

Circulating Food and Relationships: the Movement of Food (and Other Things) Between Brazilians in Boston and Brazil

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Abstract: In 2009, I conducted fieldwork about the culinary practices of Brazilian immigrants in Greater Boston, USA. I assume that food is a good way to understand the migration process, because it is related to the construction of ethnic and national identity, as well as gender, power and class relations. In this article, I emphasize that food is used by Brazilian immigrants in Greater Boston to strengthen social relations with family members and relatives who stayed in Brazil. There is a circulation of many types of goods, such as laptops, computers and cosmetics, between the participants of social networks in the USA and Brazil. In this flow, I highlight the role of food, that maintains through its sensuality (specially smell and taste) the connection of the immigrants with their place of origin.

Keywords: *Brazilian immigrants, food, eating practices, circulation of goods, social networks, United States.*

Introduction

Since its establishment as a discipline, anthropology has helped to denaturalize acts as mundane and commonplace as that of eating. In this sense, to denaturalize the act of eating implies understanding that eating is more than

simply ingesting nutrients. When we eat, we feed not only our biological bodies – as Woortmann affirmed (Woortmann, 2006), - when we eat food we satisfy both our physiological and social needs. This is because eating practices are related to identities and differences among social groups, ethnic groups, social classes, and age and gender segments.

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Considering these socio-cultural dimensions of eating, between May and December 2009, I conducted an ethnographic study of eating practices and food knowledge of Brazilian immigrants in Greater Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A. The goal of my research was to realize in what way eating could help us understand the experience of being a Brazilian immigrant in that context. When they migrate, individuals carry with them eating practices and food knowledge that can be kept, modified or adapted within the destination society. Because eating habits are considered in the anthropological literature as one of the most entrenched cultural aspects, and therefore among the last to denationalize (Casudo, 1983), I tried to observe what possible transformations and continuities in practices could be perceived in the daily lives of Brazilian immigrants in Greater Boston.

For eight months I lived among and conducted interviews with immigrants from different Brazilian states, different social classes and with different immigration statuses, and lengths of stay in the region. Most of them were undocumented, which reflects the situation of most Brazilians who migrated to the United States. It is estimated that there are between 800,000 and 1.4 million Brazilians living there, and the highest concentration (about 336 000, corresponding to 24%) is found in Massachusetts (Lima, 2009). During my fieldwork, I accompanied Brazilians preparing meals, shopping in supermarkets and grocery stores and going to bakeries and restaurants. I also participated in breakfasts and lunches in churches, 'June festivals'¹, birthday parties and other Brazilian events where

food was always present. Through the interlocutors of my research, I learned about their eating habits and where they find Brazilian products in the Boston area. My close contact with the subjects of my research was essential to understanding not only their discourse about food, but also their practices – at times, the two were not corresponding. The participants in my research, said that most of the time they eat 'Brazilian food'. This could include a great variety of eating practices, given the different trajectories and origins (as well as regional, age, social class, and other differences) of the subjects of my research. It is interesting to observe that in their speeches, they define their eating habits as 'similar' to that which they ate before migration, despite the visible adoption of certain foods produced in the U.S. in their daily eating habits². They said that maintaining these food practices is possible because in Boston 'you can find almost everything from Brazil'.

In fact, there are many Brazilian markets, restaurants and bakeries in Greater Boston. Brazilian products can also be found in the 'ethnic products section' shelves of markets. Through interviews with Brazilians living in the region since the 1960s and 1970s, I realized that the increased supply of Brazilian products accompanied the increased flow of Brazilians to Greater Boston. According to the memory of these speakers³, the first Brazilian restaurant in Boston appeared in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Brazilian markets emerged in greater numbers in the 1980s and, by the 1990s, you could find some Brazilian products in the 'ethnic products', section of in supermarket chains. After the year

2000, Brazilian markets, bakeries and restaurants began to multiply, especially in towns and cities of Greater Boston, where immigrants are more numerous, such as Framingham, Everett and Allston⁴.

This paper demonstrates that despite the large supply of Brazilian food in Greater Boston, many foods are sent to Brazilians living in the area by family and relatives who remained in Brazil. To understand the importance of these foods, they are analyzed within the wider flow of products into the region. This movement of goods highlights the role of social networks, linking both immigrants in the host society and friends, relatives and acquaintances in the societies of origin. Immigrants, therefore, are not thought of as isolated individuals, but participants in these social networks. Socio-anthropological studies show that international migration is made possible by these networks, which seek to minimize risks and dangers present in the migration to another country. Contacts with relatives or acquaintances in the host society are important for the establishment of new immigrants because they provide information that helps them to find housing and employment, among other things. The ties that bind both migrants and other individuals of host societies, establish roles and behavioral expectations among participants in these networks (Massey, 1990).

Circulating products and relationships

The image of isolated, rootless immigrants, to use the definition of Handlin (1971), having no connections

with their relatives in Brazil does not correspond to the experience of the vast majority of Brazilians that live in Boston. In addition to being a community of about 336,000 people in the region, these Brazilians also maintain relationships with family and friends in Brazil. Maintaining these relationships is now facilitated by media such as telephones and the Internet. There are also those who receive family members from Brazil (some of them with expenses paid by the immigrants), as well as relatives and friends.

Many products are transported between the USA and Brazil through the travels of relatives and friends. But these products are not only transported in suitcases while traveling. Some are sent in boxes through Brazilian carriers based in the U.S.A. who specialize in these exchanges, or by mail, which is considered a more expensive service. It is necessary to clarify that this box transport service has become more and more expensive in recent years, according to reports of Brazilians with whom I spoke, a factor that has greatly diminished the flow of products. The transport of luggage has already been hampered by increased surveillance at airports for safety reasons - especially after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 - and fiscal measures meant to curb the smuggling of goods. In addition, the circulation of food is facing certain sanitary restrictions set by each country. However, all these difficulties are not enough to completely stop the flow of goods between these two countries.

Economic, sociological and anthropological research has focused on the remittances sent by Brazilian

immigrants in the United States to Brazil. In a survey conducted by Martes, 80% of Brazilians reported sending money to Brazil regularly. She found that 76% of these remittances are intended to pay expenses, help family members and buy goods in Brazil. Martes concludes that these remittances, aside from improving the lives of those who were left behind, are also a way to make up for their absence. According to her, 'remitting and receiving the money that is sent from so far away means maintaining ties, so as to negate the disconnection that the distance threatens to impose. From time to time the money reaffirms the commitment of return – be it physical or symbolic' (Martes, 2008: 146).

I affirm that not only those remittances can be understood as a means of maintaining social ties. Other products that circulate among participants in social networks that bind the United States and Brazil also seem to reinforce these connections. I believe that these flows, aside from maintaining and strengthening relationships between people, can also be understood through the concept of 'social remittances' created by Levitt. The author defines as 'social remittances' the ideas, behaviors, identities and cultural capital that flow from the host society to the immigrants' society of origin. Levitt notes that these remittances play an important role in the social and political life of the community from which migrants departed. For her, the exchange of social remittances occurs when migrants visit or return to live in their societies of origin, when they receive visits from non-migrant families, or by sending and receiving letters, telephone

or video conversations (Levitt, 1998). I believe that through the flow of goods, there is a movement of relationships and memories that connects individuals in Greater Boston with individuals in various locations in Brazil. This flow of goods is, in turn, related to a set of consumption practices that guide and objectify ideas and cultural values.

I am referring here to the concept of objectification as defined by Daniel Miller: the use of goods and services in which the object or activity becomes both a practice in this world and the way in which we construct our understandings of ourselves in this world (Miller, 1995). Thus, consumption (here not only food consumption, but also the consumption of other products) is a process of objectification and must be understood through the dialectic between specific forms of *commodities*, social groups and regions and the broader context of global changes in which the political economy and the contradictions between cultures are inserted. For the author, humanity is not possible without the material world; that is why he adopts a dialectical perspective: humanity and social relations develop only by means of objectification (Miller, 2001).

To better understand the movement of goods, I would like to propose two distinct theoretical approaches which are complementary. One of them is the theory of the gift, as formulated by Marcel Mauss. According to this approach, the movement of goods among Brazilians in Boston and Brazil can be understood in the system of three obligations: to give, receive and reciprocate. Thus, these seemingly volunteer acts are in fact mandatory and

their dynamic creates and strengthens social relations. In the definition of Godbout and Caillé (1998), the gift is a provision of goods or services, made without a guarantee of payment, which aims to create or nourish social links between people. Godbout and Caillé highlight that time is essential to the gift because there is a reconnection taking place between the gesture from the past and the present through reciprocation. The authors also point out the common features of the gift in modern society: its *free* (thus, the degree of constraint pointed out by Mauss seems to have disappeared) and *spontaneous* nature (making it more a movement of the soul, and not necessarily a rational act). The authors also affirm that disguising any obligation to present a gift is essential to the act: the more the gesture is perceived as unconditional, the more it strengthens the social bond. But if this understanding were to be explicit, it could lead to the death of the gift, according to Godbout.

Another theoretical approach is proposed by Arjun Appadurai who affirms that things, like people, have social lives. Following Firth's (1983), Appadurai maintains that a 'methodological fetishism' is needed to shift the focus of anthropological studies from the forms and functions of trade to a focus on things in motion. Appadurai notes that there are meanings inscribed in the forms, uses and trajectories of objects. Therefore 'it is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things' (Appadurai, 1988: 05). I believe that the two theoretical approaches – that is, the focus both on exchange as a promoter of social

relations, but also on the things that are exchanged - enrich the understanding of the movement of products observed in my fieldwork.

In this movement of goods, it is interesting to consider the role of Brazilian Green Card holders, or permanent residents in the the United States. These people are legal immigrants who, in addition to work permits, also have permission to leave the country for a specified time and then return. This freedom to come and go is highlighted in the immigrants' conversations, since this allows them to visit relatives in Brazil and return to the United States, without the difficulties faced by undocumented immigrants. There are also Brazilians with dual citizenship who can enter and leave Brazil and the United States without any legal impediment. In this sense, the immigrants' legal status, instead of distancing them from their connections with their country of origin, helps them strengthen these relationships, by allowing their movement between the two countries. These Brazilians have, in most cases, been in the United States longer than undocumented Brazilians, and come mostly from the middle class in Brazil, unlike more recent Brazilian immigrants to the United States more of whom are from the lower classes. In the circulation of goods, Brazilian Green Card holders and those with U.S. citizenship have an important role, because they constantly receive requests from other Brazilians to bring products in or out of Brazil in their travels.

Although quite diverse, the flow of goods seems to have certain patterns in relation to what is sent and received by Brazilians in Boston and different

regions of Brazil. Mainly electronic goods such as computers, laptops, digital cameras, cameras, cell phones and others are sent to Brazil. These products are sold at more affordable prices in the United States and, according to some interlocutors: are more 'modern' or 'advanced' than those sold in Brazil. Some of these electronics are sent as gifts to family members or close relatives, in other words, without any cost to the receiver. Others, however, are 'commissioned' by individuals in Brazil, who pay to receive them at lower costs than charged in the Brazilian stores. Because they are more expensive and considered 'fragile', these products are more often sent through people who are traveling to Brazil, instead of being sent by mail or carriers.

Besides electronics, Brazilian immigrants in Boston told me that they often send brand name items that are sold at very high prices in Brazil. Among these items are mainly shoes, handbags, sunglasses and perfumes. It is quite common to send Victoria Secrets body moisturizers, perfumes and makeup. Similarly to the electronics, some of these products are sold by family members and relatives in Brazil, but they are also sent to be used by the recipients. The participants of my research recurrently stressed the ease in buying these goods in the United States, and the difficulty to buy them while living in Brazil, because of low wages and the high price of these products⁵.

The flow in the opposite direction - from Brazil to the United States - also has its recurrences. The items that are most often sent to immigrants in Boston are foods, medicine and clothes.

Medicine is sent through people who go to the United States, but also by mail. According to the participants, it is possible to send medicine with copies of medical prescription in envelopes or boxes. However, I have also been told about other strategies. Painkillers and ointments for muscle aches, medicines for flu symptoms and contraceptives are frequently sent. Brazilians have told me these remedies help them deal with health problems such as muscle pain caused by exhausting work, without the need to spend hours to see doctors. Besides, we must consider that the U.S. health system is often expensive, hindering Brazilians' access to treatments. Also the monitoring of drug sales is very strict and many drugs purchased over-the-counter in Brazil, such as antibiotics, are only sold with prescriptions in the United States. Other Brazilians told me that the cold medicines sold in U.S. drugstores cause sleepiness, which prevented them from working and therefore would reduce their earnings, since many of them are paid by the hour.

But there is also suspicion regarding the effectiveness of medicine sold in the United States and even of diagnoses by U.S. physicians. Two participants of my research told me that the contraceptives they had bought in Boston had no effect, because they did not regulate their menstrual cycles. Other individuals told me that U.S. physicians believe that 'there are no worms in the United States'. One woman told me that she had brought from Brazil a medicine against intestinal worms to cure her grandchild. In addition to drugs, people also send medicinal plants to make tea

and home remedies.

Underwear is also frequently sent by family and relatives in Brazil to immigrants in Boston. 'Brazilian' panties and bras can also be found in Brazilian markets in the region. The immigrants, mostly women, say they do not like the format of the U.S. clothes. There are also many complaints about U.S. jeans' brands, which according to my interlocutors, 'are not made to suit the bodies of Brazilian women'. The Brazilian stores in Boston sell pants and underwear at prices considered somewhat high. Brazilian perfumes are also sent to immigrants in Boston, but to a lesser extent. Some informants, however, said that 'it's not worth' to receiving these products from Brazil since they can buy 'brand name' perfumes in the United States at affordable prices.

In addition to medicine, clothes and perfume, my interlocutors told me they receive or have received food - which I describe below.

The journey of food

As reported previously, my interlocutors said they had no trouble finding 'Brazilian' food in Boston. The increasing availability of these foods in recent decades accompanied the increased flow of immigrants from Brazil to the region. Despite this apparent ease in finding and preparing Brazilian food, I heard many stories of immigrants who receive some food from Brazil. Like other products reported above, these foods come mainly in suitcases, brought by people traveling to the United States, or, less frequently, by mail. According to my

observations, this flow of food follows only one direction: from Brazil to the United States. A nun of the Catholic Church in Everett told me that the Brazilian community in the region held a campaign to help those affected by the floods in Santa Catarina in 2008. Clothes and money were collected but not food because, she said, 'they wanted [the food] from there'.

A large variety of food is sent to the immigrants in Boston: sweets, fruits, vegetables and even meat. Some of these foods are sent because they cannot be found in the United States, such as the fruit *jabuticaba*, for example. Other foods can be found, such as mangoes and jackfruit originating in Central America or southern U.S. states like Florida and California, but they are of different varieties and have different tastes than the ones cultivated in Brazil. As pointed out by my interlocutors, these foods 'don't taste' like the ones from Brazil.

Food and flavors are a vehicle for memory, marked by nostalgia for Brazil. Marília is from Vitória, Espírito Santo, has been living in the United States for 20 years and has U.S. citizenship. She usually comes to Brazil at least every two years, and always brings food to the United States, and takes requests from other Brazilians:

I remember I once brought a large bunch of 'silver' bananas, because they do not have those there. (...) Here they only have 'dwarf' bananas. (...) some people call them *caturra*, [in Espírito Santo], we call them dwarf bananas. I remember a lady from Minas Gerais telling me:

‘When you go to Brazil – dear, I felt so sorry for her! – bring me a large silver banana, just one!’ How could this have not made my heart melt? Here, they don’t have large silver bananas. There, I went to a supermarket in Vitoria and I bought one that was quite green. Girl, can you believe that by the time I got here it turned yellow? The trip from here to Brazil only takes a day or so. Then I thought: ‘I have to deliver this right away, or else it’s going to spoil soon’. Then she was so happy, what a joy...

In addition to bananas, other fruits are commonly carried in suitcases to Brazilian immigrants in Boston. Mark told me he has brought passion fruit, mango (‘because here they only have those big mangoes, not those small pear-shaped mangoes that are sweeter’), and also told me how he brought jackfruit: ‘You take the sections out of it; put them in a jar, you freeze it and when you get there it’s still frozen’. According to Marcos, he usually receives *jabuticaba* periodically from a friend who comes each year to Brazil. Ana told me that she misses eating *pinão* [large seeds from a pine tree native to Brazil], which she cannot find in markets in Boston and that she received from her sister who lives in Curitiba. She said her sister bought a vacuum sealed package and sent it by mail in a box.

Similarly to fruits, they also send products from the countryside that are valued by my interlocutors because they are perceived as ‘natural’. These products are related to the lives of immigrants before migration, or to the idealized representations of country life as opposed to urban life and its

industrialized foods. In Marília’s account, below, it is interesting to notice that the bottles of ‘country’ *cachaça* (a kind of sugar cane rum), which she buys in Brazil, are not for her personal use but to be given as presents to Brazilian friends, men who appreciate this drink. She also usually has a bottle of *cachaça* at home to serve Brazilian friends who come to visit:

I love bringing ‘country’ *cachaça* as a present for some people, because I do not drink *cachaça* but I love the smell of ‘country’ *cachaça*. It’s from the countryside of Espírito Santo (a Brazilian State), there are many stills, I think this is the greatest thing because it is something very natural.

Some of these rural products can be related to what Appadurai calls ‘imagined nostalgia’, which would be a nostalgia for things that never existed because they correspond to an idealization of other times and places, or even a ‘nostalgia without experience’, to speak of nostalgia for things that were not part of the consumption habits and lifestyles practiced by the subjects in the past (Appadurai, 1996).

The *pamonha* (a corn-paste wrapped in husks) was also described by many of my interlocutors as a ‘country’ product. Some Brazilian Green Card holders told me they were asked to bring *pamonha*, especially that prepared by family members of immigrants in Brazil. José told me he has brought *pamonha* in a suitcase for his wife’s cousin, who was waiting for him in Florida, when he migrated to the United States with his wife and two children. He said he had problems with

the inspection at customs, but the guard 'let it slip' when José said it was for his children. The *pamonha* was prepared by his wife's relatives in Brazil.

Besides the 'country' products, other foods brought into the United States can be characterized by their regionalism, such as types of cheese and sweets. Elias has U.S. citizenship and goes to Brazil once a year. He often visits the interior of Minas Gerais, where he was born, and buys cheese. 'It's not just the cheese made by the Mineiros [people who were born in Minas Gerais], it's the cheese from our region, the creamy cheese, the most typical of our region, and it's the 'cabacinha' cheese which was hanging from a strip'.

Sweets –in crystallized form or jams - are some of the foods most frequently sent to the United States. Elias brings rapadura (a traditional candy made with) brown sugar every time he comes to Brazil and that is why he does not bother to look for it in Boston. He used to bring fig and orange preserves made by his mother when she was alive. After his mother died, he never brought sweets again. He says his sister, who lives in Parana and goes to Boston every year, makes sweets in Brazil and takes them to the United States to distribute them to her three brothers who live there. According to Elias, 'she' s a second mother ... she cooks just like our mother'. Other participants told me about their desire to receive sweets prepared by relatives in Brazil. As Tadeu explained to me: 'you can also find sweets here [in Boston], but their quality does not compare to those made by mom and dad'. There are also the sweets that mark important family events. Zelda

told me that she once received sweets from her sister's birthday - *brigadeiro*, *beijinho*, *cajuzinho*, among others – by mail, in an egg carton.

Besides these sweets prepared by the family, 'traditional Mineiro sweets' are also sent. Victoria, a cook in Boston, received from relatives in Brazil seven different types of *goiabada* (guava paste), made by female farmers who participate in cooking contests. She usually orders *pão de mel* (small cakes made of honey which she says cannot be found in Boston), marmalade, *doce de leite* (a kind of 'milk fudge' made of milk thickened by hours of simmering with a lot of sugar, which has a pasty consistency and caramel color) and orange sweets – none of them canned. The clay and iron pots (made in Minas Gerais, generally used to prepare traditional foods) in her kitchen were brought by brothers and friends. She usually takes them to serve food when she works at parties.

But it is not just homemade food or handmade food that is sent to immigrants in Boston. People also send industrialized food that cannot be found in the United States, such as Brazilian brands of candies and chocolates. Monica, who now lives in the United States with her two daughters and her grandson, tells me that she sent snacks: 'When I went to Brazil I sent a box of *Cheetos* to the girls because they liked them so much and here they could not find them... then they made a list and I sent a box with what they had asked for'. After returning to Boston, Monica asked for relatives traveling to the United States to bring *cocada* (a traditional coconut candy from Bahia). 'Now my niece is going to come and she will bring a lot

of these candies', she told me.

Some industrially processed in Boston are considered different from similar ones in Brazil and, therefore, people also send those to immigrants in Boston. Marilia told me she always brings *Pilão* coffee from Brazil, which she considers to be one of the best brands of coffee. The same brand can be found in the United States, even in stores, but as Marilia states, 'it's really bad'.

My interlocutors also told me they have brought or received meat. Brazilian meat is considered different from that in the U.S. because of the cut, but also because of its 'taste', just like other foods mentioned above. Cecilia told me that her husband, a pastor, once helped a former Brazilian student to get a place to stay in Boston and provided him with other information, relevant to his establishment in the region. In return, the young man asked if he wanted something from Brazil, and the pastor said he wanted a steak. According to Cecilia, he brought two. The young man bought them shortly before his flight, aged and frozen, wrapped and placed in a Styrofoam box. According to Cecilia, who lives legally with her family in Boston, it is quite common to receive requests to bring dried meat from Brazil, because this is rarely found in the United States, but she refuses because it is illegal to do so. Other interlocutors told me they had asked for sausages - whose transport in suitcases is prohibited - because in Boston 'you cannot find sausages like the Brazilian ones'. Marcos told me that he has brought armadillo meat, which he got from a family friend on one of his trips to Minas Gerais: 'we fried it and put it in a jar of hair conditioner'.

Conclusion

The shipping and transporting of foods is not characteristic only to Brazilian immigrants or to other specific social segments. As I pointed out earlier in this article, Brazilian immigrants in Boston form a very heterogeneous group, which can be differentiated in terms of their origin, social class, length of stay in the United States and immigration status. These differences are quite relevant when considering various issues such as power relations and articulations between the participants of the social networks, the opportunities for integration into U.S. society and the identity of the entrepreneurs who own markets, restaurants and bakeries in Greater Boston. However, sending food from Brazil to the United States is a phenomenon that, according to my observation, is not particular to a given segment. Reflecting on which foods are being sent, however, allows us to locate what contacts are maintained and reinforced by the participants of the social networks, through this movement.

My interlocutors' accounts reveal that the food expresses relations - with childhood, with the family and the time prior to migration. For the immigrants I interviewed, 'taste' appears as a vehicle of memory, since eating 'Brazilian' food is not enough - the food's taste (and smell) has to evoke memories of Brazil. These memories do not always have a positive effect. I remember Rosa, a housecleaner, who told me that a Brazilian friend of hers used to receive from Brazil *pequi* (a fruit native to mid-western Brazil that is widely used in regional foods), chorizo, mango, *jiló* (a small bitter fruit

somewhat similar to eggplant). When I asked her if she had received food from Brazil, she said no and explained: 'It's stupid, because we eat, it makes us homesick and then the food is gone'.

Even though this food comes from Brazil, and is often defined as 'Brazilian food', I maintain that its circulation and consumption are not necessarily related to a process of national or ethnic identification. That is, when they receive and consume these foods, the immigrants are not, in most cases, asserting themselves as Brazilians in Boston. Through my interlocutors' practices and discourses, I realize that their daily eating practices correspond to the family and household dynamics that they had in Brazil and continue to maintain in Boston. Therefore, the movement of food is a movement of these relationships that develop in a transnational context. Furthermore, this movement also produces and reproduces relations among Brazilians in Boston, since these foods are distributed among both documented and undocumented participants of social networks.

Notes

¹ June Festivals take place in Brazil in June and honor three Catholic saints: St. Anthony, St. Peter and St. John. In these festivals, it is possible to find typical food, music and dances.

² The changes in their eating practices were discussed by the participants in my research especially in relation to changes in their routine: according to them, in the U.S., they no longer have a large lunch, as they did in Brazil. Therefore, the immigrants' main meal is in the evening. These changes occur because of the work routine - most

of them get paid per hour worked and work sometimes up to 16 hours a day in order to 'make money'. The immigrants' statements demonstrate an idealized vision of Brazil. When they talk about their food before migrating, they often say that in Brazil, 'they had time to eat'.

³ I emphasize that all memory is selective and, following the reflections of Holtzman (2006), destabilizes notions of truth, considering how subjective the past is remembered (or forgotten) and used to construct the present.

⁴ Despite periods of greater or lesser movement over the decades, the flow of Brazilians to the Boston area has remained strong since the 1960s and 1970s. While Brazilians in the early years of this migration were mostly from the middle class, the most recent flows show an increase in the number of low income Brazilians. Entrepreneurs owners of restaurants, bakeries and markets in Greater Boston arrived mostly in the 1980s and come from Brazil's middle class. The more recent flow is also more diverse in relation to places of origin of these immigrants. Before the majority were from Minas Gerais State, while the majority in the Greater Boston region are now from other Brazilian States, such as Santa Catarina, Espírito Santo, São Paulo and Goiás. This flow of Brazilian immigrants to the United States has been studied by anthropologists and sociologists since the 1980s, such as Margolis (1994, 1998), Sales (1999), Martes (2000) and Assis (1995, 2004).

⁵ Some of these brand products are not bought by immigrants in Boston. Some Brazilians working in the homes of wealthy U.S. families, especially housecleaners, told me to have gained some clothes, shoes and bags used by their employers. It is also common to buy falsified products at black market fairs and shops. These goods are highly praised for their low price and similarity to the originals.

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