

Occupational Trajectories of Immigrant Workers in Brazil: Unequal Pathways

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This study sought to analyze the occupational habits of immigrant workers in the formal Brazilian labor market from a sociological perspective. It was understood that a study on occupation should observe professional and employment history, which may include an analysis over time of workers in the same profession or in periods of professional mobility. In order to understand occupational trajectories and related aspects, this study used data that were collected through semi-structured interviews and surveys with immigrant workers who were employed in the Brazilian formal labor market. The interviews and surveys revealed a strong polarization among the immigrant workers present in Brazil—while a small part holds highly skilled occupations, the majority participate at the base of the productivity hierarchy.

Keywords: occupational trajectories, immigrants, formal labor market, mobility, migration

Introduction

Few issues raise as much controversy as international migration due to it being a significantly complex and multifaceted social phenomenon interrelated to other important issues. The act of migrating is directly linked to economic, demographic, political, cultural, and religious issues, among others.

Wang (2004) explains that international migration is a global phenomenon despite the fact that there are currently more legal restrictions—which hinder or impede cross-border movement of people—than there were a century ago. For this reason, migratory movements have generally aroused great interest, and in the academic and scientific field, this is no different. “An endless plethora of investigations sheds a constantly renewed light on the many facets of the phenomenon.” (Arango, 2003, p. 1, our translation).

If previously the few theories that emerged proved to be quite rigid and unconnected from each other, more recent migratory studies increasingly take into account that the experience of migrating encompasses all dimensions of human existence.

According to Sayad (1998), to examine migratory movements with all of their diversity and complexity means to understand them as a “total social fact”, realizing how the act of migrating is interrelated to society as a whole. Therefore, when studying migration, it is fundamental to analyze both the “diachronic dimension, that is, a historical perspective... as well as the synchronic extension, that is, from the point of view of the present structures of society and its functioning.” (Sayad, 1998, p. 16).

In this sense, it is understood that employment is an important element for the analysis of contemporary migratory flows since it is a central element of organization in individuals’ lives in general, and of identities,

communities, families, opportunities, etc.

According to Ragazzi and Sella (2013), migration and work are directly connected, both because the search for better working conditions is a strong motivation among most of the individuals who migrate, and because work is a fundamental aspect of cohesion especially for migrants. Therefore, participation in the world of labor presents itself as a pillar of active citizenship and a fundamental step in individual self-construction and in the development of social skills.

This study stems from a completed project that aimed to analyze the participation and occupational trajectories of foreigners in the formal labor market in Brazil. 25 individual in-depth interviews were conducted with immigrant workers of different nationalities who were part of the formal labor market in Brazil in the cities of São Paulo, Goiânia, and Aparecida de Goiânia.

The research also used data obtained through an online survey. The surveys were used in order to obtain a more representative sample of the Brazilian formal labor market with immigrant workers located in different Federal agencies. This was possible by adopting the following strategy: knowing that immigrant workers who receive authorization to work in Brazil do so through the *Coordenação Geral de Imigração* (General Coordination of Immigration)—a body linked to the Ministry of Labor and Employment—and that after examining the application, if it is granted, the authorization is published in the *Diário Oficial da União* (Official Gazette of the Union). We decided to identify workers through these publications.

Thus, we searched the lists with the names of companies and the immigrant workers who received authorization to work in Brazil, and, having access to the names of these workers, we began to search the internet for other information about them, trying to locate some kind of contact as email or through social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).

After finding some form of contact with these workers, they were asked to answer the survey through a link that was made available to them. The survey was in English and had 40 questions, distributed between open and closed questions. Over the course of two months we sought out lists of work permits published in the *Diário Oficial* and 150 e-mails and messages were sent in various social networks, requesting the informants to answer the questions.

During a period of three months we left the survey open to receive the answers, which was filled out voluntarily by 15 immigrant workers located in different Federal Units. These data were incorporated into the research and contributed to the analysis of the occupational trajectories of immigrant workers in the formal labor market in Brazil.

Occupational Trajectories: Conceptual Dimensions

According to Bourdieu (1996), trajectories can be understood as the product of a system of traits pertinent to a specific individual biography or of several biographies, or as “a series of positions successively occupied by the same agent or the same group of agents in a space that is in becoming and subjected to incessant transformations itself” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 81).¹

Bourdieu (1996) explains that a successful analysis of trajectories requires separating individuals from their social camp. Thus, analyzing a trajectory constitutes investigating the historical sequence of the lives of

¹ Translation of “uma série de posições sucessivamente ocupadas por um mesmo agente—ou mesmo grupo—em um espaço ele próprio em devir e submetido a transformações incessantes” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 81).

individuals in a socially determined space. Because of this, it is important to seek out information from the social starting point of the individual until the current moment in which their life has passed since it is understood that the primary *habitus*, in function of the familiar environment, exerts a strong social demarcation on the identity of the individual.

The sociological fixation around occupational trajectories specifically arose in the 1970's, seeking to emphasize the fact that the occupational trajectory of an individual is defined socially through the means in which their choices are limited by the existence of a social striation that represents itself unequally for different individuals (cf. Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, the notion of occupational trajectories looks to reconstruct the changes of position over the course of the professional life of an individual; however, obviously, these trajectories are also social since they occur within an institutional context with norms and conditions that condition employment opportunities.

According to Silva (2011), the concept of occupational trajectories involves diverse structural aspects of the labor market such as:

The influence of macroeconomic, local, and global factors; the nature of corporate strategies for a certain segment of the market and the demands from certain profiles of workers; inert factors to the personal projects of workers, much like the capital, economic and symbolic, that is mobilized for its place or mobility in the labor market. (Silva, 2011, p. 60)

Valenduc, Vendramin, Pedaci, and Piersanti (2009) explains the difference between the terms “career” and “trajectory”, since despite being regularly considered synonyms—because both describe the path of an individual’s entrance into the labor market and the continued steps of their professional life—there are differences between these concepts since career suggests an association with human resources, having as psychological and organizational theories as support that comprehend careers as an individual path within or between organizations, while the notion of trajectories is related to the labor market and seeks to show the entry, mobility, and transitions and the professional pathways of individuals.

To demonstrate the differences between the concepts of course, careers, and trajectories, Dubar and Nicourd (2017) explain that the notion of course arises from an approximation between sociology and demography, and that this concept makes it possible to think of social existence as a process, since it starts from the assumption that there is a relation of interdependence between the history of individuals and societies. The notion of careers stems from a constructivist approach, favoring an institutional analysis, especially, of labor. Thus, the notion of career is connected to an institutional logic that permits “understanding the contexts, changes, and evolutions to clarify what can be learned in a situation, attempting the social conditions that remain determinants” (Dubar & Nicourd, 2017, p. 43).² Finally, the notion of trajectories corresponds to “a curve that connects successive social positions of various people of the same lineage or moment of a course of an individual lifetime” (Dubar & Nicourd, 2017, p. 31).³

According to Edmonston (2013), an analysis that seeks to examine the occupational trajectory of an individual must focus on their occupational history and on work, being that such an analysis can include an analysis throughout the course of the same profession or in periods of professional mobility.

² Translation of: “de saisir les contextes, les changements, les évolutions pour éclairer les apprentissages en situation tout en objectivant les contraintes sociales qui restent déterminantes”. (Dubar & Nicourd, 2017, p. 43).

³ Translation of: “courbe reliant les positions sociales successives de plusieurs personnes de la même lignée ou de moments d’un cours individuel de vie”. (Dubar & Nicourd, 2017, p. 31).

According to Riera (2013), the studies about trajectories have been utilized increasingly to explain the mobility with respect to certain occupational segments and possible stratifications of the labor market, much like is true in identifying different types of mobility. In this sense, the notion of occupational trajectories applied to the experiences of immigrant workers has been utilized especially to understand in what form these individuals are capable of accumulating work experiences in the labor market of the place of migration.

The theoretical approaches that seek to understand and explain the form in which the sequences of employment positions occurs of these workers have been provided principally by the theories of human capital as have the structuralist theories. I affirm that the literature about occupational trajectories of immigrants has been developed principally from biographical experience, which can be summarized in six principle themes:

- (1) The socioeconomic status of the immigrant workers in comparison to the native workers;
- (2) The possible discrimination of the labor market in relation to immigrants;
- (3) The structural adjustment of immigrants to the receiving labor markets;
- (4) The effects of integration of foreign workers to the levels of employment and national wages;
- (5) The incorporation of the perspective of general on the analysis of international migration;
- (6) The influence of social networks on the processes of migration and integration in the new labor market (Riera, 2013, p. 43).⁴

Accordingly, it is understood that an analysis that aims to observe the occupational trajectories of immigrant workers must consider the dynamism present among variable individuals and structures, seeking to understand how individuals of diverse ethnic backgrounds can have different occupational trajectories in the labor market of their society of migration, considering their previous employment experiences until the present moment and questions related to the occupational mobility of these immigrants.

The Trajectories of Highly Productive, “Virtuous” Immigrants in Brazil

Something that was very evident from the collected data and completed analyses from the surveys and interviews was the existence of a dual structure⁵ of productivity in the labor market in Brazil, which absorbs immigrants to participate in both the highly productive, “virtuous” side as well as the low-skill, “precarious” side of production. Because of this, this study attempts to demonstrate aspects that involve the occupational trajectory of immigrants who are present in higher positions of the productivity hierarchy in the formal labor market of Brazil.

Following Sassen (2011), over the centuries, the international division of labor included a variety of pathways for exchange between labor and capital. However, these pathways were altered considerably over time; in this way, old pathways that remain currently feed off new dynamics, while new types of labor and capital pathways also emerge. One example of this is the rise of new global geographies that traverse the old North-South division and are constituted by means of a variety of specific processes, such as the increasingly global

⁴ Translation of: “1. L'estatus socioeconòmic dels treballadors d'origen immigrant en comparació al dels treballadors d'origen autòcton. 2. Les possibles discriminacions del mercat laboral cap els immigrants. 3. L'ajustament estructural dels immigrants dins dels mercats de treball receptors. 4. Els efectes de la integració dels treballadors estrangers en els nivells d'ocupació i salaris nacionals. 5. La incorporació de la perspectiva de gènere en l'anàlisi de les migracions internacionals. 6. La influència de les xarxes socials en els processos migratoris i d'inserció en el nou mercat laboral.”

⁵ Even though some immigrants were present in intermediate positions, they appeared infrequently, and what was most evident in the data collected was the polarization between immigrant workers in more prestigious occupations and another part in more subaltern occupations. Therefore, the exposure of the occupational trajectories of immigrants at the top and bottom of the production chain, seeking to identify the main characteristics of each, was the most adequate for this study.

operations of companies and markets through the multiplication of multinational and transnational companies.

The so called “global cities” are thus characterized by the dispersion of their production activities in different geographical locations, and as such, the networks of productions become increasingly more complex and globalized and demand new forms of financial services and of producers with specific abilities to provide them.

In this sense, the migration of workers is an important piece in the gears of the new global geographies. Sassen (2011) finds that a distinguisher of contemporary migration is the dislocation not only of low-paid workers in precarious jobs, but also high-skill workers, that will be present in highly qualified positions and in charge of management. Thus, it’s possible to affirm conceptually that the contemporary migratory fluxes have provided the means to the incipient “formation of two global labor pathways, respectively, at the top and bottom of the economic system” (Sassen, 2011, p. 56).⁶

Being it so, one of these global labor pathways characterizes itself by the presence of a transnational workforce, composed by high-skilled or specialized professionals that are able to participate in different areas of the private sector in various positions. This type of pathway and presence was quite evident, principally in the data collected through surveys where all the participants are characterized by a high level of education and enter the country to work in medium and large companies, especially multinational companies.

One predominant characteristic between the immigrant workers that filled out the survey online is the mention that they took jobs that required some type of specific educational degree, or in other words, that they are professionals that work at companies that seek/are in need of technical specialists that perform precise tasks in need of expertise, and that because of this, these immigrants manage to enter more “protected” sectors of the labor market.

When questioned which aspects would be important for an immigrant to get a job in Brazil, the majority believe it is of great relevance having a former work experience abroad, being a specialist in the profession, and having an educational degree from abroad.

With respect to the workers who find themselves working for multinational companies, they note that these workers arrive to Brazil to occupy management and director positions at companies that they already worked at previously—that is to say they are professionals that already possess a career within these companies as it is possible to note from the following responses:

I am working in this same company in Finland. I informed the management of the company that I was available, in the case that they needed to send someone to Brazil, and here we are [...] Currently I am a sales manager of our products here in Brazil [...] previously in Finland, I worked in operations [...]. (Survey no. 09, 46 years old, Finnish)

I was already working for this company in the Netherlands. Now here in Brazil I am a research and development manager in the company that develops seeds [...] the difference is that before in the Netherlands I was a coordinator, and now I am a manager, that is, I have more responsibility [...]. (Survey no. 12, 37 years old, Dutch)

The Russian company bought this factory in Brazil and they needed Russians in administrative positions, currently I am the financial controller of the company here [...] in Russia I was an auditor [...]. (Survey no. 07, 32 years old, Russian)

Thus, it can be noted that these workers are highly valuable for their companies since the same workers correspond to the needs of the companies and/or make themselves available to be relocated and are physically present in centers of work located in different countries. This characteristic was evident between the workers that rotate among multinational companies, as it is possible to observe in the response of one of the participants:

⁶ Translation of “a formação incipiente de dois circuitos laborais globais, respectivamente, no topo e na base do sistema econômico”.

I have had similar roles as this current one in which I had to go to other places, so I already was in China, Brazil, India, and different countries in Europe, etc. at different points in time. Our company works globally, so I was working and traveling abroad significantly in recent years. (Survey no. 09, 46 years old, Finnish)

This type of mobility which corresponds to a worker from an organization being sent from their country of origin and/or permanent resident to a country abroad to temporarily work is denominated as “expatriation”. According to McNulty (2013), modern expatriates work in an altered way, exercising activities during determined periods in the place of origin and at other moments going to work in different countries, living out an experience “here and there”, managing their own career and the separation from their family; however, all of this occurs internally within a company. These workers would be pressured by the necessity to cultivate and develop scarce abilities for immediate tasks of these companies and to develop capabilities related to global leadership capacity.

Sassen (2011) explains that the significant growth of emerging markets created a series of demands in the past years such that large companies and corporations began to relocate their workers to different places around the world to explore and take advantage of new opportunities.

In this sense, the way in which multinational companies enter these emerging markets to capitalize on the growing consumer population, and also to reduce their costs of production and install service centers for clients in these locations, is by sending their own employees abroad, being that the principal objectives of these workers generally consists of: exploiting new markets, creating operations, providing abilities considered scarce and specialized, solving problems and providing immediate needs for the companies, contributing to short-term projects, supporting the companies in transformation projects or restructuring, acting as agents of the transfer of routines, information, knowledge, values, and culture of the company headquarters to the subsidiaries, among others.

According to Beaverstock (2012), large transnational corporations depend increasingly on a continuous supply of highly qualified professionals to occupy roles of management, execute technical, scientific, or creative roles—as such, the use of highly skilled immigrant workers aims to meet the demand of global labor markets and ends up adding an economic and symbolic value to these companies.

Another interesting aspect is recognizing that the majority of workers confirm that they do not send remittances to people that live in their countries of origin. In other words, the migration here is not strictly of instrumental character, something very common in migratory fluxes when the emigrants leave in search of better economic conditions to be able to help those that remain in their places of origin.

Thus, it can be understood that the motivation of these workers coming to work in Brazil is interconnected to other aspects such as corresponding positively to the expectations and requirements of the companies for whom they work or to gain work experience abroad.

However, one aspect that emerges and seems to have a strong connection with this motivation is linked to self-identification and a positive preference of these workers in relation to the function of their roles, and this appeared in the data of the surveys quite prominently. When the interviewees identify with the work they do, they all responded positively.

In this sense, one can see that identification with one’s role emerges as a result of a relational process between the identities of the subjects in a certain system of action and their occupational trajectory throughout their lives (Dubar, 1998).

Therefore, for such identification to take place, it is essential that the skills and specialties of these individuals be used in their work spaces, and this is a characteristic common to all interviewees who answered

the survey online since they perform specific functions that require previously acquired skills, which serves to facilitate the process of migration to Brazil and the migratory experience of these workers.

The Trajectories of Low-Skill Immigrants in Brazil

Sassen (2011) explains that the processes of globalization produce a growing demand for certain types of labor. While there is a strong demand for high-level transnational professionals, there is also a great demand for workers who will be poorly paid and occupy precarious jobs. Often these workers come from the global South.

The incorporation of these immigrants into the labor markets of their destination societies usually occurs across different occupations, most of the time performing manual and generic jobs due to poor working conditions. In this way, the dynamics of the new international division of labor allow some workers, companies, and sectors to be overvalued and others undervalued.

In this sense, structural changes in the markets and world economies that emerge in the era of flexible or post-fordist accumulation imply a shift from stable and regulated forms of work to casual (deregulated) and often informal—temporary, partial, etc.—with constant occupational instability and few or no benefits for workers.

For Harvey (2008), the process of productive restructuring, or as he refers to it, “flexible production”, is part of a new model of accumulation. Harvey (2008) says that flexible accumulation:

is marked by a direct confrontation with the rigidity of Fordism. It relies on the flexibility of labor processes, labor markets, products and consumption patterns. It is characterized by the emergence of entirely new production sectors, new ways of providing financial services, new markets and, above all, highly intensified rates of commercial, technological and organizational innovation. Flexible accumulation involves rapid changes in patterns of uneven development, both across sectors and across geographical regions, for example creating a broad employment movement in the so-called service sector, as well as completely new industrial facilities in previously undeveloped regions. (Harvey, 2008, p. 140)

The restructuring of production processes triggers a crisis in the labor arena since it is perceived as a reduction in wage labor and a growth in the forms of unsalaried work and unemployment rates. Accordingly, several authors seek to understand the effects and implications of production restructuring and globalization in contemporary migratory movements.

Simon (2002) believes that when analyzing international flows of migration, we can identify three basic types of migrants: (a) those who meet the demands of manual labor in relation to specific existing jobs in the receiving countries—these migrants are the ones who take on subaltern roles without being able to take advantage of their scholarly and individual capabilities; (b) then there are those who are part of a professional and internationalized professional elite, who are known for exporting their technical skills; (c) and finally the refugees.

Thus, these changes in global economies have contributed to the growth of low-income jobs in major economic centers, both in the global North and in the global South. These new trends have generated diverse effects such as the increase of economic instability in general and the emergence of new forms of employment.

There is thus a set of conditions that directly influence the formation of migratory flows of low-skill workers in the contemporary world, such as the growth of the service sector; the dissemination of temporary, partial, and other forms of atypical work; unconventional production processes in factories and in industrial works and so on. All these aspects are fundamental in understanding the increase in the availability of low-income jobs and the demand for immigrant workers to fill them.

This type of work corresponds to a large majority of the immigrant workers in the Brazilian formal labor market, as RAIS data suggest (cf. Suzuki, 2018).

Thus, when analyzing the occupational trajectories of the participants of the interviews, especially the workers from countries in the southern hemisphere, the majority are found to be working in precarious roles. It is noteworthy that in their countries of origin the same individuals had similar occupations, although in some reports of Haitian workers, it is explicit that the conditions of work here in Brazil are often even worse than those experienced in Haiti:

I started working at age 15, but I left Haiti and went to work in the Dominican Republic when I was 17 years old, and I stayed there for 20 years, and I always worked in construction as a bricklayer. Back in Haiti, I was managing bricklayers, I had 40 people working for me on a construction site, the work there was not as hard as here, I did not carry weight all day. (Italo, 38 years old, Haitian)

I was 14 years old when my father died and I had to take over the work he did in the field. I worked on our land, planted all the plants, tomatoes, peppers, corn, cassava, okra and beans. In Haiti the work is very difficult because there are months there that have water and others that you do not have any, then you lose everything [...] Here I am a transporter, the work is very difficult, I carry boxes of food, I start at 6 a.m. and leave at 5:00 p.m., I think God is going help find a better job for me [...]. (Joseph, 24 years old, Haitian)

In my first job I sold clothes, T-shirts, then I left, I worked for the company Coca-Cola, then I left and I worked on my own as a painter. [...] Now here I am at the tomato company, but the service there is very bad, work is from 4:00 am to noon without any breaks, and sometimes I have to work until 10:00 pm. It is very hard, harder than in Haiti, but in Haiti there is not any work now. (Vicent, 41 years old)

The process of migration together with the occupational trajectory of these workers has elements distinct from those found and exposed in the previous section, starting with the decision to emigrate, which occurs in practically all cases at some point of deterioration of the material living conditions of the family nucleus in the country of origin, or by extreme situations that require them to leave the society of origin.

This initial point marks a first difference in relation to previously mentioned trajectories since the search for better living and working conditions among these workers emerges strongly among those interviewed, a non-existent aspect among the respondents to the online survey. The sections below make this quite clear:

I came here to Brazil. There was the earthquake in Haiti. There were a lot of people that died. There are not many colleges there, similar to here, so I had a lot of difficulty, so I came here to go to college and work too. (Oliver, 32 years old, Haitian)

I arrived in Brazil, because there was an earthquake there, my mother died, my house was destroyed, and everything fell, there was no way to stay there after the earthquake. All the people who did not die went to other countries, United States. Does that make sense? Now we are suffering, understand? Little work, little service, the people have to get out of there, go to another country, to help. (Italo, 38 years old, Haitian)

I came to Brazil because on January 12, 2010 the earthquake happened. There are a lot of people dying there, the support is very weak, I come here to work, to help my wife, my daughter, my family too. (Jim, 41 years old, Haitian)

Because Haiti does not have much work, after the earthquake, it got worse. There is no water, food, had to leave, this is why I come to Brazil, to work. (Patrick, 40 years old, Haitian)

I came because of the war in Syria, it was no longer safe to stay there with my family, I left behind 40 years of my life [...] Why Brazil? Because only Brazil opens doors to travel without documents. That's why I chose Brazil, because in Brazil it's not required. I did not know many things about Brazil, just some, like Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, the Amazon, coffee and soccer. (Daniel, 43, Syrian)

I had a store in Peru, a small store, but things got tough and I had to close. For my family not to go hungry I had to think of an alternative and as I knew some people who was here in Brazil, I decided to come here. So I came first, and when I was able, I brought them here. (Alexandre, 45 years old, Peruvian)

Therefore, among these interviewees it is possible to note the existence of contradictory processes adjacent to the immigrant condition, such as cases of status inconsistency. The reports of Daniel, Alexandre, and Gael

demonstrate this inconsistency of status experienced by many immigrant workers, for although they have completed tertiary education, many do not get jobs that take advantage of their specific educational background:

Here in Brazil I need to work, I still have not been able to get my degree recognized, but I'm trying, for me I want to recognize my degree, to get my degree in Brazil, because I studied 5 years to become an engineer and not a cook. But I also need to work to live, I like to cook, I like the kitchen, the food, but I cooked before in my country as a hobby, not as work. (Daniel, 43 years old, Syrian)

I graduated in accounting, right after leaving college in Peru, I started working in that area, but then I decided to start a business myself there. Here in Brazil it is very complicated because I had a hard time finding any type of job, I stayed unemployed for almost five months in my area, so I believe it would be practically impossible. (Alexandre, 45 years old, Peruvian)

After I finished college, I decided to come to Brazil. I always wanted to live abroad and here seemed to be a good place [...] I have a degree in art. I tried to teach some classes here, but it never worked out. I was offered to teach Spanish, but I'm not a Spanish teacher and would have a lot of difficulties. When I arrived, I had already worked in other bars and restaurants and it's been some time now that I am working as a waiter here. It is not the job of dreams, but I can pay my bills and continue living here. (Gael, 29 years old, Uruguayan)

These workers in precarious roles also have a greater social vulnerability. In this sense, the vulnerability of immigrant workers is generally reflected through the absence of workplace safety measures, informal employment situations, outsourcing processes, and so on.

This emerged quite strongly, especially among Haitian workers, as several evidenced during the interviews that they were subjected to poor working conditions, exhausting journeys, and low wages, as Italo and Patrick share:

Here, since I arrived, I'm in this tomato company. I spend all day carrying heavy items from 5:00 am to 5:00 pm, I make money breaking my back, it's very heavy, but it's what there is. When we arrived in Goiânia, the owner of the company rented a house and we went to live there. Then when we were paid, he deducted [money from our wages]. After only six months I left his house, then I went to another place with a colleague, so that there was more money left over. [...] I get a salary, working there. (Italo, 38 years old, Haitian)

I work loading and unloading tomatoes. The tomatoes arrive in the truck, and then you have to pick up and take them out of the truck and carry them to the market [...] I've worked there for two years and seven months already, Monday to Saturday, starting at 4 o'clock in the morning and leaving at 5 in the evening or 7:00 o'clock at night. It depends, if you do not have customers, you don't work much, if you have customers, you work harder. The work here is harder than in Haiti, it's a lot of weight. [...] there are times where there is overtime, at the end of the year there is, and when end of the year approaches, the boss warns that there is only a start time. There's no set time to leave. (Patrick, 40, Haitian)

Furthermore, these migratory experiences, unlike previous profiles, exhibit more instrumental aspects, such as the need to save some money and send economic remittances to the family that remains in the country of origin. Something that among the workers in high-skill positions appeared to be insignificant is expressed clearly among other immigrants:

Q.- Do you send money to someone who is in your country?

R.- Yes, money to my father, mother, and sister. I have to help them. (Oliver, 32 years old, Haitian)

R.- I send money. I have a son who is there. (Martin, 30 years old, Haitian)

R.- My family who stayed in Haiti, I send a little money to them. It's not much, but it serves to help. (Jim, 41 years old, Haitian)

R.- I send money every month to my girlfriend who is there. (Joseph, 24 years old, Haitian)

R.- Yes. To my mom. I help her. (Vincent, 41 years old, Haitian)

Another issue that arises quite expressively among these workers at the base of the productivity chain is their non-identification with the activities performed. Many demonstrate that due to the poor working conditions

or because they are performing activities quite different from the activities they were accustomed to, they struggle, they do not like or do not identify with their current profession; this is very noticeable in the speech of the Haitian Italo and the Syrian Daniel:

Here in Brazil there are a lot of large employers, Haiti does not have much of this. As I am a bricklayer, if I find a job in construction, I make money, if there isn't one, I'm left with nothing. Here it is very hard, bricklaying is hard too, but it's not the same here. If this job does not turn out well, I'll leave, I'm not going to stay, I did not work hard there like this [...] I wanted to find work here like I did in Haiti, but until now I have not found it, there are only these jobs of carrying heavy weight [...] I, we have to work, have to pay rent, we can't stay on the street, we have to eat, have to buy soap to wash clothes, I have to work, but for me this job is very taxing, I don't like it. (Italo, 38 years old, Haitian)

I like to be an engineer because I studied to be an engineer, I studied 5 years for this. I like the kitchen, the food, but for me, for my family this was a hobby, not a job. But now in Brazil this is my job. My desire is to be able to gain recognition for my degree, register in the CREA and work as an engineer, although I like the kitchen, I do not want to do this for the rest of my life. I want to return to the work that I really like and I studied, which is engineering. (Daniel, 43 years old, Syrian)

Despite all the difficulties faced in Brazil, due to aspects such as the difficulties of entering the labor market and precarious work conditions, the majority of Haitians interviewed expressed the desire to remain in Brazil because they understand that even with all these difficulties, the conditions of life in Brazil are better compared to those in Haiti.

Yes, I want to stay. My wife is there and soon a daughter as well. I want to bring them. In Brazil I am calm. I prefer to stay here. There are many difficulties there. (Jim, 41 years old, Haitian)

It's better for me here. There are many problems there. I will stay because it's better. In Haiti there is only war and hardship. There are no jobs there. There are always strikes. There are many problems. (Joseph, 24 years old, Haitian)

I will go back to Haiti in 2018. I will see my mom and dad, but it's not to stay. I'll stay here. (Oliver, 32 years old, Haitian)

It's difficult to return now because Haiti is very dangerous. It's better to stay here. (Martin, 30 years old, Haitian)

For these immigrant workers, therefore, their employment trajectories in Brazil are marked by the need to send economic remittances to the country of origin and improve the living conditions of their families. Thus, emigration occurs when all other options disappear such as situations of material loss, accumulation of debts, or long-term unemployment. In Brazil, many experience constant job changes during the migration process, situations of status inconsistency, and holding jobs in precarious and poorly paid conditions.

The Influence of Ethnic Origin, Education Level, Structure of the Labor Market, and Individual Decisions in Occupational Trajectories

As was shown previously, some immigrants upon arrival in their destination country are able to quickly make a single transition to stable employment. However, for others, the process of incorporation into the labor market is more complicated and involves a series of events and transitions inside and outside the labor market and in different types of employment.

For such individuals, incorporation into the labor market can be understood as a process that is linked to several previous events that directly shape and influence the search for work and occupational mobility of immigrants in the receiving society.

A number of studies have shown that new arrivals often carry with them certain disadvantages, such as a lack of local language mastery, limited personal networks, educational credentials, and other skills the benefit of which cannot be reaped in the target job market. And this tends to result in greater risks of unemployment and

low-quality jobs. But how is it possible to explain that two different immigrants through these same aspects have totally different occupational trajectories in the destination society? How can some enter into better occupations, located at the top of the productive chain and others enter more subaltern labor spaces?

It is understood that these factors alone cannot explain significant differences in relation to the employment and occupational trajectory of immigrants in the recipient societies since it is necessary to take into account other factors such as the individual decisions of these immigrants in addition to differences regarding human capital and cultural differences as well as structural differences in the context of destination society which may positively or negatively affect some immigrants more than others.

One aspect that seems to have significant influence on the probability of increasing or decreasing the chances of an immigrant worker having a successful trajectory in their destination location is their ethnic origin. Fossati, Liechti, Auer, and Bonoli (2017) argue that several surveys conducted in different fields of knowledge have demonstrated over time that employers may consciously or unconsciously discriminate individuals from different cultural contexts; however, they would not simply discriminate against all immigrants in the same way, but rather a classification with respect to different ethnic groups and nationalities and from this classification have a positive or negative discrimination effect.

In this sense, some nationalities end up accumulating a higher level of disadvantages than others. In the case of workers from countries of the global South, barriers to their employment and an upward occupational mobility in the formal labor market in Brazil were present in the more intensely collected data.

This was very noticeable when, for example, following the occupational trajectories of two Haitian workers Oliver and Martin. These respondents report that they attended higher education in Haiti but failed to complete their undergraduate degree; however, they acted as teachers in Haiti, teaching children and adolescents until the situation of the country became very chaotic causing them to have to leave the country in search of a better condition of life:

In Haiti I am a teacher of literature, as well as Spanish and French. I taught in school. I have a certification of Spanish and French languages as well, gave classes for teenagers and children too. That was the only job I had [...] I came here to Brazil. There was the earthquake in Haiti. There were a lot of people that died. There are not many colleges there similar to here, so I had a lot of difficulty, so I came here to go to college and work too. (Oliver, 32 years old, Haitian)

In Haiti I started working as a painter and working as a primary school teacher. As I started to go to college I taught [...] my last job in Haiti was as a painter and in the morning, and I taught in a private school [...] There's a problem in Haiti, at 8:00 pm everything closes, we have no chance to work and study together, you have to choose. (Martin, 30 years old, Haitian)

It is interesting to note that these interviewees understand that in Brazil only by acquiring a new set of specific educational and educational capital required by the labor market here may they be able to enter into the occupations they previously held in the country of origin.

Therefore, they show a great desire to study in Brazil, since they entered higher education in Haiti, but were unable to conclude. Additionally, they were performing activities there related to teaching and therefore they realize that to become employed in the same area of activity here in Brazil, it would be essential to resume studies and complete higher education. The amount of time spent in the place of destination emerges as a necessary resource because Oliver recognizes that he needs time to be able to improve more skills like Portuguese and take courses to achieve a transition to the occupation he wishes to pursue:

I'll wait to find a place to teach, because I have to improve my Portuguese and it takes a little time and I need to do the college here, after that I'll try to be a teacher somewhere, because that's what I know how to do. (Oliver, 32 years old, Haitian)

Having an occupation totally different from the one they were accustomed to in a role requires them to communicate with other workers and work as a team on a production line occurs amidst several problems reported by the interviewees:

I work from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. There is a lot of work. It is not always the same work. It changes a lot. There are days when I put iron on doors, then I make the place to put a key in doors. [...] I learned the job there, at first it was difficult because I did not know how to do it and I had difficulty understanding and speaking Portuguese. (Oliver, 32 years old, Haitian)

I work in a company that makes plastic [...] I work as a production assistant there [...] I learned how to do the job there, for me conversation was a bit difficult because we have to work as a team. Communication is very important, and Portuguese is very difficult [...] I work from 10:00 pm to 6:00 am. Working at night is difficult. There are three groups that work at night. I was not used to it. (Martin, 30 years old, Haitian)

These barriers to integration and upward occupational mobility appear to exert less pressure on immigrants from the global North. In the case of the Canadian Alicia, she explains that since she arrived in Brazil, she was “pushed” into the educational field, even though she never worked in that area and didn’t have any type of teacher training. In the words of the Irishwoman Giulianianna, she expresses that she had an upward occupational mobility when comparing to the occupation she had in her place of origin and understands that here in Brazil this happened within a very short time, and that in her country of origin this probably would not be possible:

In Canada I worked within the college schedule. In the summer you do any job to make money, but here in Brazil I always worked teaching English. It was almost forced, if you knew English, you were forced to teach English. [...] I was pushed. I did not know what to do, I was a bit lost, and then people came to my house and said, “look my course needs a teacher and I want you.” I was pushed. I remember saying: but I do not know how to teach, I went to college in Canada but in another area. They said: But we train people; you must know. From then on I found that I got the hang of it and I liked it. But I was pushed. (Alicia, 61 years old, Canadian)

Back in Ireland, when you work in kindergarten, you are not a teacher. You are an educator or you take care of the children; you are not a teacher. So I think the difference is that here I gained a lot more experience here in much less time than I was going to get there. Because I’ve already become a coordinator with six years of work here, I think to get the same back in Ireland would take longer. (Giuliana, 28 years old, Irish)

The understanding is that for this type of immigrant, even if there is no specific vocational training, it is as if nationality were conducive to the creation of an “authority” or “knowledge” and this made the worker immigrant able to perform certain functions, as shown by the speech of the Frenchwoman Anne in explaining how her nationality is beneficial to the work she currently does in Brazil as a manager in a wine company:

I am currently a product manager. I studied about Latin America, I did not study about wines. But at the same time I also develop projects here, so I think that part of my work is linked to my training and another it not, which is something that’s a part of my family and tradition from the world of wine that was not something that I studied in college [...] being French and working in the world of wine is a helpful thing, people already ... just by being French, it seems that I have credibility to be able talk about wines [...]. (Anne, 30 years old, French)

Therefore, there is evidence that ethnic origin is capable of playing a certain influence on the occupational trajectory of these immigrants. Another important aspect is the educational background of immigrants, including the education they can acquire upon arrival at their place of destination. This can be observed through the occupational trajectory of the Mexican Mateus, who possesses complete superior education and before coming to Brazil worked in his area of study; but when emigrating to Brazil, motivated by a situation of loss of material

conditions in his country of origin, he has not been able to enter into an occupation similar to the one he had in his country:

I have a degree in human resources management. In my country I worked in this area for more than 20 years. When the company where I worked closed, I was unemployed for more than a year. Since I did not find anything in that area, and I wanted to go back to work with it [...] after you get older it's very difficult to find a job, you face more barrier. My older sister was in São Paulo and needed help because she had health problems and she lived alone. I decided to come with my family, to help, but with the thinking that if I could something, I could try it here [...] I did not find a job similar to what I had, but after some other work here that was not alike, as a waiter, security guard, caretaker, I searched for some courses and after a while I got this job as a logistics technician in this company. It is not the same thing I did in my country, but it is the closest I got. (Mateus, 59 years old, Mexican)

In the case of the interviewee Mateus, he used a strategy of “re-professionalization”, realizing it would be difficult to encounter and exercise his previous profession here in Brazil, and after holding several unqualified occupations, he reinvented himself as a professional and invested time and money in courses, but taking advantage, in a certain way, of the specific formal education that he had already acquired in his country of origin. It is understood that this type of individual decision was fundamental for his upward occupational mobility after acting in other occupations that did not meet their expectations.

However, it is possible to identify situations in which accesses to positions with greater responsibility and/or compensation are usually limited to certain immigrants. That is, there is a group within the immigrant population that is already self-selected from the beginning. This was quite explicit when discussing the occupational trajectories of the migrant workers who circulated through multinational companies.

In all these cases, it is possible to observe that these different aspects—ethnic origin, educational background, and labor market structure—directly influence the occupational trajectories of these workers, as well as the decisions of each individual from the moment they decide to migrate, and at each moment during the migratory process itself, often developing strategies to maximize as much as possible the gains obtained while residing in the place of migration.

Final Considerations

Throughout the years several migratory theories have been developed seeking to understand and develop concepts about migratory processes. Despite the complexities involved in the migratory phenomenon, as it pervades and relates to different spheres and aspects of social life, one aspect that emerges as the main issue for understanding this phenomenon is the question of labor.

A first question that can be highlighted is the finding of a dual or segmented labor market with respect to the employment of immigrants in Brazil; however, in contrast to the theory of the “dual labor market” developed by Piore (1979), which understands that labor markets in advanced economies are divided into two sectors—primary and secondary—and that the secondary sector would specifically be the segment that absorbs migrant workers, the data presented in our study demonstrate that the Brazilian labor market has absorbed immigrant workers to act in both the primary and secondary segments.

In this sense, it was possible to observe that there is activity of immigrant workers in Brazil, both in the primary sector characterized by high salaries, additional benefits, satisfactory working conditions, and safer jobs and in the secondary sector with low wages, minimal or non-existent benefits, bad working conditions, high turnover of workers, and jobs that bring greater risks to the health and integrity of workers.

We also find that a great portion of the immigrants that arrive in Brazil cannot immediately count on the human capital that they possess; thus, as several theoreticians (Chiswick, 1978; Chiswick, Lee, & Miller, 2005; Clarke & Drinkwater, 2008) explain, there are often obstacles for immigrants to use the skills acquired in their host countries, and they often face many barriers to entry into the local labor market, especially because they do not have a command of the local language and fail to get their certificates and diplomas acquired in the countries of origin to be recognized.

This often generates situations of inconsistency of status and it is noted that many immigrants who have completed higher education and specific skills cannot take advantage of them and work in occupations that take advantage of their educational training.

With regard to the use of social capital and the use of social networks, it was possible to perceive that, as Palloni, Massey, Ceballos, Espinosa, and Spittel (2001) highlight, social networks play an essential role in the migratory strategies of immigrant workers arriving in Brazil, acting as a link and transmission of diverse resources, such as important information about the country and help during the migratory process, especially with regard to access to the labor market.

It is also noticeable that in certain migratory flows, social networks have the capacity to facilitate the entry of immigrants into the labor market in the destination society, but at the same time they impede or hinder the access of immigrants to certain sectors of the labor market and opportunities because of the fact that certain immigrants access occupations in the secondary segment of production. The labor market of the host society may end up “stigmatizing” other individuals who migrate and who come from the same region or place of origin, thus creating specific niches for the work of these workers.

It can be observed that some immigrants end up accumulating greater disadvantages and discrimination when trying to integrate into the formal labor market in Brazil, as the theory of disadvantage or discrimination suggests through several studies (Mata & Pendakur, 1999; Clark & Drinkwater, 2008; Parker, 2006) to the existence of structural barriers—related to ethnicity, race, gender, and class—to the integration and the occupational mobility of certain immigrants in their society of destination.

This fact became very evident when observing the most significant migratory flow that exists today for the country, which is the migratory flow of Haitians. It is possible to see that these workers are pushed to precarious jobs—the majority are in subaltern jobs that do not allow occupational mobility.

To understand better how this process of disadvantage and discrimination occurs in relation to these immigrant workers in Brazil, it is fundamental to take into account the historical and social formation of our country as the process of transition from slave labor to free labor in Brazil, the selectivity with regard to foreign workers who came to replace the slave labor after the end of the slave trade to Brazil, and all the repercussions of these facts in the context of our present moment.

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