

In the amnesty results, Bolivians were the largest group to benefit from the amnesty albeit at numbers still very low and under the expectations of immigrant groups. Unsurprisingly, the majority of applications came from the state of São Paulo, where most current migration is situated. Tellingly, the Pastoral dos Migrantes just opened a branch in Rio de Janeiro in 2013 to help the inflow of new immigrants in the city. Chinese immigrants came in second in what has been shocking to some among the important immigrant groups. Overall, under 42,000 immigrants took advantage of the amnesty in Brazil in 2009. However, amnesties are not the only path towards legal documentation. There are other paths to regularization in the country. One such path involves having a child in Brazil or getting married to a Brazilian citizen (Da Silva, 2005:24). It is still a main path to documentation for many Bolivians.

Despite its very strict immigration law, Brazil generally does not practice deportation on a regular basis. Although some groups are sometimes threatened with deportation, particularly when workshops are controlled by labor inspectors, the practice in the past decades has been to give a letter asking for voluntary departure. The immigrant can then move and will escape deportation. Immigrants could actually use such notices in the amnesty of 2009 to prove their presence in the country within the required time frame.

In addition to mitigating the law through amnesties, a government council called Conselho Nacional de Imigração<sup>48</sup>, National Immigration Council, moderates

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<sup>48</sup> Although the CNI is created in the immigration law, it is actually another version of the 1939 Conselho Nacional de Imigração, second version of the Conselho Nacional de Imigração e Colonização (1938) both created during the Vargas era, in a xenophobic atmosphere. (Oliveira, 2001: 20).

the specificities of delivering visas and immigration policies in general. This Council was created in 1939, a second version of the Conselho Nacional de Imigração e Colonização from 1938 (Oliveira, 2001: 20). This Council is linked with the Labor Ministry. Decisions have varied between strict interpretations of the law and more lax policies (URB-AL, 2007: 24). The CNI is in charge of:

1. Elaborate an immigration policy. 2. Coordinate and Guide immigration activities, (...) 6. Establish norms for immigrant selections, in order to distribute qualified workforce to different sectors of the national economy and obtain resources for specific sectors, 8. Providing opinions on changes to the legislation related to immigration when sent by any organs of the Executive Power (Ministério do Trabalho, s/d).

Resolutions by the CNI influence the opportunities for visas for South American nationals but also more broadly to immigrants from everywhere. For instance, resolution 97 offers Haitian nationals a way to obtain a temporary humanitarian visa in Brazil (Resolution 97, 2012). Similarly, immigrant associations have used the CNI to soften the conditions for obtaining a work visa. Resolution 80 opened up the possibilities to obtain a visa with only a contract with a registered business in Brazil. Citizens of South America are exempt from having to prove nine years of education and two years of experience in the sector, facilitating the application for a visa. However, the existence of this visa did not necessarily translate into a rise of legal Bolivian immigration since the visa costs about US\$100, a sum that immigrants may not be willing to pay. It does not encompass the amount they might have to pay once in the country with the Federal Police.

This situation has changed in recent years; Bolivians still come to Brazil with a tourist visa or cross the border illegally<sup>49</sup>. However, their opportunities of achieving a temporary status in the country have increased. Brazil and Bolivia have made agreements through MERCOSUR (Decision n° 28/02 and decree n° 6964/2009 and n° 6975/2009) that provides a way of regularizing the citizens of each country. Until recently, Bolivians could have only a very difficult access to this agreement because they were asked to produce a police report of criminal antecedents. This police report used to only be available in Bolivia until early 2013 (Interview with Colonel Raul). The government has made it possible for individuals to get this paper from Brazil through the Consulate. Those transactions happen through a secondary branch the consulate in São Paulo opened in the rua Coimbra in the neighborhood of Bras, a street where Bolivians meet every Saturday for a market<sup>50</sup>. This is also one of the public places where opportunities of work are announced.

One other main obstacle in the Bolivian community for regularization has been the cost of the different avenues of regularization. The agreement Brazil-Bolivia from

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<sup>49</sup> Recent developments seem to indicate increasing restrictions at the border for Bolivians seeking entry to Brazil with a tourist visa. Bolivians are asked to prove that they have over US\$800 before being granted the temporary visa at the border situated in Corumba (Tamayo, 2014).

<sup>50</sup> Showing the increasing attention and ultimately, value, attributed to the Bolivian community in São Paulo, the market of the Rua Coimbra was recently in the process of being accredited as a cultural event of the city. This characterization helps the market happen at hours different from the regular hours of a market in the city. However, it also means that there is some control over what is sold in the market (particularly a control over the sale of clothes) to fit in with the cultural orientation of the accreditation: food (either ready to eat or supplies) and traditional art are definitely favored.

2005 demanded the payment of a fee for overstaying the conditions of the visa up to R\$830, so about a good month's salary (Silva da Paz, 2008). Immigrants also needed to show formal employment in the country to be eligible. At the time only 12,000 Bolivians obtained documentation that way (interview with Ruth Camacho in 2009). Similarly, Bolivians have been largely underrepresented in amnesties conducted in Brazil. Up until 2009, amnesties in Brazil were very costly, up to R\$1,000 per individual, meaning that each family member had to pay a fee to obtain legal documentation. Those who managed to qualify for the amnesty only obtained legal documentation for two years. Once the delay was over, they had to renew their papers. The renewal application involved a proof of formal work and the payment of another fee. The new visa was valid once again for two years before immigrants were eligible for a permanent visa in the country. Immigration groups successfully pressured the government then to lower the prices for amnesties<sup>51</sup> and offer the possibility for permanent stay two years after the amnesty. The cost of necessary documentation was lowered as well as the requirement for police history were revoked, all thanks to the work of immigrant groups and the Bolivian Consul at the time, Cardona.

It is very important to look at processes of regularization for Bolivians as it is usually the step necessary to help them achieve the status of entrepreneur. Since most workshops are today declared with a CNPJ. Estimates of Bolivians in Brazil range from 60,000 by the consulate to 200,000 by the Pastoral dos Migrantes (Lesser, 2013: 189). The number of Bolivians who sought the amnesty was still disappointing for many associations. They had worked hard in 2009 to spread the news in the

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<sup>51</sup> The fees for the amnesties were changed to around R\$95.

community. Still some fell prey to abuse as ill-intentioned people conned people out of money under the guise of helping them obtain legal documentation.

The use of the CNI to effect migration policies rather than change legislation reflects the high bureaucratic powers that exist in Brazil. Different policies and bilateral agreements affect who gets a visa and who does not. In the following section, I will look at new immigrant groups that are often overlooked but who are playing an increasingly important role in Brazil.

#### **4.4 New Immigrants**

Although Bolivian migration is still important today, immigrants from new origins are also coming to Brazil. Haiti has witnessed a growing emigration to Brazil since 2010. An earthquake struck the country in January 2010. It killed 200,000 Haitians and displaced millions (OCHA, 2012). As of 2014, 138,000 remained in camps (IOM, 2014). The dire conditions in Haiti have pushed many to seek emigration as a remedy. Some have found their way to Brazil, at first undocumented. Once the government acknowledged the severity of the conditions of Haitian immigrants, they started delivering special visas for Haitians, under the guise of humanitarian needs. The number of visas was initially highly underestimated, Haitians continued to come in through trafficking routes. Brazil ultimately dismantled the temporary camps of Brasileia in the Amazonian jungle where Haitians waited in undignified conditions for paperwork to legally work in Brazil. Most Haitian immigrants are men under 30 (Godoy, 2011: 47). During my volunteering at the Pastoral dos Migrantes, I saw many Haitian immigrants; women were a minority, but there were also older immigrants. They all had the same desire in common: finding a job.



The desperate search for a job is a distinctive quality of Haitians in Brazil; they do not come with signed contracts since they already have a visa in Brazil. They have to find employment once in the country. That is distinct from Bolivians who usually have a contract or agreement with a family member or a workshop owner once they arrive. This means that although Haitians have access to documentation, they are in very precarious situations, some of them, like Jean, a Haitian I met at the Pastoral, have left stable jobs behind to immigrate to Brazil. Hence, the Brazilian state is faced with many new decisions regarding how to integrate Haitians in the country.

Another black immigrant community is made up of people from former colonies of Portugal in Brazil as well as Nigerian immigrants (Lesser, 2013: 5). Many of the Portuguese-speaking African nations of Mozambique and Angola are mostly coming for study purposes. They also experience problems as their visa renewal is complex and the possibility to remain in Brazil after the end of the studies is hindered. Both Haitians and African immigrants experience discrimination based on the color of their skin as the myth of racial democracy reveals itself to be a lie once they spend some time in Brazil.

The Chinese community has been present in Brazil for a long time, but very little has been written about them. I addressed the obvious racism that fraught all discussions of inviting Chinese workers in Brazil earlier in the chapter. In the 1980s, immigration boomed to a whooping 150,000 today, although Lesser argues it could be the double of that (2013: 86). Today, their presence has been increasingly visible in the city, particularly when visiting the rua 25 de Março where many shops managed by Chinese immigrants sell electronics. The Santa Ifigênia building on the rua 25 de Março is impressive as each level has several electronic stores selling more or less the

same products, in wholesale or retail in prices similar to their competitors. The immigration of Chinese has been visible and a surprise to some in the numbers of immigrants who achieved the amnesty in 2009.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

The last sponsored migration resulted in the immigration of thousands of Koreans in Brazil, knowing the same fate as non-white non-agricultural workers: rejection and discrimination in the society despite their relative success. Today, Brazil has for the most part abandoned organized migration to agricultural lands. Instead, it is mostly dealing today with unorganized, unsponsored migration from immigrants traditionally rejected as not “white” and undesirable. Dictatorship legacies informed a legislation treating immigrants as threats to national security, stripping them of fundamental rights. This legacy has meant that today, most legal actions surrounding migration policies are made outside of the legal framework, leaving a lot of room for different administrations to do as they will. Bolivians came in the country mostly as individuals, whereas Koreans followed a more traditional pattern of bringing their nuclear families with them, adding in their children as a workforce.

Today, Bolivians, Chinese, African, and Haitian immigrants are coming into the country in different circumstances with different prospects. They are sure though to find some degree of resistance from the local population to their immigration. Some communities like Bolivians and Haitians have made the news while the other communities mostly remain discreet and their life conditions are much less known. The government has much less control over those migration flows and tend today to do more damage control than proactive policies. Interestingly, Vargas created both restrictive immigration policies and a welfare state. This has consequences today

where, as I will show, the welfare settings make it hard for Bolivians to find their advantage in getting registered and legally declared as workers.

The Brazilian subconscious seeing the hard back-breaking and exploitative work a mandatory first step to social ascension for immigrants in Brazil means that immigrants have a hard time disputing the work conditions they experience in the country, in particular because of the law of immigration preventing them from legally organizing. Bolivians and Koreans work in the same industry, at different levels of production as I will show in the next chapter. Their staggered arrival meant that Koreans found the opportunity of replacing their workforce with Bolivians. This unequal distribution in the production network influences how the government is dealing with abuse accusations in the Bolivian community. In the next chapter, I will look more closely at the garment production network in São Paulo.

## Chapter 5

### GLOBAL PRODUCTION AND THE GARMENT INDUSTRY

#### 5.1 Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I considered the past history of Brazilian immigration and its relationship with its colonial past. Brazil has a long history of controlling and organizing immigration, bending its own identity to make place for newcomers. The distinctive quality of both Korean and Bolivian immigrants is their high levels of concentration in the garment industry. This concentration constitutes a change from other immigrant groups, as it tends to keep immigrants out of sight in the city. Only when they start trading clothes do they become a visible part of city life where Brazilians may interact with them. Koreans are credited with having revitalized the garment market and introduced the “just in time” production models adopted all over the world today. Far from being insignificant, the Brazilian garment industry ranks fourth as a global producer. However, most of its production is internal and, as such, away from the eyes of many. It has only been recently that conditions of work in the garment industry, particularly those experienced by Bolivians, and usually framed as stemming from the abuse of Koreans, have come to light.

In chapter two, I explained different theories as to why immigrants tend to create niche markets where they have higher than normal rates of entrepreneurship. In this chapter, I examine more closely how the Brazilian garment market is structured

and how both communities are involved in the market. Finally, the last section will examine the different claims of abuse made over the years on the industry using as examples experience and incidents described by my respondents. This chapter sets the context for the actions of the government and the reactions of the immigrant communities.

## **5.2 The Garment Industry Worldwide: a Short Overview**

Garments fulfill one of the most fundamental needs that is nearly universal: wearing clothes. On the international level, the garment industry is frequently pointed out in the headlines as abuse and catastrophes happen on a regular basis. Both are not new. One needs only recall the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire of 1911 that took place in New York City to get an idea of how devastating tragedies associated with the garment industry can be. 146 workers died in half an hour as a fire spread quickly through the overcrowded building. One main cause of the high number of deaths was that the factory owner had locked the fire escape doors to ensure no workers sneaked off during the workday. Workers were thus left with the only option of a slow moving and small elevator to escape the fire. Tragically, some elevators were blocked off which led many to jump to their death (Dickson et al, 2009: 10). Although this tragedy is marked in the minds of many, particularly in the US, it is far from the deadliest accident in the garment industry's history. Very recently, on April 24<sup>th</sup> 2013, the Rana Plaza building fell on its thousands of workers despite previously voiced and disregarded concerns of the same workers. 1134 workers were killed and hundreds

more were injured (Rana Plaza Arrangement, 2015). Many other incidents have happened over the years, making this a bloody industry worldwide.

Another significant characteristic of the garment industry is the importance and sometimes domination of immigrant workers and entrepreneurs in Western nations (Dicken, 2007: 256). An explanation to this situation is the low upfront costs for immigrants to start their own workshop. While Nancy Green has shown that the expectations in terms of who are the most appropriate or the best suited for the job have changed historically and locally (1997), women in particular have been an important part of the workforce worldwide. One of the reasons for the dominance of women, aside from the current construct about women's small hands and dexterity is the appeal of homework. Sewing machines are accessible enough that a woman can keep her traditional role at home while working an extra wage. The dominance of women garment workers "can vary greatly if the country offers few work alternative opportunities for men" (Dickson et al, 2009: 6). In addition to immigrants, the garment industry is "employing many of the more 'sensitive' segments of the labour force: females and ethnic minorities, often in tightly localized communities" (Dicken, 2007: 249). Since wages are a big factor to limit the cost of production, immigrants and other minorities have always been the preferred workforces as they can be more easily exploited (Dicken, 2007: 256).

While most of the production in Western industrialized countries was done internally, in the 1970s a shift occurred with oversea outsourcing, led in part by big

brands like Liz Claiborne and Nike. Today, this process has been so well entrenched in practices that Dickson et al argue

Brand is a more accurate descriptor than apparel manufacturers because by the 1990s several large companies, Nike and Liz Claiborne, for example, adopted business models that focused on design and marketing, and included contracted production and no factory ownership (Dickson et al, 2009: 16).

Outsourcing is the rule for most brands in Western countries. But it has also become the norm in Brazil, particularly for Korean-owned companies. Historically, the garment industry has operated in a variety of environments: from the house to large factories. Outsourcing has had the tendency, in particular recently, to lower the number of workers and thus the size of the factories, with homework being important. The necessary machinery means that big factories are not necessary: a regular apartment, although often unsanitary, is still a suitable workplace for production.

Overseas outsourcing was controlled by an international agreement, called the Multi-Fiber Arrangement. It originated in 1973 as a broadening of the 1962 arrangement on cotton textiles (Dicken, 2007: 260). The MFA attributed quotas to each country about how much they could export in a year. This arrangement was designed initially to protect the industry in developed nations from the competition of very low cost production in the South. However, the international quotas did not quite work that way and the industries in most developed nations suffered greatly from the 1970s on. Ultimately, another unexpected consequence has been the creation of garment industry in other nations to take advantage of unused quotas to become

attractive locations for the industry<sup>52</sup>. Dicken perceives the end of the MFA as a time of great unrest in the industry for producers all over the world: not only are developed nations without protection from developing nations' industries, but smaller players among the developing nations are at risk when having to compete with bigger producers like China (Dicken, 2007: 249). Their fears materialized as today China is the biggest producer and they employ around 2.7 million workers in the garment industry (Dicken, 2007: 251).

The garment industry is particularly well-suited for outsourcing for the same reasons it has been an immigrant endeavor in most Western nations. The low start up costs meant that entrepreneurs in developing nations could still afford to set up businesses. It is easier to set up a workshop to sew garments than it is to design and sell garments. Indeed, "the low barriers to entry into clothing manufacture make it one of those activities accessible to virtually any country, even at low levels of economic development" (Dicken, 2007: 250). The MFA helped this situation by making global buyers interested in even low-income countries. Low startup costs also mean that corners tend to be cut in other areas such as safety and wages.

It is important to note that the garment industry is part of a broader production that includes the textile industry. Conditions of production and work in textile are vastly different from the garment side. For one, technology is more advanced in textile

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<sup>52</sup> For instance, the garment industry of Nepal was created because of the MFA (Dicken, 2007: 261).



production (Dicken, 2007: 250) while garment making is still heavily dependent on the labor of individuals for a lack of mechanical options for machine replacing human workers. In fact, in the clothing industry “capital intensity is generally low, labour intensity is generally high, the average plant size is small, and the technology is relatively unsophisticated” (Dicken, 2007: 255). Labor intensity is actually so high that “labour costs are the most significant production factor in the clothing industries” (Dicken, 2007: 256). Other factors enter into play such as how elaborate the garment is. When turnover is very high and the garments complex to make, proximity might be better than lower labor costs. This is one of the reasons why some of the industry is still standing in developed economies and why some close low cost neighbors such as Mexico remain competitive in the garment industry (Dicken, 2007: 256). Another difference with the textile industry lies with the size of businesses, as businesses in the garment industry are usually much smaller than in the textile industry (Dicken, 2007: 262).

Elastic labor costs, the use of minorities as laborers, a regulatory environment found in developing nations, and low capital all come together to make for very abusive conditions. It bears to remember that the original sweatshops were found in the garment industries, where poor workers labor in subpar and abusive conditions with few of their rights recognized (Dicken, 2007: 257). The Industrial Revolution in England as well as conditions in the US were all extremely abusive (Dickson et al, 2009). Sweatshops started in the Western world but have not completely disappeared

from there despite labor regulations (Dicken, 2007: 257). In particular, despite extensive work regulations, New York City and Los Angeles still have sweatshops, most often populated by immigrants. Similarly, Brazil has important labor regulations that coexist with an important informal sector where labor laws are not respected. In both cases, labor law violations happen without necessarily plunging into the realm of sweatshops. Abuses range from no extra pay for overtime to passport withholding and violence on workers. I will explore abuses found in the garment industry in São Paulo in more detail at the end of the chapter.

### **5.3 An Overview of the Brazilian Garment Industry**

Brazil is often overlooked as a producer of clothing. However, Brazil is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest producer of garments in the world, representing only 2.8% of the total production of garments (IEMI, 2012: 21). Being the 4<sup>th</sup> producer of garments with such a low percentage represent no surprise as China maintains its domination of the garment industry worldwide. This is not the only difference with China as Brazil is lagging behind in terms of exports, ranking as the 76<sup>th</sup> largest exporter in the world (IEMI, 2012: 22).

Table 3: Exports: Apparel, socks, and accessories

	US \$1,000	Percentage of total
Paraguay	31,049	17.2%
Argentina	23,923	13.3%
United States	19,209	10.7%
Chile	12,369	6.9%
Bolivia	11,839	6.6%
Uruguay	10,580	5.9%
Angola	8,375	4.6%
Japan	7,001	3.9%
Portugal	5,911	3.3%
France	5,625	3.1%
Others	44,343	24.6%
Total	180,224	100.0%

(Source: IEMI, 2012: 96)

Most of the exports were destined for local destinations with Paraguay (17.2%) and Argentina (13.3%) as the top two recipients. Notably, the US followed with 10.7% of all Brazilian exports. Some argue that there is a growing awareness in the fashion industry of Brazilian designers (IEMI, 2012: 8) followed by efforts to support the export of Brazilian made garments (IEMI, 2012: 13).

In fact, many articles about the current Brazilian garment industry focus on the high-end fashion designers, rather than the more popular fashion (See Pinto and Souza, 2013). Some argue that Brazil obtained its fashion industry, in addition to its clothing industry, in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Brandini, 2009: 165). Indeed, São Paulo has its own Fashion Week twice a year since 1996 where Brazilian

designers present their productions (Pinto and de Souza, 2013: 313). Kontic argues that the São Paulo Fashion Week marks the beginning of Brazil as a major professional actor in the garment industry internationally (2007: 131). It is now counted among the major international Fashion shows of Paris, New York City, Milan, and London (Pinto and de Souza, 2013: 313). However, the Brazilian garment industry is a sizeable industry that produces mostly for internal consumption. The internal market is huge, since 200 million people live in Brazil and consume garments. It stands only at the 36<sup>th</sup> rank for imports in the world (IEMI, 2012: 24). Brandini argues that there is a “Latin style” that is particularly developed in Brazil and increasingly recognized internationally (2009: 164). This Latin style “derives its aesthetic from local culture and ethnicity” (Brandini, 2009: 165).

Table 4: Imports: Apparel, socks, and accessories

	<b>US \$1,000</b>	<b>Percentage of total</b>
<b>China</b>	1,038,977	60.4%
<b>Bangladesh</b>	116,708	6.8%
<b>India</b>	104,232	6.1%
<b>Peru</b>	73,102	4.2%
<b>Hong Kong</b>	61,350	3.6%
<b>Indonesia</b>	32,201	1.9%
<b>Argentina</b>	31,255	1.8%
<b>Vietnam</b>	28,981	1.7%
<b>Italy</b>	27,149	1.6%
<b>Paraguay</b>	17,876	1.0%
<b>Others</b>	189,321	11.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,721,152</b>	<b>100%</b>

(Source: IEMI, 2012: 96)

Like many other states, most of those imports originate from China (60.4%), followed by Bangladesh (6,8%) (IEMI, 2012: 96). An important fact to look at is the increase in imports over the past half-decade.

Table 5: Imports of apparel in \$1,000 US

	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Apparel	452,196	643,713	710,160	998,887	1,592,498

(Source: IEMI, 2012: 94)

There is a clear trend towards an increase in imports since 2007: imports have increased over three fold in five years. However, although imports are on the rise, a majority of garments sold in Brazil are being produced internally. Furthermore, as Brazilians become wealthier, their consumption has also increased. It went from 11 kg/person in 2000 to 13.6 kg in 2011 (IEMI, 2012: 46). This increase has to take into account the global economic crisis that has globally reduced consumption of clothes. It is thus an expanding as well as an emerging market (Pinto and Souza, 2013: 312). The textile-garment industry in Brazil represents 5.6% of the value of industry in the country but about 16.2% of employees in the secondary sector (IEMI, 2012: 26). Textile and clothing industries are the second biggest employers in Brazil (Mendes, 2010: 13). Despite the growing importance of the industry, in particular under the umbrella of fashion, the sector still lacks in terms of professional technical and business expertise (Brandini, 2009: 175).

The industry has more presence in the South-Eastern region of Brazil where it was traditionally started in greater scale by immigrants as explained earlier in the dissertation. The distribution of garment factories is unequal over the territory.

Table 6: Production per region

<b>Region</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>North</b>	41,924	42,395	40,206	42,792	43,080
<b>North East</b>	698,064	810,839	819,773	876,428	880,280
<b>South East</b>	2,425,617	2,520,719	2,577,365	2,706,437	2,616,070
<b>South</b>	1,410,988	1,536,570	1,529,094	1,731,581	1,703,308
<b>West</b>	230,899	231,491	234,643	270,418	272,704
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,807,492</b>	<b>5,142,013</b>	<b>5,201,081</b>	<b>5,627,656</b>	<b>5,515,442</b>

(Source: IEMI, 2012: 85)

The importance of the garment industry in each region is unequal. There is a clear domination of the Southeast region, where the city of São Paulo is located, in the garment industry, where 48.3% of the garments in Brazil are produced (IEMI, 2012: 32). This confirms the importance of our case study in the city of São Paulo, a major center of the industry in the country both in terms of employees and production. However, we can see a slight diminution of the importance of the region in the country over the five years at play: production decreased from 50.4% to 48.3% of the total. Since the 1990s, there has been a decline in industrial employment in the São Paulo area in favor of service jobs (Garcia and Cruz-Moreira, 2004: 273). One of the reasons for this can be found in the increasing costs of production in the city, particularly in terms of rent, transportation, and the related salaries (Garcia and Cruz-Moreira, 2004:

274). One of the solutions to this is to lower the cost of the workforce: homework, work cooperatives and immigrant labor, often undocumented, became common strategies in the city (Garcia and Cruz-Moreira, 2004: 301). My field research was focused exclusively on the city of São Paulo and its immigrant entrepreneurs from the Bolivian and Korean community. This is also the area where most of the reported abuses occur. I will explore later in the chapter the impacts of those small informal businesses where family relations and immigrant community sometimes mesh into situations of abuse.

### **5.3.1 Size of businesses**

It is important to note another difference in the Brazilian garment sector: the high number of small and medium businesses.

Table 7: Distribution by size

Size	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Share
<i>Small</i>						
Factories	16,201	16,842	17,898	18,302	19,197	69%
No of employees	319,258	332,143	337,134	351,733	338,299	26%
Production (1000/year)	2,064,288	2,091,796	2,070,332	2,096,115	1,972,853	21%
<i>Medium</i>						
Factories	6,274	6,631	6,886	6,962	7,568	27%
No of employees	491,130	512,186	515,748	524,048	533,875	41%
Production (1000/year)	3,012,544	3,213,143	3,280,972	3,388,614	3,373,181	35%
<i>Large</i>						
Factories	801	865	882	912	935	3%
No of employees	413,474	442,538	447,466	455,280	444,091	34%
Production (1000/year)	3,484,157	3,938,337	4,038,912	4,363,960	4,228,610	44%
<i>Total</i>						
Factories	23,276	24,338	25,666	26,176	27,700	100%
No of employees	1,223,862	1,286,867	1,300,348	1,331,061	1,316,265	100%
Production (1000/year)	8,560,989	9,243,276	9,390,216	9,848,689	9,574,644	100%

(Source: IEMI, 2012: 86)



For the garment sector, which includes apparel, socks and accessories, home textiles, and technical articles, 69% of the businesses were small businesses,<sup>53</sup> while 27% were medium-sized businesses<sup>54</sup> in 2011 (IEMI, 2012: 86). Many operate in the informal economy but more importantly those businesses operate at all stages of the production network: production, design, retail, and intermediate producer. It is important to keep in mind that those numbers are produced by the IEMI (Instituto de Estudos e Marketing Industrial). In an interview with Leandro, a worker at the ABIT (Associação Brasileira da Indústria Têxtil), he admitted that the data in the annual report of the IEMI does not integrate informal businesses, in that case those businesses that are not legally registered, which he referred to as “opportunistic.” Another source confirms that the IEMI does not collect data from the informal economy (Mendes et al, 2010: 18). It remains unclear exactly how reliable the data is, but it offers a particular view on the industry that is worth reporting. Another indication of that lag is the category of small businesses understood as those employing between five and nineteen employees (IEMI, 2012: 86). In comparison, many Bolivian workshops employ less than five workers, and according to my respondents, this is increasingly the case, which classifies them as family businesses. However, most of the reported abuse happens in those family, small, and medium sized workshops. Small businesses have little power in the network, particularly in terms of negotiating better prices or conditions of work.

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<sup>53</sup> Small businesses have 5 to 19 employees (IEMI, 2012: 86).

<sup>54</sup> Medium-sized businesses had between 20 and 99 employees (IEMI, 2012: 86).

The Brazilian garment sector is different from the American and European models in retail as many small and medium-sized businesses still dominate retail, and big retailers are not yet as significant as they are in the US.<sup>55</sup> In particular, the neighborhoods of Bom Retiro and Bras are two national hubs of clothes retailing. Walking in those neighborhoods, one will not find the big US and European-based brands. Instead, they will find store after store, most often owned by Koreans (for women fashion), with few other immigrant groups there. In 1998, “Koreans were producing one out of every three articles of clothing sold in Brazil” (Buechler, 2004: 108). A sizable proportion of those garment stores sell wholesale with or without a few days a week dedicated to retail. Other stores are more focused on retail. In terms of size, some of the stores are very small, while others are big. Most of the neighborhood of Bom Retiro is based on a particular architecture with a brightly colored storefront on the first floor and workshops or stock rooms upstairs. Some of the retail also happens on a large informal basis, particularly in the neighborhood of Bras, in what is called the *Feira da Madrugada*. In this *Feira*, producers or resellers sell clothes in small stalls, extending nowadays beyond the original occupied land where it started to repurposed warehouses surrounding the area. The Feira will be explained in greater detail in the coming chapters.

In this dissertation I focus on a particular subset of that industry: Korean and Bolivian immigrants as they intersect in the industry. Overall, Koreans are today

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<sup>55</sup> In the 1960s a switch occurred in the US and Europe where big niche retailers became dominant in the industry (Dicken, 2007: 263). Today, among the five largest retailers in the US, Walmart, Sears, J.C. Penney, and Dayton Hudson, a big proportion of the clothing sales (Dicken, 2007: 263).

mostly involved in the retail and wholesale section of the industry: they design the clothes and sell them in a store they own. Production once integrated within stores now involves separate activities and ownership. Koreans in their majority have outsourced their production to workshops, many of them owned and headed by Bolivians. Dicken explains subcontracting as “one firm outsourcing some of its operations to another firm, [it involves] a kind of half-way house between complete internalization of procurement on the one hand and arm’s-length transactions through the open market on the other” (Dicken, 2007: 154). Production is no longer done in a factory owned by the main producer, but the producer is still familiar with the person it is working with: it is not like going to a neighborhood and choosing a store to shop at and accepting their production as is, for the most part<sup>56</sup>. Bolivians are thus part of this outsourcing: they do not work exclusively for Koreans though. They work for other immigrant communities in the industry and for Brazilians too. However, the relationship between Korean storeowners and Bolivian workshops has been the focus of the government and the literature. This type of subcontracting is what Dicken calls “commercial subcontracting” (2007: 154). Commercial subcontracting is:

The manufacture of a finished product. The subcontractor plays no part in marketing the product, which is generally sold under the principal’s brand name and through its distribution channels. The principal firm may be either a producer firm, that is, also involved in manufacturing, or a retailing or wholesaling firm whose sole business is distribution (Dicken, 2007: 154).

I will also study the emerging retailing activities of Bolivians, principally through the informal garment sale market of the *Feira da Madrugada*.

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<sup>56</sup> Private label owners act more like this set up as they prepare ready production.

### 5.3.2 Informality in the garment industry

Informality is a widespread economic practice in Brazil. In 2009, the International Labor Organization (ILO) estimated that 32 million workers were in informal non-agricultural employment, reaching about 42% of non-agricultural work (ILO, 2013: 75). I use informality here in the sense of activities that are para-legal. Activities are not necessarily illegal per se as would be an activity such as drug trade, but they operate outside of state norms. Maloney describes the informal sector in Latin America as an “unregulated microentrepreneurial sector and not as a disadvantaged residual of segmented labor markets.” (2004: 1159). The garment sector of São Paulo is no exception: many immigrant entrepreneurs employ workers who do not have legal documentation, they do not declare any workers, nor do they declare income for tax purposes.<sup>57</sup>

It does not mean that the garment industry is only an underground endeavor. Indeed, most workshops have registration numbers, called CNPJ (*Cadastro Nacional da Pessoa Juridica*, National Registry of Legal Entities). Those numbers are obtained by anyone wanting to open and register a business. The process, according to one of my respondents, is quite easy, and the monthly fee only R\$35. No one checked the location of her business activity, her own apartment. The requirements for obtaining a CNPJ are rather limited, and it is possible to register a business even in an apartment.

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<sup>57</sup> The production of garments in São Paulo has long been the realm of immigrants, be they from foreign lands, or internal migrants from the impoverished North East of Brazil. Informality has also been dominant through the years, where workers and entrepreneurs not always had legal documentation, and did not always declare their economic activity to the authorities. One of my respondents’ mother had a garment store where they would not turn on the lights inside unless it was nighttime. It has certainly tended towards more formalization and professionalization as time has passed.

Most Bolivian immigrant entrepreneurs have waited to obtain legal documentation to open a business in order to obtain that registration. Hence, the number of registered workshop has soared in the past decade following pressures from the government to have this number when merchandise is travelling on the road. However, registering the business is usually where formality ends. Many workers are undeclared regardless of their immigration status. The production from both the workshop and the stores are not always fully declared. Indeed, many Korean storeowners have admitted to eschewing some tax payments, preferring to gamble on potential fines.

An example of the informality in the garment industry is related to retail. The *Feira da Madrugada* (Dawn market) is an informal garment market that takes place in the Bras but originally started on the rua 25 de Março. Walking around the *feira da madrugada* at 5AM on a Tuesday is like stepping into another world. The subway is eerily empty yet when you emerge at the Bras station, in the neighborhood of the same name, the streets are busy with people. Heading towards the *feira* and the streets around it, hundreds of people fill the street. Walking fast past, some of them are heaving big plastic bags on wire carts. On many streets, sidewalks are taken over by people selling clothes and accessories. All their products sit on plastic bags on the ground. This makes for easy escape as later in the morning the police will move in and most vendors will flee with their products: after 7AM, main sidewalks are free from vendors. It will take going to other side streets to find some of them again, in much lower numbers. They seem usually more on the edge as they check the streets for police officers. Street vendors are far from being the only ones selling clothes or handbags in the *feira*. On the contrary, there are thousands of vendors who rent individual stalls either on the original site owned by the municipality or in surrounding

repurposed factory buildings or stores. Many of the vendors are Bolivians, men and women alike, but there are also Brazilian, Paraguayan, Chinese and Korean vendors. The *Feira* operates five days a week rain or shine.

Once again, informality in the *Feira* is often partial. People selling on the sidewalks are doing so illegally: police can and do come after them in a mouse and cat game starting at 7AM. Others who sell in the *shoppings*, often in repurposed warehouses in this former industrial neighborhood, are charged high rents per square meter by the owners and they sell production they might have made themselves or are re-selling. Some have *CNPJ* from their workshops, while others do not. Most of them do not emit fiscal receipts (*nota fiscal*), which is not a legal practice and firmly puts their activity in the informal sector. Sales in the *Feira* are for the most part undeclared. Several Korean respondents and three Bolivian respondents have experience working at the *Feira*. Most of their sales were not declared. In fact, Miguel told me that he brought fiscal receipts slips with him, but clients never wanted to use them, as it is beneficial for them not to declare their purchase.

Informality in developed nations is less widespread, but some of the justifications for opening an informal business can be found in developing nations too. Most immigrants do not want to get registered since they perceive taxes as a lost income where their contributions would not get back to them or improve their situation in any way, something that is found within informal entrepreneurs in the UK as well (Williams, 2013: 166). This feeling is magnified among Bolivian immigrants, as they often do not plan to stay in Brazil forever. Contributing to a retirement fund is thus perceived as a lost income that could have been sent to Bolivia to help there. Other forms of informality involve declaring only a part of one's production, as well

as declaring a part of one's sales. Informality is something the industry was founded in. At the beginning of Korean domination of the neighborhood, the work was not very professional. Clara remembers her mother's store without any artificial lights inside.

Formerly, I remember, that my parents they did not even turn the lights on in the store. And there were only three light that I remember, they only turned them on at the end of the day to see. The whole day, the store on a sunny day stayed with no lights on. So it seemed to be centuries ago, but no, it happened 25, 30 years ago. So the evolution was very, very big.

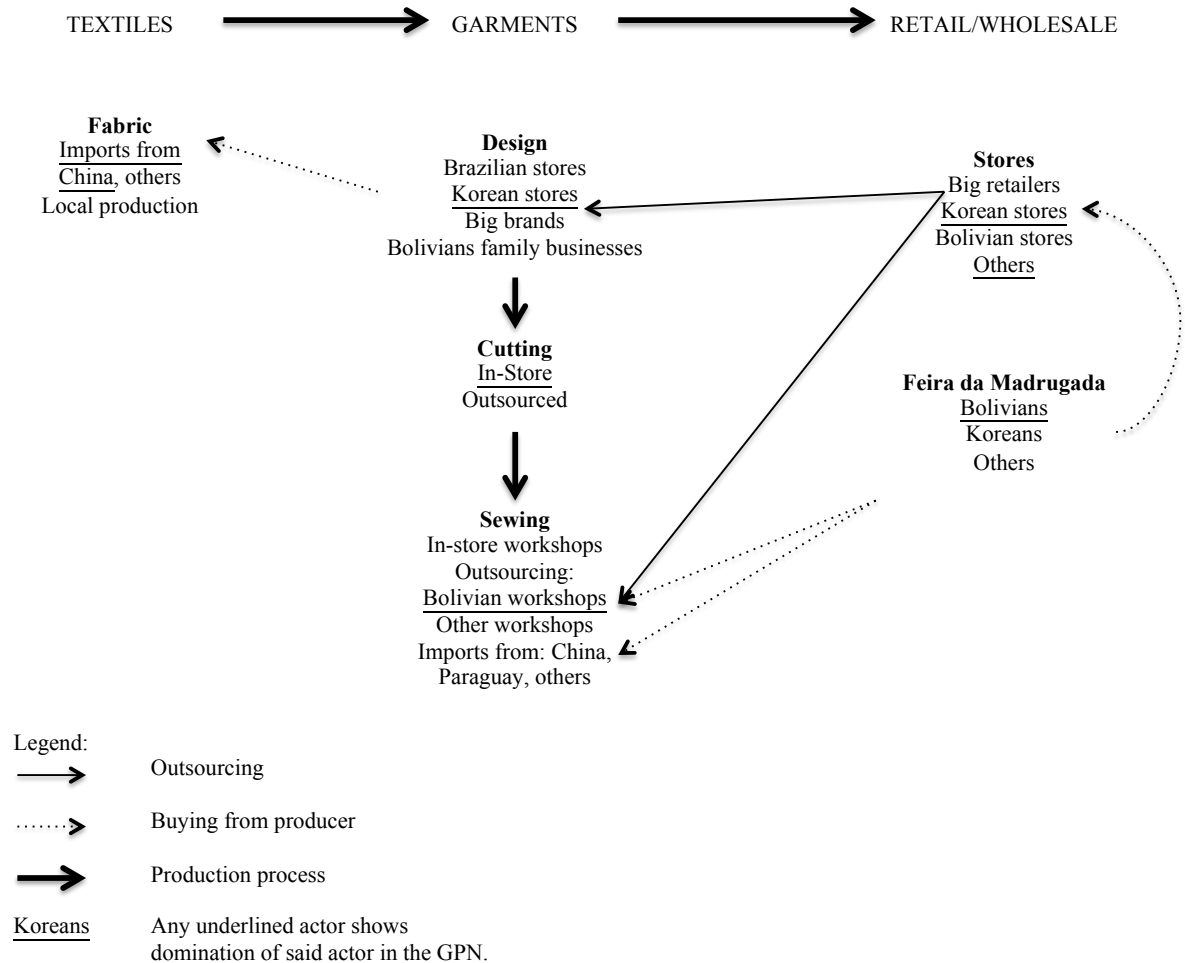
There is a plethora of research and policy guidance on how to tackle informality (de Soto, 1989; European Commission, 2007, Small Business Council, 2004; Williams and Youssef, 2013; Williams, 2013). I will spend more time on the topic in the next chapter to understand how the government has understood informality in the past years and how it intersects with the garment industry. Informality provides advantages to immigrant workers, but it also makes for a ripe environment for abuse. Section 1.4 will focus on the instances of abuse in the industry of São Paulo.

### **5.3.3 A first sketch of the production network of the garment industry in São Paulo**

The Brazilian garment industry is atypical: it remains fragmented along small stores and small workshops; production is mostly internal; informality dominates most of the interactions in the sewing processes; immigrant communities are deeply involved in women's fashion. Using the GPN framework and the information gathered about the garment industry in Brazil and in particular in São Paulo, I elaborate this

sketch of the network. Through the chapters, this sketch will get more elaborate as more information is brought in. For now, the GPN in question is set up in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Representation of the GPN



In this figure, I organized production around three main activities: Textile/Garment/Retail. The study at hand is focused on the garment and retail



sections. The textile section shows that most of the fabric is imported, and is ordered during the design activity. It comes of course before the cutting. There is a vertical distinction in the garment section that is very important: indeed, designing activities are linked to retail stores and tend to be positions of more power for those holding them. They have power as they outsource cutting activities and sewing activities. Very often cutting of women's clothes is done in house, while sewing activities are overwhelmingly outsourced. Most Korean stores outsource to Bolivian workshops, while Big Brands most often outsource to Korean intermediaries and rarely deal directly with workshops. Several Korean entrepreneurs said that there are very few Brazilian workshops. Luiza<sup>58</sup> tells me "not much of Brazilian population wants to sew any longer and nor do they want to learn how to sew. They would rather go out to a job in a shop or in a restaurant than sew". Although she looks for Brazilian workshops, she mostly finds Bolivians looking for work. Some of the producers order from China, either buying ready-made garments or ordering in a more traditional outsourcing relationship.

The retail section is also named wholesale because an important part of the Korean producers in the Bom Retiro neighborhood are wholesale producers. Brazilian entrepreneurs from all over Brazil come to the neighborhood and the Feira to stock their stores with garments. At the Feira, some of the sellers actually buy from other Korean stores to sell back at the Feira. Some of the production comes from China or Paraguay and is sold in wholesale at the Feira. Many Bolivian producers sell their own production there.

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<sup>58</sup> The interview took place in English. Luiza lived in the US for several years and her English was good.

Additional players come into the network including the Brazilian government, international forces (such as the UN, international NGOs), and immigrant associations. Those external actors and their influence on the production network will be examined in the next chapter. Chapter seven and eight will look more closely at the power relations established by the pressures of those external actors. I now turn to the abuse found in the garment industry as reported by the literature and by my respondents.

#### **5.4 Work and Life Conditions in the Garment Industry**

As I mentioned in the literature review, conditions of abuse in the garment industry is the most studied topic on Bolivians. It is thus unsurprising that abuse comes in many forms among the workers in garment workshops. The accusations run along common abusive practices in garment sectors, even in developed nations. Conditions of work in most clothing workshops are hard and do not follow legal practices: hours of work vary between 12 and 18 hours, salary is paid by piece, often paid late, new workers are usually indebted to the workshop owner for their trip and are not paid while they learn the necessary skills. Considering that the workshops are often informal, they operate inside apartments with inappropriate ventilation, which is ill suited for garment work<sup>59</sup>. In some cases, including in some of my respondents' personal experiences, workers have been found locked in the apartment while the owner or manager is gone.

Children sometimes play in the areas of work; sometimes they are locked in bedrooms to ensure their safety. In some cases, workers sleep on the floor, under their

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<sup>59</sup> Lung infections and tuberculosis are common occurrences in such conditions. See the work of Martinez et al, 2012.

machines, but in most cases they have a shared bedroom in the same apartment where they work. Many of the Bolivian entrepreneurs that I have interviewed have experienced some form of abuse, whether physical, or emotional, with the withholding of salaries being a very common occurrence, before they started their own business. However, they all proceeded to become entrepreneurs and own their own workshop. It can be hard to determine if those entrepreneurs have reproduced the abuse in their own workshops, as most would probably not admit to it. Some have told me that they made a point to avoid reproducing specific forms of abuse, but the majority was silent on their current workers.

#### **5.4.1 Abuse seen in a historical perspective**

Bad conditions of work dominated the industry long before Bolivians arrived. For instance, Luciana, a Korean immigrant in her 50s explained that when she first arrived in São Paulo in the 1970s, the Jewish storeowners her family worked for had a cot in the hallway of the store. To her, that signified that someone was sleeping there, in similarly hard conditions she was living in. Galetti refers to the harsh conditions of work of Koreans in one of the few publications referring to the industry before the arrival of Bolivians (1995). While Koreans were often referred to as “hard workers” who would forego their health in order to make a profit, similar conditions of work are perceived as exploitation and abuse in the Bolivian community. Buechler argues that Koreans themselves were loath to qualify their work conditions as exploitative, instead focusing on the entrepreneurship aspect of saving money to open their own workshops (2004: 108). Several explanations can come into play here, most importantly I think are racial prejudice and the difference in work standards several decades can make. Although the rules and regulations on work in Brazil were first adopted under Vargas’

government in the 30s, Koreans mostly arrived in Brazil during the military dictatorship (that started in 1964), probably impacting the willingness to follow the law at the time. As far as racial prejudice is concerned, I will explain this in more detail in the following chapters.

Some Koreans started in the country by setting up a workshop, but most of them first worked for others. When they had their own workshop, the whole family worked including children, in particular for those who arrived in the 60s and 70s. Koreans rarely reported conditions of exploitation in those first years in Brazil. Luciana though explained that they worked from home, in similar conditions to the Bolivians nowadays. She, as other older Koreans, insisted that they knew the same lives as Bolivians: long hours of work for little pay. The immigration story of many Koreans involves the whole family working together to survive. Antonia arrived in Brazil at 13, and had to help her parents in the workshop and translate Portuguese for them. Work would take place after school. To her, it is part of the history of the industry. They endured conditions similar to the ones Bolivians experience. Buechler reports the crowded living and the abuse from workshop owners who would tell them lies about the police (2004:107), all in line with what Bolivians have been experiencing. Antonia told me that she worked in her parents' workshop from an early age. There is awareness from many that children working may not be the most ideal situation. Antonia tells me that no parents ever wish for their children to live a life of labor from a young age. But sometimes, circumstances are such that it is unavoidable. Consequently, for many Koreans, there is a lack of understanding why the government is being so intolerant of child labor. No one came to "save" them from those conditions when they arrived in the country. I will explore this topic in chapter seven,

as I try to map out the obstacles Koreans have in solving some of the issues of the industry.

There are exceptions to the involvement of Korean children in workshops. Adriana's parents were very much opposed to her working the garment industry, so much so that they disapproved of her studying for it. When they were in Argentina, she never helped in the workshop or in their store. This can be found in the Bolivian community too: Marcelo never let his daughters work with him. One of them is a nurse, like her mother. Marcelo always made a point to encourage his friends to send the children to school and not make them work with them. To him, it was important that his children not be like their parents because they have all the rights with the proper documentation.

More contemporary conditions of work mostly concern Bolivians today as Koreans have moved up in the production network to the design and sale of clothes. The next section will address the conditions of work in the first years, including the problems accumulated through the travel to Brazil.

#### **5.4.2 Travel and arrival in Brazil: the first years**

Every single one of my Bolivian respondents came to Brazil and first worked in a workshop. Most of them reported conditions of abuse and exploitation in the first workshops where they were working. Rosa, who cried during the whole interview<sup>60</sup>, reported to me that in the first workshop where she worked when she arrived, she was expected to sleep below the sewing machine at night. She ate at her sewing machine

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<sup>60</sup> I asked repeatedly if she wanted to stop the interview, but she said that she was fine and that we should continue.

too. She explained to me that she never received any help when she was working there. It is the Church that actually gave her a *cesta basica*, a monthly food package containing flour, oil, beans that is often offered in low paying jobs in addition to the salary.

Marcelo worked from 6AM to midnight every day of the week. The workshop owner, a Korean, would lock the door all day, while he worked in his store. He gave them food, a room, and a bed. In the bedrooms there was a TV, and Marcelo recalled that the Korean owner would reply when they said they wanted to go outside “why do you need to leave?”; they had everything they needed in the workshop. Marcelo worked in there for 3-4 years. After a month of learning the trade, Marcelo had earned enough money to buy lunch, 30 cruzeiros at the time. This was particularly frustrating to Marcelo, who at 24, had a job in a plant, making plastic models in Bolivia.

Marcelo’s experience reflects a common practice for Bolivians who just arrived in São Paulo: most of the time, their first months of work are barely remunerated or not remunerated at all. Part of it, is like Marcelo explains, considered a time to develop sewing skills<sup>61</sup>. But a lot of times, Bolivians also have to repay their trip to São Paulo, which is very often funded by the entrepreneur who hires them. That person sets the terms and amount that need to be refunded, sometimes withholding pay for over six months. The *coyotes* and the bus prices are often way below what the worker ends up repaying. Ultimately, Marcelo made friends with the Korean owner who offered to

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<sup>61</sup> This is a common tactic in low-income immigrant jobs. This was uncovered as a common practice in the nail salons in New York City. Apprenticeship is a time for bosses to make a profit out of the money they fronted to get immigrants in the workshop.

take him to the US where he would make more money there. But Marcelo declined and decided to stay in Brazil.

For many of my Bolivian respondents, the roots of abuse were set in Bolivia, when someone convinced them to come to Brazil and make more money than they could in Bolivia. Marcelo explained that his friend told him to come to Brazil with him because “we will earn money”. He trusted that friend. There is obvious disillusionment and disappointment in his voice as he tells me that he arrived in São Paulo and from that day worked days and nights in the workshop that was owned by a Korean. Marcelo explained that in the 1980s this was a common occurrence. Bolivians brought other Bolivians to São Paulo, deceiving them into thinking that they would make easy money. Since there was no communication among Bolivians in the city at the time, abuses were very common. Abuse and deceit has continued through the 90s and 2000s. When friends or family are not involved, it is other Bolivians, prospective employers who are involved. For instance, Rosa did not follow a friend to Brazil, but rather a woman who wanted her to work in her workshop. However, when that woman realized that Rosa brought her young disabled son with her, she refused to let her in. She said she was not to work for her while caring for her child. Rosa was thus left to find another place to stay for the night in a foreign city, and possibly work, since she did not have money to get back to Bolivia.

Some Bolivians recognized that the hours of work and the conditions of work were very harsh. Marcelo told me that he was always upfront and honest about the amount of work expected of garment workers in São Paulo when he visited Bolivia. He laughed and said that every person he told about Brazil replied that they would rather not immigrate. Rosa told me a similar story. The Bolivians she told about the

conditions of work told her that they preferred to suffer in Bolivia. Both Rosa and Marcelo seemed to want to counteract their experience of being tricked into immigration by being honest with fellow Bolivians about the prospects in Brazil.

### **5.4.3 Conditions of work and living**

I never asked any of the entrepreneurs to visit their workshop. To do so would have potentially portrayed myself as one of the journalists that has asked over and over to visit workshops for their stories. Rodrigo explained that he was involved in such a situation where journalists asked his association to come into a workshop and film there. However, they were disappointed in what they found: a clean workshop. They were looking for what he called sensationalism, as the Brazilian press so often does. They finally found another entrepreneur who was willing to let them in a less than stellar workshop. There is definite frustration among Bolivians about the media coverage that the community has experienced. I preferred to steer clear of this in order to focus on the experience of workshop owners.

Rodrigo, however, was very willing to show me around his workshop and house where his workers live. He was a very pro-active respondent, drove me to his house and back to the subway, for which I am highly thankful since the neighborhood was unsafe. His house was spread over three levels, two of which he constructed after moving in. There was not much on the first floor aside from two sewing machines, and bags of clothes. On the second floor, accessible through a stairway inside the main room of the first floor, there were three bedrooms that workers occupy. There was one family of a husband, a wife, and their two children, another room was reserved for their ailing mother, and the last bedroom hosted two Bolivian women workers. On the



third floor, there were six sewing machines plugged in high up.<sup>62</sup> Dark clumps of fiber strings were on the floor throughout the house, making a sharp contrast between the white tiles. The workroom was open to the elements when I visited, in the beginning of the Brazilian fall. Bolivian music was playing on the radio, which Rodrigo turned down when we came in. We ended up talking on the balcony, where clothes are hung up to dry. Although the workshop was not as tidy as Brazilian standards would have it, it was still a very open space that seemed to follow some of the norms at the very least.

Rodrigo told me that the main issue was that the way Bolivians' work looked like slave labor or abusive labor to Brazilians. He argued that the conditions have improved a lot since the 1990s; now workshops managed to end the workday around 8PM instead of 10PM. Some managed to end even earlier. Rosa for instance worked until 8PM most nights, some weeks she might work until 10PM if she had a lot of demand. This is a vast improvement over her previous employment where she was working from 7AM to 1AM. It is important to note that even as entrepreneurs, Bolivians still work the machines, particularly in the beginning and in small workshops.

A very common form of abuse in the industry reflects the informality of the labor. Workers and workshop owners are often found in situations where they are owed money. Ricardo explained that the first workshop he worked in asked him for some loans. Of course, nothing was registered and he never saw that money again. Similarly, when Koreans offer to help Bolivians, it is often done on the conditions of

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<sup>62</sup> Among the norms listed in a DVD created by the immigrant association, all machinery needs to be plugged in high to ensure the safety of the workers.

exclusivity, or like Marcelo told me, with the expectations that the following orders would be discounted. Marcelo obtained two sewing machines with the Koreans he was working with when he set up his workshop. He realized after some time that they were taking advantage of him, and the prices were not worth it. Ruth Camacho explained that sometimes Bolivians and Koreans became friends. However, to her, those relationships were fraught with abuse. According to her, Koreans become friends with Bolivians in order to ask them for more favors, including delaying the payment on some of the orders. That is how one of her clients claimed the Korean storeowner he worked with owed him R\$60,000. All this was done without any written proof; in the end she was expecting him to only get around R\$20,000. Bolivians often change workshops, and when they leave, they sometimes leave with unpaid salaries. This is what the CAMI deals with the most. In those cases, if the worker goes to another workshop, s/he might find that the former boss closed the workshop and left. This is a topic of complaint for both Bolivians and Koreans; it is common practice in both communities to avoid problems by closing one business and opening one somewhere else. Those stories often lead to cases of abuse. Rodrigo emphasizes that the BOLBRAS does not only deal with cases of unpaid labor from Korean contractors, but also from Brazilian contractors.

Abuse also happens in their daily lives around the workshop. Bolivians are regularly targets of scams. Rosa told me that when she rented the apartment where she started her workshop, a young man came by and asked for a deposit of R\$9,000. Although she did not know who he was, she paid the money. It turned out that this person had no relation to the landlord, who still expected a deposit. She thus had to find the money to pay for the same apartment twice. This sort of abuse is similar to

what happened to the young Bolivian boy who died in 2013 in an armed home invasion. His family arrived in Brazil several months beforehand and were sewing garments in a workshop in the city. Individuals asking them for money regularly raided his parents and the people they were working and staying with. Those individuals knew when there was cash in the workshop after payment for the contracts they completed. They came in one night and threatened the occupants with a gun, scaring the little boy who started crying. Because he was not consolable, one of the gunned men shot him to death. Because immigrants have trouble accessing high fee Brazilian banks, they are more susceptible to robberies as they keep cash in their homes.

Other structural conditions lead to abuse in Bolivian workshops. One important systemic danger is that most workshops are situated in apartments. Those apartments usually do not have good ventilation, as the sewing activity is sometimes not declared to neighbors, although this tends to change once workshops are registered. Sewing garment involves a lot of dust fibers that get in the air and cause lung infections in most workers when ventilation is improper. Tuberculosis is a common infection in Bolivian garment workers (McGrath, 2013: 1118). Fire represents another risk for sewing workshops over the world<sup>63</sup>. In São Paulo, there has not been any publicized case where a fire broke out in a workshop and garment workers died. Since most workshops are in regular apartments, any fire gets registered as a domestic fire, not as industrial. According to Lucas, a worker at the Labor Ministry, fires are very frequent

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<sup>63</sup> Here we can recall the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, where in only 30 minutes the both floors were ravaged by flames as piles of garments and fibers were everywhere.

in those workshops. The clumps of threads in Rodrigo's workshops were particularly good fodder for any house fire.

It is very common for workers to live in the same apartment where they work. I told the story of Rosa, who had to sleep under her sewing machine. However, this is not a common practice in the industry. Most of the workshop owners that I met have at least some of their workers, if not themselves, living in the same house or apartment where the work takes place, but they all have bedrooms. São Paulo is a very expensive city; some have compared the cost of living there with the cost of living of New York City. For immigrants to be able to rent two separate apartments on small income is not imaginable. With the price of rent also comes the price of transportation both in real money, the numerous protests in public transportation attest to the high cost of transportation in the city, but also in terms of time and safety. Getting apartments in São Paulo is also complicated for newcomers. When signing a rent agreement, other people need to sign off on it as caution. This is a luxury for new immigrants who know no one or very few people, and might depend once again on their employer. All these reasons together explain why most Bolivians live where they work: it is complex to do otherwise, and at a time where they want to make the most money, it is just not conducive to their lifestyle. However, there are heightened risks of abuse that exist when the workshop owner lives with its workers and when all workers live together. There is a lack in privacy, but also issues that can be related to thievery, since most immigrants do not have a bank account. Cash can be found and taken easily from strangers as related earlier, or from co-workers or the workshop owner.

Proximity also leads to more opportunities for sexual abuse, particularly for women (Buechler, 2004: 111). Some of them travel alone to the country; in fact, most

of the entrepreneurs I met had found their current partners in Brazil. Because of the fear of authorities, Lucas tells me that few assaults are reported to the authorities. He also points out that babies are born in those workshops. Contrary to developed countries, homebirth is not a trend in Brazil, which means that sanitary conditions are not always met. Lucas explains that many women often have to get back to work the day after giving birth.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have described the industrial sector of the fourth largest producer of garments in the world. Brazil has an industry that is not negligible although it is geared towards local consumption for the most part. Efforts to insert the sector into fashion have been more important in the past decade, but its women's fashion, often called *modinha*, that is at the heart of my study. Dominated by Korean retailers and Bolivian workshops, the sector is involved in Global Production Networks of the garment industry through its sourcing of textile, and through the production model it has adopted over the years. Korean retailers now use travel over the US and Europe as an integral part of designing clothes. However, modernization has not followed the path of the US: the Brazilian garment sector remains fragmented horizontally both in terms of retail and of production. This high number of actors means that labor law enforcement by the government is more complicated than in concentrated sectors. As national income has risen, consumption of clothes has also followed suit. Increasing demand for cheap clothing, with no centralization of buyers only encourages the small scale production and high competition that is fertile ground for abuses.

Abuses in the sector are widespread and widely documented in the literature. They range from simple violations like the non-payment of extra hours to full on physical abuse. At the very least, the great majority of Bolivian workers have experienced hours of work that went beyond the maximum stated by Brazilian law. Most entrepreneurs I interviewed had similar stories to tell. This abuse, however, is not at odds with what is found over the world in garment workshops, including in developed countries like the US where illegal workshops set up by immigrants, some of them also of Korean origin, operate in similarly abusive patterns. It is important to keep in mind that today's entrepreneurs were yesterday's workers who experienced some form of abuse during their times as employees. I will show how this matters to the understanding of abuse and the ability of both communities to help fight those conditions.

In a *buyer-driven* chain the responsible parties are the buyers, they have power over the way production is conducted. So in that chain, Korean retailers have power over how production is made because they are the ones ordering the collections. It could be said though that Brazilian consumers also have an important role to play here as their demand increases in volume with their income, while the prices they ask to pay for clothes remain low. The informality dominating the sector influences how change can proceed. In the next chapter, I will examine how the government handles discussions of abuse. The consequences of governmental actions will be examined in chapters seven and eight as I will explore how entrepreneurs react to governmental actions to reduce abuse.

## **Chapter 6**

### **THE BRAZILIAN BUREAUCRACY'S RESPONSE TO ABUSE**

The GPN of the garment sector of São Paulo, Brazil has links to global players through several points of production even though retail, in particular of women clothes, is mostly internal. I described the instances of abuse reported in the literature and in the interviews I conducted in the last chapter. Such abuse varies widely but the informal conditions of work tend to make abuse more prevalent. A legitimate question that I will tackle now is to understand how the state works in this environment and whether and how Brazil has addressed some of this abuse. Brazil is a federal state, and in the instance of the garment industry, both the municipal and the federal levels of government have acted to limit abuse in the GPN.

In this chapter, I focus on the government's reactions to international and national pressures to end abusive conditions in the garment industry. The impacts on both immigrant communities will be explored in the next chapters. The first section of this chapter will be reserved to exploring the concept of conditions of work analogous to slavery, a concept that is often used in Brazil to describe the Bolivian section of the industry. The rest of the chapter will address the actions taken by the government to limit abuses including changes to the immigration system, and the actions taken towards ending informality in São Paulo. This chapter should make clear that the Brazilian government has adopted the discourse of abuse and through some international and internal pressures have started a campaign to solve it. This campaign

involves a heightened scrutiny and visits to workshops to uncover abusive situations. In addition to fighting abuse, the government also attempts to eliminate all informality in the sector. However, corruption complicates the role of the government in the industry.

## **6.1 The Label of Slave-Like Labor, or Work Analogous to Slave Labor**

Global Production Networks is a framework that emphasizes the importance of the state in the production network. One way the Brazilian government has acted in the network is through its use of the label slave-like labor, *trabalho escravo*. Different levels of government have led several research commissions focused on the fight against slave-like labor, both at the municipal and the federal level. In this section, I plan to first look at the label of slave-like labor, how it came about and has been used to describe the abuses in the garment industry. I will then expose the racial implications of the use of that label on the immigrant communities.

### **6.1.1 Framing the issue at the municipal level**

In the previous chapter, I showed that abuses in the garment industry have been commonplace over both time and space. Brazil, as I have described in the preceding chapter, did not escape this situation. However, it was only in the early 2000s that such abuse started being framed by authorities as a serious problem that needed to be thoughtfully investigated and solved. The first public light onto the conditions of work in the garment industry was mediatized in 1992 when the Labor Ministry uncovered a workshop where Bolivian workers were locked up and abused by a Korean owner. From that time, Koreans were identified in the media as the culprit in the abuse. Throughout the 1990s, Brazilian journals kept reporting the abuse in the



garment industry (URB AL, 2007: 54), particularly as an abuse mostly perpetrated by Koreans.

Despite the media coverage in the 1990s, it took until the turn of the century for the government to pay attention. The spotlight on abuses in the garment industry started as a federal Parliamentary Research Commission on Slave Labor following denunciations of slave labor at the end of 2004 and early 2005 (URB AL, 2007: 54). Despite the news coverage and the federal report, the turning point in Brazil was sought through the municipality which published its own report entitled “Immigration in the city of São Paulo: Integration of immigrants in the city as a form of fight against poverty” (URB AL Rede10, 2007). The document outlined areas where services provided by the municipality that could support the immigrants in terms of health services, access to education<sup>64</sup>, and to cultural expressions needed improvements (URB AL, 2007: 55-57). Most importantly, it started to associate Bolivians in the garment industry with the label of “slave-like” labor.

### **6.1.2 Conditions analogous to slavery in Brazil: meanings and use**

The third chapter described the history of slavery in Brazil. Considering that history of slavery, and the importance in the Brazilian narrative of showing that the country has improved and moved on as a unit from those times, the importance given to issues of slave-like labor is not surprising.

In Brazil, the use of the term slave labor has been taken into the mainstream media and society thanks to the advocacy of the Catholic Church since the 1970s

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<sup>64</sup> Since 1995, children of undocumented immigrants can attend school in the state of São Paulo (URB AL, 2007: 56).

(McGrath, 2013: 1010). McGrath explains, “the concept of slave labor in Brazil is distinct from but overlaps with concepts such as forced labour, trafficking, contemporary “slavery” and unfree labour” (2013: 1007). Article 149 of the Brazilian penal code concerns conditions analogous to slavery. This article provides a broad definition of what constitutes forced labor and conditions analogous to slavery. Those include a “tiring workday”, “degrading conditions” (article 149). Article 149 states:

Reduction to conditions analogous to slavery

Art 149 Reducing someone to conditions analogous to slavery, submitting him to forced labor or exhaustive days, or subjecting him to degrading labor conditions limiting by any means his locomotion because of debt contracted with the employer or the person in charge (...) 2. Those who do the following risk the same penalties: limit the use of whatever mode of transportation of the worker, with the goal of keeping him in the workplace; keep ostensive watch in the work place or taking documents or personal objects from the worker, with the goal of keeping him in the workplace.

In a publication designed for workshop owners, the CAMI and the SPM explain article 149 of the Penal Code as follows:

Submit the worker to a labor they did not offer voluntarily

Submit the worker to exhaustive days of work, above what is permitted by law, continuously, leading to tiredness

Keeping workers in degrading conditions, such as habitations in precarious conditions, without ventilation and in conditions that put them at risk for their health and security

Forbidding workers from leaving their work place

Keeping the worker in the work place because of debts with the workshop owner

It is prohibited to discount from the salary of the worker the following costs:

Use of tools for manufacture of pieces

Trip value regarding trips to Brazil and other countries (bus, plane, or whatever other mode of transportation) to the benefit of the business

Equipment for individual protection

Justified mistakes by the employee

Low productivity because of sickness (CAMI SPM, 2012: 53)

In Brazil, two sectors are particularly pointed out as using slave-like labor: the sugar cane industry and the garment industry, in particular the employment of Bolivians in the garment industry.<sup>65</sup> In the sugar cane industry, conditions of work have been traditionally horrid with deaths happening on a regular basis from overwork and overheating. Sugar cane workers are transported from the North East region of Brazil for seven months a year to the state of São Paulo where they live in communal living areas often inadequate for so many workers. I attended the conference “Migração, Trabalho and Cidadania” (Migration, Labor, and Citizenship) in São Paulo, where Dr José Roberto Pereira Novaes reported the case of one worker who passed away on the job after harvesting 52 tons of sugar cane in a day.<sup>66</sup> One way that this problem is being dealt with by the industry is to mechanize harvesting as a way of evading the poor conditions of work systematically offered to temporary workers in the sugar cane industry (McGrath, 2010: 198). Gains by workers can be ignored in

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<sup>65</sup> Those two sectors are highlighted in the US State Department report (Department of State, 2013 a).

<sup>66</sup> During the conference, the speaker explained that slaves were expected to harvest three tons of sugar cane per day. Today, workers are encouraged to meet a 12 tons a day productivity rate, which very few manage to achieve. The comparison with slavery years is important because very little has changed for most manual sugar cane harvesters in terms of technology.

favor of investing in machines that will not complain or attract the attention of the Labor agents and their intense fiscal controls.

McGrath finds that “accusations of slave labour in garment workshops generally did *not* benefit these workers. Complaints of slave labour could even make them worse off, as in cases where the end result for workers was an order of deportation” (2013: 1023). McGrath did her field research in 2008, before changes in laws were implemented making access to documentation easier to Bolivians. McGrath explains that the police continues dispensing notices of eviction during workshop busting. However, those notices, as I explained in chapter four, do not necessarily mean that workers will be forcefully evicted.

Consequently, the label of slave-like labor, although widely used by the authorities and by international organizations studying the country is often contested, and in particular by Bolivians themselves. This label serves the purpose of the government: it helps exclude the work of Koreans and Bolivians as intrinsically exploitative, of no value, and in need of being terminated, to be brought back into the fold of the regular labor that is offered in Brazil. Of course, this discourse does not address the fact that many people in Brazil, and in São Paulo, work many more hours than permitted by law.<sup>67</sup> Francisca explained that she could not follow the rules set by the government for herself. In order to make a profit, she had to work more than 44 hours a week in her store and at her sale points. She found it unacceptable that in Brazil, anything over 8 hours of work a day was considered slave-like labor. She felt

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<sup>67</sup> As an anecdote, my roommate who was working for a chain of high-end supermarkets usually started work at 8AM and finished around 8PM. She also worked most Saturdays at this rate, going way over the 44 hours of work legally permitted by the government. She was not compensated for the extra hours.

that there were no ways to advance yourself, unless you became an entrepreneur. Then you could work as much as you needed to make the money you wanted. She explained that she should have the right to make more money if she wanted. Further, there is a sense in the Bolivian community that conditions have already improved. Rodrigo explained that many immigrants did not work past 8pm on most nights anymore, while they used to work up to 10PM or midnight on a regular basis in the past.

In the garment industry, there are definitely some workers who would fit the bill of unfree labor. Lucas, a fiscal control agent at the Labor ministry, explained that it does not matter to him whether Bolivians consent to their conditions of work or not. McGarth (2013: 1006) argues that free and unfree labor should be perceived on a continuum rather than a binary understanding where one falls into either one category. She makes the case for a more multidimensional approach taking into account that workers may be more or less free but that their conditions of work may also be more or less degrading, one not necessarily being dependent on the other. A worker may have no choice in staying with his/her employer while having good conditions of work. Exploitation and abuse does not require the use of force or threats, there is a lot to be said about describing those workers as slave-like. One particular habit of Bolivian garment workers is to change workshops frequently, sometimes from year to year. Those are not the conditions of slave-like labor. There are consequences to depicting the daily lives of the Bolivian community as one of slave-like labor. It reinforces some stereotypes, and makes an issue very paternalistic. If they are not forced to stay in the same workshops, and are actually known for changing employers a lot, can they still be considered in slave-like condition?

An interesting way to understand the government's approach to the Bolivian community is through a project realized by the Pastoral dos Migrantes and the Missão Paz. The DVD, called, "Oficina Modelo" or Model Workshop, presents six short interviews of several governmental actors on slave-like labor, as well as six other small videos of a workshop used for teaching at the SENAE. The former range from a message from the consul of Bolivia, to an explanation of what is considered degrading work conditions in the country. Dr Maria Steinberg, taking an approach that is at times confrontational, insisting that in Brazil immigrants have different rights or better rights than in Bolivia, also declares:

In Brazil, a worker deserves work conditions where (...) he has minimum conditions of health, light in his work. A healthy space where the air circulates, secure conditions, a place free from fires, right to a living space, not to live in the same place where one works, to not live in the middle of the sewing machines, to not have food mixed up with their work instruments. Those conditions in Brazil are considered degrading (CPM, 2013)

The DVD further explains that at the SENAE they teach their students to avoid working for places where they do not care about the health and the well-being of children (Oficina Modelo, 2013). Implying that workshops that let children in the workshop are neglectful, and not that they are doing the best they can with what they have.

With debates on "new slavery" came situations where "women migrants and sex workers are sometimes "rescued" from a situation they do not wish to leave, or are prevented from migrating for work "for their own good" (McGrath, 2013: 1009 citing Doezema 2002; Dottridge 2007 and Jana et al 2002). Just as Lucas said, to the government, consent does not matter. An exploitative or degrading work conditions exist whether or not workers consent to it. This lack of agency has some repercussion

in the community as it has started to despise the spotlight on the negative aspects of some of its members.

International organizations tackle the topic of slavery and trafficking. Definitions that they use for slavery are however, narrower than Brazilian definitions. For instance, the ILO defines forced labor as “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily” (ILO, 2016). This definition includes much less cases than the Brazilian definition does. A lot is being done on the international scene to end human trafficking and slavery. Human trafficking refers to the transfer from one place to another of people without their consent, or with a consent obtained under duress or deception (ILO, 2009). As far as Bolivian immigrant workers, Brazil focuses on forced labor more than on human trafficking. One of the reasons may be that it is more difficult to identify traffickers. Consequently, as I will explain further, Brazilian actions usually happen in the work place rather than during the original travel to the country. The Brazilian fight slave-like labor fits within the broader international fight.

Slave-like labor is a concept that has pushed the government, in particular the Ministry of Labor and the municipality of São Paulo to take actions regarding the abuses that exist in the industry. However, such abuses are not limited to this sector, particularly in São Paulo, which has pushed some to wonder about the racial implications of framing the Bolivian community as a whole, as a victim of abuse, while framing Koreans as the abusers. I will explore this dimension in the following section.

### 6.1.3 Racializing slave-like labor

Regardless of the definition used for slave labor, it has certain connotations both for the people involved and for the media. A term such as slave involves the idea of lack of freedom and absolute exploitation. Those characteristics do not represent the majority of the work undertaken by Bolivians in the garment industry of São Paulo. Many feel that the most exploitative forms of work are limited to the first year or months of work when workers are learning on the job, and often do not receive a salary or very little money, like Marcelo in chapter five who had just enough to buy a snack. Past this exploitative period, it is often assumed that conditions improve substantially.

The label slave like labor, as used in Brazil, is not without racial stereotypes, particularly as it is framed in the media. It puts against each other, the Korean immigrant community against the Bolivian immigrant community without regards to the fact that Brazilians also use Bolivian workshops to make garments. Their pay is on par with Korean contracts, also contributing to the conditions of work found in the garment industry. On the one hand, it classifies Koreans as the exploiters, which Ernesto, a Bolivian entrepreneur referred them as “raza exploradora”, an exploitative race, and puts away Bolivians as the exploited gullible group. Because of their situation and visibility in the city, Bolivians are often referred to in the imaginary as those *indios*, lacking “culture”, that is to say deficient in terms of sophistication and basically intelligence. In the beginning of the dissertation, I laid out some work about racism in Brazil and its association with the history of migration. Like in many countries experiencing migrations, newer waves of immigrants are usually considered improper to fit in the country. But in the case of Bolivian immigrants, other identities intersect the identity of newcomer. I believe two important factors come in: the fact



that many have phenotypes associated with indigeneity in Brazil, and that “indigenous” men work in an occupation that has been traditionally occupied by women in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Brazil. Bolivians are the good community to frame as an abused minority.

In chapter three, I have described briefly Japanese immigration to Brazil. Those immigrants are associated with positive images in the Brazilian mind, in particular they are considered hard workers and smart (Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros: 2000). However, the positive image is not translated to Korean immigrants in Brazil. The publication “the New Face of Discrimination” from the Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros, found that Koreans were systematically lowest in terms of opinions of all Asian immigrants, and most of the time, lowest when taken in comparison to Afro-Brazilians,<sup>68</sup> Japanese, and Nordestinos. (2000). Koreans, Chinese, Arabs and Jews are usually held in the lowest evaluation although Koreans are often at the lowest rung of evaluation (Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros: 2000). Part of the image that is constructed around Koreans refers to their hardworking ways, but also to connections to the mafia, and exploitative practices (Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros: 2000).

Some of my respondents wondered if those representations were linked to the fact that Koreans are often the employers, assuming that employees must not like their

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<sup>68</sup> The research explains the uniform support for Afro-Brazilians and Nordestinos as follows: “(...) while racism against Afro-Brazilians and northeasterners is a widespread problem, the public discourse that Brazil is a country with no or little racism means that these traditional groups are discussed in a positive light, especially when the conversation emerges out of a research project” (Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros: 2000).

employers. Because the cultural practices surrounding work are vastly different in both cases, Brazilians who work with Koreans often have poor opinions of their bosses, who often act in a manner they find disrespectful.<sup>69</sup> The research from the Centro de Estudos Nipo-Brasileiros also suggests that there is a strong sense from Brazilian employees that their employers are rude and sometimes disrespectful. It is certainly not easy to decide whether the stereotypes about Koreans come from the framing of the community in the newspaper, or if they were preceding the scandals of exploitation. In literature dating from the 1990s, Galetti (1995: 139) describes Koreans as hard workers, who would forego their health in order to make as much money as possible in a short amount of time. Yet, Bolivians are never described in such terms in the literature. When they work so many hours, trying to sew as many items as possible to get as much money as possible, they are exploited. Koreans were never framed as slaves to Jewish storeowners or to their fellow immigrants. Yet they experienced similar conditions to the ones Bolivians are living in. Luiza, Luciana, Felipe, Patricia, Antonia, Francisca, and Anita have discussed their work as children or the work of their siblings as children in their parents' workshops. Granted, at the time, a dictatorship was ruling Brazil so the conditions of work of the population were not necessarily high up in the priorities of the government. Rodrigo, a Bolivian workshop

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<sup>69</sup> I was personally struck at one interaction at the association for Koreans in Brazil, where granted, I was treated very paternalistically by the president. While I was waiting for the president to end his call, I sat on a chair. There were six people in the room, four men and two women. One of the women was Brazilian, and she had opened the door for me after checking in that it was ok. As I was sitting on a chair, the Korean woman suddenly got up, looked at the Brazilian woman and said very sternly "café!" (coffee) while gesturing towards me. This was definitely not in the handbook of good communication at work. I felt bad for the worker, and did not want any coffee, and asked for some water instead.

owner and sometimes leader in the community explained that Bolivians only inherited the system of work from the Koreans.

It is important to note, though, that Bolivian entrepreneurs that have worked with Brazilian stores report that their prices are not better. Paulo Illes emphasized during our meeting that exploitation was not limited to Koreans on Bolivians, but also extended to big brands and Brazilians in general. Some understand that the network in itself is exploitative. In one such realization, a Korean came to Paulo Illes' office when he worked for the CAMI, and started with "eu tambem sou filho de deus", I, too, am a son of God. He explained that even though the CAMI had been pressuring him to pay, the matter was out of his hands because he was waiting on payment from higher up in the production network. Although abuse exists all throughout the network, it is easier for the press, which tends to be very sensationalist in Brazil, to simplify the issue as a matter of exploitation of one immigrant community over the other.

On the other hand, Koreans I met often emphasized that those who are doing the first hand exploitation are Bolivians. I was told many times "*o proprio boliviano explora o boliviano*", it is Bolivians themselves who exploit other Bolivians. This unwillingness in the press and government to frame Bolivians as exploiters of their fellow citizens has some grounding in the organization of the network of course: outsourcing associated with low pay means that the contractors have a lot to do with how much money is available to pay employees and the time for turning out an order. However, it is certain that the entrepreneur also plays a role here: by choosing how to organize and manage his or her workshop, the amount of the pay, the food and lodgings. The label takes away some of the agency of those immigrants, denying the realities that many of them dream of entrepreneurship and ultimately many take that

step. And I believe it plays into the racial representations of Bolivian immigrants as indigenous groups that do not know any better than to submit to exploitative conditions.

This section bringing together racializing slave-like labor has been mainly motivated by my observations of the Bolivian community. I attended two conferences in which Bolivians spoke up against the over-study of their community and the lack of results being circulated back.<sup>70</sup> In addition to a lack of communication between researchers and the Bolivian community, is also the fatigue associated with the recurring representation of Bolivians as victims of slave-like labor. Most of the research as I have previously shown has focused on Bolivians as victims of abuse. As I have explained, very little research has been conducted on Bolivians as entrepreneurs, or active agents of their lives.

There are definitely some negative side effects of using the term of slave-like labor in a country that has a complex history with its past with enslavement. It is important to realize though that the categorization of the abuses found in the garment industry in São Paulo have pushed the government to take action. The next section will focus on the actions taken by the Brazilian government to remedy the situation.

## **6.2 Actions from the Government**

As Brazil is working on solving abuses, international outlets have denounced the conditions of work in the garment industry in Brazil. The *New York Times* and the

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<sup>70</sup> Pedro asked to read some of the research that has been produced on his community. I brought him a dozen publication of *Travessia*, the journal published by the Church Nossa Senhora da Paz.

*Guardian* have both published articles on the conditions of work in the garment industry of São Paulo (URB AL, 2007: 54). In particular, the giant Zara was the subject of an article in *The Guardian* regarding slave-like labor encountered in the production network in São Paulo (Barcelona and Philips, 2011). The US State Department and Amnesty International have also chimed in. In the 2013 “Trafficking in Persons Report” and “country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013”, the US State Department has criticized Brazil over abuse in the garment industry over the past years (Department of State, 2013 a: 104; Department of State, 2013 b). Those reports highlight the Bolivian community as the main victim of abuse in that industry.

This international pressure on the Brazilian industry has been felt by the ABIT, the Brazilian Association of the Textile Industry as reported by Leandro, a representative I interviewed. None of my respondents explained specifically how this pressured was communicated to Brazil. However, a study of Brazilian foreign policy and its pretension towards becoming an important international actor can account for this. The perception of the international community matters to the Brazilian government. As an emerging garment market (Pinto and De Souza, 2013: 306), the state and the industry both have a lot to lose if negative attention becomes important. The ABIT has thus started some programs to bring about sustainable and ethical work in the industry<sup>71</sup>. As a former colony that practiced slavery until 1888, Brazil has a lot at stake in being singled out as a harbinger of slave-like labor. In particular, its international ambitions of becoming a middle-power make Brazil more vulnerable to

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<sup>71</sup> For instance, see Selo Qual, a certification on Quality and Sustainability of the Textile and Fashion Industry available to garment businesses in Brazil.

international criticism and more likely to try to improve its international image.<sup>72</sup> Brazil is thus willing to address visible issues to redress its image.

Programs to cut down on the employment of undocumented workers have existed in many countries, particularly in Europe and the US primarily through employer sanctions. The ILO has sponsored some of the research on the legislation and governmental efforts to cut down on the employment of undocumented workers (Martin and Miller, 2000). Those programs seek to punish employers for hiring undocumented workers, in order to cut down ultimately on the undocumented population in the country (Martin and Miller, 2000: 1). Employer sanctions rely on uncovering situations of abuse or illegal employment. The way to achieve such knowledge usually involves the inspection of workshops by inspectors from the department of labor depending on what branch of administration is responsible for this work.

It seems that the Brazilian government has worked towards a situation that could be named employer sanctions in the garment industry. The Brazilian government acted in two main sectors to solve abuse in the garment industry: by facilitating the acquisition of legal residency papers for Bolivian immigrants and by ordering workshop inspections enforcing long standing legislation. In this section, I will first address inspections, and then look into the changed policies for legalization of immigrants.

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<sup>72</sup> For more information on Brazilian foreign policy and its middle power dreams, see Burges, 2009; Vigevani and Cepaluni, 2009.

### 6.2.1 Inspections of workshops

Inspections of workshops have always existed, but since 1995 they have noticeably increased. There are two types of workshop inspections: those that follow anonymous denunciations, and those that are considered routine inspections. Routine inspections include checks on clothes' tags that happen every week according to Miguel. The type of enforcement employed by the administration and the Ministry of Labor drastically changed after the CPI report. The focus switched, enforcing an existing understanding of various laws that makes outsourcing effectively a practice that does not sever the links of employment. Two laws, law 7102 of June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1983 and law 8666 from June 21<sup>st</sup> 1993 only cover very specific sectors, but they are understood in ways that means that businesses that outsource any part of their main production<sup>73</sup> are responsible for the conditions of work found in the outsourced businesses (McGarth, 2010: 186). In addition, the Labor Tribunal has also adopted resolutions that have legislated in this direction (Biavaschi, 2008). In this case, the production of clothes is considered to be the main activity of a clothes retailer, clothes retailers are responsible for the conditions of work found in the workshops they contract out.

In 2015, a 2004 project of law was being discussed in the Senate after being passed by the Lower Chamber. This project would revoke the current interpretation of the existing set of legislation and formally allow businesses to outsource their main activity without making them responsible for the conditions of work there (Costas,

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<sup>73</sup> The law states that only services of food/cleaning and security can be outsourced without making the main business responsible for the work conditions. There is a new project of law (4330/2004) that would broadly extent authorizations for outsourcing and take away the responsibility for conditions of work from the contractors.

2015). Considering this project has been discussed since 2004, the legislative process runs very slow in Brazil, showing signs of the very heavy bureaucratic state, and of the dysfunctional proportional representation system that runs the legislative process in Brazil.

Lucas, an inspector at the Labor Ministry, explained that the focus of the government switched after the Municipal report was published: while Bolivian workshop owners used to be the main focus of investigation and punishment, nowadays, it is the business that contracts the workshop that suffers the most consequences. Nowadays, when agents come into a workshop, detention would only happen to the owner in cases of egregious violations. Fiscal agents are nowadays looking for clothes tags that would point out to the responsible culprit: the store that outsourced the production. He further detailed that the demand needed to be made responsible: because the production network is complex, it is not a winning strategy to hold responsible the offer of cheap labor. In order to fight slave labor, the government decided to make the demand for cheap labor, that is to say bigger businesses responsible. Consequently, 2013 marked a very big increase in the inspections of workshops, and by association in inspections of any associated store.

If the government is not looking closely anymore at the workshop owners and charging them with fees – unless there are cases of human trafficking or other violence going on above not respecting labor laws and hiring undocumented workers – the government has started making intermediaries responsible and is trying to go after the big players too. Lucas explained that the increase in fiscal control is a means to get to the bigger brands that outsource their productions. However, often times, those bigger brands use intermediaries to produce their clothes. He assured me that they are not



prosecuting those intermediaries, although most Koreans seemed to think that they are targets. But during the interview, Lucas acknowledged that many Koreans end up being blacklisted in the industry. Oftentimes intermediaries work exclusively with a big brand and being prosecuted is an obstacle in their finding work later on. Businesses who hire Bolivian workshops are thus responsible for what is happening in those workshops even if they do not own them. Among the changes, a new practice threatens any store that is found guilty of outsourcing to a workshop that used slave labor with being barred from working in the industry for the next 15 years. This change constitutes a very real fear among the Koreans I interviewed. Time will tell if this high stakes measure will be as avoided as it was in France where fines were determined to be too high, leading labor inspectors to change their reports (Martin and Miller, 2000: 13).

This move to apply the law rigorously has meant that some big companies have been indicted for using slave-like labor. In the case of those companies, their work still continues in the country and they use the same procedures of outsourcing. According to a source close to the Bolivian community that wished to remain anonymous, some of them have donated sums of money to the Church Nossa Senhora da Paz, a Scalibrinian-based entity that cares for immigrants in the city of São Paulo, that used to be the main center of help for Bolivian immigrants.<sup>74</sup> Today this money

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<sup>74</sup> Nowadays, this status of main help for the Bolivian community is in question. In my observations as well as during discussions with some members of the community who preferred to retain anonymity, the target populations have changed a bit. Haitian minorities are now the most visible around the Church during the week. The Church is still a meeting ground for some cultural events like the *novenas*, a series of celebration linked to Bolivian Saints. The population attending those events is, however, usually Bolivians who are more well off, and come from a particular region in Bolivia. The status of first help to Bolivian immigrants has certainly changed in the past years.

may not benefit the victims of abuse in workshops as well since the Pastoral's main target community seems to have shifted in the recent years.

Lucas explained that he has closed every single workshop he has visited. To him, there were no workshops up to par with the standards established by the government. This does not mean though that the work found there should necessarily be considered slave-like labor. One of the examples he brought up of their successful action concerns one of the most complex issues for Bolivian immigrants in the city. Conflating living and working spaces remains a very big point of contention with the government as Lucas and others have explained. Lucas tried to present some ways around this issue during our interview. He told me of a workshop he busted where workers lived where they work. The workshop owner talked to the landlord who agreed to build a wall on the inside door from the front room, in order to make a separate area for living and for working. Lucas' solution seems rather straightforward, but I cannot help but wonder if the workshop was then charged with a double rent, if that change needed approval from the municipality, and how much it changed the workers' lives and freedom to have to get out through the back door, go back in front of the street to get in to work in the morning. As I mentioned in chapter six, abuse patterns brought by sharing living and work spaces cannot be solved by a wall: abuse dynamics may still happen when workers live collegiately. The government's solutions seem to be more cosmetic than a long-term answer to complex dynamics.

Aside from using the existing legal interpretation on outsourcing, the government of Brazil and of Bolivia have worked together to help the immigration

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More details on the dynamics with immigrant associations will be explored in the next chapter.

status of many Bolivians. Martin and Miller concluded that employer sanctions by themselves were insufficient to fight illegal employment (2000: 56).

### **6.2.2 Changes in immigration status**

The conditions of abuse in the garment industry thrive in a context of undocumented immigration from Bolivians coming from poorer social classes. As such, there have been pressures by immigrant associations on the government to facilitate the regularization of undocumented immigrants. The 2009 amnesty was understood in the Bolivian community as an opportunity to provide legal documentation to those who suffered the most in workshops. However, as I emphasized in chapter four, the amnesty resulted in a lower number of legalizations among Bolivians than was expected.

The Bolivian consulate has also instituted changes that make it easier to obtain immigration papers. Colonel Raul, whom I interviewed, explained that he came to work in São Paulo from Brasilia because there was an increased need for the consulate. We met on the *Rua Coimbra*, a street in the Bras neighborhood that holds the Bolivian market every Saturday. It is known to be a hub for the Bolivian community. In 2009, only the consulate downtown existed. This office was opened in 2011. My visit to the consulate in 2009 showed a rather empty office in comparison to the amount of people in that day, with about 60 people waiting in the small waiting room. In particular, the consulate now has the option to emit police records on site, which helps Bolivians tremendously as they no longer have to travel to Bolivia to obtain their paper. Those papers cost R\$81, which is affordable for most. This piece of paper is used to take advantage of the MERCOSUR agreement that provides temporary residence documentation to undocumented Bolivians in Brazil.

Despite the changes made to facilitate documentation, people in charge in the garment industry still hold misconceptions. Leandro, as a Brazilian working in the ABIT, shows some misconceptions about the issue, something I witnessed at the ABIT during meetings and round tables that I attended; participants keep thinking that the main problem is the lack of proper documentation and fear of the authorities. Ignorance of the law was often cited as the main reason why there was such widespread abuse in the Bolivian community. Leandro explained

Today, those people [immigrants] often do not know [their rights], and often the state is distant from them. So when the immigrant arrives, he does not know what are his rights. He needs to know and since he does not know those rights, he thinks that he is here illegally. He does not want to be found. He thinks that if he is found, Brazilian authorities will come, and he will be sent back home, like it used to happen before. But today it is not the same. He needs to know that he can come here and get legalized. He needs to know the tools.

This reality, although important, only provides a partial understanding of the situation. Community leaders have also emphasized the need to go do those controls without the police so that immigrants would not be jailed. It has been very often successful, but on occasion the police have continued to accompany fiscal controls and emit notices to leave the country voluntarily. The Bolivian community has worked very hard to change those misconceptions, and although some are still misinformed, a large part of the community has access to the information.

Changes to immigration status and emission of notices of voluntary leave have made it easier for Bolivians to open their own workshops since they need legal documentation in the country to obtain a CNPJ. Community leaders mentioned on several occasions that the size of workshops was decreasing as years went by, a workshop employing a couple with maybe their married sibling is becoming the norm.

This ease of access to legal documentation might have been an encouraging factor to this situation. While Bolivians are obtaining legal documentation in higher numbers, the registration of Bolivian workers remains very low. Workers in Brazil need to be registered to legally work. This registration is represented by a document called *carteira de trabalho*. This document looks like a passport; it contains information about the worker, his/her employer, the salary and other benefits. This document is available to both Brazilians and foreigners in the country. In order to legally work, employers need to sign this document. Simply having this document is thus not enough to be legally working in Brazil.

Many of my respondents have reported that immigrants did not want to work legally to avoid paying the high taxes and contributing to a retirement fund they have no intention at that moment to ever benefit from.<sup>75</sup> Many only plan short stays in Brazil, and among my respondents, few had the idea that they would stay in Brazil as long as they did. The physical proximity of Bolivia and relative ease of travel encourages a more temporary mindset among Bolivians, despite the reality where some end up staying in Brazil all their lives. Carmen and Daniel were both older Bolivians, while Daniel has contributed to the retirement fund all through his life and will enjoy in a few years the payments. Carmen, on the other hand, described being very tired and having her children take care of her financially. She had just closed her

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<sup>75</sup> It is important to note that immigrants who contribute to taxes on their salaries can fully take advantage of all benefits that Brazilians are entitled to. One of the last programs that foreigners did not have automatic access was the Bolsa Familia (and the Minha Casa, Minha Vida: My House, my Life). However, the government made those programs available to foreigners in 2014 (Portal Brasil, 2014).

last workshop and was helping her husband care for his restaurant. She never planned a retirement in Brazil.

Brazilian social charges are very high and usually figure high up in the list of reasons why immigrants refuse to get their legal documentation signed. They stem from a tradition of strong labor rights that was started in the 1930s, by Getúlio Vargas. As in other countries, like in Europe, immigrants had a role in the fight to obtain better work conditions before the 1930s (Nicoli, 2011: 79). During the Vargas era, while labor rights were granted to most of the workers, the government implemented restrictions on immigration and in particular on low-qualified immigration (Nicoli, 2011: 79). He institutionalized a phenomenon called “nationalization of labor” where the local workforce is officially favored over a foreign workforce (Nicoli, 2011: 79). Vargas regulated labor rights and unionization in an effort to put the government in the middle of negotiation between labor and industry (Fausto, 2001: 181). Today, his legacy on labor rights is still celebrated in Brazil.

Aside from a general idea that employees cost a lot more than their salaries in Brazil, there is little consensus about how much more they cost. In another indication of the high bureaucracy legacy in Brazil, looking online at the exact cost of charges did not help uncover the exact cost of an employee. Juliano, a real estate agent from the Bras, argued that employees cost double their salaries. Patricia, a Korean-descent store and workshop owner told me that it cost just around 60% of the salary in charges. Such disagreements are not surprising as the government website actually states: “Because of charges that are reflected on the pay papers or salary, and benefits, the worker costs a lot more than his salary. But there is no consensus about exactly how much more.” (Portal Brasil, 2012) It is important to explore the charges that are

paid by employers and employees to understand why there is a reluctance to register employees among Bolivian workshop owners.

Piece rate pay is not legal in Brazil; instead employees need to be salaried. Their salary at the end of the month will depend on the number of hours worked as any extra time is paid above the hourly salary and the amount of extra time is heavily regulated. All registered employees are entitled a 13<sup>th</sup> month salary. So every month the employer contributes 8.33% of the monthly salary to the 13<sup>th</sup> month. Every registered employee also receives the right to a month-long paid vacation every year, with its eligibility starting after the 12<sup>th</sup> month of employment. Every month, the employer needs to contribute 11.1% to paid vacation. In addition, the employer needs to contribute to a fund called FGTS (Fundo de Garantia do Tempo de Serviço). FGTS is a fund to which all employers have to contribute. The money in this fund can be used by employees in particular circumstances including: when they decide to buy a house, when they are getting married, and when they are fired, as a part of their unemployment benefits, when they retire, when they get sick with HIV or cancer or any other terminal illness, and in case of an environmental disaster (Fundo de Garantia do Tempo de Serviço, 2009). Contributions to the FGTS amount to 8% of the salary paid by the employer; that includes overtime and the 13<sup>th</sup> month.

Other costs include the transportation fee, which employers are requested to pay for those living a certain distance from work, as well as paid holidays. This a very minimum of how much an employer has to pay in addition to the monthly salary, which brings social charges to 27.43% of the salary. Employees paid by the hour cost more to the employer, up to 98% of the salary, according to one site (Zanluca, 2015).

The number of sites devoted to calculating the costs of employees are an indication of the complexity of the calculations.

Employers are not the only one affected by the high cost of social charges. In turn, employees have money discounted from their salary. For instance, contributions to the retirement fund, the INSS are automatically discounted from the salary and paid by the employers. Contributions to the INSS are dependent on the salary; anyone earning under R\$1,300 per month only contributes 8% of their salary to the INSS. Taxes are not discounted from the salary until a monthly salary of about R\$1,900. It is complex to figure out exactly how much is collected from the employee and the employer despite some time researching the issue. Any workshop or storeowner has to resort to professional help from professional accountants if they want to respect the law.

The minimum salary in itself has increased over the last few years. In 1998, the minimum salary was R\$130; in 2005 it was R\$300; and in 2015, it was R\$788. McGrath argues that her research on the news coverage of Bolivian workshops shows that the minimum wage today possibly influences the base payment received by Bolivians in workshops (McGrath, 2010: 237). It is important to realize though that the city of São Paulo's costs of living make the minimum salary not a living wage<sup>76</sup>.

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<sup>76</sup> During my field research, I volunteered one morning a week at the Pastoral dos Migrantes. During that time, I translated in French a presentation given in Portuguese on labor rights in Brazil. During our talk, we would all calculate a budget of a salaried employee on the minimum salary. Social charges were discounted then immigrants were encouraged to share the cost of their accommodation. We took all budget items out and ended up with no money left or a negative amount. I think the point was to show how difficult living on a minimum wage in the city was.



Once all charges are discounted from the salary, very little is left to the worker to cover their own rent and food.

There are of course regulations on regular workweeks. Workers are supposed to work no more than 44 hours. Any supplemental hour is considered overtime. Overtime is limited to 10 hours a week, no more than 2 hours a day (CAMI, 2012: 46). Hours extra are paid 50% more than regular work hours, and on Sundays and holidays they are paid 100% more.

Finally, it bears pointing out that the abuse targeted by the Brazilian government exists everywhere in Brazil and is not limited to the garment industry nor the Bolivian community. Brazilians also send their children to work, particularly in street sales.<sup>77</sup> Anecdotally, on my way to the subway station Santa Cecilia, I observed a child of around 8 to 10 years old, selling umbrellas on a rainy day. The police station was 200 yards away. Other common forms of eschewing the laws are, for instance, failure to pay or account for overtime. My roommate during my field research was a registered employee, yet she worked 12 hours per day on a regular basis, with many of her weekends devoted to work. She did not receive overtime payments or days off as a result of her work. Abuse is not limited to the garment sector; rather practices in many sectors in Brazil overgrow the labor standards. Of course, Brazil like those who tried to implement employer sanctions has limited resources to send labor inspectors in every workplace (Martin and Miller, 2000: 4).

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<sup>77</sup> The *Bolsa Familia*, or family grant, has helped keeping children in school, at the very least during the school year. It has not completely eradicated child labor in the country.

### **6.2.3 Conclusions on employer sanctions**

The government has taken actions to solve abuse in workshops. Some of the actions targeted the immigration status of Bolivians, and in that case the Bolivian government also had a hand in improving the situation. However, this did not necessarily translate into fewer abuses for Bolivians. Instead, it promoted the proliferation of ever smaller workshops, where abuse may be harder to uncover. Legal documentation is thus not a solution to the conditions of informality in the garment industry. The government has also increased the inspections in workshops and seems to target informality as the culprit of the abuse. I will explore the topic of informality in the following section.

Although it seems that Brazil is implementing a form of employer sanctions that have been developed in Europe, the government has not implemented deportation policies or more restrictive policies of entries. If anything, the provisions to receive Haitian immigrants show an interest in absorbing a bigger immigrant population. Furthermore, Brazilian workers have already left the industry for the most part as other more profitable jobs have opened up for them. Korean storeowners have never hired Brazilians for the sewing segment of their production. The main goal of the Brazilian government's actions is to ensure that Bolivian workers are no longer exploited in the industry. Additionally, the main issue in Brazil does not relate to counterfeit documents (Martin and Miller, 2000: 3). I have neither heard nor read about counterfeit workers' registration cards, or fake registration, which does not mean it does not exist, but rather it was not a prominent problem at the time. If anything, those inspections may bring on more issues where workers forge registration and registration systems to avoid those inspections. It may also be that putting sanctions mostly on storeowners who outsource, works more slowly to curb down the

informality and lack of regularization of workers in small Bolivian owned workshops. I will explore in chapter seven how entrepreneurs from each community react to those employer sanctions.

### **6.3 Designating Informal Labor as the Culprit: Policies to End Informality**

The government's work towards immigration, slave-like labor and registering workers to respect labor laws, points towards an interest to end informality. Contrary to the US, France, and Germany, the informal sector remains very widespread in Brazil. This means that strict employer sanctions would work better in tandem with a fight against informality. This informality, the existence of economic transactions outside of the eyes of the government, is very visible in the informal market for garments in the *Feira da Madrugada* described in chapter five. All Korean immigrants who own a store or a sale point at the *Feira* have emphasized that no seller provides an official receipt, a *nota fiscal*. Diego, a Bolivian workshop owner who works at the *Feira* explains that he is within the law because his workshop has a CNPJ and he pays taxes on his workshop. I will discuss the intricacies of this informal garment market in the last chapter. In this section instead, I want to focus on informality in the workshop and on the relationship between workshops and stores since it is the relationship targeted by the Brazilian legislation that perceives outsourcing as an informal employment relationship. I will first examine the theory behind informality in Brazil and Latin America, and then look more particularly at the specific conditions it is established in the industry. Finally, I will look at relationship between corruption among government employees and the existence of informality.

### 6.3.1 Informality in Brazil and Latin America

The informal economy, the extra-legal sector of the economy, is a topic of many debates. But overall, there is one thing in common among the different approaches to explain why it exists: there is a problem, and that problem needs to be solved. For De Soto whose approach is close to neoliberal politics, the informal economy is a more efficient economy dominated by capitalist entrepreneurs set free from overpowering bureaucracy (see De Soto, 1989). Overall, most approaches consider a binarity between informal and formal, although numerous studies have shown that there are connections between formal and informal economies. The topic of informal labor and the informal economy made a comeback on International Organizations' agendas in the 2000s (Coletto, 2010: xv). In São Paulo, stores are partially involved in the informal economy when they do not declare all their sales or transactions. Workshops often operate in the informal economy by not declaring their employees. And the *Feira* remains a mostly informal retail and wholesale affair. In Brazil, the informal economy remains a problem to be solved, even to be eradicated. The steps the government has put in place are not limited to the garment industry.

Informality represents a large share of the economy in Brazil. In 2009, the ILO estimated that 32 million were in informal non-agricultural employment, reaching about 42% of non-agricultural work (ILO, 2013: 75). In 2002, there was a gender imbalance with 67% of women and only 55% of men in informal employment (Coletto, 2010: 29). Among all those in the informal economy, 41% are self-employed and 59% are employed (Coletto, 2010: 31). However, it bears to keep in mind that different definitions of informality bring different numbers on the informal sector. As such, quantification is almost impossible and all results are inherently flawed (Coletto, 2010: 27).

Government actions put pressures in the early 2000s on the industry by requesting that merchandise traveling on the road carry a registration number, called CNPJ (*Cadastro Nacional da Pessoa Juridica*, National Registry of Legal Entities). As a result, the number of registered workshops soared in the past decade. According to Ricardo, around 80% of Bolivian workshops now have a CNPJ when only ten years before, no store wanted to work with a registered workshop. It is considered a success of pressures and lobbying by immigrant associations and the government. This registration can be obtained by anyone wanting to open and register a business. The process according to Rosa, one of my respondents, was quite easy, and the monthly fee only R\$35. No one checked the location of her business activity, her own apartment. The requirements for obtaining a CNPJ are rather limited, and it is possible to register a business even in an apartment. Most Bolivian immigrant entrepreneurs have waited to obtain legal documentation to open a business in order to obtain that registration. The ease of obtaining a CNPJ hardly compares to the extensive administration and cost of registering employees, as I have shown earlier.

Informality in the garment industry of São Paulo comes in many forms. The workshop may be informal, although this is rarely the case nowadays. All workers or some workers may not be declared. Retail may happen in the *Feira* and thus informally. Or the contract may be informal, although an important part is formal as there are fiscal notes traveling with merchandise between the store and the workshop. Another point of informality might also be the store accepting a contract from a bigger retailer, in particular from Brazilian or international big retailers. Those contracts are not always in the formal sector. There are thus many points of informality in the garment industry of São Paulo. They are not always simultaneous, but there rarely is

no informality at all. Registering the business is usually where formality ends. Many workers are undeclared regardless of their immigration status. Daniel explained that at the time of the interview he was seriously considering abandoning his workshop because none of his employees wanted to register. In a group interview with Ernesto, one woman expressed this feeling when she said that she did not want to pay taxes, she wanted to keep all her money because she was in Brazil only temporarily.

Ricardo was one of the few Bolivians who tried to operate a totally formal and registered workshop where all workers were declared to the authorities. His thirty-five employees were declared, registered. He paid the FGTS for them and other correlated taxes, which according to most people I interviewed represent nearly the equivalent of another salary. However, this experience was a disaster for Ricardo; employees produced very little despite his incentives.<sup>78</sup> To him, paying hourly rather than by piece was the main reason of his workshop failure. To successfully run the workshop, employees needed to make at least three pieces and a half per day: most only made three pieces a day<sup>79</sup>. To him, his employees did not invest 100% of their energy to the task. On the other end of the spectrum, Carmen, who never ran a fully legalized workshop, argued that

it works, it works (...) my eldest daughter has a sewing workshop working with thirty employees, her workshop is all legalized,

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<sup>78</sup> He offered 10-15% bonuses if the workshop went over certain objectives.

<sup>79</sup> A very quick calculation shows that if a regular employee made R\$500 per month, that would represent about R\$20 per day of work. If they receive R\$1 per piece, that would be twenty pieces a day. For an eight-hour day, instead of the twelve hours a day most workers do, that would mean thirteen pieces. That is a tremendous difference in terms of productivity.

everything. Even a cleaning employee is registered with her registered card. Independent workroom, independent living space, it works

There is definitely the feeling in those that are the least close to the immigrant associations<sup>80</sup> that there is no way that a fully formal workshop is sustainable. One other point of contention of course is how much Korean stores are willing to pay for the production, as setting up an entirely legalized workshop costs a lot of money. Contracts value need to get higher for Bolivians to be able to afford registering their employees.

Another avenue of informality comes through the production from both the workshop and the stores, which is not always fully declared. Indeed, many Korean storeowners and even the president of the Korean Association have admitted to eschew some of the tax payment, preferring to gamble on potential fines. When Luiza lived in the US she paid all her taxes and was not concerned about corruption or inspections. She felt though that in Brazil, high taxes did not come with plenty of public services that made them worthy.

(...) With this kind of labor law Brazil is not going to compete with any other country in the world. (...) it's too old. And it's not realistic you see and they, this labor law has to do with fiscal, fiscal laws. That's where they get all the taxes that we pay and the employees that pay and go to the governments and they manage the money. They manage the money, but I don't know how they manage the money because we don't have anything in return. All the employees if they depend on the SUS the public medical insurance, they will die on the lines right. And (...) we pay such a huge amount of tax and we have to pay for our own medical insurance and we don't have a decent retirement plans, no. So Brazil has to go through big reforms, but politicians are not interested if you go through all these renovations, it will be very hard for them to be rich right.

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<sup>80</sup> Carmen was the president of a prominent Bolivian immigrant association.

If the taxes are not contributing to their lives, then why pay them in full? There is also the feeling that nothing can be done right, as controls are done monthly within stores about the information displayed on garment tags. Adriana and Miguel both have discussed this as a routine practice by fiscal agents, and as a way to keep the government afloat with regular penalty fees.

Informal labor brings its hosts of problems, including problems of instability by its very nature of being extra-legal: authorities have power over it, such as powers of ending activities, fining entrepreneurs, or allow corruption to weigh on them. For Maloney and Cunningham though, “many of the ‘precarious’ characteristics associated with informality are natural by-products of the fact that the informal self-employed are fundamentally the owners of a small firm” (2006: 41). In the next section, I will address other forms of vulnerability, in particular vulnerability to thieves who impersonate legal authorities or simply violently threaten immigrants who do not want authorities involved in their business that go beyond the risks of owning a small business.

### **6.3.2 Corruption in Brazil**

In this section, I explore the theme of corruption. Although the government is officially against all corruption, and in particular of its labor inspectors, corruption is part of the daily life of entrepreneurs in São Paulo. I want to see here, how it competes with the understanding of the government as a resource in fighting abuse, instead contributing to the negative experience of the entrepreneurs with the state.

Corruption in Brazil is often perceived internationally as a corruption of the high elites of the government. The beloved president Lula hardly managed to finish his two mandates without being accused of being corrupted, investigation courts



instead putting the blame of corruption on his son. Similarly, Dilma Rousseff, Lula's successor, has been at the center of a few corruption scandals herself before her impeachment in 2016<sup>81</sup>. But corruption happens on an everyday basis too. Developing countries are often blamed for their levels of corruptions, and most of us who have lived there usually have experienced corruption in one form or another. When I started my field research in Brazil in March 2013, corruption was a topic of discussions for most of the population<sup>82</sup>. Street protests started while I was there just a year before the World Soccer Cup started in Brazil. In 2013, Transparency international ranked Brazil 72<sup>nd</sup> out of 177<sup>83</sup> for corruption in the world (Transparency International, 2013 a). Transparency's study shows that business owners and top managers report high levels of corruption, encouraged by the intense bureaucratic organization of the country where each business has to deal with several regulatory agencies, increasing the opportunities of corruption (Transparency International, 2013 b).

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<sup>81</sup> As of the end of 2015, Rousseff was involved in several corruption scandals, which have taken a heavy toll on her approval rates in the country (Zainulbhai, 2015).

<sup>82</sup> My very first hours in São Paulo were actually marked by this discontent with corruption. I shared a taxi from the drop-off point of the airport shuttle to my apartment with a doctor who was complaining to the cab driver about corruption in the hospital system. She explained that some doctors refuse to treat patients or put patients higher up on the list if they give some money to pay for the procedure. This is absolutely illegal in a country with free health care. I certainly did not predict any of the protests that started when I was in São Paulo, but it was not far-fetched to see people organize against the widespread corruption that exist in the country after the many times corruption was brought up in everyday conversation or by my respondents.

<sup>83</sup> Bolivia and South Korea ranked respectively, 106<sup>th</sup> and 46<sup>th</sup> in the same index (Transparency International, 2013 a).

Corruption is not limited to the higher spheres of government. Indeed, during my field research, most of my respondents brought up the topic. Even the government was aware of the situation since Lucas explained that although he did not know personally of corrupt fiscal agents, corruption as a whole needed to stop. The CAMI, Ruth Camacho, and Paulo Illes, have all attested to the widespread corruption. For Sandra, the respondent at the CAMI, this was no surprise because of the widespread corruption everywhere in the country. It came from irresponsible fiscal agents, but Sandra assured me that there were methods to deal with this situation. For instance, workers can be fired for being corrupt. She had no answer though as to whether those programs have had any impacts on the levels of corruption in the industry. The reports from entrepreneurs seemed to show that corruption was well-established and a fact of life.<sup>84</sup>

With informality comes opportunity for abuse from both the government, and private individuals. Pedro's story in the first workshop where he worked is an example of such corruption. Government representatives, or people impersonating government agents, showed up at the workshop and offered to keep quiet about the unregistered workers and the material conditions of labor if the owner, a Korean, accepted to pay them an important sum of money, in that case around R\$30,000 the first time they came in. The second time, they asked for R\$5,000 per agent. The owner ended up paying those people as she needed to keep the workshop out of sight of the

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<sup>84</sup> Out of all my respondents, Ricardo is the only one who did not know if there was any corruption in the industry. He said that he hoped fiscal agents were not corrupted. In the end he concluded that corruption exists everywhere in the world and in Bolivia too. But he did think that people in Brazil were good.

government. It is not clear in such stories whether the people who claimed to be fiscal agents actually were from the government or if they lied to prey on vulnerable individuals. Some of the reports of corruption can be attributed to unscrupulous individuals preying on vulnerable populations. Pedro and Alfonso both reported being disappointed to see high levels of corruption in Brazil as they thought that Brazil was better than Bolivia on that account. Juliana, a government worker at the Ministry of Justice, explained that Bolivia experiences a lot of systemic problems with corruption and the treatment of workers. According to her, this creates expectations in immigrants who do not know it could work differently thus putting the blame at least partially on their lack of knowledge. Yet Pedro's story shows that it might be slightly different from what she thinks.

Learning how to deal with the corruption is part of the learning curve that most Koreans must learn when they open their stores. Luiza explained that corruption "that's part of the business, unfortunately." Several new storeowners reported that their parents were the ones who usually take care of the fiscal agents<sup>85</sup> who come to the store. Patricia for instance lets the accountant deal with any demands from fiscal agents. Corruption was not systematic, but according to her, it did exist. Some of the stories they told show the blurry lines that exist between corruption and regular inspections. For instance, the inspection of tags that I mentioned earlier falls into this category. Adriana explained that in a recent visit from an inspection agent, he noted

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<sup>85</sup> The term that is used is *fiscais*, or *agente fiscal*. I decided to keep the sentiment behind it although in the US, fiscal controls are strictly related to taxes. In Brazil, those controls seem to range wider from tax payment up to the verification of compliance with regulations.

that she did not conform to the size regulations of some of the logos on the tag and fined her R\$500 for it. In the end, she thought that she was not responsible for this since she bought the fabric from an external source who gave her the wrong tag. She paid the R\$500 without saying a word. She knows that this was not filed with the government: it basically does not exist anywhere. She also knows that if she does not pay on the spot, it will be filed and registered.

Similarly, Miguel experienced

I had one incident like two years ago because because of the high taxes we pay, sometimes I don't [produce a fiscal receipt] right. So once I sent the merchandise out and then my representative she got caught by some cops then she was able to go through with the merchandise but the cops only got the little piece of paper with the content, my store name and then they came here and they said "ok so I know you are doing something wrong, so come by the police department and we'll talk" so we sent I think it was my dad and a lawyer or accountant so they went up to the department, the police department, they negotiated and I ended up paying around R\$7,000. (...) just to say ok (...) yeah let's forget about it. So this let's forget about it cost me R\$7,000 which at first it was paying R\$10,000 and they said we'll we can't do that. And he, the funny thing is that the chief said, oh I can't do that because we have many people to share it with.

Miguel understood this negotiation practice and the fact that the police had to share the money as an example of corruption. It seems pretty clear that it probably was. In this experience, his dad was the one responsible for dealing with this kind of activity. The levels of corruption in the government frustrated Francisca because they harmed garment stores on a regular basis. Those kinds of situations make most entrepreneurs feel that there is no point making efforts in the country, because in the end, it is not what is fair that prevails, but who you pay.

Adriana believed that Koreans were scared of inspections. This fear was the reason why they did not protest against the rampant corruption in the industry. They

worry that, if they protest, fiscal agents will come to their business and make them pay very high fees (Adriana said R\$100,000). However, Adriana recognized that her business was still very young and her friends might have a better grasp of the realities of corruption than she does. Rosa, a Bolivian workshop owner, explained that she had heard of corruption during inspections on workshops and it scared her a lot.

Iago on the other hand, believed that he did not have much to fear for since he paid some money to the government: “I am not scared because I pay a little too, I contributed to the state. If I did not pay anything, I would be scared.” Iago was very clear that he had “thieves” coming to his workshop pretending to be police officers, not agents from the Labor Ministry. This vulnerability to dishonest and ill-intentioned individuals culminated in 2013 in the death of a young Bolivian boy shot at his home by people who were robbing his family at gunpoint.

The main theory of employer sanctions as discussed by Martin and Miller (2000: 5) is as follows:

The economic theory of unlawful behavior for economic gain is based on individuals making rational decisions, i.e., an individual compares the certain payoff from lawful behavior and the uncertain payoff from unlawful behavior selects the option with the highest expected value. Thus, increasing the penalty associated with unlawful behavior, increasing the probability of detection, or both can reduce unlawful behavior. Social stigma or other opprobrium attached to lawbreakers can also encourage lawful behavior.

This rationalization is obvious when taking into account the cost of registration for workers as well as the cost of corruption. When Korean storeowners declare that they would rather pay the fines, than all the taxes, it is because they expect those to be cheaper in the end. So increasing the legal cost of outsourcing by barring Korean storeowners from the profession altogether would be an alternative increasing the

costs and thus decreasing the incentives. It is probable that such a strong punishment was devised to attempt proportionality for the widespread informality and corruption in the industry. However, it still relies on getting caught, the main gamble most entrepreneurs play on a daily basis. The addition of corruption also tones down the effectiveness of such laws, as payoffs might still exist to stave off scrutiny.

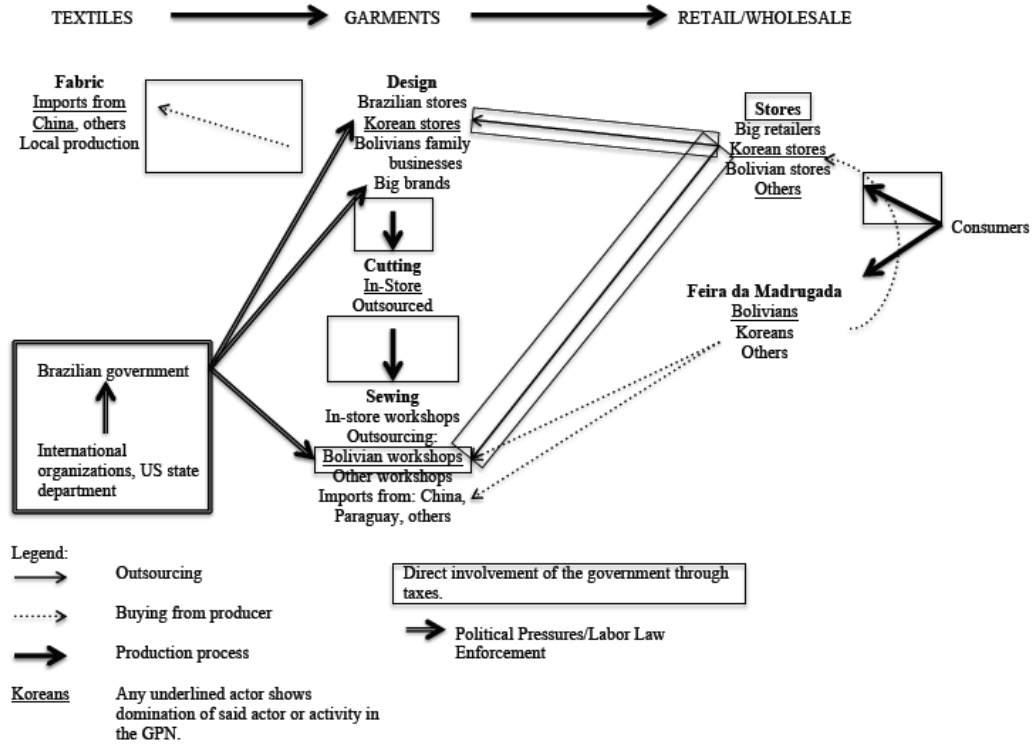
There were very few reports of corruption related to the immigration status of my respondents. Helena, a Korean sales representative, explained that when she first arrived in Brazil and was at home with her siblings, someone tried to get into their apartment and told her father, who did not master the language, that he had to pay a fee to stay in Brazil. Thankfully, they knew a Korean lawyer who told them to denounce this situation to the police, scaring the potential extorter away. Antonia related to me that immigrants were often the targets of corrupted individuals because of their status as immigrants. She said that she usually warned immigrants to always carry their papers with them to turn down any threats. With the advent of an easier access to legal documentation, those stories might possibly become less common.

The efforts to fight informality and conduct inspections of workshops are undercut by the widespread corruption in the garment industry. Entrepreneurs seemed to have difficulty discerning the difference between acts of corruption, legitimate acts from the government, a redundant system of taxation and penalty fees, and sometimes, individuals of ill repute, taking advantage of them. Widespread corruption has rippling effects where entrepreneurs fundamentally distrust the government and its actions.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

To conclude this chapter, I present an updated version of the Global Production Network integrating the role of the government in the network.

Figure 2: Representation of the GPN



In this chapter, the Global Production Network of the garment industry in São Paulo has been defined with a bit more details. The role of the government, important in the GPN literature, has shaped many of the developments of the garment industry in the past fifteen years. This role is illustrated in the figure with the squares that surround areas of the network the government is policing, and the double lined arrows. As I explained, some of that policing has been routine, in particular with the stores. Some of the policing has increased when the government started addressing some of

the most egregious concerns of abuse in the industry by increasing inspections of workshops, dismantling workshops and giving notice of deportation to immigrants found without proper documentation. This pressure is symbolized by the double lined arrows. Providing documentation to immigrants helps with their daily lives, but does not solve the conditions of abuse in the garment industry: many who obtain documentation move on to reproduce that abuse by opening their own workshop, seeing a way to evade abuses placed on them by unscrupulous fellow Bolivians. Those who remain workers never get registered despite their legal documentation and remain firmly entrenched in informality. Yet, informality is justly named as one of the causes of the abuse. As long as workshops remain informal, workers will have no formal recourse to know their rights or to demand reparation or respect. However, the government has chosen the route of labor law enforcement in this matter, rather than a route of promoting understanding of the rules. In a case of too many rules to be understood, immigrants might feel like they can do no right and abandon altogether any semblance of propriety.

As noted in the chapter and in the figure, pressures from international forces symbolized by double lined arrows, have pushed the government and the industry to making decisions that solve the visibility of the issue, but fail to understand the deep roots of the abuse. The government has taken a repressive route because of the success it garnered through establishing controls of merchandise in transit, successfully imposing CNPJs registration as the norm for garment workshops. However, this success might have been linked to the ease of registering a business. A prospective entrepreneur needs only to pay a small monthly fee to keep up a registration number. The government does not inspect any workplace to make sure it is suitable for work or



follows labor law, making it a straightforward bureaucratic action. Registering workers on the other hand, is a much more complex endeavor, with many laws to follow, meaning that outside help is most certainly necessary to adequately follow the law.

GPN tend to present a unified view of the state, but the Brazilian case shows that the state has several levels of action: in this case, the Municipal level was the impetus for broader changes on the federal level. The label of slave-like labor has taken its toll on both the Bolivian and Korean communities. The following chapter is devoted to social capital in the GPN and how it affects perspectives about the governmental efforts to end abuses in the sector.

Employer sanctions in the case of Brazil are understood broadly because of the legislation in place. Instead of penalizing the workshop owner, the government makes the store that outsources the real employer, responsible for the conditions of work and the legal employment of workers there. Considering the high levels of informality and corruption, the penalties devised by the government are very high for those storeowners convicted of slave-like labor. Despite the weight of the punishment, in 2013, many were still continuing business as usual although tensions and anxieties were palpable during my interviews. The next chapter will address what entrepreneurs think of this program.

## Chapter 7

### THE UNDERSTATED IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL CAPITAL

#### 7.1 Introduction

This dissertation project started as a means to explore the relationships between Koreans and Bolivians in the garment industry. The accepted wisdom in the research was that Koreans are benefiting more from the garment industry than Bolivians. The former stand higher in the network as they control the purse strings. Accordingly, the government holds them accountable for the abuse that happens in Bolivian workshops. Their reaction to being held accountable should then be a consequence of their position in the network: they will make fewer profits if they have to pay more for the garments they make. If Koreans are unhappy and resisting the new application of an existing set of laws, it is because they stand to lose a lot. Yet, having actually talked with Korean storeowners during my first field research, this analysis did not seem quite right. Conversely, Bolivians are advantaged by the fiscal controls and should welcome them. Again, this was not the overwhelming impression outside of the tight circles of the elites of immigrant associations.

This chapter delves deeply into explaining each community's understanding of the new labor law enforcement. The role of the government in their affairs was explained last chapter; I am now refining the network to integrate social capital in particular as it appears through the role of immigrant associations for each community. I will first take a look at how both communities perceive the government's actions. I will then look at the rising political capital that is found in the immigrant associations

catering to both communities. I will argue that each community has a different access to political capital, which influences their understanding of the question of abuse and the role of the government in the industry.

## **7.2 Bolivians Find a Much-Needed Help to Negotiate Contracts, a Potential Threat for the Future Too.**

The idea of holding responsible businesses for the conditions of work of the workshops to which they outsource appears to be a seducing idea. A version of this can be found in France<sup>86</sup> where unpaid salaries from employees of a subcontracted firm can be taken out from the main client (Palli, 2009: 3). Under the concept of joint liability, a central business becomes responsible for illegal proceedings in its subcontracted chain (European Foundation of the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, 2009: 3). This legislation intends to combat illegal work in the country. Many advocacy groups argue for such an approach as the multinationals unfairly benefit from international outsourcing to countries where conditions of work are much less regulated. While fiscal control agents and some immigrant associations are satisfied with this situation, I want to explore each community's perspective on the intensified fiscal control, and the legislation about outsourcing. I start this section by looking into what my Bolivian respondents had to say about the intensified fiscal controls.

The outsourcing laws are framed as a solution to end abuse, particularly as they constitute part of the employer sanctions put in place by the government. As

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<sup>86</sup> Germany has similar legislation in the construction sector, limited to wages and taxes too (see Houwerzijl and Peters, 2008).

such, they should be welcome by Bolivians and for most of my Bolivian respondents, the controls are a good thing. They agree with the spirit of ending abuse and making some people responsible for their actions. Ending abuse would also help provide recourse to their complicated situations. However, the majority worry about the applicability of the plan the government has in place. There is a concern about whether employees will accept to be registered, thereby showing that power is not so unidirectional in favor of the employer. Carmen, who participated in associations of Bolivian producers of garments, was very happy with the fiscal controls. She definitely accepted the dominant discourse of overwhelming benefits for Bolivian workers. She explained; “I am cheering for everyone to register with their card and have a fixed salary.” Carmen’s workshop had been inspected by fiscal agents, and to her, their criticism was always warranted.

There are always small infractions, it will not be 100% [formal] I even had fines [...] when I had fiscal control, there were no hygienic paper in the bathroom. Imagine when a seamster comes in, what paper is it going to use? Yes [the laws are] right! Now to wash hands, there was no soap [...] They are right to fine for those things.

She has never felt that controls were unfair. She had erred and should have done more for her employees. To Carmen, applying outsourcing practices making the main business responsible was the way to end abuse in the industry.

Rosa, who had to sleep under her machine in the first workshop she worked in, says that a part of the inspections appeared constructive and just. She used to work very long hours from 7AM to 1AM. Now she mostly stops working around 8PM, 10PM if she has a lot of work that week. Her situation improved noticeably, and today no longer requires by fiscal inspections. She also thinks that it is not worth it financially for employees to be registered, although she has three registered workers in

her workshop. They lose too much money to the government in payment of taxes when they are registered. Rosa still works too many hours to be within legal limits. But she felt that her work load was hard but still acceptable. She was fearful of controls in her workshop.

Daniel similarly thinks that the laws are just, yet, they will not solve the abuse.

Daniel: Look, in this garment industry, laws, I think that they are right, it has to be that way, [...] register everyone [...]. But [...] there are a lot of people who do not want to get registered. With time, it will pass [...] And like this, [the law] will be forgotten. [...] They will open new workshops, and there will be new clandestine workshops. Because workers do not want to be registered.

Iago also felt that it was the right thing for Bolivians to be legally employed. However, because Bolivian immigrants are not fixed in the country, they should be allowed to receive the taxes that they pay. Registration is not to the financial advantage of the workers due to the large amount of taxes. Iago's employees were actually not registered at the time of our interview. But the financial cost did not take away from the fact that Iago considered the law just: "Laws have to be respected, it is not like in our country in Bolivia, they are not respected." Legality was thus important for Iago.

Similarly, Daniel's employees did not have their worker's cards signed. He was thinking about actually closing his workshop because his six employees would probably never want to register. Since he was close to retirement and had a backup opportunity in another industry, it was possible for him to think of closing his workshop altogether. Daniel concluded too that he counted everything, and even if his employees accepted to register, he would not be able to make it financially. Getting Bolivians to register their workshop amounts to R\$30 per month and filing one kind of

paperwork once. On the other hand, registering workers involves an on-going struggle with bureaucracy, taxes, and filings. Clara, an experienced Korean storeowner, explained that it was a full time job to try to respect the laws.

Ricardo's words were much harsher than his fellow Bolivians. To him, the outsourcing laws destroyed some families, taking away their ability to work. Ricardo resented the repressive aspects of the controls. The government did not understand the necessities that Bolivians face in working in the garment industry. Workers and entrepreneurs needed solutions, not punishment. Instead, the government should meet with the workshops to figure out the best steps to proceed. To Ricardo, the actions of the government belied the importance of the community's contribution to the garment industry: it goes beyond abuse. He also resented the fact that fiscal controls were not targeted; they were random, thus catching people who were not as guilty of abuse as others. Fiscal controls can also be traumatizing to the children, women, and old people who are working there. He resented in particular the media that follows the busting of workshops. In particular, Ricardo pointed out to me that not all abused seamsters are Bolivians, he knows Brazilian employees who work in similar conditions.

Although Daniel thought the laws were necessary to protect from abuse, he argued, "now laws, are never in the favor of the employer, always in the employees' favor." Daniel further reported that employees have started to have the upper hand, because they can threaten their employers to report them. Even for minor transgressions, they will have to pay fines.

Ernesto echoed a similar feeling that the government was against entrepreneurs. He believed that the government refused to do anything to help entrepreneurs. All the policies in Brazil are set around helping workers. The police and

the media followed the government's lead to focus on workers. Entrepreneurs were rendered responsible for everything without any support. When Ricardo tried to run a lawfully declared workshop with registered workers, the experience was unsuccessful as I explained in the previous chapter: workers were not motivated to work and he had to close his workshop. There is a lack of opportunity to make it work financially or to explain how best practices would be feasible. Daniel thought that the Seamstress Union was behind the law since it went from 130,000 workers to only 20,000. They wanted to regain their membership and thus were focusing on getting Bolivians back in the formal economy to do so.

Most Bolivians agree with the government's assessment of abuse in the industry. Despite the assessment being in their favor, they worry about the consequences of the labor law enforcement. This repression was conceived to ensure that Bolivian workshop owners mostly get off without jail, pushing responsibility higher up in the chain. However, because it puts emphasis on having registered employees, the pressures from higher up in the chains mean that Bolivians are forced to register their employees to ensure no problems with the law in the long term. This is problematic for entrepreneurs, particularly those who are not close to Bolivian associations as most Bolivians refuse to register. In the next section, I will explore the perspectives by my Korean respondents on the greater responsibility they now bear in the production network.

### **7.3 Furthering Misunderstanding with the Korean Community**

Overall, the outsourcing legislation and actions by the Brazilian government are perceived as a way to further alienate the Korean community, treating them unfairly. Korean respondents had much more to say about labor law enforcement than

Bolivians did. In this section, I will focus on why Koreans storeowners thought the law was unfair and would be detrimental to the industry. And thus they had no way to control what happens in workshops they do not own. Furthermore, it was unfair for the situation to be labeled as abusive when they had lived the same when they first arrived to Brazil. Finally, the controls were not improving the relationship of the community with the Labor Ministry, which in their eyes seemingly targeted the two immigrant communities unfairly.

### **7.3.1 The law is costly and unfair**

Koreans stand to lose a lot by the multiplication of labor inspections and the outsourcing laws. They became legally responsible if a workshop they work with is found to have slave-like labor. If Bolivian workers accept to be legally registered, workshop owners will charge higher prices to the store, either diminishing the margins Koreans make on the clothes, or resulting in higher retail prices. Felipe was convinced that the cost of clothes would double if workers were declared to authorities, because it cost a lot to make an “environment that is agreeable for seamstresses.” This doubling would be related to employment taxes. Adriana also agreed that the cost of clothes would rise up. Although she internalized her production, such production usually ends up in lower output than outsourcing does. If the cost doubled, consumers would not be able to afford the clothes anymore and imports would soar as a result. I will explore the import option and future of the garment industry in the conclusion.

Helena did not accept that Koreans get fined for clothes found in a busted workshop even when it was only very few items. According to Helena and Felipe, fines go up very high too. Helena talked about \$R800,000, a little less in her friend’s case. Felipe referred to a friend who got fined R\$1 million for 28 Bolivian workers in



an undeclared workshop. Lucas thought that fiscal controls and fees are ways for the government to obtain unpaid taxes. Lucas thought that laws changed for the worst in Brazil. He wanted the law to be less strict.

Felipe argued that the only way for businesses to get in line with the law was to open their own workshop, but this option was too expensive to consider. Felipe was reluctant to employ women, who make up most of the Brazilian seamstresses, who would get pregnant and cost too much to the business.

Luciana thought the law was not good, and instead Brazil should look into how the US is doing it to take note. Clara agreed that the law was wrong but at the same time she accepted that she had no choice but to respect it. To her, the law simply struck an erroneous balance between the reality and the ideal the law was trying to convey.

Adriana felt that fiscal controls came from a good place. Stores should not pay so little or participate in exploitation, but the way controls are done was wrong. Antonia also believed that the law will bring improvement to the Bolivian community's conditions. Enforcement of rules was important because workshops needed to be legalized, and pay taxes. Fire norms, rest time, having overall decent conditions were important to Antonia. But her problem was with the way the government is enforcing the law. She found the law too rigid and bad for entrepreneurs. Anita also recognized that there were conditions that should be illegal when they are inhumane. But ultimately, she believed that the outsourcing law was unfair and it would get more difficult to work with workshops. Miguel thought that as long as he was not asking for those contracts, then he was not responsible if Bolivians were seeking him out.

Adriana did not agree with the fact that Korean stores were made responsible for the conditions of work in the workshops. Ultimately, Helena insisted that it is Bolivians themselves who enslaved other Bolivians. It bears keeping in mind that Koreans handed over workshops in the 1990s so that they would not be held responsible for abuse there. Outsourcing was their way of dealing with the abuse: let Bolivians handle the conditions of work. In contrast, Bernardo's opinion was a bit more nuanced because he felt that it was wrong for storeowners to continue working with workshops they knew have terrible work conditions. But most of the time, storeowners cannot know those things, so why would they be held responsible for it? The next section explores exactly why Koreans feel that they do not know for sure what happens in Bolivian workshops.

### **7.3.2 They have no say into what happens in a workshop**

The main source of resentment for Koreans laid in the fact that storeowners felt that they were ill-placed to know what was happening in the workshops with whom they worked. They thought the government should be the one responsible for the conditions of work, or at the very least for inspecting workplaces before allowing them to be registered. Mostly, they felt that it was impossible for them to be in the workshop 24/7, which would be needed to make sure nothing illegal happened.

Mario did not understand why Bolivians obtained permission to work if the government believed the conditions to be abusive. He asked: "who gives them authorization to work? It's the government, it's not us who give it! They have to make fiscal control beforehand. Once [the storeowner] starts outsourcing, there is no responsibility for the condition[s of work]. The first guilty party would be the government that gave authorization." Without going as far as Mario, Anita believed

the government should be the one responsible for checking the conditions. Patricia thought like Mario, that she should not be the one responsible for controls since she trusted any documents that are provided to her by employees or workshops.

Furthermore, for storeowners to actually evaluate workshops and the conditions of work there, Mario felt like they would have to impose themselves in the private lives of the workshops that work for them. Luiza actually usually checked out the workshop before she would agree to a contract

but this person they don't stay there, they change. All of a sudden they leave all together [...] one or two at a time and I cannot be there all the time to control his employees right. And he himself does not have control over his employees because they don't want to be registered. So once this contract is caught all the responsibility comes to us.

While multinationals may have the means to hire companies to do controls on their production networks, smaller businesses do not have this luxury. To Luiza, the responsibility she has to bear through the law is unfair. Not all storeowners own a car<sup>87</sup>, a necessity to visit all workshops. Miguel for instance worked with workshops outside of the city. And because workers share living and working space, some respondents seemed to feel like visiting a workshop was akin to violating the privacy of the storeowner and the workers.

Aside from having this responsibility to visit workshops, Koreans do not have the necessary qualifications to do so. Bernardo pointed out that storeowners would not know whether or not a workshop was right with the law; “how will the store know if [the conditions found in the workshops] respect or not the law's criteria? Because who

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<sup>87</sup> Interestingly, it used to be the store's responsibility to bring cars to workshops, but it is not anymore.

knows this, [are the] labor inspectors, those who can evaluate are the inspectors.” No one else is trained to know what to look for, and the law being complex, it is doubtful that they would catch all the nuances. A person with special training should thus be sent to those workshops, not a regular employee or the storeowner.

Patricia also felt that the law was unfair because she could not know exactly who was working in the workshop because other employees could start working without her knowledge. For Bento, there was no way to control what Bolivians do in their workshop; if they worked all night, it was their choice. Storeowners cannot be there every day to make sure that regular hours are observed. Adriana pointed out that although she had an internal production, she outsourced button sewing to a workshop. In there, two people were registered but she had no way to know how many people actually work there. She felt that fiscal agents should be the ones checking those businesses.

The requirements of the Labor Ministry seem to be inadequate for small and medium sized businesses. They are better suited to large businesses with enough money to invest in a special department to monitor workshops, or contract with other businesses to do so.

### **7.3.3 Using slave-like labor as a label now but not then**

My Korean respondents seemed to disagree with the term of slave-like labor. Some of them insisted that there was no enslavement at all. Helena thinks that the law is not appropriate because in the end,

I am not going to say enslavement, because the person comes from a terrible condition in Bolivia, when [they] come to Brazil, the person has somewhere to sleep, has somewhere to work, and has somewhere to receive, and what they earn is a salary, it's yield. You manage to sew a

dozen, you earn more, if you manage to sew six pieces, you earn less, so what happens, it depends on each one, for them it was a chance to manage to come to Brazil and work

Most believed that aside from very few exceptions, the long hours, the sharing of living and working spaces were to be expected in the industry. Similarly, Clara resents the use of the label “slave” because “the word slavery is a very strong word [but] no one took them by force from their families, from their countries, and brought them and detained them. And they were free, they came and are looking for a life opportunity and it was offered.” Clara believed that the slave label was not appropriate for what Bolivians experience. According to her, “They work from a time to a time as they choose, not because someone chose it for them.” Adriana refused the labels of boss and slave because Koreans and Bolivians had normal business relations. Bolivians provided services, lowering their prices, without being coerced. Antonia had the same idea.

Mario’s opinions were less politically correct in those times. He judged that the law forbidding children under 14 from working was not ok, as it prevented families from learning the trade, as it used to be for the Koreans. Felipe furthered the idea that Bolivians were only experiencing what every immigrant went through in Brazil.

It’s that Bolivians, they live in [their] workplace, they work along with their children, right? So the government prohibited this, to separate living and working space. But immigrants, [...] when they come in Brazil, [the entire family] works this way in the beginning, [...] Koreans as well as other people from other countries, when they come to Brazil, [...] it does not do to rent a workplace, a business, and do it right. Why would they? They have no knowledge, they know no one. Parents, so the head of households, they cannot separate a bedroom, a room, and put the machine and work there. This way, they earn money, [then] they buy a business. [...] all immigrants started like this. So [...] Bolivians are doing the same thing! They came to Brazil, they live together in the house, they put a machine and they sew. This, the government prohibited.

The Bolivians' story became the story of all immigrants, and there was nothing wrong about it. The stark history of migration in Brazil, and the precarious conditions of living, are definitely on par with what Bolivians and Koreans in their time experienced. There is definitely a point here where most Bolivians agree: separating living and workplace is not necessary, and makes no sense to newcomers, particularly in an expensive city that requires a lot of references to rent any apartment. Antonia thought that it is a waste of time if workers have to devote several hours of commuting to get to work: shared working and living situations pose no problem.

Clara had a similar opinion, seeing Bolivian experiences as the story of social ascension for immigrants.

They had to go through what they did to conquer what they have today, [...] I think that I do not know anyone who comes rich from Bolivia and opened a store, but I believe that they came, fought, submitted themselves, obviously there are difficulties, right, but in the end what they did, what they achieved, like we achieved, and I think this is natural.

Bolivians are only going through what Koreans went through to become successful in the industry. She argued further that if the media was saying Bolivians were enslaved, then her parents too were enslaved. She added, "I am very annoyed because my parents were also [enslaved], so if you think that way, my parents were enslaved by someone, [...] but we do not feel that way. We think that we are thankful, because we survived. We had the opportunity to work and have food on the table." She further argued,

In the 70s and 80s, no one questioned if someone was taking advantage, if one was enslaving someone else. In my time, I never heard this being discussed. On the contrary, my mother, when she received work, obviously there are good people and bad people, there are annoying people, there are normal people, but whatever it is, she survived and raised us.

Antonia reminisced that she used to work at night too when she first came as a child. She recalled her little sister, five years old at the time would be fighting off sleep at night to help them finish clothes. The Jewish storeowners she worked for did the same. I previously noted that Antonia had found cots in the hallway of the store for which her family was working. Every migration starts as a life or death situation.

Bento agreed that what Bolivians were going through was simply the same thing that happened to Koreans. He recognized though that the family and children in particular ended up suffering a lot until the family was established in the country. Sacrifices were great in those years. Bernardo held similar opinions. To him, “the conditions [...] are not very favorable.” The problems are thus endemic to the situation of new immigrants and garment industry.

It seems most of my respondents did not conceptualize their parents’, and their own experience, as abusive, but rather as necessary to survive. Without this conceptualization of their past, as a past of abuse, there is much less empathy for the idea that work conditions in the industry are inherently abusive and should not be the norm. I think that it is important to revisit the Korean community’s past before a broad acceptance of what constitutes abuse is set.

#### **7.3.4 Relationship with the Labor Ministry**

It is not simply the law that Koreans disagree with and find unfair. There are underlying tensions with the Labor Ministry and a sense of misunderstanding and lack of communication. Helena characterized well the overwhelming feeling from Koreans, “but I think that there was some missing information before mandating the new law.” The government moved to change practices that have been the norm in the past 30-40 years without properly training Koreans. Antonia had a very negative view of the

government since she believed they would soon impose other requirements for them to comply. Antonia expressed a resignation that seemed overwhelming in the Korean community. She believed that everyone would eventually accept all the changes just like they had to do with the registration of workshops. The anger will only be in passing.

In the spring of 2013, the Ministry organized a meeting in a local Korean church to reach out to Korean storeowners on the new policy on outsourcing. Throughout my interviews, I managed to receive a two-sided picture of what happened. The main disagreements between Koreans and the Ministry appeared emblematic of the communication difficulties. To Luiza, the meeting was fruitless because it provided no help to them

the other day [...] some people were presenting these new revelations from the government and I think they were participating at the missionary church here in Bom Retiro with some Korean people in the garment business. And my friend [...] went there and she was telling me there was a Japanese, probably she was second or third generation, [she was] very rude you know all the questions the Koreans were [asking], [were] so what do you want us to do? We don't have a solution [to] the problem and we want you to give us [the] solution so we could obey your regulations [...] And then she turned around and she said "just don't give them the work" to the contractors.

Luiza found it hard to not hire Bolivians because the vast majority of the people who answer her advertisements "We need workshops" were Bolivians and very few were Brazilians. If she plans to keep her place in the garment industry she felt that she had little choice but to contract Bolivians.

I put [a] sign out there of course I am not going to put a sign I need a Brazilian contractors but they come in and 99% they're Bolivians, no Brazilians come in. So I'm trying some of [the] Bolivian contractors, 2 or 3 contractors they have been working for a while with me so it's more reliable so I'm trying to help them to declare their employees.



And pay a portion of this registration as employees see and some of them they agree, but most of them they don't agree. They'd rather have more money for the kids than [use the money] for the registration.

Bolivians do not want to pay the high taxes that come with registration and Luiza can only do so much to convince them to register their workers. She needs the service even though it is risky to hire Bolivian help. She emphasized that Brazilian women did not want to work in the garment industry anymore. There is a lack of Brazilian workforce to compensate for the unregistered Bolivian workers.

On the other hand, I talked to Elisa at the Ministry. She felt that Koreans were absolutely unwilling to listen during that meeting. Ruth Camacho noted that most of the young Koreans left in the middle of the meeting. At the Ministry, Lucas argued that enforcement was the only thing they were doing and that it was absolutely necessary. They recognized they were not there to teach or educate entrepreneurs, meaning that the Koreans' perspective is not unfounded.

Antonia, acknowledging that she was pessimistic, felt the government did nothing to help entrepreneurs know what they should be doing. She was in a particularly good place within the community to have such stark opinion: she was one of the very few in the community to have started the ABVTEX certification. This certification is meant to provide businesses with sustainable goals, helping them to conform to very specific rules in accordance with the law. For instance, she had to have paper towels rather than reusable towels in the bathrooms.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> I did not ask how paper products were more sustainable than re-usable products. It seems counter-intuitive on an environmental level that is supposed to be accounted for in the certification.

Tensions with the government are reflected in how the Korean community is framed in the media. Bento blamed the media often on how Koreans were portrayed as enslavers of Bolivians. Helena had a similar perspective when she said

In the Brazilians' view, in the government view, not everywhere, but they were enslaving, so those differences end up making Koreans in the press as if they were robbing everyone, and in truth, I think that Koreans are strong, they have no speech, they are very small, they are not like [the] Chinese, they are not like [the] Japanese, so they end up having a bad situation, that brings a lot of prejudice, when it comes in the press, you know. That burns already, it has even been affecting business.

Helena was not the only one to mention this, as another respondent claimed that people sometimes stopped in her store to ask her why she enslaved Bolivians. As I explained in the introduction, the overwhelming majority of studies have not included Koreans as respondents, as a dialogue on the situation. Part of it arises from how the community is considered close-knit. But this feeling of being very closed to outsiders also comes from the way Koreans believe the press is against them as a community. Clara expressed distress and sadness over how her community was portrayed in the media. She thought that abuse cases comprised only isolated incidents and could not be generalized to the rest of the community.

Miguel thought there was a particular interest of the government in Bolivians; although many Brazilians were not declared either, Bolivians were targeted because they offered lower prices. Clara also believed that Bolivians are unfairly targeted.

There are mothers who, to support the family, put a machine and sew in their house. [...] why is it that a Bolivian who does the same thing is enslaved? Because he is a foreigner? But if you were to think this way, we are all foreigners too. So [...] a Brazilian mother who works in her home to support her home, because she does not have a job or she did not have the opportunity to come in the workforce. The only way that she found to support her house, her children, sewing. What is the

difference? She is not enslaved, and because a Bolivian works in his house, because he stays inside his house, with his children, is treated as a slave.

More than just targeting the immigrant communities, Alexandre believed that it constituted straight up persecution of the garment industry. Antonia went as far as calling it anti-immigrant terrorism. It was terrorism, she believed, because the government refused to show the benefits of following the law or how to conform to the law.

Koreans follow an expected pattern of being opposed to the higher prices that will result from the government's actions, as well as resenting their responsibilities. They have some practical concerns such as the impossibility of monitoring workshops on a daily basis. But there are also deep-seated resentments of labeling as slavery the conditions of work in the industry where they succeeded. The continuation of misunderstanding with a government that has chosen repression over discussion also enhances the opposition in the community.

#### **7.4 Immigrant Associations, the Way to Political Capital**

Koreans and Bolivians have obviously different understandings of the legal practice of outsourcing. The acceptance of the definition of abuse, without agreeing to the particulars of the solutions brought by the government shows that Bolivians have a different understanding of what constitutes abuse than Koreans do. In this section, I will demonstrate that the networks of support both communities have constructed to survive and thrive involve different understanding of abuse. Some of those networks are private, using social capital through friends, family, and acquaintances. Other support comes from immigrant organizations: religious or secular. I believe the latter to be crucial in understanding the opinions in both communities on the governmental

labor law enforcement. I will first explore Bolivian immigrant associations, then take a look at the equivalent in the Korean community.

#### **7.4.1 Brazilian-managed immigrant associations catering to Bolivians**

There are several types of Bolivian associations. Some of them are religiously based, most often they were organized by Brazilians and geared their actions towards Bolivians as they started using their services. Other organizations are smaller scale union-type groupings of entrepreneurs trying to represent Bolivian entrepreneurs in the city. During my field research, I interacted closely with two of the Brazilian-based associations and one of the Bolivian-based organizations. I will start with the organizations funded by Brazilians since they are, for the most part, older, before looking into the organizations Bolivians have built.

The main community organizer for Bolivians in São Paulo has been the church Nossa Senhora da Paz, located in the neighborhood of the Glicério, a neighborhood formerly occupied by Koreans in the 1960s. The church stands close to the Liberdade neighborhood, traditionally a Japanese neighborhood<sup>89</sup>, but poorer and more run down<sup>90</sup> than the latter. This church is a Roman Catholic-based church that follows the Scalabrinian teachings<sup>91</sup>. This means the church has a special mission to care for

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<sup>89</sup> Today, Liberdade remains a neighborhood with deep Asian roots, many shops sell Japanese food and items.

<sup>90</sup> The neighborhood of the Glicério today is very poor and unsafe, particularly at night.

<sup>91</sup> John Baptist Scalabrini was a missionary from Italy who responded to the plight of the millions of Italian immigrants living a destitute life in the countries they had just settled in. Their mission is as follows: “to become migrants with the migrants, so as to build with them, even by the witness of our life and our community, the Church, which in its earthly pilgrimage associates itself particularly with the poorest and most

immigrants, provide services and fight for their good conditions. In the rules of life, the congregation states:

So, besides spiritual assistance, we give the migrants our human, social, and cultural help. We denounce the causes of the evils that afflict them and we struggle to stamp them out while promoting the migrants' fellowship and their participation within the community that welcomes them. (Scalabriniani, 2015).

The congregation has thus very clear political goals. As a consequence, the Pastoral dos Migrantes has been heavily involved in politics and policies concerning immigrants in Brazil. They have a research center in São Paulo and in Brasilia.

Sandra, a worker at the CAMI, a satellite organization of the Pastoral, explained that they adhere to the liberation theology, a progressive left-wing version of Catholicism that had many adherents in Latin America, particularly in the 70s. Liberation theology is a politically active branch of the church that has social goals.

Father Sidney Antonio Da Silva was one of the first scholars to write about Bolivian immigration in São Paulo. While finishing a PhD in anthropology, he studied the community. His first work, *Costurando Sonhos* published in 1997, addresses the daily life of immigrants and describes the abuse in workshops as well as the xenophobia they encounter in their daily lives. His work was one of the first of its kind on the community at the time. At the time he was a priest, then the head priest, at the church Nossa Senhora da Paz.

In 2009, the church's building was very simple. Although on a wide terrain in the Glicerio, the indoor court was battered earth. When I came back in 2013, the

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abandoned classes of people; and also to help people discover Christ in their migrant brothers and sisters and perceive in migration a sign of mankind's eternal calling" (Scalabriniani, 2015)

whole church had been renovated. The indoor court was now paved, and the research center was all new. Access was no longer through a side street, but rather through the main entrance. In 2013, the church had social workers providing services to immigrants to help them access the right paperwork. According to a flyer, the Pastoral center aided 11,695 individuals from 74 nationalities (Misión Scalabriniana N.S. Da Paz, n/d). The church also organized classes for immigrants on labor rights, as well as organized a network for them to obtain training or a job. Furthermore, the church had renovated the *Casa do Migrante*, an annex building that hosts immigrants. Although the renovations were done, only about 100 temporary spots were available there<sup>92</sup>. In 2010, they hosted 477 immigrants throughout the year. The money for the renovation came from a settlement between the government and big garment brands<sup>93</sup>.

Marcelo, an older Bolivian workshop owner who arrived in 1982 found the church not too long after establishing his workshop with his wife. They found that at the time, it was the only welcoming organization for them. In 1992, the main Latino community that was present there were Chilean<sup>94</sup>. While he and his wife ate lots of

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<sup>92</sup> A source close to the church deplored the limited space dedicated to immigrants during the renovations. According to that source, enough money was available to open up new spots.

<sup>93</sup> The same source noted that the main purpose of the settlement was to provide services to immigrants in the garment industry to stave off the abuse they were experiencing. However, since 2009, the main clientele has changed from Bolivians to Haitians. The latter do not work in the garment industry.

<sup>94</sup> Marcelo explained how hard it had been for him to hang out with Chileans considering the historical tensions between Bolivia and Chile. After a while, he realized they were regular people and so felt more comfortable spending time at the Pastoral.

rice at home, at the Church they ate a lot of Chilean food, diversifying their diets. The church has two congregations: an Italian congregation and a Latin-American congregation. The Italian congregation is a remnant of the time when Italian immigration was very high, and their welfare comprises the main purpose of the foundation of the Scalabrini order.

Another organization is associated with the Pastoral dos Migrantes, the CAMI: Centro de Apoio ao Migrante (Support Center for the Migrant). The CAMI was created in 2005. The original organization was the SPM (Serviço Pastoral dos Migrantes), which dealt with internal migrants from the North-East of Brazil. However, that migration tapered off since the SPM was created, giving rise to a need to help international migration. At the time of my field research, Sandra told me that 90% of their clientele was Latino-Americans, the majority being Bolivians. The CAMI is funded in part by the government, by a settlement where big brands had to pay fines for using slave-like labor in their networks, and by donations from the Bishop's organization and from immigrants.

At the CAMI, employees can report their employers for unlawful practices. The organization will help them put in a formal complaint to the Police, although sometimes entrepreneurs try to negotiate directly with the CAMI. The CAMI deals more directly with the government, since they send the records of instances of abuse of Bolivians in the garment industry to the government. The organization has a long history with the Bolivian community, 2005 being the year when Bolivians became the main immigrant community in São Paulo. Sandra explained that the CAMI does its own inspection since the government does not have enough fiscal control agents to do the controls. In 2012, the CAMI inspected 408 workshops. The government thus relies

on a non-profit organization to do the controls they cannot make themselves. One might say that the government is outsourcing its responsibilities to an NGO.

In addition to working closely with the Labor Ministry, they also organize protests to inform the population of the conditions of life of immigrants in the city. They put pressures on health centers in the city that refuse to assist immigrants<sup>95</sup>. Just like the church, they are thus very politicized. The CAMI also provides some education to both workers and entrepreneurs about their rights and duties.

Paulo Illes is an important figurehead of Latin American immigrants in Brazil. He used to work at the CAMI, after which he started his own organization the CDHIC (Centro de Direitos Humanos e Cidadania do Imigrante – Center for Immigrants' Human Rights and Citizenship). Although it is not a religious organization, its funding comes in part from the CCFD (Comité Católico Contra Fome – Catholic committee against hunger). The CDHIC's goals are to provide legal and social help for immigrants; they also have an anonymous phone line for denouncing situations of abuse. However, it is very much involved in political lobbying. Paulo Illes was at least partially successful as he was nominated in mid 2013 as coordinator of immigration politics at the São Paulo municipality. Paulo Illes organized a campaign to let immigrants vote in local elections. He is associated closely with the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT), the party of Lula and Dilma.

Bolivian immigrant associations provide political analysis and a political voice for the community. But they also provide other services<sup>96</sup>. For instance, when stores

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<sup>95</sup> Health care is free in Brazil. Foreigners also have the right to free health care.

<sup>96</sup> The Bolivian consulate was not very popular, at least until 2013 when they opened an office on the Coimbra street. Carmen was the only one to mention the Bolivian



delay payments for garments, Bolivian workshop owners often turn to those organizations to get help. Paulo Illes, Ruth Camacho, and CAMI employees all intercede between Bolivian workshops and Korean stores to obtain unpaid contracts. This particular place in the life of entrepreneurs might explain the very negative view of entrepreneurship held by a worker I met at the CAMI. She actually told me that the CAMI did not have a bias in favor of employers<sup>97</sup>. In terms of Brazilian politics, it means that the organization aligns with the political left.

Paulo Illes for instance, found the International Organization of Migration (IOM)<sup>98</sup> too right leaning<sup>99</sup>, in favor of voluntary return for immigrants. The question in this chapter is not to criticize their political ideology, but instead to contrast this political ideology in most associations that cater to Bolivians with those that cater to Koreans. This left-leaning tendency was also very obvious in the UN meeting hosted in part by the CDHIC. At that meeting, attendees in my subcommittee refused to address the topic of entrepreneurship as a contribution of immigrants to their host countries because that was too close to commoditifying immigrants.

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consulate as help in her life. She had to fight to get the local school to accept her children. She acknowledged though that no one in the community knew about the Consulate and its services.

<sup>97</sup> Sandra further explained that the CAMI followed the union CUT, rather than the Seamstresses' Union, because the latter was not in favor of immigrants, something that I gathered from the problems I had contacting them for my research.

<sup>98</sup> The IOM is a Geneva based organization, unaffiliated with the United Nations. This organization is very active in international migration related matters, with several international agreements to its name. It is dominated by the U.S.

<sup>99</sup> Although Paulo thought the Pastoral liked the IOM too much, the Scalibrinian and liberation theology traditions still point to a more left-leaning organization.

The rhetoric of Paulo Illes and the CAMI betrays more obvious leftist political leanings, proposing immigration policies that are more open and progressive than what is the case in Brazil. Three groups thus consider the conditions of work in the industry as abuse and thus emphasize the necessity to end abuse and seek support from the government to end this abuse. This understanding gets reflected in their actions and proposals for reform. It also influences those who seek help in their organizations. Juliana recognized that some of the organizations were very politicized. The main organizations created by Brazilians hence are very politicized and of leftist leanings. This influences their view of abuse and of the industry.

#### **7.4.2 Grassroots Bolivian organizations**

Other groupings and associations exist that have been created by Bolivians. Carmen, Rodrigo and Ricardo all held very important positions in the BOLBRAS, an organization that has been representing Bolivian workshops since 2000. The BOLBRAS was created when the government tried to reach out to both Koreans and Bolivians and the latter had no representative. The BOLBRAS has tried to unite workshops, because according to Carmen “each one does their own garment workshop, and each one helps themselves like they can, there is no order, there is no leader that says look, here do this, there do that.” Carmen thought that because many Bolivians came from the countryside, they had little knowledge of management leading to a lack of knowledge about laws and how to manage their money, leading to alcoholism. Because of this lack of knowledge, it was important for Carmen to have a strong Bolivian leadership. However, this strong leadership did not exist yet according to her. BOLBRAS was there to help entrepreneurs when they needed to obtain payment for a service that was left unpaid.

Aside from the political organizations, Bolivians also have several cultural organizations. Bolivia Cultural is an organization that caters to Bolivians and other immigrants (mostly from Latin America). Joana explained “Bolivia Cultural is the main communication outlet of the Bolivian immigrant community today.” It is a more recent organization, which mostly focuses on bringing a network of businesses together for discounts to all members. They also have an active Facebook page as well as news about the community published on a regular basis. Joana said that she had received questions from Bolivians in Bolivia to learn how to immigrate to Brazil through the Facebook page of Bolivia Cultural. Another cultural organization is the Associacion Folklorica Bolivia Brasil, the folk association Bolivia Brazil. They organize dances, in particular *novenas*, a series of religious Bolivian dances honoring saints that take place several times a year at the church Nossa Senhora da Paz.

Rodrigo reported that although his association helped migrants to get papers, many others were also helping. Some of them charge money to provide help to obtain proper documentation, a phenomenon he was unhappy about. I saw this first hand the next day, when I interviewed a representative of another organization on the Coimbra street, where many Bolivian restaurants operate. On Saturdays, a market happens there that was legally recognized by the city in 2013. Ernesto was complaining about the multiplication of associations of Bolivians; his was supposed to be the real representative. While I was waiting for him to be ready for the interview, his secretary checked several paperwork files and accepted money for it. On the walls were advertisements for what documents and fees to bring to get documentation in order. Since the amnesty from 2009 was already over, I think it referred to the MERCOSUR agreement.

Aside from the main associations catering to Bolivian immigrants, there are multiple organizations that have been formed over the years by Bolivians themselves. Daniel is the only respondent to have emitted some doubts about those organizations as he had had a bad experience participating in one. Aside from this, Ricardo and Pedro were both part of a cooperative they started that encompassed sellers at the *Feira da Madrugada*. They started the cooperative to have more power to negotiate for better-situated spaces and less corruption at the informal market. I will explore the topic of corruption in chapter eight.

I met with several members of a cooperative of Bolivian street vendors that started in 2010. Ernesto talked about the high number of organizations in the Bolivian community that claim to represent all Bolivians. He thought the Pastoral was unhelpful to Bolivians, but that the CEDHIQ was very helpful to them. They helped with the proceedings to start an association. Their goals were to offer an alternative to the far reach of the mafia in the *Feira da Madrugada*. However, their alternative was to transpose the market to another location and to keep it exclusively Bolivian.

Although there are increasing numbers of evangelical Bolivians, the Roman Catholic church remains the most important in the life of the community. Rosa was the only Bolivian I interviewed who attended a (small) protestant church headed by a Korean pastor in the Bom Retiro. She obtained help in the form of the *cesta basica* a package of basic food that is usually delivered every month by employers. The church she attended, headed by a Korean immigrant pastor was not very knowledgeable about immigrants although most of his congregants were Bolivian immigrants. I met them at the very end of June and dropped off several DVDs of *Oficina Modelo* the following week so they would have access to some resources about workshops. They had not

heard of this resource and although it could have been better, it was a way to ensure they had access to some resources.

In summation, most organizations catering to Bolivians are left-leaning politicized organizations. The main organizations have actively and publicly worked to bring attention to the plight of Bolivian immigrants and to frame the situation in terms of abuse. It is important to note here that immigrants have restricted political and organizational rights in Brazil, which would partially explain why the main organizations have been traditionally Brazilian. In the next section, I will address the Korean situation, which is the opposite of the Bolivian community.

## **7.5 The Absence of Politicization Among Korean Organizations**

### **7.5.1 Cultural and community based organizations**

This section begins with my recollections about two representatives of two Korean associations I have met with that were not based on religion. The first association is of Koreans in Brazil (Associação dos Coreanos no Brasil) funded in 1962 in advance of the arrival of the first wave of migration in 1963. My meeting with a highly placed representative, who I will call Thiago, was a bit tense as he warned me against contacting any other Koreans on the topic. However, he described the goals of the organization during our meeting. The organization had three main goals: first to represent Koreans in proceedings with the government, second to preserve the culture, and third to protect Korean vis-à-vis the law. However, this last objective is put aside. Undeterred by this less than stellar experience, I met Felipe through another association and we discussed his past experience as president of this association. He explained that the association occasionally gave some advice to entrepreneurs who

needed it, but that was not the main purpose of the organization. Felipe said that he tried to discourage the promulgation of the new fiscal investigations enforcing the prohibition of shared work and life spaces in the garment industry, which is not appropriate to immigrants.

The organization is involved in a yearly meeting with government representatives along with select representatives of the Bolivian community and big brands. However, there is little negotiation going on during those meetings according to Felipe. They constitute more information sessions than negotiations. The association used to try to pressure the government, but they gave up after a while. Felipe argued that the association today was mostly devoid of any real power. From discussions with other respondents, it became clear that the association's goals had shifted and the then president had been involved in shady business transactions<sup>100</sup>. Thiago explained that there was no political action per se from the association and that it was their weak point.

For the second one<sup>101</sup>, I met with Julia, a young woman of Korean descent. She was the president of the association of future leaders.<sup>102</sup> She explained that very few garment workers are found in the association. Most of them do not need to network, but they also are bound by competition: socializing with people they do not

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<sup>100</sup> A respondent accused the president of buying off the votes in a Miss Korea local pageant. This created a scandal in the community.

<sup>101</sup> I met individuals that were involved in many organizations. However, all those organizations, except the Korean Association in Brazil, were all cultural. In order to ensure anonymity of my respondents, I will not name those associations in the dissertation.

<sup>102</sup> Associação de Futuros Líderes

know is not in their own interest. The association has no political goals, it is mostly focused on celebrating the Korean culture in Brazil. It was created in Korea and was sponsored by an organization in Korea. Julia explained that the Korean government was seldom involved in Brazil. Although it was the year of Korea in 2013, cultural events were severely limited, in particular in comparison with the previous year, which had celebrated France. Artists had traveled from France and activities had been promoted throughout the year. Julia's group had very few people from the garment industry as she explained "because [someone] who works in the garment industry does not need networking, [they] work a lot during the day and [are] very focused [...] this professional part, [they have] no interest in being social." Among garment industry workers, there was mostly competition, so their networking is not necessary and can be fraught with tension. Instead, in her experience, those who work in the garment industry mostly hang out with other garment industry entrepreneurs if they were life long friends.

Koreans are often considered closed<sup>103</sup> and tightly knit (see de Freitas, 2004: 298). Rodrigo who had negotiated with Korean representatives before in his role as president of the BOLBRA explained that Koreans are much more united through their church. He used church in the singular and I will explain later how this is a very big misconception of the Korean community. Koreans Rodrigo interacted with in the

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<sup>103</sup> I was discouraged both during my first and my second field research from interviewing Koreans, being told that no one would answer me. As I mentioned before, I ended up interviewing more Koreans than Bolivians. Although it took me two months to manage the first interview, once contact was made and consent obtained, my interviews went really well, and longer than most interviews with Bolivian respondents.

BOLBRA, all always replied that it was a question of demand and offer, and some Bolivian respondents acknowledged that as long as newer immigrants were willing to offer services for even lower prices, there was nothing they could do about the common prices in the community. Alfonso actually said that he would like to learn from Koreans because they were better at organizing than Bolivians.

As mentioned before, there is a feeling in the community that there is little solidarity in the garment industry between Koreans. One of the questions I asked my respondents was whether they ever acted in an association and whether they thought laws could be effectively changed in Brazil. Overwhelmingly, the response from most Korean respondents was that there was nothing to be done to change laws in Brazil. Few had ever taken part in associations, and if they had, those were culturally oriented, without a political agenda<sup>104</sup>. Helena continues in that thought by arguing that “within the Korean community, there nowhere [for] people to ask [for] help, you know.” She further explained that existing organizations did not provide any help for entrepreneurs in the garment industry. Helena felt that Koreans were not as united and organized as Japanese for instance. She felt the Japanese organization had trained workers to deal with problems. So they got solved quicker. I asked Luiza if she ever got involved in Korean associations to change the laws and she replied “at the beginning I did, not any longer because I don’t think it’s very effective and even Koreans [...] are not very united.”

Miguel and Luciana both asked me what political impact they could have because it was only them. They were too small to have any important impact on the

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<sup>104</sup> The lack of central organization put some obstacles into finding respondents.



situation. Miguel and Helena had very little trust in any organization of the Korean community to actually do anything to change the situation. Patricia never participated in a Korean association. Clara explained that she did not take part in activities of the Korean community because she did not know anyone who did.

The Allo Bras Association of the Bras storeowners struggled to find Korean storeowners to include among its members according to Milena, a representative of the association I interviewed. Yet their action in the neighborhood directly concerned them as many storeowners in the Bras are Koreans. The organization managed to revitalize the neighborhood by collaborating with the Municipality. They also advocate to dampen the effects of the *Feira da Madrugada*, which has had an important financial impact on many stores in the neighborhood.

Helena was actually scared about the idea of getting involved. She said, “the Brazilian government, I am scared, you see some [people] that are found assassinated, [...]but I will think about it because I have a daughter” It is not clear whether this threat from the government is actually realistic, but it has a grain of truth as matters in the *Feira da Madrugada* have turned deadly<sup>105</sup>. Although the mafia was ultimately to blame, the reports by my respondents were of connivance between the police and the mafia. Helena’s fear may not be as unwarranted as it appears at first glance. Luciana was adamant that she had no interest in politics and did not like getting mixed up in politics. Adriana, a young Korean storeowner evoked similar fears. To her, most Koreans did not organize nor fight because many did not speak Portuguese well, and most were scared their business would get inspected and they would have to pay fines.

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<sup>105</sup> The head of the organization was killed. Even Paulo Illes received threats that discouraged him from taking actions or talking about the Feira. Both Pedro and Alfonso got into violent run ins with the mafia in the *Feira*.

It is important to keep in mind that the bulk of the Korean immigration came before the end of the dictatorship. Korean immigration showed signs of reducing by the mid-1980s, with a clear drop in the 1990s (Won, 2005: 83). This means that most Korean immigrants, in particular the parents of current storeowners, lived through that dictatorship. So at their most vulnerable, Koreans could not find help through the government. Although this is not the case anymore, the 1990s were a time of expansion for the community as a whole, while networks of help had already been constructed and did not include the government as an active player aside from its labor law enforcement dimension against the conditions of work in some of the Korean owned workshops. That is the decade when most got rid of their workshops in favor of stores, having to formalize some of their activity and starting to deal with the intensive bureaucracy of the state.

### **7.5.2 Separating politics and religion: Protestant churches in the community**

This portrait painted up until now may suggest that Koreans are very isolated. However, that is not necessarily the case. Although Korean networks make very little use of immigrant associations, they instead focus a lot on religious entities. Helena for instance, argued that the church was very important for Koreans. The Korean community is religiously more divided than the Bolivian community; the Korean community is comprised of Protestants, Catholics, and Buddhists. There are around 40 to 50 Protestant churches<sup>106</sup>, one Catholic Church, São Degun, and one Buddhist

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<sup>106</sup> References disagree on the exact number. Considering the very small size of some of those churches, there is some turnover that would make establishing an exact number quickly irrelevant.

temple, Sin-Duk-Sa, in the community. There is a dominance of Protestant Korean immigrants.<sup>107</sup> Choi explained it as the fact that Protestantism was less opposed to emigration than Confucianism<sup>108</sup> (1991: 21). Silva and Park attribute this dominance of Protestantism to a better acceptance of the accumulation of personal wealth, in a very Weberian understanding (2008: 9). The Protestant churches are obviously not of the liberation theology since that is Roman Catholic based. The Catholic Church São Kim Degun<sup>109</sup> is not part of the Scalibrinian congregation, nor an adherent of the liberation theology. There was no relationship with the Pastoral dos Migrantes that I could uncover. The churches are located in different neighborhoods. In the research center, I only found one document that was sent to the church Nossa Senhora da Paz when São Kim Degun was founded.

Korean churches at the beginning of the immigration were central to socialization and survival of the community (Santos Araujo, 2005: 38). It was not religious fervor that created so many churches in the community, rather the need for support (Araujo, 2005: 38). The Korean community suffers from much lower church attendance in the past decade, something that is a topic of worry for pastors in the churches I visited. Contrary to organizations catering to Bolivian immigrants, those entities are not politically active. I met four respondents who were pastors and every

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<sup>107</sup> In Korea, 23% of the population identified as Buddhists, 18% as Protestants, and 11% as Catholics. The remaining 49% identified as non-religious. (Kim et al, 2009: 789).

<sup>108</sup> Confucianism considered leaving the ancestral land akin to betrayal (Choi, 1991: 16).

<sup>109</sup> The Korean catholic community celebrated fifty years in 2015.

time I discussed political actions they were adamant that their churches did not take part in political activity. To do so would be going against the wishes of their congregants.

Bento, who works in a Korean protestant church in the Bom Retiro neighborhood explained that his church does not have a political stance. In response to a question about the political action of his Church, Bento replied that they “do not openly have [a political action] we are not going to do this because I think that this is a topic that the Church or any Korean, [...] will think that this is not a thing that the church should participate in, so we do not help those things.” Bernardo, another protestant pastor explained,

I believe that the citizen who [attends] church participates in politics [on his own time]. Now the separation of church and state [is] a chapter already over in history. But some churches [...] want to unite both, but in our case, citizens participate to politics of citizenship, but the church as a whole, we are in nothing political.

He further added, “if we start to move politically, the church will lose its identity.”

Bernardo’s church identity eschews political action.

Heitor had similar opinions when he explained that it was not his role to act in politics “there needs someone to [act politically], so this is why there are lawyers and politicians. They have to fight against the country, but not pastors. I think that this is not the role of a pastor.” His personal philosophy was that one needs to first change themselves before fostering change in the country. Heitor further argued that, among Koreans, no pastor was involved in political action.

Today, both Protestant and Catholic churches are involved in social work in and around the city, as well as missionary work in other parts of the country (de Freitas, 2004: 308). This social action is often not known by many in Brazil because

the community does not advertise it. There are organizations, such as the Korean Christian Benefits Association of South America,<sup>110</sup> that provide medical help to local individuals in the Bras neighborhood, in particular to older individuals. Several pastors have mentioned their help in the *favelas* outside of the city. Claudio's church does a lot of service for the community, in particular outside of the city even though at the time the church was only six months old. Claudio's church makes such a distinction between the role of the state and the role of the church that they do not provide food in the *favelas* where they work. Rather, they focus on after school tutoring. Claudio explained that

we have no interest in politics. We have political opinions in the church. If [president] Dilma does or not, it does not matter. The church has an interest in the decisions that influence the church. This yes, for instance gay marriage, we are against. We have some opinions. We have no direct action.

Claudio later described the social action of his church as a way to get more attendance at his church in his neighborhood.

Bento explained that the church had sometimes helped newcomers to rent an apartment. In Brazil, there needs to be someone to guarantee the rent, something that newcomers rarely have. Bento argues though that the Church does not play this role anymore in the Korean community as the immigration is older and more established. Churches though played an important role in guaranteeing help for Korean new immigrants. Any help that Bento's church provides to immigrants is little and far between. Bento cites cases where people were robbed as a reason why the Church tries to avoid getting caught up in those demands. Bento further outlined some financial

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<sup>110</sup> Associação Cristã Beneficente dos Coreanos da América do Sul.

help given to members of the church, such as a woman who was toothless who obtained a denture from one of the other churchgoers. But that help seemed mostly on a case by case basis. Heitor said that he had helped some people gain legal status in Brazil. Heitor is a pastor at a Protestant church and volunteers at an organization that provides educational support, in particular for newcomers whose parents cannot help them in Portuguese.

Overall, many first generation Koreans, and a significant number of the 1.5 generation, still only hold their Korean citizenship. There is no dual citizenship, forcing immigrants to choose one nationality over the other. As such, many have chosen to retain their Korean citizenship. Julia explained that it was only since 2012 that Koreans had the right to vote abroad. This means that they have little say in politics, and have not had much of a say or a tradition of political engagement over the last fifty years. Only one Korean descent individual was involved in politics at the time of my field research. It is understandable that years of political powerlessness may have brought a general disinterest towards politics in their host country.

Despite the perception that Koreans are very united, an examination of their associations reveals a lack of political clout. Although they have fifty years of presence in Brazil, only one person was cited as a politician. Religion has not been a way into politics for the Korean community. Just as much as the Catholic Church and its subsidiary organizations are involved in politics through their Scalabrinian teachings, Korean protestant churches' core identity is undeniably separate from politics and active political action. This lack of political sensitivity, in particular to left-leaning politics has encouraged a lack of introspection on the history of abuse in the Korean community. I think it is a hindrance in mending the fences with the

government and in fostering acceptance in the community, just as much as higher prices put a strain on the community and storeowners.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

While Koreans possess few organizations that can boast of representing the whole community, Bolivians have a plethora of organizations with political and representative goals, making the emergence of a single interest very hard. Each one claims they represent the Bolivian community over others. Juliana recognized the high number and competition between Bolivian associations. She believed that the majority worked for their own success rather than the success of the community as a whole. Ricardo explained that the Bolivian community was like a snowball: very difficult to manipulate, to make it go in one direction rather than another. Ricardo also explained that Bolivians were now present in many places in and outside the city, such as in Guarulhos and Americana. The geographical dispersion was becoming a hindrance to community cohesion.

When Koreans first arrived in Brazil under the dictatorship, they relied on internal networks for help, seeking counsel among the many Protestant churches. The government at the time was not a reliable source of help. Most of their economic activity took place in the informal economy, even once stores were being opened. Many Koreans were also undocumented and thus not inclined towards seeking out government intervention. It is important to remember to, that the law of migration framed foreigners as threats to national security. The Protestant churches that dominated the community were not politicized, and still lack political capital today. Abuse was thus not a word uttered, politicized, or contextualized at the time.

Conversely, Bolivian immigration started in the 1980s as the dictatorship was unraveling. Catholicism brought many in the community to the church Nossa Senhora da Paz. Because of the church and Scalabrinian teachings, there was a pre-existing understanding of the suffering and abuse inflicted on immigrants, as well as a tradition of denouncing it in political channels. Bolivians did not have to create organizations of their own until the 2000s when negotiations with the government and Korean representatives started, instead using pre-existing social and political network. Today, the community's public face consists of organizations with leftist political leanings that have actively lobbied the government to recognize the situations of abuse and to provide solutions. The current labor law enforcement measures can be traced back to such lobbying, even though not all Bolivians, in particular entrepreneurs, agree with the methods and end results.

In the next chapter, I will delve deeper into the networks of help and survival. I will explore what those means for the future of the community.



## **Chapter 8**

### **SOCIAL AND HUMAN CAPITAL: SHAPING THE FUTURE OF BOTH COMMUNITIES' INVOLVEMENT IN THE GARMENT INDUSTRY**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

In the last chapter, I explored how specific sets of social capital helped explain differing attitudes towards the policing on outsourcing. A differing use of organizations has brought different access to political capital shaping those attitudes towards what constitutes abuse and the solutions that should be implemented. In chapter six I described the involvement of Brazilian bureaucracy in the industry as well as in immigration matters. Exploring labor law enforcement more closely, I want to look in this chapter at the techniques to promote social ascension and how they might influence changes that are expected by the government. The Feira da Madrugada has become a way towards social ascension for Bolivians, eschewing the relationships of employment with stores marked by the government as abusive. However, repression is also brewing there while local mafia and corruption hamper it. Looking at the government's actions, I argue that immigrant associations' involvement does not guarantee a bottom-up approach to solving problems.

I start this chapter by examining the Feira da Madrugada as I observed it alongside Pedro, one of my Bolivian respondents. Then I look into the repression at the Feira and the top-down actions of the government. Finally, I explore what it means to be an entrepreneur and how this could be integrated in the fight against abuse.

## **8.2 The Feira, Independence and Reproducing Abuse**

The *Feira da Madrugada* is an informal market located in the neighborhood of Bras. The original Feira occupies a municipally owned terrain at the Western end of the rua Oriente. Over time, it expanded to occupy most of the surrounding streets, only minutes from the subway station Bras. The Feira is a space where Bolivians and Koreans compete on the retail of garment alongside Brazilians, and Chinese communities among others. Some stores owners in the neighborhood, including Korean retailers have started complaining about this market where vendors charge lower prices in part because they eschew any taxes. I go through the history of the settlement of the *Feira*, and then look into how the *Feira* works, drawing heavily from my meetings with Pedro, a Bolivian vendor at the *Feira*. Pedro, Alfonso, Lorenzo are three Bolivians who sell at the Feira. Nicolas, Adriana and Francisca are three Koreans who have been selling at the Feira. This section is also heavily inspired by the interviews, observations, and hours I spent at the *Feira* as there is very little literature on the topic. By the end of this section, it should be clear why Bolivians consider the Feira a question of social ascension, while on closer inspection it might not look as good. The governmental actions surrounding the Feira turned again very repressive without much consideration for the rationale of the market.

### **8.2.1 History of the *Feira***

I first heard about Bolivians selling their own production in 2009. However, I did not get to visit their small selling market on the Rua 25 de Março at the time. By my second field research, it became impossible to ignore the Feira. Many Bolivian producers had transitioned to that neighborhood to sell their products. The Feira started representing success in the community: being a vendor there meant being free

of contracts and able to dictate the worth of each garment. Many believe the Feira constitutes social ascension since it means that Bolivians moved up the production networks to become their own retailers. Although it operates informally, the authorities are well aware of its existence. In 2013 during my field research, the municipality ordered the temporary closure of the original location of the Feira.

The neighborhood of Bras has been an immigrant neighborhood for over a century. Italians first, then internal migrants from the *Nordeste* lived there for decades. Today, it is home to many Bolivian, Korean, Jewish, Lebanese, and Syrian immigrants or descendants of those communities. Originally, this neighborhood was a center of industrial activity<sup>111</sup>. Big warehouses where immigrants manufactured fabric remain today as reminders of this era. For the past decades, with the arrival of Koreans and Bolivians, the Bras became the location for garment wholesale. Garment wholesale started before the *Feira*. Milena, a representative of Alo Bras, an organization of store owners of the neighborhood, told me that at the time, buses would park on certain streets, several blocks east of the current *feira* around Maria Joaquina. The buses were taking most of the space on those streets and in order to free space on the streets the Municipality made them park at the current location of the original *feira*. Consequently, the center of activity in the neighborhood shifted west. Milena told me that they did not realize at first that the Public Ministry would put the buses where street vendors were, giving easy access to informal tax-free shopping to the bulk of

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<sup>111</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century, São Paulo was still a somewhat rural city (Santos, 2000: 1). The Bras went from a very rural space to an urban and industrialized neighborhood (Santos, 2000: 1). Since there was no previously existing small scale artisan work, the neighborhood started as an industrial area connected by railroads, and attracting many newly arrived immigrants (Santos, 2000: 40-45).

clients that used to shop in those stores. One of the vendors at the original *Feira* used to have a storefront. He explained, “it failed. The *feira* started at that time, and the buses that used to stop in front [of the store] went to the parking to park there.” Most of the stores that were receiving a lot of the activity suddenly lost many clients. On their way to those stores, buyers had a multitude of other options for buying garments, which diverted their consumption on other businesses.

Similarly, the *Rua 25 de Março*, west of the *feira*, used to be a very busy street for the wholesale of clothes. Along with the Bras street sales, it witnessed the very first beginnings of Bolivians selling in the early hours of morning. The opening of the *Feira* and its bus parking also shifted that activity to the east. This shift was more damaging to sales on the *25 de Março* because it is separated by a network of overpasses and highways. It is quite dangerous to walk there from the Bras even more so because most of the buyers are walking around with the products that they buy, lugging them behind on small metal carts. If they can leave their products with someone else, they will attempt the crossing. However, most of the sale there has now shifted to wholesale electronics, and not garments.

The *Feira* is predominantly an informal market for garments although there are also sales of handbags and pirated clothes and handbag items. Although Bolivians and Koreans comprise many of the vendors, Brazilians also sell there. Not everyone who sells at the *Feira* manufactures what he or she sell. Indeed, Bolivians tend to be small producers, but Koreans sometimes are resellers. They either purchase stock from other stores in the Bras and Bom Retiro, and sometimes from Paraguay or China. In conversations with Ruth Camacho, it came up that oftentimes Paraguayans were hired at very low salaries and in exploitative conditions to sell handbags in stalls owned by

Chinese retailers. Vendors are not necessarily small entrepreneurs: they can be employees too.

The mafia's influence is very important at the *Feira*, but so are some businessmen who have dozens of boxes. This is in particular very true for those boxes selling imported luggage and purses from China. During my discussions with a fellow researcher on the sales practices at the *feira*, I learned that some of those vendors have up to 30 boxes. As a small producer, Pedro was only a small player in the *feira* business. Adriana and Francisca are a little bit bigger since both had stores in addition to their *box* and Adriana actually had two boxes. Small entrepreneurs and medium-sized entrepreneurs coexist in this highly informal environment. Bolivians individually remain for the most part small players in the informal retail of garment.

Considering that the center of business shifted with the arrival of the *feira*, there is a lot of tension between informal vendors and long-established stores. Prices offered by the vendors are hard to follow for stores around the *feira*. They have higher costs of production since they have to pay rent and employees to sell the clothes. Most often, they also outsource production, sometimes to the same Bolivian workshops that sell some production at the *feira*. Alfonso, for instance, still worked for Korean storeowners in addition to selling his production at the *feira*. For those storeowners, the competition has been fierce and they complained of unfair competition. Such unfairness stems from storeowners being formal entities paying taxes, while Feira vendors remain completely informal. Of course this comparison eschews the fact that most of those storeowners actually hire Bolivian workshops that are partially informal. Ricardo explained that if Bolivians can get R\$10 for a shirt that will be R\$30 in a store, Koreans are displeased. To Ricardo, Koreans only reaped what they sowed.

Bolivians only looked at the *feira* because Koreans have been giving them “hunger” prices for decades; Koreans did not see this coming.

Competition from the *feira* is a complex matter. Although the center of wholesale in the Bras was switched to the west, the fact that the *feira* remains at all in the Bras is a positive influence for the neighborhood. With increased foot traffic, surrounding stores also get some trickle-down activity. Neighboring stores are thus in a situation where they feel the need to complain about the unfair competition the *feira* has brought, while reaping some benefits from its presence. Around Christmas time, many decide to rent their stores to vendors as it is more lucrative than selling their products. In the end, “shopping” owners seem to benefit the most from the growth of the Feira, charging very high rents and non-refundable deposits for the small booths they call “box”. They receive a tremendous amount of money for the spaces they rent out. Overall, the Feira has changed the face of the neighborhood and revitalized it by reinvesting in the abandoned warehouses. Because of the high activity, it has also become more secure, attracting more clients.

Pedro used to sell in the streets. When he did so, it was officially free of rent. However, the mafia charged him R\$200 per week to sell there. Nowadays though, he has a spot in a “shopping”<sup>112</sup>, a former warehouse reconfigured to host a complex network of vending booths, that are called “boxes”<sup>113</sup>. He had to pay a deposit<sup>114</sup> of

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<sup>112</sup> All vendors call those warehouses “shopping” using the English word.

<sup>113</sup> All vendors refer to the plastic cubicle-like stalls where they sell as “box” using the English word.

<sup>114</sup> The word used is “luva”. A luva in Portuguese is a glove or a gauntlet. It does not have a translation in Spanish. This is the name attributed by my respondents, both

R\$15,000 to be able to rent the space for 3 years. In addition to this non-refundable deposit, he paid around R\$1,000 for his stall every month. The rent is determined by the proximity to the street and the size of the stall, which in Pedro's case is a regular size booth a little way inside a not busy shopping. The rent is relatively easy to make, but the deposit can be hard to come by. That is one of the reasons why Rodrigo gave up selling at the Feira: although he was interested in renting a *box*, he did not have enough capital to secure a spot.

Pedro woke up at 2AM six days a week. He traveled the street of the Bras neighborhood to get in his vending stall at 3AM. At that hour, 300 buses would pull in the neighborhood, each one bringing around forty to fifty prospective customers. Those customers would usually stay within walking distance of the bus parking lot to look for the best deals to sell in their stores back home. Some come from the North-East of Brazil, dozens of hours away, others come from all over the state of São Paulo or the neighboring state of Rio. The Feira has become their main hub of shopping to fill their clothing stores with mostly Brazilian made garments.

Pedro left the streets in July 2011. By that time, there was no free space in the original *Feira da Madrugada*. The original Feira is public property, there is no rent set for those who occupy this space. I asked several vendors there who all confirmed that they did not pay rent, nor did they pay any mafia for their spots. One of them did mention that she pays R\$250 per month to “administer the market, for cleaning, etc.” The *Feira* vendors have a definite advantage over most of the other vendors: they are adjacent to the parking lot where most buses park during the day. They see a lot of

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Koreans and Bolivians, to the non-refundable amount of money they have to deposit to secure the rental of a store or of a stall.

foot traffic as prospective buyers move around looking for products. Nicolas told me that his sales varied a lot from month to month. He sometimes made as much as R\$80,000 in a month. His case is very different from most other vendors I have met. In fact, Pedro explained to me that the first year was very productive for him, but sales have dropped significantly since then.

Pedro worked on a street off the Rua Oriente, at the end of which the original Feira is located. His booth could be a little hard to find, as customers had to walk a little way in the shopping to find him. Boxes are rather small. Only Lorenzo had a bigger sale area that could be considered closer to a regular very small store. His booth was about 6'5'' by 4'9'' space. In that booth, Pedro had to fit most of his products, as well as a counter where he usually exposed three mannequins with some of his T-shirts on. He also had full-sized mannequins in the front of his booth wearing several pieces of clothing. The walls of the box were packed full with clothes in individual plastic wrapping. Seeing those arrangements, one understands better how important the risks of fire are in those *shopping*. Adding to this how most shoppings seemed to be mazes, the risks of a major tragedy seem to be very high.

Wholesale Korean stores often name the *feira* as a bigger competitor than garment imports. Some of them pointed out to me that select clients went to the *feira* for a while but came back to them in order to find a quality that they preferred for their clothes. But others like Adriana and Francisca, take advantage of the *feira* to sell some of their stock there. Those who have stores can be both hurt by the *feira* competition while using it for profit. It equally underscores the entrenchment of informal activities along with formal activities. It is not merely small entrepreneurs, workshop owners



who delve into the informal world, but formal stores who follow regulations on some of their activities too. The limit between formal and informal is thus fluid.

### **8.2.2 Street sales and governmental labor law enforcement**

Pedro had to abandon his spot on the streets for his pricier booth as a direct result of the Municipality's policies on street sales. The Prefecture implemented a policy of zero-tolerance of unregistered street sales around 2010<sup>115</sup>. Street vendors visually represent an economy entrenched in informality, and thus an economy that does not belong to developed economies. The authorities see street vendors as devaluing the neighborhood, leaving trash behind them, hindering the due process of the police, conditions of work are precarious<sup>116</sup>, and part of the sold products may be illegal (Pamplona, n/d: 1). Displacing street vendors contributes to cleaning up a neighborhood and propelling the city into a more developed economy club. Brazil remains involved in a postcolonial game of keeping up appearances and growing as an economy defined by the Western world as “developed.”

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<sup>115</sup> The authorities were very efficient in that process. I observed a great difference in terms of street sales in the city between my first field research in 2009 and the second one in 2013. Street sales happened outside of the Bras neighborhood too. I was struck by the change on my way to the office of Ruth Camacho. That street used to be filled on both sidewalks with vending carts, making it a complex maze to navigate to get to her office. In 2013, there were no carts outside and the neighborhood was actually rather empty. Sure there were stores, but there were just less people on the streets.

<sup>116</sup> In the neighborhood where I live, Brazilian street vendors worked food carts along the main road to the subway. On my way to the Feira da Madrugada one day at 5AM, I saw them set up their carts. They usually only closed around 6-7 PM after the last residents came back from work.

The Rua 25 de Março that featured at the time the original Feira da Madrugada, was hit very hard towards the end of 2010, with unfriendly police action (Cordeiro, 2010). Street sales used to range over a number of streets in particular Oriente, Barão de Ladario, Largo da Concordia, Henrique Dias up to Maria Joaquina, several blocks to the East. Although the authorities were pretty efficient in their work, unregulated street vendors did not completely disappear. Indeed, on his way to his booth, Pedro has to step around people who are setting up some clothes on black grocery bags. Bolivian men and women, but also Brazilians, are sitting on the sidewalk and looking for prospective buyers. Some of the clothes that they sell are “knockoffs”, pirate copies of brand clothes. When Pedro finishes his workday around 11AM, they will be already gone. The police usually moved in on the streets of the Feira around 6:30-7AM. At that point, all street vendors who do not have a permit and a registered cart run away. This is why their clothes are laid out on black plastic bags: it makes it easier for them to pick them up fast and run away from the police without losing their stock<sup>117</sup>. Some of the vendors can be found in small parallel streets, sometimes staying for a few minutes until they are tipped off that the police are moving in. And thus begins a game of cat and mouse for the rest of the day. Those scenes of running can be found in other neighborhoods in the city. I have seen it in Santa Cecilia, the neighborhood close to where I was staying where vendors sometimes have carts with wheels, as the streets are wider than in the Bras, and less busy.

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<sup>117</sup> Interestingly, similar arrangements existed in London’s informal second hand garment market in the 1800s (Mendelsohn, 2015: 30).

When the police started enforcing this ban on street sales, Bolivian and Brazilian vendors looked for another option to sell their products. There were small stores renting their space for booths as early as 2007 according to Rodrigo. But it was not until the Prefecture went after the street vendors that the use of *shopping* became widespread. Because everyone looked for a new place to sell, owners of former warehouses, or sometimes clothes stores, set the rent very high. This is how Pedro went from paying R\$800 for a *box* to sell his clothes to R\$1000 a month with a *luva*. *Box* prices can vary a lot, depending on location. Some booths have a rent of R\$3,000<sup>118</sup>. Six years ago, before street sales were outlawed, the rent for a *box* was around R\$300 per month according to Ricardo. This jump in price is very significant and affects the profits that can be made as a vendor. In the feira, location means everything: clients are kings, if slightly lazy ones who count their steps.

### **8.2.3 Mafia and insecurity**

An informal environment is the perfect breeding space for criminal activities to thrive. A small number of vendors at the Feira sell pirated clothes. But more importantly, the Feira is home to a mafia that already managed street sales before the change. Pedro, Alfonso, and Lorenzo complained about the constant harassment from the mafia and the racism they experienced when they were selling on the streets. The mafia started getting bigger a couple of years after they started selling in the streets. At first, Brazilians and Bolivians would sell together. However, Pedro explained that this changed quickly when the mafia decided to segregate Bolivians and Brazilians. His

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<sup>118</sup> The prices by square feet are actually the highest in the city. Even big brand stores in the most exclusive malls in the city have lower rent prices per square feet.

brother Alfonso told me that Bolivians, and in particular Bolivian women and girls, were verbally abused during the *Feira*. They were the targets of verbal sexual harassment to a point that made him very uncomfortable. Alfonso was less of a target since he says he looked more Brazilian<sup>119</sup>. The mafia decided who would get a spot that day, even if they had collected payment for the full week. When Alfonso and Pedro tried to call the police to denounce the harassment, the police came and told them that they were doing illegal business and would not help them. According to them, once the mafia realized that the police was on their side, they amped up the harassment. Alfonso said that he saw the police and the main mafia man have coffee together that same day.

In another incident with the mafia, Brazilian members of the local mafia assaulted Alfonso, Pedro and his wife. After calling the police to denounce someone with a gun, the mafia sent about twenty men to beat Alfonso, Pedro and his wife. After that incident, none of them went to the hospital. Pedro did not go back to sell in the streets for three months. Instead, he sent his wife to sell their production in his place. They went to the *Camara dos Vereadores* and talked to a lawyer from the Labor's party<sup>120</sup> but both institutions told them that there was nothing to be done about it even though they had legal immigration documentation in Brazil. From that point on, Alfonso and Pedro did not trust the authorities anymore. When I met him, Pedro was

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<sup>119</sup> His facial features looked less indigenous than most Bolivian immigrants in São Paulo.

<sup>120</sup> Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT). This was the party of Lula and then president Dilma Roussef. Paulo Illes is associated publically with this party.

still scared that the main mafia man would recognize him as he still walked around the Feira.

This mafia involvement is common knowledge. Paulo Illes told me that people were still very scared about the mafia. It was to him, one of the reasons why Bolivians would not be able to organize and fight. Because Paulo received threats, he never got actively involved in the Feira or in any activism related to the Feira. One person, who was the head of the Bolivian cooperative shopping, was killed allegedly by the mafia for being too outspoken and in favor of changes. Paulo Illes believed that the mafia was involved in the proceedings to close the Feira<sup>121</sup>. Considering the level of corruption that Pedro and his friends reported, this does not seem unlikely.

The mafia has complicated the efforts of the government to fight informality. Whether or not they are involved in the 2013 proceedings to close the original Feira, governmental actions have seemed very much top down, with little regard for those acting on the ground. In the next section, I want to evaluate if by seeking more independence, vendors at the Feira have truly achieved the social ascension so many claim it has.

#### **8.2.4 More independence does not put an end to abuse**

Many immigrant associations and some Bolivians question the choice of the Feira as an upward progress in the production network. For instance, Ricardo told me that many Bolivian *feirantes* only worked to pay the rent; the profits to be made at the *feira* were small. According to him, vendors made a lot of sacrifices to sell at the

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<sup>121</sup> Some of the banners that I saw during the protests reported similar ideas: “Material for the mafiosi, they will sell our boxes, we will respond!”

Feira. During the three years he sold in the streets of the Bras, he got there at 3AM. He cut, sewed and sold his own clothes in addition to being present in the booth for sale. It made him very sad when he did not sell anything. The sacrifices were not worth it for him. He went back to only producing clothes for others. Other respondents expressed their fear at working at the *feira*, like Rosa, who told me that her female friend was assaulted at the *feira* in December 2012, so she would rather work from home and had never been interested in selling at the Feira.

Similarly, Pedro's workday included getting up around 2AM to get to work at 3AM. He usually stayed at work until around 11AM-noon. When his day at the Feira was over, he would come back home, have some food, and rest. At about 2PM, he would work at the sewing machine for a while to make the clothes he sold at the Feira. His wife worked all day at the sewing machine to manufacture their stock. In our discussions he mentioned that he was glad to keep the full R\$10 to R\$15 he charged for each of the shirts he sewed. The hours were long, but he preferred to sew a garment he is going to receive more than R\$1 or R\$2 for as a worker, or R\$4 as a workshop owner. Although the hours were very long, Pedro told me that he enjoyed the work because he was free to decide not to work one day. Not only was he independent, but he also had flexibility that deadlines imposed by storeowners did not permit.

However, in early 2013, Pedro's sales declined. Sales were actually not good for many people in the garment industry. I spent several hours at Pedro's booth over several weeks; many people would stop by to look at the clothes, but very few actually bought any significant amount of clothes. Although most of the Feira is a wholesale market, customers who stopped during my observations would only buy one or two

pieces as samples before committing to a wholesale quantity. Pedro's drop in sales was not surprising. The informal market in the neighborhood of Bras seems to be saturated. It is hard to have exact data of how many vendors are in the *feira*, in its original form or in the surrounding *shopping*. According to a protest organizer Sergio, in the original *Feira*, there were about 5,000 vendors. Ruth Camacho talked about 1,000 vendors in the original *feira*. As with many immigration related issues in Brazil, it is hard to come across reliable numbers. Paulo Illes talks about 20,000 people selling in the *feira*, of which 5,000 are Latino immigrants. Even so, during my field research, at least two more *shopping* were in construction. To reiterate, most of the first *shoppings* were situated in repurposed warehouses. Those new buildings usually also hosted several levels of maze-like booths<sup>122</sup>. However, in those bigger *shopping*, particularly on higher levels, it is striking to see that many booths are empty.

Prices are low at the Feira for several reasons. Obviously, operating informally lowers prices. Additionally, when word of mouth got out that selling your own production would bring more money, many Bolivians chose that option, quickly overcrowding the market. An instance of price competition can be shown when comparing Pedro and Francisca's prices. Pedro sold his simple women's shirts for R\$10 apiece while Francisca sold women shirts for R\$50. Francisca is the exception in the Feira where most prices are closer to what Pedro offers. Francisca complained to me that buyers were not interested in her prices. But she felt her hands were tied; the fabric was high quality and cost around R\$24 just for a shirt and labor cost around R\$7. Selling for R\$10 would be selling well below cost for her. Francisca, however,

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<sup>122</sup> One of those *shopping* has color coded the *box* areas in addition to numbering them.

had an advantage over Pedro: she had a store that she managed along with her mother in the Bom Retiro. If the Feira did not pan out, she always could go back to her store.

Aside from the overcrowding of vendors, the quality of the clothes at the *Feira* remained a problem too. The main issue is not the sewing process: most Bolivian owners have been working for several years in the garment industry before they have access to the Feira. The quality of sewing is similar to the one they gave under contracts with Korean stores. They cut prices with the fabric they used to make those garments; in order to make a profit out of the small prices that dominate the industry, the fabric chosen is a much lower quality.

The *feira* is often regarded in the Bolivian community as a proof of the social ascension of Bolivians in the clothing industry. It is true that they have certainly risen up the network of production, but the life led by Pedro shows also that it is a very demanding business, involving long hours of work, and a dependence on the interest of buyers. The Feira in the end cannot be a way out of abuse as long as buyers seek low prices. The over saturation of the market is not helping the situation. But looking at Pedro's day, starting at 2AM, taking a brief nap and working until 8-9PM most nights, there is little sense in making a difference in the condition of abuse he experiences with the one employees do. The boundary between employee and employers reveals itself as pretty thin. Looking at who sells at the *feira* is also a good window into understanding that even though it represents a certain freedom and ascension to Pedro, other actors are getting more out of this *feira*. Entrepreneurs who operate a store in another neighborhood, or big players who own over ten sale points, reap different benefits from evolving in such a milieu. In the next section, I want to look at how the government has acted towards the Feira.



### 8.3 Repression and Informality

Most government actions have been top-down, with little interest in communicating details to entrepreneurs. Most of the focus has been on street sales<sup>123</sup>, or in officially remodeling the Feira to make it conform to fire codes. The municipality refused to answer questions, such as whether updating the feira to fire code would involve diminishing the number of booths. The governmental stance on the Feira seems to be not so much on abuse, but on outward signs of informality. Most vendors are still informal, but the municipal government had no plans to change this.

At the federal level, and according to Lucas, the labor inspector, the government had not plan to hold responsible buyers from around the country who do not technically outsource the work of Bolivians, but buy wholesale to re-sell in their own stores. There is no plan to enforce employer sanctions in the Feira. The corruption that I will outline later in the chapter can explain in part why the

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<sup>123</sup> Another Bolivian market was the target of a Municipality regulation: the market on the *rua Coimbra*. Every Saturday, starting around 11AM going into the early hours of Sunday morning, Bolivian street vendors come together to sell traditional products from Bolivia. The Municipality was in the process of formalizing the market, registering the vendors, although there would not be enough room for everyone to be registered, and deciding the hours the market could be conducted. The Bolivian Association of the *rua Coimbra* market prioritized the vendors who were up to date on paying their dues to the association. There was dissention about letting clothing stalls sell in that market. Indeed, the market is formalized as it is a part of the cultural patrimony of the city, putting an emphasis on traditional Bolivian resources, rather than on Bolivian entrepreneurship per se. Paulo Illes tells me that the hope is to see Brazilians in this market, who would spend money there. For having visited the market there on a Saturday afternoon, I was visibly the very minority who was not Bolivian. It was also the first and only time that someone called me “gringa” in the streets. This market’s formalization was done in cooperation with some of the associations on the ground, something the closing of the Feira was not. Perhaps it was the lack of representation, but it does not mean that the decisions were as well received.

government hesitates taking action in this area. However, if the government is making small stores responsible for their outsourcing, they should question whether those who purchase clothes made in unregulated conditions should also be held responsible. Particularly those who purchase wholesale collections for their stores. The government should take a stance on this. Imposing employer sanctions on one side, but not the other is inconsistent, and unlikely to end abuse in workshops.

### **8.3.1 Consequences of labor law enforcement**

While in 2009, street vendors occupied many streets throughout the city, occupying half the sidewalks and sold a variety of products from clothes to accessories; in 2013, most of them had disappeared. The municipality successfully implemented a policy to end street sales in the city. Other developing nations have also worked to end street sales as a means to end informality. Many street vendors felt that they had no power against the government. Coletto (2010) provides a detailed study of street vendors in Porto Alegre (southern Brazil) who face similar struggles in terms of getting approval for their occupation of municipal lands (sidewalks) and areas as street vendors of São Paulo. Coletto concluded his study of street vendors in Porto Alegre by arguing that most of the resources street vendors used were geared toward defending the status quo, which actually created obstacles to greater reforms (2010: 148). Their insecurity resulting from informality and the fraught relationships with authorities prevent the Feira vendors from conceiving greater reforms that would improve their work experience. The need for a constant cash flow makes any major undertakings problematic. Like in Porto Alegre, success was only partial in rendering legal street vendors since they have not disappeared completely from the city (Coletto, 2010: 105).

In Coletto's case study, many street vendors obtain their merchandise from Paraguay (Coletto, 2010: 102), like many of those who do not produce their own merchandise in the Feira. They travel in particular to Ciudad del Este the third largest tax free zone in the world (Coletto, 2010: 103). Most of the goods purchased in Paraguay are actually made in China (Coletto, 2010: 133). This means that a lot of Chinese imports are being concealed by first being traded through Paraguay and may enter the country informally as Foz do Iguacu stands as a well-known point of entry that the police seldom inspects. This might mean that the data presented in the fifth chapter should include some imports from Paraguay as actually belonging to China.

Street sales are not the only part of the informal garment sale market that the government has its eye on. As a whole, it does not look favorably on the Feira. Lucas told me that the Feira da Madrugada is the worst of all the worlds. Workers are informal, sales are undeclared. At the beginning of 2013, the municipality decided to close the original Feira to make it up to fire codes. When I visited it around 5AM in the morning, I noticed that the space between stalls was extremely tight and in about five minutes if not for Pedro who offered to show us around I would have been completely lost. In case of a fire, it would be difficult to get everyone out in time. Considering that each stall vendor stores their clothes in their small booths, there are a lot of flammable garment to feed any fire. It is even more an issue than for surrounding shopping located within smaller warehouses. Since the original Feira is located on a municipally-owned terrain, it was relatively easy to close it. The first decision was met with a lot of resistance followed by street protests<sup>124</sup>.

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<sup>124</sup> Protests in the streets preceded the protests of 2013 linked to the World Cup by a couple weeks.

Vendors implemented some changes within the area of the Feira including providing fire extinguishers in regular emplacements that did not satisfy the authorities. A judge reviewed the unilateral decision to close the space and ruled in favor of the Municipality<sup>125</sup>. The *feirantes* had 48 hours to vacate the premises, take their stock with them and figure out what to do next. On the day the *feira* was closed, a heavy police presence could be seen in the neighborhood, and in particular in front of the doors leading to the *feira*. While the Feira was closed, no space was provided to the workers to continue their economic activity; there was little communication about when the Feira would reopen. In the weeks after its closure, I passed by some of the entry points and police officers were standing in front of the entry points. During the protests, there was an impressive visible police force in the neighborhood. Some people looked in neighboring *shopping* for booths to rent. Nicolas shared that his plans may involve going to Paraguay to import clothing in the meantime. Others suspended their activity until figuring out what their next move would be. Those who owned successful stores outside of the *feira* just reverted their efforts to their stores, hoping that it would re-open soon.

Since the police raided the shopping center where he worked in search of pirated clothes, Pedro stopped leaving his stock in his box. Instead he started bringing with him most of the clothes he thought would sell that day. This was a step back for

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<sup>125</sup> At the time I left the field research, the Feira was still closed. Although my study stops in 2009, since then events have continued to affect the Feira. As of early 2016, the Feira closed briefly for ten days. An agreement was sought with a private business to turn the area into a fully fledged shopping including parking space, food courts, and hotel arrangements. Vendors at the market had to register their business in order to continue their activity (Domingos, 2015).

him: he used to do this when he sold on the streets, but the *shopping* had provided him with a better solution for storage. The Bras neighborhood, and São Paulo in general is not very safe, particularly at such an early time. The 20 minutes' walk becomes more perilous as he has to bring his stock with him. Since most buyers come in on a bus and do not stay the night in the city, Pedro cannot tell them to come back the next day for their order. He risks losing some work by only bringing what he can with him. Pedro is lucky enough to be living close by, but many Bolivians still do not own a car, although many have become owners in the past years as regulations have changed for the production of clothes and Koreans do not do deliveries anymore to receive their production. The close by neighborhood of Bresser-Mooça hosts many Bolivian immigrants and is much less safe than Bras, at least on some streets.<sup>126</sup> For entrepreneurs selling at the Feira, making the trip before 3AM, when public transportation is over, is full of dangers. If they have to bring their products with them because they are concerned their place of work will be closed and unavailable to them at any moment's notice, this only heightens the risks. Considering all sales happen in cash, many entrepreneurs carry enough cash with them to be easy targets. Milena argued that the end of street sales on the Largo da Concordia, close to the subway entrance lowered the instances of pickpockets, by diminishing how many people crowded the street at once. However, in the early hours of the morning when the Feira happens, thefts still happen.

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<sup>126</sup> While in Rodrigo's car, on the way to his workshop, he tells me about a young man in his early 20s that we see in the street. "He is a bad guy." Apparently this young man threatened Rodrigo and tried to steal his money some time before our meeting. This is a very big grievance for Rodrigo: he feels very unsafe in the city.

There are obstacles on the way to further entrepreneurial success for Bolivians. I explained that the market was saturated and Pedro's sales had suffered greatly from this saturation. But there is also a question of real estate. At the beginning of the Feira, competition was rather low. When surrounding stores started setting up stalls to rent like in the original Feira, rent prices were not as high as they are now. When looking at the price of booths in shopping centers and averaging it by square meter, we get some of the highest prices per square meter in the city. Of course, booths are rather small so the starting prices are more affordable than opening their own stores. In addition, landlords ask for *luva* from prospective renters at brick and mortar stores just like they do at the Feira da Madrugada for the small booths. Getting this access is prohibitive for most. While creating more shopping is relatively easy when so many abandoned warehouses are available, building a store is a more complex endeavor. The potential for growth in the neighborhood of stores is thus more limited. It also would widen the radius for prospective buyers.

Location matters immensely in São Paulo. Considering that the bulk of the buyers come from everywhere in the country, it makes sense that wholesale is so concentrated in two neighborhoods, the Bras and the Bom Retiro. Setting up new neighborhoods, or out of town markets is not very realistic at best, and at worst takes vendors away from governments' eyes. Lorenzo's Bolivian association of entrepreneurs selling at the Feira had plans for relocation of Bolivian vendors. He showed me plans to a piece of land that the association wanted to purchase to establish their own market like a Feira da Madrugada. However, because most buyers come by bus, they are stuck where they are for most of the day – it is not very practical to take the subway with the stock they are carrying particularly since the market starts earlier

than the beginning of the subway service. Suffice it to look at how the rua 25 de Março lost most clients to see that setting up points of sales far from the original Feira can seem a risky endeavor. Buses would have to reroute to get to the new sale area. Lorenzo and his group did not acknowledge this risk, and were actually wondering why they had so few signing up.

Governmental law enforcement had repercussions on vendors that were not necessarily foreseen. Fighting pirate clothing has meant putting Pedro into more danger. Ending street sales increased the cost of selling at the Feira. One-sided actions without consultation also left thousands of vendors with few options to continue their economic activity. Instead of fighting against the mafia, governmental actions have complicated the issue letting the mafia take more space. The closure of the Feira da Madrugada, the suppression of street sales, and the fight against pirate clothing disproportionately affect poor Bolivian entrepreneurs who only work on one spot at the Feira and do not have a store. They have few options to get around law enforcement, and end up paying more financially and in terms of their security. When Koreans and Bolivians feel they are unfairly targeted by the inspections, it is possible to see how this is their perspective. The government, knowingly or not, has been putting obstacles in the roads that have proven the most economically successful for immigrants.

In chapter five, I have shown that the history of Brazil towards its immigrants has changed to a more laissez-faire attitude. Because of the lack of tools to control the entry of the many immigrants, law enforcement that affects their business and economic welfare may constitute a continuation of repressive politics in other ways. Ultimately, the government limits betterment of economic situations for many

Bolivians by using a repressive approach that seems, at least from the entrepreneurs' perspective, to be one sided. Later in the chapter, I will show that the lack of education and support for professionalization contributes to this sense of control. The government may not mean to emphasize punitive measures with no supportive initiatives, but immigrants may interpret the situation as a concerted action to put obstacles in their way. Brazil is putting small entrepreneurs on the same scale as big businesses. Limiting interactions with storeowners to suppressive inspections is not helping the matter. In the following section, I look at whether those actions are truly top-down and how immigrant associations fit in the governmental actions.

### **8.3.2 The role of immigrant associations in top-down labor-law enforcement**

I want to bring up a point about immigrant associations and their role in the garment industry of São Paulo. I showed in the previous chapter that the political capital of Bolivians through the associations that represent them has contributed to their understanding of abuse in a different way than in the Korean community. I think this political capital has also meant a different understanding of entrepreneurship for both communities. While Koreans more easily accept the idea that they are entrepreneurs, for Bolivians, it is more complicated. First I go over my experience interviewing workers at those associations specifically about entrepreneurs.

In chapter six, I alluded to a meeting of the Regional Consultation of Civil Society in preparation of the UN High Level Dialogue on Migration and Development, that a colleague's and my suggestions concerning the recognition of entrepreneurs and their role in the host countries were struck from the record, despite the approval of the only Bolivian in attendance. This behavior reflected a strong belief in the concept of false consciousness that seems prevalent among workers and



volunteers of immigrant associations. This concept relates to Marxist thought; it is the idea that individuals are not aware of their conditions. Instead, they accept the truths, arguments that the production system and its accompanying elites have devised. In short, they believe their condition to be normal, natural, and unchangeable. In this case it asserts that immigrant entrepreneurs do not know any better than participating in the capitalist industry by becoming entrepreneurs and striving to become their own boss. Instead, since they remain at the bottom of the production network they can only hope to be exploited and to reproduce the abuse they escaped. They lack awareness of the real issues at stake. The more progressive leftist leanings of those organizations have been very beneficial in bringing to light the conditions of abuse. However, at the same time, they have separated those organizations from the understanding of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs. I believe that it is more favorable to treat immigrant entrepreneurs as individuals aware of their conditions in life. It does not preclude the need for help in particular for support and resources for a better experience.

In my interview at the Pastoral do Migrante and at the CAMI, there was some tension about the topic of entrepreneurship. Sandra seldom accepted to discuss entrepreneurs. At the Pastoral, Sofia explained that she had little interactions with entrepreneurs as they are already in legal status when they start their business. To her, most of the interactions with entrepreneurs was limited to cultural events that take place at the Pastoral, such as the “novenas,” traditional dances preceded by dances honoring saints throughout the year<sup>127</sup>. Sofia failed to see like many others, that those

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<sup>127</sup> Those dances are events organized by groups of Bolivians. All women wear the same dresses, and men wear similar business suits. The hats and dresses can be very

people she helped obtain legal documentation in the country, were actually for some of them future entrepreneurs. There was no thinking about intervention at that point to promote training or understanding of the issues entrepreneurs face.

Tensions were the highest at the CAMI with Sandra. This is understandable since the CAMI is a place where workers can go to make claims of abuse against their employers. It is also an organization working in collaboration with the authorities to monitor abuse and make reports of abusive situations in workshops. Obviously, helping entrepreneurs is not their main occupation. On the contrary, their main activity is to bring entrepreneurs to pay unpaid wages, or get them prosecuted for abuse in their workshops. Sandra explained that most Bolivians arrived through human trafficking (i.e. being promised conditions of work that did not happen). Bringing up human trafficking takes away the autonomy of those who decide to move to Brazil. Sandra described immigrants who open workshops as people who knew little and thought they would earn more money but failed to understand that they need capital and to invest in their business. Sandra also explained that they usually did not know about the paperwork they needed to fill out to properly register their businesses. What Sandra saw of the workshops were the worst, those who had the most violations. When she thought of entrepreneurs it was only in a dual terms: either abusers or exploited by Korean storeowners. When entrepreneurs have agency, it is only to reproduce abuse.

The issue of funding is particularly important for immigrant associations. The provenance of the funding might influence the portrayal of the situation. Paulo Illes

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expensive, which precludes the participation of many workers who cannot afford to participate in the event.

told me that he had started having trouble getting a renewal of funding from a European Catholic group because of the projected image of Brazil as a very successful developing nation that takes care of its population. The CAMI receives donations from Catholic organizations, but as part of the financial settlement reached between the Labor Ministry and several big brands that were found to use slave like labor in their network. The SPM, the parent branch of this organization, has similar funding patterns. There is thus an interest in keeping the focus on abuse, a topic that may seem more urgent and more central to the traditional funders than entrepreneurship or entrepreneurship training. Expanding their services beyond assistance to undocumented immigrants or abused workers may not be financially possible, or desirable for their discourse.

I explained in chapter seven the role those organizations have played alongside the government. They have lobbied the government to have amnesties and change the law on immigration. The CAMI works alongside the government to communicate data about abuse in workshops. They also pressured the authorities to accompany them alongside the investigations in workshops. How far their influence goes, poses a question I cannot answer. But I can definitely argue that immigrant associations perceive their work as being done in collaboration with the government. Two important players shared that to them, the current hurry the government has exhibited towards solving abuse has mostly been a case of journalistic interest in recent events and personal ambition to move within the bureaucracy. Keeping the focus on abuse of workers might constitute the only strategy immigrant associations have to keep relevance, funding, and momentum. Immigrant associations are imperfect, although they might constitute the only outlets for a dialogue with the community. It is

important, however, to realize that those associations' involvement in the dealings of the industry does not constitute a guarantee of a bottom-up progress in the industry. Involving entrepreneurs remains an important goal for a truly inclusive bottom-up action, unfulfilled by most immigrant associations. For entrepreneurs to fully commit to changes in the industry, professionalization becomes crucial. A topic, I will investigate in this following section.

#### **8.4 Professionalization of Entrepreneurs**

Instead of looking at this problem from a labor law enforcement, I think it would be beneficial to look at the issues through the lens of professionalization. The government is already entrenched in the production network at several levels. But this involvement has been uneven depending on access to political capital. However, I believe it is human capital that matters the most in solving this matter. I have made it clear that for workshops to abide by the legislation, there is a need to know a lot about administration and the rules in Brazil. I do not believe that most entrepreneurs, both Bolivians and Koreans, have a genuine desire to hurt others and abuse workers. I think that they often lack training that goes beyond short-term profit and short-term goals. Improvements to human capital need to include entrepreneurs, as their role in the production network is so central. In this section, I will look first at what it means to be an entrepreneur. Then I will look at opportunities for professionalization and why they matter.

##### **8.4.1 The meaning of entrepreneurship**

Throughout this dissertation, I have referred to storeowners and workshop owners as entrepreneurs. I used Light and Bonacich's definition of immigrant

entrepreneurs as self-employed individuals coming from an immigrant community, whether they are first or second generation (1988: 18). Indeed, Bolivian and Korean immigrant entrepreneurs own their business, usually have registered their business with the authorities and thus possess a registration number. They are entrepreneurs in the most capitalistic sense: they own the means of production and produce goods to resell for a profit. If anything, since they eschew some of the legislation, they operate in a freer competitive environment. Despite my understanding of my respondents as entrepreneurs, many did not identify as such. Ruth Camacho first corrected my use of the term entrepreneur during our first meeting in 2013: micro-entrepreneur is the technical legal category for them.

Similarly, vendors at the Feira did not identify as entrepreneurs either. I observed one such example during the protests at the Feira; the vendors had written banners that highlighted the history of Brazil as a defender of workers' rights. They appealed to the protection granted to workers, not entrepreneurs. Among the slogans displayed that day on the place were "Justice was made for the poor, hard working society, *feira da madrugada*", "leave the hard working workers alone, yes to improvements, no to interdiction", "thank you Jesus for creating Judges for the working people" and "Justice, look at our 1500 workers". They insisted on the fact that workers would be losing their employment, and that many families would be affected. They tried to appeal to the history of workers' rights in Brazil<sup>128</sup>.

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<sup>128</sup> In interviews I conducted during the protests, there was a clear solidarity coming from Brazilians towards immigrants, where respondents often emphasized that for immigrants it was impossible to find any other sort of employment and that they needed to send money back home. However, this was not necessarily true because many could find work in other workshops or accept work for other clothes stores. But it would push them back lower into the production network. The main representatives

The line of abuse between workers and entrepreneurs is not as clear-cut as one might think. It was clear that the Feira brought more independence and entrepreneurship, yet also pushes into extreme conditions those who choose them. The difference between a worker and an entrepreneur is that one is salaried and depends on a boss, the other is salaried if they chose to be salaried and depends on buyers of their services or products, sometimes through contracts. They both work long hours and in some cases in similarly abusive conditions. Conditions of abuse can emerge, particularly in overcrowded business environments, which is the case for both the offer of service (i.e. workshops) and the offer of products (i.e. the informal market).

Many of my respondents outside of the Feira did not identify as entrepreneurs either, Koreans and Bolivians alike. They moved to entrepreneurship in order to seek independence from a situation they usually find abusive or not as much to their benefit as it could be. By developing their sense of pride in entrepreneurship and taking them seriously, it can empower them to realize the role they can play in the industry. There would be a chance to let good practices become the norm among Bolivian workshops. If Korean storeowners can also get into a more professional relationship with workshops, the negotiation might start to move towards a more egalitarian one. There are obstacles to making the garment industry more professional. By keeping the label of workers, Bolivians and sometimes Koreans alike, put up barriers to professionalization. Workers lack responsibility over the conditions of work and abuse they and others around them suffer. By developing a more grounded entrepreneurial

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did not mention the plea of immigrant vendors, nor were they mentioned on the banners that day.

identity, it would be possible to start emphasizing responsibility within the business. Of course, this identity is not the only solution.

#### **8.4.2 Opportunities for professionalization**

Using a Global Production Network and social capital framework emphasizes the idea that there is more than transactions at play in the network. There are power relations between the nodes. Obviously storeowners exert the bulk of control over the prices they impose; workshops compete in that environment and at times lower their asking prices; workshop owners impose dreary work conditions and low salaries. Aside from transactions and power imbalances, production networks also produce practices and habits. Howard Hass, the former top manager of Levi's said in an interview "It is difficult to unlearn behaviors that made us successful in the past" (Robert Hass cited in Howard, 1990: 139). Going through the existing networks built by social capital is important, but so is building new networks, new habits of help that are able to transmit information about abuse and best practices for entrepreneurs. If this is not informed, they will simply hide somewhere else. Or in the case of the vendors at the Feira, transfer production to Paraguay for cheaper products under less legal constraints.

Understanding that most entrepreneurs were once workers, and that some remain deeply involved as workers, professionalization matters. It cannot be limited to learning how to make models and cut fabric, it has to encompass how to be an entrepreneur and formalize their business. Because of their history as workers, or their family's history as workers in the industry, the explanation of abuse has to encompass their mental health. Part of a durable education will involve putting new meaning on the experience of current entrepreneurs and highlight past abusive conditions. While in

chapter seven, I presented the opinions of many in the Korean community that immigrants all have to go through a very hard phase when they first settle in a country, an education of entrepreneurs can start to tackle this stance in the community to re-write the meaning of entrepreneurship and of recent immigration.

During one of the many follow-up meetings that I had with Pedro, he said that he thought he made about R\$1000 per month in his combined activity of garment production and retail. The main issue here was that he thought so, but was not exactly sure what his costs and profits were. This here is the center of the problem: most of those immigrant entrepreneurs have little idea about business. They do not know how to make a business plan, or to make sure that they make a good profit for what they do. No one taught them how to do it. Picking up sewing is a task that happens organically but also with the help of a more experienced seamstress. In my research, I asked every respondent whether they had received help during their time in the garment industry. I came away with two very different experiences for each community on how or whether they seek help to set up their business.

Koreans usually receive help from immediate family, or for those who arrived in the second wave of immigration, from others who came with them. Since Koreans have immigrated to Brazil alongside their nuclear family, parents, children (from very young to older teenagers or even children in their 20s), it makes sense that their network of help is more focused on family relations than Bolivians. Among my respondents, generation 1.5 and second generation used extensively their parents' or aunts' connections to know how to run a clothes store. Miguel spent some time at his aunt's, learning the trade such as "how to spread the sheets, [...] how to cut [...] how to do the math, how to do the pricing, how to buy fabric." Clara actually took over her



in-laws' clothes store. They helped her and her husband transition into the business as it was their first time. Some of them work alongside their parents, such as Miguel and Francisca.

Despite the general idea among Brazilians and Bolivians that Koreans are very united and are more powerful than Bolivians, most Korean respondents had a very different perspective on the matter. Luiza thought that Koreans were not very united, and that they relied mostly on themselves, not on others. Her friends and relatives helped her with knowing what will be in fashion, or providing some financial help. Helena thought the industry was not as successful as it was made to believe in the media. There was a high turnover with stores opening, then quickly closing, starting up again, etc. Helena thought that Koreans were not united in the garment industry despite the perception of a very closed off and thus united community. She argued:

Korean [are] a united race. But this does not mean that it works in the garment industry. Like you can see, here in the Bom Retiro market, stores are right next to each other, everything is stuck, sometimes the clothes are the same, facing the same clients. So, in the garment industry, I think that Koreans are not united.

Most respondents had received help from family and only a few from friends (Clara for instance, who came on the first wave of migration). Julia confirmed Helena's thoughts when she explained that her association Future Korean Leaders had only one member in the garment industry, underrepresenting the presence of young Koreans in the garment industry. To her, competition was too high to make new friends in the industry. Thus only family or long-standing childhood friendships remained.

It is worth mentioning that community financing was extremely important in the Korean community in the past. Called *kye*, it is practiced all over the world in Korean immigrant communities. *Kye* is a type of rotating credit system. In Brazil, it is

commonly used among friends or acquaintances. A group of people meets once a month and everyone contributes a set amount of money. Nicolas explained that each person can decide who will “win” the big amount of money this month by putting in their names, if they need the money, in the cup. Once they know who needs it, they can decide who will win the amount this month. The first person to win the *kye* will have the most interest to pay, and the last person to earn it will have the least. While analyzing my interviews, it became clear that despite some of my respondents’ assurances of its irrelevance today, *kye* is still important in the community<sup>129</sup>. However, *kye* seemed to be mostly used by those who were struggling the most to achieve success or who were selling at the *Feira*. The most successful entrepreneurs use banks regularly, as most of their proceedings go through banks anyway.

Bolivians have different networks of help. Most of my Bolivian respondents actually claimed that they did not seek anyone’s help to learn how to run their workshops, they merely observed how it was done when they were employees. Most Bolivian men respondents started their workshop with their spouse, but Daniel had his

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<sup>129</sup> Back when Koreans started in the business of garment, paperwork for opening a store were much more limited. According to Nicolas, most of those stores were not really declared at that time. The main obstacle was access to capital. The community thus sustained important growth using *kye*. Most people without documentation could not access loans in banks. Banks are very expensive in Brazil, like in most developing nations, cutting access to the poorest. Furthermore, loans had also high rates, particularly in high risk situations like new immigrants represented. Considering the problems with banks, “with the indication of someone, it is possible already to enter in a *kye*,” making the *kye* a very interesting option. Bernardo, Clara argued that the *kye* was crucial in the very beginnings of the establishment of the community in Brazil. Bernardo pointed out that interest rates in Brazilian banks were still very high, among the highest in the world according to him. There is still something to be earned by using *kye* instead of banks.

wife help him start their business because she had experience in the business contrary to him. The two women I interviewed Carmen and Rosa started their workshops on their own, without a spouse, but with young children. Contrary to Koreans, the Bolivian immigration is more isolated: very rarely do whole families migrate together. Sometimes their arrival is staggered, with a mother or a father first going in Brazil, getting settled, then sending for young children. Sometimes, siblings would arrive after several years, like in Pedro's case. For the most part though, many Bolivian workers are more isolated than Koreans were at the peak of immigration. Most of the help that was noted was financial help or help with getting immigration paperwork sorted out.

Overall, Bolivians obtained help among people they knew, through immigrant associations, and through the Korean storeowners they worked with. They usually described Koreans as providing loans or advances, or purchasing products for them with the sense that a discount on prices was due until the loan was entirely covered. This help is less common nowadays as many Koreans have stopped helping their workshops because they lack trust that those they help will remain among their clients. On one side, Bolivians expect this help and resent having to be loyal to a store afterwards, and on the other Koreans perceive this help as an investment to secure a certain contractual security with the workshops they help.

Considering that Koreans seek help in veterans of the industry, and Bolivians seek no help at all in setting up their business, changing the attitudes towards abuse might require a change of help networks. Knowing how to set up a business and run it might demand more collaboration and more knowledge or training. For Bolivians, becoming an entrepreneur means losing help or understanding from those institutions,

as they so often become the more suspicious employer or potential abuser.

Furthermore, for both communities they obtain much less help from others, as they become competitors rather than co-workers. Most Bolivian respondents, contrary to most Korean respondents, received little help when they started their own workshop.

The generation 1.5 and 2.0 of Korean immigrants is usually highly educated. Although they do not always go to college in something related to the clothing industry, some of them still take business management as a major and go on to help their parents, start their own stores or take over the store from their parents. Being an entrepreneur is not an occupation that comes easy to everyone. It bears repeating that this is a qualified occupation, whatever the level of informal economic activity involved. Heitor agreed with this view as he argued

The second generation needs to be more professional, more specialized. That would be my challenge [for the future of Koreans in the industry]. My fear, my worry is that children when they take over stores, they are very unprepared, they are not trained well. This is why [stores] do not last long.

The new generations struggle with increased competition and insufficient training. Adding this to the complexity of the regulations in the industry, it calls for better professionalization.

Small entrepreneurs like Pedro receive next to no help from the government. Ernesto expressed his discontent that the government was only focused on helping workers and never on the workshop owners or vendors. He insisted on the need for teaching and training that would be a permanent help, and not a temporary remedy to the situation. The SEBRAE is an institution started in the 1970s to support small entrepreneurs and businesses (SEBRAE, 2016). It has a model institution represented in the DVD *Oficina Modelo*, but it is far removed from the reality of most Bolivian

entrepreneurs. Not everyone in the community has enough education to pursue further studies. Some of the training should be conscious of that and cater to their interest. Consequently, it is of very little help to them. Ernesto does not believe the government's statements about entrepreneurship. He thinks that the government only pays lip service to this. Although Ruth Camacho argued that the situation should not go on being informal and undeclared, she also pointed out that the local government did not provide any help to change practices. Sandra agreed that the law was not in favor of small entrepreneurs. Adding this to the lack of support from immigrant associations, it seems as though individuals get downgraded in terms of priority when they go from being workers to being entrepreneurs. Failing to recognize entrepreneurship among Bolivian workshop owners or vendors at the Feira works best for immigrant associations providing help to abused workers. However, it also means that there are very few resources for the professionalization of immigrant entrepreneurs and developing practices adequate for small entrepreneurs.

Miller (1995: 5) reports the words of a French expert on immigration, Jacqueline Costa-Lascoux on the long term impacts of employer sanctions in France. She "has taken exception to the viewpoint that such laws are merely symbolic by pointing out that laws are supposed to be educational, symbolic function and that it is rare law that overnight eradicates the ill that motivated its promulgation" (Miller, 1995: 5). However, in 2016, many areas that used to be regulated by heavy legal repercussions have found support for softer sanctions, and heightened education.<sup>130</sup> In

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<sup>130</sup> Here I am thinking about politics on drugs, imprisonment for small crimes, and sex work for instance. After decades of fighting and making those activities illegal, many have realized the long term negative effects of strong repression on large communities. Involving those communities, giving them agency might help them and their

Brazil, that is visible through the avoidance of deportation as a mean to punish undocumented immigrants. But the government could go further, and actually actively educate and invest in the professionalization of the industry rather than wait until fear of sanctions effect a slow change in the industry. It is particularly striking that a country that implemented the Bolsa Familia, and extended it to immigrants, would take a strictly “repressive” stance on informality and registration among immigrant workshops.

During my field research, only one of my respondents was actively seeking education. In 2013, Pedro was attending classes on Saturday afternoons to learn how to design clothes. Professionalization and reinventing entrepreneurship involve education to some extent. Many descendants of Korean immigrants who become storeowners have some college education, but many studied in a different field and then were pressured by their parents to take up the stores, a common situation among other immigrant communities around the world. Julia argued that most Korean families have at least one child who remains in the garment industry. During my interview with Clara, she expressed some longing about my being a graduate student. She had to end her studies abruptly to start working. Although she did not go into the garment industry right away, she had to stop to help her family financially. Helena had been in the same situation, except she had to go into the industry right after school. Although education is highly valued in the Korean community<sup>131</sup>, some argue that

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communities better in the long term. I realize that the issues are different, but I believe that more understanding policies remain a valuable tool that has been seldom used in history and should become more prevalent in the next decades.

<sup>131</sup> During my field research, I visited the only Korean school in São Paulo, Polilogos. While I was there, there was a discussion at lunch over the fact that a census had

profits are higher in the clothing industry, and thus parents put pressure on children to follow in their footsteps.

Conversely, few Bolivians have higher education. Some, like Pedro, took classes on specific skills such as model making. However, many have not finished school in Bolivia and may not have enough skills in Portuguese to take classes. While volunteering at the Pastoral do Migrante, I observed that they encouraged new immigrants to enroll in classes for apprenticeships, including the garment industry. Although most of the new immigrants were Haitians, and thus not encouraged to seek employment in the garment industry, the program had one big problem: it required prospective students to have a certain level of education. When they lacked that level, students had to take classes in mathematics, for instance, something several people did not appreciate. This setting may be imperfect for immigrants who cannot follow a full time school schedule and need to be treated differently from other clients who might just learn to read and write.

With a saturated market and a lack of professionalization options, many entrepreneurs who set up a box, revert back to producing clothes in their workshops, turning back on the independence they sought.

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found no Korean descent child in public school. My friend explained that most Koreans (or maybe even all) sent their children to private school to ensure they have a good education. Public schools in Brazil often do not prepare children adequately for college. Private schools are a common option for wealthier parents in Brazil. It is also said that part of the motives for leaving Korea is for families whose children will not make it into good colleges.

## **8.5 Conclusion**

Labor law enforcement does not end at the inspection of workshops. While Bolivians sought out independence and better profits through the sale of their products, the government has followed them, discrediting their way of social ascension. Some of this increased inspection on street sales has resulted in higher insecurity for vendors at the Feira, and important short and long-term economic loss. Brazil has elected solutions that keeps informality away from the streets without actually eradicating it.

While it seems most of the government's actions have been top-down, they have in some aspects, collaborated with immigrant associations, particularly in workshop inspections. The mafia's involvement in the feira has put up obstacles for immigrant associations and the government to reach a solution, leading to more top-down actions from the government. As I showed in the previous chapter, political capital is unevenly distributed among immigrant communities. In this chapter, I have shown that immigrant associations come with their own agenda. Because most of those catering to the Bolivian community have leftist tendencies, their discomfort with the idea of entrepreneurship under the cover of false consciousness limits their perspective on the industry as a whole. This in turn affects their ability to contribute to an inclusive bottom-up solution for workshops and the Feira. Thus the government has kept a limited perspective on abuse, encouraging what seem to many entrepreneurs top-down decisions.

Finally, I believe that more inclusive decisions would include a sincere effort to professionalize the industry without a focus on labor law enforcement. Developing a feeling of entrepreneurship and responsibility may become crucial to help with understanding of what constitutes abuse. Having a more openly educational stance



towards the entrepreneurs would contribute to hastening the change and hopefully fight abusive conditions. Building human capital remains important in solving abusive conditions in the industry. In the conclusion, I will address some issues about the future of the industry as my respondents presented them.

## **Chapter 9**

### **CONCLUSION**

By the end of this dissertation it should come clear that the situation in the Brazilian garment industry has no easy solution. Communication between the government, immigrants from both communities, and immigrant organizations is fraught with tensions, and unequal power relations. When I started this dissertation, I strived to make the voices of my respondents heard, and let them explain how their lives proceeded on a daily basis. My hope is that I succeeded in this endeavor.

Brazil's attitude towards immigrants took root in its past as a former colony which controlled tightly who could and could not be part of the nation. While the government is actually working to ensure that Bolivian immigrants have documentation in the country, and are not actively deporting undocumented immigrants, their actions on the survival strategies of Bolivians put into question the coherence of the policies. In particular, entrepreneurs perceive the actions on the business front to be proof of the undesirability of their communities and business in Brazil. It is not clear if providing immigrants with social benefits will manage to tip the scale towards registering their employment with the authorities. Maybe one solution could be to refund INSS contributions upon the time immigrants leave the country. Indeed, Brazil already has programs that include refunding money contributions when an employee leaves his or her employer. This promise of getting contributions back might encourage more immigrants who plan to get back to Bolivia to register by bringing back a good sum with them.

Corruption in Brazil brought a dreary political situation for Brazil in 2016. This corruption is detrimental to the relationship between the government and immigrant communities. They distrust the true intentions of the government and sometimes struggle to identify legitimate governmental actions and illegitimate actions. However, corruption is a hard problem to solve, in particular as it is often a legacy of colonialism. In order to regain the trust from both communities, the government should make significant efforts to fight corruption among labor inspectors.

For many people, including those who are dealing with the GPN of the garment industry in São Paulo, it is challenging to consider entrepreneurs beyond the idea of exploitation. Looking at their experiences reveals its own sets of abuse and lack of opportunities for improvement. All immigrants have agency and can make decisions about their future. Their need for formal education does not mean that they are unaware of the mistakes they are making. The government has left the situation develop in informality with no emphasis on professionalization or respect of labor rights. The change, regardless of how long tolerance lasted, remains very fast for those who grew up in the industry. I believe the government holds some responsibility towards how far into informality this industry has evolved, and thus should be more proactive in educating the partners in that industry.

GPN helps look at external actors more systematically. It helped me look at the government actions but also at the role of immigrant communities in the industry. In particular, this pushed my analysis into understanding the complex relationships between those immigrant groups and the government. Bolivians benefit from a network of immigrant associations drawing largely from leftist inspirations with

political capital built over the years. In particular, those organizations successfully put abuse on the agenda, as well as exerted pressures both on the Brazilian government to stop bringing the federal police during inspections, and the Bolivian government to start emitting police records outside of the country. In contrast, Koreans lack political capital despite being in the country for a longer period of time. As such, they have been mostly excluded from the policy to start inspections. No organization taught them about the abuse they suffered, or the one they perpetuate by dealing low prices to workshops.

In this conclusion, I want to explore the future of fashion, a topic that was dear to many respondents. I will then look at the lessons drawn for Brazil, and for the international garment industry as a whole. Finally, the last section I will focus on contributions I make to research.

## **9.1 Future of Fashion**

Throughout the dissertation I examined reactions of both Bolivians and Koreans to the accusations of abuse and the efforts taken by the government to deal with the situation. In this section, I want to explore briefly the emerging strategies that I observed and briefly discussed with my respondents. In my interviews, the difficulties in imagining a future came up often in the conversation. Bolivians employ strategies that involve trying to ascend the production network and leave abuse for themselves, and in some cases making commitments to treat their employees better. There remain some elements to unpack here. I chose to not address them earlier for several reasons. For one, those observations came from limited samples, and more than anything else, the diversity of strategies employed may make it hard to extrapolate to the entire community. Second, when I brought up some of the changes,

other respondents did not see some of the strategies as actually happening in the community.<sup>132</sup>

There were three strategies employed to deal with the heightened consequences of working with Bolivian immigrants. The first one consisted in keeping current practices of hiring Bolivian workshops. As I mentioned in chapter seven, finding an alternate workforce appeared very challenging to many storeowners. The majority of my respondents just kept the same practices, with maybe an increased emphasis on looking for non-immigrant workshops. Miguel explained “some people are taking the risk just hiring some Bolivians that they don’t have anything because governments when the fiscal control comes they are not going to go for a small fish (...) they don’t want the small fish; they want the big fish.” Clara felt there were two other situations happening around her: “They either tried to open their own workshop [...] or they tried the second, more common option, which is to import.” Most respondents mentioned imports as the most probable strategy to come in the future to deal with government oversight.

The second strategy chosen by Adriana, and others, has been to open her own declared and legal workshop. Her employees were also Bolivians or Paraguayans and all were registered with the authorities. Adriana argued that it cost her about the same to pay her employees the minimum wage and benefits as it would to outsource production to a workshop. This strategy seemed the most controversial as most respondents who did not produce internally often vocally defended that it was not a viable option and would never become a dominant strategy in the community. As I

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<sup>132</sup> This is particularly true of the question of Koreans opening their own workshops. I will address this in the following paragraphs.

mentioned earlier, there was somewhat of a bias in who accepted to talk to me: it may be that those few entrepreneurs constituted a very small minority that did not reflect that vast majority of the industry. Bernardo did not believe that internalizing production would become popular again. To him, “the trend is to outsource production [...] if [internalizing] were better, easier, or more convenient, they would already be working that way.” Clara was the exception as for her, internalizing production was one of the solutions to the governmental oversight. She even corrected me as I asked if this constituted a return to previous methods of production. To her, internalizing production signified a change in the industry, not a return to old practices. Miguel explained that if he had the space to produce everything internally, he would. He realized that the pieces coming out of his own small workshop were consistently better than the ones he outsourced.

The third and last strategy I observed and discussed with many respondents consisted in imports. The topic of imports dominated many of the answers about the future of the industry. Opinions were mixed about the idea of importing clothes from China. Alexandre made it clear that it was much cheaper to buy clothing from China. Felipe agreed with this and added that the changes imposed by the government would raise prices substantially, making imports from China more affordable. According to him, Korean storeowners will become resellers and not manufacturers. Mario believed that without Bolivian workshops, the industry would be one of imports and resale.

However, the ease of receiving orders from overseas in Brazil seemed complex. Entrepreneurs were quick to explain the limits on imports as a solution to the current situation. In Brazil, imports are heavily taxed. In addition, Brazil puts other barriers to imports: for instance, Francisca reported that her friend imported clothes

from China but the cargo sat in the port for two years as some administrative process went wrong. Once they got the cargo, all the clothes were ruined. According to Helena, “there is always something going wrong at the port.” It may not be as extreme as a two-year clearance wait, but it remains an unviable delay for retail. Helena does not believe that imports will solve the current problems either. Luiza felt that the changing dollar impacted her ability to make a profit: at the time of the interview she still had some of the product she ordered two years before from China. Francisca thought that importing from China was an option for bigger shops, not for the majority of small Korean stores.

Storeowners mostly mentioned China whereas sellers at the Feira talked about importing some of their clothing from Paraguay.<sup>133</sup> Felipe said “I believe that in ten years, half of the Brazilian industry will transfer to Paraguay because big confections like Zara, Adidas, Nike are all in Paraguay now.” Paraguay offers an easier opportunity to verify the sewing process as travel there is quicker than going to China. Another problem with producing in China according to Adriana, was that once it is in Brazil, there is no way to send it back if the sewing is not perfect. Miguel’s friends produce in China and have to travel there every other month. Miguel also mentioned other competitors who already produce in part in Paraguay, “There are some people who are sending their merchandise, they cut the fabric here, they send to Bolivia or to Paraguay and they send it back so they don’t have to pay for taxes.” On the other hand, Luiza inquired into manufacturing garments in Bolivia or Paraguay as several in the communities had been discussing, but she felt it impractical. According to her,

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<sup>133</sup> According to Nicolas, 90% of the vendors in the Feira produce their own merchandise and the rest are resellers.

transportation costs would be too high, in particular when factoring the insurance on a perilous trip on the highways.<sup>134</sup> The Brazilian real has become very weak to the dollar since the interviews, meaning that imports plans may have been put on hold. Ultimately, Luiza declared “If you want to survive in Brazil you have to live day by day.”

Lucas, the labor inspector, and his colleague assured me that there did not exist much threat of imports from China as clothes bought there did not fit Brazilian women’s body shape and they did not fit with the local fashion either. Aside from a broad generalization denying the existence of immigrant minorities that may have an influence on body shapes, this comment demonstrated a lack of knowledge of how the production of clothes works. Although storeowners can buy ready-made clothes from China, they also have the opportunity to order their own production, just the same as with the contracting of a local workshop. Times of production and obstacles put up by the government seem more likely to tone down imports from China. It is important to note that Milena from AloBras suggested that the government had changed some policies on imports in the past years, contributing to the rise in imports of storeowners in the Bras.<sup>135</sup> Patricia also explained that many stores already outsource in China part of their production. She sells bikinis and had the most elaborate pieces manufactured in China. Leandro from the ABIT, argued that there was still a long way to go before seeing a garment industry as concentrated as the United States in Brazil. However, considering the heightened importance of imports as a solution to the current troubles

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<sup>134</sup> It is often said in Brazil that highways are perilous, in particular at night. Most people for instance, do not drive to the Northeast, preferring the costlier plane trip.

<sup>135</sup> Along with the competition from the Feira da Madrugada.



in the industry, concentrated big businesses might become more prominent as their structure and weight might help in dealing with the bureaucratic aspects of imports.

Finally, Mario, Luiza, and Daniel all mentioned closing their business as the complications grew every year. Miguel also adopted a very negative attitude towards the future of the industry, “I believe that the textile industry is one of the pillars of any nation [...] if you take down that pillar [...] it’s very hard to recover from that because [...] you’re gonna be outsourcing so all the production and all the labor, [and] the money for the labor is going somewhere else.” There was a definite feeling that the government did not express any interest towards the survival of the industry in the long term.

A lack of trust in the government and a feeling that many were against their success contributed to creating a situation where no one makes an effort to improve the issue at hand: abuse. In particular, transferring the production of garments to China does not mean that abuse will disappear. Conditions of work there are not always following good practices. More importantly, Paraguay remains a very poor country, poorer than Brazil. Conditions of work and the prevalence of abuse do not fall under similar scrutiny in Paraguay. If imports become the norm, abuse will have been merely displaced to another country. I believe it is important to think about whether fighting abuse in Brazil will actually result in less abuse overall or displace it elsewhere, in places with less scrutiny.

Brazil needs to address directly the question of the immigrant presence within its borders. While the country is working to avoid deportations, and improve the ease of obtaining documentation for specific nationalities, its actions in the garment industry may question its ultimate goal towards Bolivians (and Koreans). If there were

better campaigns to explain the rights of immigrants, the rights of workers, and the resources for entrepreneurs and immigrant entrepreneurs, there would probably be less misunderstandings and hiding from the authorities. Revising current labor laws might be an impossible task for Brazil, particularly as it faces an important political crisis at the moment of writing. But it is important to recognize that some rules can become inadequate to a changing context.

In the next and last section, I will examine some contributions I made with this research as well as the limitations of my research.

## **9.2 Contributions and Limits to this Study**

The most important lesson beyond Brazil concerns the importance of studying all producers of clothing. While Brazil ranks as the fourth largest producer of garments in the world, its industry receives little attention internationally. This study has shown the importance of looking beyond exports, and beyond issues that ultimately affects the Western World (through our consumption of the clothes). Abuse exists within workshops, but the treatment of immigrant entrepreneurs also matters. The way the industry is organized in countries that export the most garment cannot be generalized from the experience of the West.

Global Production Networks consider all levels of production, that understands that the firm is not a closed black box, but instead involves individuals that have a history that can be entrenched in the garment industry. This research has also shown that small entrepreneurs who own workshops and sometimes retail establishments can be entrenched in practices that are hard to change. Because of historical practices by those communities and by the government, modifying behavior to lower abuse can be a difficult process. This research has shown the importance of buy-in from the

entrepreneurs for conditions to improve. Education in the network has to include entrepreneurs alongside workers for effective change to happen. This research can help emphasize the need to involve stakeholders more thoroughly and provide broad scale education so that entrepreneurs make more educated choice in the conditions of work they offer.

My methods necessarily imply that my findings are only partial representations of reality. I interviewed a small subset of individuals in both communities; considering the difficulties in securing interviews, that subset was not an exact representation of all entrepreneurs from both communities. For one, most Koreans that I interviewed admitted to contracting only a small number of Bolivian workshops. Part of this might be a concern about disclosing too much. But I also believe that those who worked more closely with Bolivian workshops had a tendency to refuse interviews. Similarly, Bolivian entrepreneurs in the most desperate situations with abusive contracts were probably least likely to have the time and willingness to meet with a researcher. Further, all but Rosa were referred to me by community organizers, who are very politicized as I explained throughout the dissertation. I also consciously chose to not interview workers, although entrepreneurs also work exhausting hours in similar conditions. This choice was meant to avoid propagating over research on Bolivian immigrants and to engage entrepreneurs to gather their trusts. It meant that my research relied on the extensive literature that exists relating the conditions of work in the industry. A more thorough research could attempt to talk to more current actors in the network.

I conducted my field research in 2013 in only four months. This field research was extremely busy and difficult. Being able to interview over forty respondents was

an achievement in itself. However, I am convinced that longer field research is needed to dig deeper into the dynamics of both communities, the relationships between government agents and associations of immigrants. I did not have the time, but I hope others will in the future.

The most significant contribution of this dissertation is towards scholarship on the Korean community of São Paulo. As I explained several times in the dissertation, very little scholarship has been written about the community. Most of the research has focused on a historical or religious inspection of the community. I intended to show some of the life of Korean and Korean descent entrepreneurs. Their lives and past history in the industry are crucial in understanding how both communities are dealing with abuse claims and the ensuing heightened scrutiny from the government. Reporting on many interviews of Korean entrepreneurs constitutes an important contribution in itself, as no other research up to this day has done so with regards to the garment industry.

Finally, I hope that this research can be a reminder that all stakeholders need to be involved, informed, and educated if governments are serious about ending informality and abuse in a manner that respects the populations involved in the daily dealings of those industries.

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## Appendix A

### LIST OF RESPONDENTS

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Role in the industry</b>
Juliano	Brazilian	M	Other
Gabriela	Japanese-Brazilian	F	Other
Pedro	Bolivian	M	W/S
Alfonso	Bolivian	M	W/S
Thiago	Korean	M	CO
Lorenzo	Bolivian	M	W/S
Ruth Camacho	Bolivian	F	CO
Sofia	Brazilian	F	CO
Paulo Illes	Latin American	M	CO
Rodrigo	Bolivian	M	W/F
Ernesto	Bolivian	M	CO
Lucas	Brazilian	M	G
Ruth Camacho	Bolivian	F	G
Anita	Korean	F	S
Francisca	Korean	F	S/F
Colonel Raul	Bolivian	M	G
Marcelo	Bolivian	M	W
Antonia	Korean	F	S
Adriana	Korean	F	S/W
Sandra	Brazilian	F	CO
Patricia	Korean	F	S
Rosa	Bolivian	F	W
Ricardo	Bolivian	M	W
Juliana	Brazilian	F	G
Padre Alejandro	Other	M	R
Leandro	Brazilian	M	I
Claudio	Korean	M	S/R
Luciana	Korean	F	S

Mario	Korean	M	S
Alexandre	Korean	M	Other
Felipe	Korean	M	CO
Eduardo	Korean	M	S
Daniel	Bolivian	M	W
Nicolas	Korean	M	F
Clara	Korean	F	S
Helena	Korean	F	S
Julia	Korean	F	Other
Heitor	Korean	M	R
Miguel	Korean	M	S
Bernardo	Korean	M	R
Luiza	Korean	F	S
Iago	Bolivian	M	W/CO
Bento	Korean	M	R
Carmen	Bolivian	F	W
Milena	Brazilian	F	CO
Joana	Brazilian	F	I
Alexandra	Brazilian	F	F
Beatriz	Bolivian	F	F
Catarina	Brazilian	F	F
Elvira	Brazilian	F	F
Flor	Brazilian	F	F
Sergio	Brazilian	M	F

Key:

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
F	Seller at the Feira
W	Workshop owners
S	Store owner
CO	Community Organizer
G	Government
Other	Other categories including real estate agent, and other professions
R	Religious clergy
I	Garment Industry Institution



## **Appendix B**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

#### **Interview guide for entrepreneurs**

1. Can you tell me about how you got into the clothing industry?
2. Experience setting up a workshop/clotheshop
  - a. Can you tell me about your experience setting up a workshop/clotheshop.
  - b. Were you a worker first? What was your immigration status then?
  - c. What resources did you have when you set up your shop? What kind of support did you get, from whom? What kind of impact did the other community had on your intentions and capacities to open a shop?
  - d. How did you get the funds? How did you learn the necessary knowledge to open a shop?
3. Experience with Korean/Bolivian entrepreneurs
  - a. How long have you been working with members of the other community? When and how did you meet and started working together?
  - b. What is your experience with the other community? Do you trust members of the other community? How are relations different than with members of your own community?
  - c. How important is the other community in your work?
  - d. Have you ever received help or helped a member of the other community? Can you tell me how you perceive relations between the two communities?
  - e. Can you tell me about your interactions with members of other communities outside of work relations? How often?
4. Institutional pressures

- a. What is your immigration status? Ever had problems with immigration? Labor laws? How do you think your immigration status played a role in your economic path?
  - b. Are you aware of the subcontracting laws? What do you think about it? How does it influence your work? How did you adapt your practices to it?
  - c. What is your relationship with organizations in your community? With organizations outside of your community?
  - d. Are you active in an organization linked to your community? What is your experience in that context? How does your experience influence your economic activity?
  - e. Do you or have you ever lobbied for a change in legislation? Have you ever met with others regarding that issue?
5. Identities
- a. How do you identify? What is the importance of identity in your lives, in your work?
  - b. What has been your experience with racism (here or in your home country)?
  - c. What do you think is the importance of identity in the city and in the manufacturing sector?
6. Is there anything you want to add? Anything you think I should have asked?

**Interview guide for community leaders:**

1. Was entrepreneurship ever a topic brought up in discussions about amnesty and the new immigration law? In what ways? What details? What was your position on the matter?
2. How does entrepreneurship in the immigrant community you represent influence your work? How does it influence the place of your community in the city? In the country?
3. How do you see relationships between both communities? How does entrepreneurship influence those relationships?

4. In what ways do you help entrepreneurs? What are the concerns that they bring to you? What is your understanding of their struggles?

**Interview guide for government representatives:**

5. What is the importance of the clothing industry in the country/city? What has been/is the value of immigrant entrepreneurship in the city? What is your understanding of the tendencies they show?
6. What are the policies or efforts made towards entrepreneurship in the city? In the clothing industry?
7. What are your relationships with immigrant entrepreneurs from the Bolivian and Korean communities? With their leaders? Do you take their presence into account in your plans for the city?
8. Do you see any changes in entrepreneurship or the clothing industry since Bolivians started to set their own shops?
9. Has entrepreneurship been a topic of interest during the latest talks of amnesties and changes in the immigration law?



## Appendix C

### HUMAN SUBJECTS – IRB PROTOCOL APPROVAL



RESEARCH OFFICE

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DATE: January 8, 2016

TO: Sophie le Blanc  
FROM: University of Delaware IRB

STUDY TITLE: [417148-6] Immigrant entrepreneurs in the city: collaboration, competition, and survival in Sao Paulo.

SUBMISSION TYPE: Continuing Review/Progress Report

ACTION: Approved for Data Analysis Only

APPROVAL DATE: January 8, 2016

EXPIRATION DATE: January 13, 2017

REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

REVIEW CATEGORY: Expedited review category # (7)

Thank you for your submission of Continuing Review/Progress Report materials for this research study. The University of Delaware IRB has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Please report all NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this study to this office.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

Based on the risks, this project requires Continuing Review by this office on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate renewal forms for this procedure.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Farnese-McFarlane at (302) 831-1119 or [nicolefm@udel.edu](mailto:nicolefm@udel.edu). Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.