

# Mixed embeddedness of Brazilian entrepreneurs in Toronto

Mixed  
embeddedness

Roberto Pessoa de Queiroz Falcão

*Universidade do Grande Rio (UNIGRANRIO –PPGA), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

Michel Mott Machado

*Centro Estadual de Educação Tecnológica Paula Souza (CEETEPS),  
São Paulo, Brazil*

Eduardo Picanço Cruz

*Departamento de Empreendedorismo e Gestão, Universidade Federal Fluminense,  
Niterói, Brazil, and*

Caroline Shenaz Hossein

*Global Development and Political Science, University of Toronto Scarborough,  
Toronto, Canada*

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this article is to investigate how social integration, immigrant networks and barriers to venturing affect the entrepreneurial activities of Brazilians in Canada, indicating how mixed embeddedness takes place in that context.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Data were collected in Toronto, through the application of a survey with 74 Brazilian entrepreneur respondents and 42 semi-structured interviews with selected subjects, thus representing a multi-method approach. The analysis included descriptive statistics from the survey data and a qualitative analysis of the trajectories and life stories of Brazilian immigrants.

**Findings** – Our sample comprises respondents with a high level of education and proficiency in English, coming predominantly from the southeast of Brazil, white, aged from 30 to 49. The majority of businesses are small and related to the service sector. The article contributes to the literature by discussing the elements related to mixed embeddedness, including the need for cultural adaptation and for the creation of networks as a crucial element for business venturing.

**Research limitations/implications** – The study focuses on entrepreneurs regardless of their businesses sector or formality/informality status. It could be used as an instrument to support Canadian public policies for welcoming Brazilians and for the Brazilian government to prevent the evasion of potential entrepreneurs.

**Originality/value** – The article contributes to the body of knowledge of immigrant entrepreneurship in Canada and of Brazilian entrepreneurship overseas. The results suggest factors that may be relevant to the expansion of their business, such as social networking, cultural embeddedness and adaptation of the products/services to a wider range of target customers.

**Keywords** Immigrant entrepreneurship, Brazilians, Toronto, Canada

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

The world is experiencing an increase in immigration flows, which reconfigure countries, their migratory spaces and the international division of labor (De Hass, 2010; Trenz and Triandafyllidou, 2017); therefore, as most areas are embedded in the global logic, international migrations will probably increase (Baeninger, 2018, p. 464).

Politically stable democracies host immigrants from various parts of the world. Nevertheless, they differ in their long-term attitudes toward immigrants (Tiffen *et al.*, 2020).

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On the one hand, several immigrants seek refuge, leaving their countries of origin in precarious conditions. Countries such as Canada favor immigrants by their skills, implementing a selective migration process (Koslowski, 2014). Entrepreneurship, as posited by Portes and Zhou (1992), could represent an important means for societal inclusion, redesigning countries in their global migratory perspectives (Akbar, 2019).

Several studies have looked at migration from a multilayered perspective (Nazareno *et al.*, 2018; Cruz *et al.*, 2018; Buettner and Muenz, 2020). In this paper, we build on this approach, using mixed embeddedness as a tool to analyze the entrepreneurial activity among Brazilians in Toronto, Canada.

Mixed embeddedness is a theory that explains immigrant small-scale, labor-intensive, low-skilled businesses in advanced host countries (Kloosterman *et al.*, 1999; Kloosterman and Rath, 2001). These informal entrepreneurs might cut corners by engaging in informal ethnic businesses embedded in ethnic enclaves (Kloosterman and Rath, 2001; Zhou, 2004). However, in Canada, due to the selective migration programs, incoming immigrants tend to have higher levels of financial and human capital and are able to access several startup support programs that take place in the country (McMullan *et al.*, 2002; Lester, 2016). Apart from their ethnic enclaves embeddedness (if the case), immigrant business activities are part of a wider institutional context, determining their opportunity structure for businesses on a macro-level. In addition, cultural contexts, governmental rules and regulations, neighborhood associations and business traditions also influence these immigrant ventures creating mixed embeddedness (Kloosterman *et al.*, 1998, 1999; Kloosterman and Rath, 2001; Kloosterman, 2010).

Brazilian economic and political crises have been fueling the emigration of Brazilians to several destinations, including European and North American countries. Within this context, Canada is depicted as an important destination for Brazilian migration (Goza, 1999; Goza and Marteleto, 2016). Research on Brazilian immigration is starting to receive more attention, for instance, with studies on the migratory and entrepreneurship trajectories of Brazilian immigrants in different countries (Cruz *et al.*, 2018). However, no study has been conducted using mixed embeddedness to the analysis of Brazilian communities overseas. So far, it is known that Brazilians are widespread in North America, encompassing both (1) highly skilled, knowledge workers, generally related to the IT sector, (2) low-skilled “servile” activities (Scott, 2012), generally related to self-employment activities, catering, beauty-parlors, etc (Cruz *et al.*, 2017, 2018). We, therefore, propose the following research question to be investigated:

*RQ.* How do social integration, immigrant networks and barriers to venturing affect the entrepreneurial activities of Brazilians in Canada?

Applying the several aspects of mixed embeddedness (Kloosterman, 2010) enabled a deeper analysis of interactions between social aspects, individual trajectories of Brazilian immigrants and their resources, coupled with the varying demands for goods and services in the marketplace. At the individual level, the different factors of the mixed embeddedness could evidence potential barriers or promoters of distinct opportunity structures. Thus, such analysis calls for a deepening of the understanding of the relationships between individual agency, structural and institutional inequalities and collective social boundaries (Romero and Valdez, 2016).

However, there are important gaps to be filled, especially regarding economic, political and migratory issues (Barbosa, 2016). We, therefore, propose expanding the existing knowledge on mixed-embeddedness by exploring the relationship between immigrants’ social integration, immigrant networks and barriers to venturing in the Canadian context. For example, when Brazilian immigrants are more integrated into society (due to language proficiency and education), what kind of business should they create? What are the possible effects of barriers to venturing (such as language, accent or the Canadian experience)? To address those questions, the study draws on the Brazilian immigrants established in the

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Greater Toronto Area, depicting several aspects of their businesses. Our contribution is then twofold. From a theoretical point of view, the article contributes to a more detailed depiction of immigrant business structures, shedding light on their related and conditioning factors embedded in broader institutional, regulatory and socio-cultural backgrounds. In addition, in practical terms, the paper aims at inspiring other Brazilian immigrant entrepreneurs and supporting governmental policies.

## 2. Mixed embeddedness

### 2.1 *General overview and evolution of mixed embeddedness concept*

Embeddedness has become a crucial concept in explaining the success of entrepreneurs. Moreover, it is particularly useful to unveil aspects of immigrant and ethnic entrepreneurs (Kloosterman *et al.*, 1999). Rath and Kloosterman (2000) posit that this framework is especially suited to explain the mechanisms related to informal economic activities that take place outside of the regular settings (Roberts, 1994). It relates to opportunity structures, actors and institutional environment (Kloosterman, 2010).

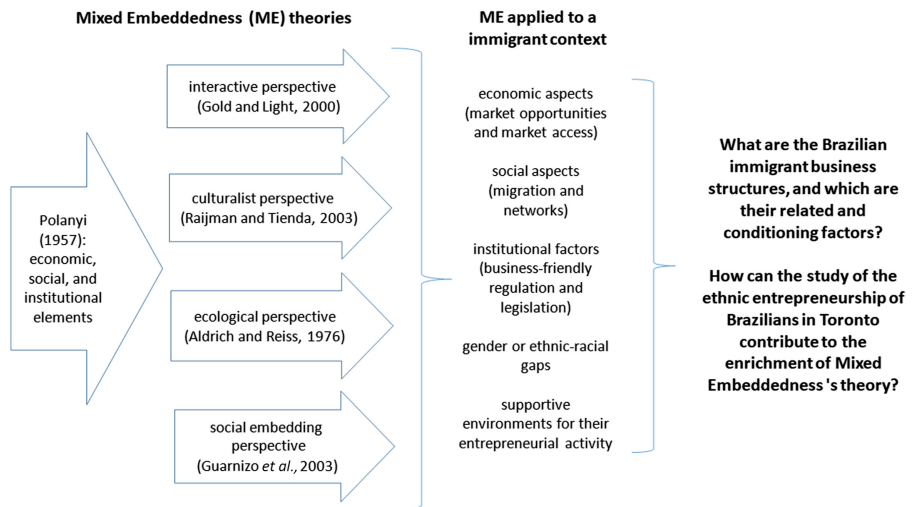
The original concept of embeddedness was developed by Polanyi (1957) and Granovetter (1985), aiming at explaining how behavior and institutions are affected by social relations—a classic question of social theory. Then, it evolved to a mixed embeddedness thesis, with the understanding that opportunity structures-exogenous factors which limit or empower collective actors—are not restricted to the market economy but rather nested in broader institutional, regulatory and socio-cultural backgrounds (Kloosterman and Rath, 2001). On the other hand, socio-cultural practices are generally formally codified in the regulatory and national institutional framework (Kloosterman and Rath, 2001), which promoted the generation of different and specific post-industrial self-employment trajectories, displaying divergent opportunity structures (Kloosterman and Rath, 2001; Kloosterman, 2010), for instance, zoning plans within urban locations limit certain types of businesses, differences in local practices regarding the division of labor, different consumer habits (e.g. British are more prone to ethnic foods than Spanish see Camarena *et al.*, 2011), etc. Several immigrant communities nowadays inhabit intricate and complex urban settings, in a metropolis such as New York, London, Toronto or Montreal. On the one hand, these urban environments are constantly changing regarding their sociocultural landscape. On the other hand, wider changes take place in the global economy and in institutional/governmental spheres that affect immigrant businesses.

### 2.2 *The interplay between elements of mixed embeddedness*

The interplay between them builds a larger, dynamic framework, encompassing organizations on the neighborhood, city and national levels, which is proposed as an intersection of several disciplines (Rath and Kloosterman, 2000), encompassing (1) economic aspects, (2) social aspects, (3) institutional factors, (4) gender and ethnic-racial gaps and (5) supportive environment (see Figure 1 at the end of section 2).

First, the economic factors are exemplified by the fact that immigrants are commonly pushed toward self-employment derived from their socio-economic conditions upon arrival and specific barriers (e.g. ethnic or racial discrimination, lack of language or technical skills). In addition, certain cultural traits added to the social, human and financial capital mix are also influential. Moreover, agency and actors are also crucial to how they are embedded in larger social structures (see Granovetter, 1985).

Social aspects, institutional factors, gender and ethnic-racial gaps and supportive environment are included in a revisited perspective; the mixed embeddedness concept has evolved to an approach that encompasses both the micro level of the individual entrepreneurs (with his or her resources) and the meso-level of the local opportunity structure, linking it to the macro-institutional framework (Kloosterman, 2010; Kloosterman and Rath, 2018).



**Figure 1.**  
Theories application in  
the context of research

Originally, seminal works on ethnic entrepreneurs and immigrant businesses (Waldinger *et al.*, 1990) were very simplistic while describing the opportunity structures. Several factors shape the opportunity structures for immigrants, namely, the technological innovations, changes in regulatory frameworks, socio-cultural practices and shifts in global trade (Kloosterman, 2010). Nowadays, urban areas economies are built-in service activities of two types: (1) highly skilled, knowledge workers who perform cognitive-cultural activities and (2) low-skilled in-person services or “servile” activities (Scott, 2012). Therefore, highly skilled immigrants integrate the “Silicon valley type” of startups as opposed to low-skilled immigrants that are prone to self-employment. Thus, Kloosterman (2010) proposes a straightforward typology of the opportunity structure, which draws on differences in entry barriers (in terms of human capital) and on their dynamics (growing or stagnating), proposing  $2 \times 2$  matrices. This comprehensive analytical framework explains several changes in opportunities, resources and outcomes of immigrant entrepreneurship.

Market conditions might determine, to a large extent, in which segments new immigrant businesses occur (Rath and Kloosterman, 2000; Kloosterman, 2010). Nevertheless, there is an interplay between cultural background and human capital in order to establish in which kind of business an immigrant might engage (Cruz *et al.*, 2018). Some ethnic businesses, for instance, demand low proficiency in the host country’s language if entrepreneurs are targeting co-ethnics. Conversely, low proficiency in the local language or strong accent could be barriers to successful careers or ventures (Collins and Low, 2010; Colakoglu *et al.*, 2018) targeting local consumers.

Sometimes, necessity-driven businesses are created by emerging demand for “ethnic” products, especially ethnic clothing and food. Long-established, local shop owners leave neighborhoods where the immigrant population rises, which promotes an interplay between spatial urban organization and market opportunity structures (Kloosterman and Rath, 2001). Due to easy entry of self-employed immigrants who were excluded from the labor market, fierce competition takes place in ethnic concentrated neighborhoods. Hence, the most evident survival strategy is cutting labor or operational costs by employing informal or illegal migrant workers. However, these practices are subject to local labor regulations and government oversight; therefore, evading the payment of taxes or social contributions might be quite risky for immigrant entrepreneurs (Kloosterman *et al.*, 1999). Within ethnic enclaves and tight immigrant communities, the use of social networks embedded in the current opportunity structure gives

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these entrepreneurs a competitive advantage for both formal and informal businesses. Therefore, configurations of mixed embeddedness can be very complex and multifaceted. In that sense, recent research that addressed informal venturing within immigrant communities and refugee settings brings new findings to mixed embeddedness theories. Business incubation in refugee settings, for instance, was evidenced by [Meister and Mauer \(2018\)](#), showing the lack of embeddedness and several barriers to refugee entrepreneurs in the host country. Other findings point to how business inception and development is influenced not only by the reciprocal action of local opportunity structure and entrepreneur's characteristics or resources, as originally suggested by the mixed embeddedness theory but also by institutional settings, economies and markets in host countries ([Bagwell, 2018](#)). Therefore, different immigration policies (meaning institutional factors and supportive environment) lead to different opportunity structures and subsequent choices of entrepreneurial activities ([Wang and Warn, 2018](#)). In addition, immigrant groups with different legal statuses also produce particular interpretations of mixed embeddedness ([Bisignano and El-Anis, 2019](#)), and co-ethnic sensemaking frames persist within culturally distinct communities ([Szkudlarek and Wu, 2018](#)).

Another framing of mixed embeddedness aspects was proposed by [Ram et al. \(2017\)](#), encompassing issues regarding (1) the important role of regulation, (2) the incorporation of racist exclusion, (3) gendered structures of migration and labor market processes, (4) market ghettoization and (5) greater sensitivity to its historical context. In other terms, as proposed by [Dheer \(2018\)](#), studies encompassing immigrant mixed embeddedness should include (1) the opportunity structures, (2) the resources of the migrant entrepreneurs, (3) the wider socio-cultural and institutional context and (4) their business strategies in a systematic manner but open way.

Studies using the mixed embeddedness theory have been carried out in several contexts, but not yet in Brazilian immigrant communities overseas. We propose to zoom in one of these communities.

### *2.3 Opportunity structures among Brazilian immigrant communities*

While long-established immigrant communities embedded in complex opportunity structures were key to supporting mixed embeddedness theories, the role of ethnic social capital as a support instrument for newcomers' businesses has been the subject of criticism ([Jones and Ram, 2012](#); [Sepulveda et al., 2011](#)). Nevertheless, wider economic and institutional contexts in which immigrants are inevitably also embedded are keys to shedding light on immigrant research contexts, such as the recent insertion of transnational social capital in the mixed embeddedness approach ([Bagwell, 2018](#)).

We now turn to a specific case of Brazilian immigrant entrepreneurship in Canada to investigate this mixed embeddedness in more depth. Several aspects might be taken into account in order to apply mixed embeddedness to the case of Brazilian communities overseas. First, the diversity of social, economic and human capitals mix, depending on the immigration waves, evidenced in Brazilian Floridian communities ([Cruz et al., 2018](#)). Second, possible mechanisms of bounded mistrust among co-ethnics ([Cruz et al., 2017](#)), as opposed to institutional networking with commerce chambers and immigrant associations ([Cruz et al., 2018](#)). Third, the specificities of Brazilian sub-cultures and ethnic-racial backgrounds depend on their ethnic groups ([Van De Kamp, 2016](#); [Ryakitimbo and Hossain, 2019](#)). Fourth, social class differences, which influence perceptions, cultural-educational level, language proficiency and integration ([Robins, 2019](#)). Fifth, opportunity structures and target audience of immigrant businesses, which are subject to their immigrant communities' affiliation ([Cruz et al., 2018](#)).

Despite the Canadian commitment to multiculturalism at all levels of government, immigrant and ethnic entrepreneurs still face barriers in their business practice, with limited access to financing being a persistent problem ([Teixeira et al., 2007](#)). Therefore, several institutional settings might promote immigrant discrimination and business hardship, such as difficulty in validating medical degrees in Canada ([Foster, 2008](#)), difficulty in getting

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permanent resident visas, especially during Trump rule in the US (Oppenheimer *et al.*, 2016) and barriers to immigrant venturing (Collins and Low, 2010). In addition, institutional embeddedness or barriers, such as the welfare system, the organization of markets, legislation and enforcement and housing policies (Kloosterman *et al.*, 1999), might promote other impacts on immigrant business inception.

Intertwining the original seminal works of mixed embeddedness (Polanyi, 1957; Gold and Light, 2000; Rajjman and Tienda, 2003; Aldrich and Reiss, 1976; Guarnizo *et al.*, 2003), we summarize in Figure 1 its application to the research context.

In order to address the research gap, namely exploring the intertwine between immigrants' social integration, immigrant networks and barriers to venturing in the Canadian context, we designed a study that depicts the context of Brazilian immigrants established in the Greater Toronto Area, using the several aspects of their businesses (and mixed embeddedness) to expand the theory of ME.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Study context: Brazilian immigration to Canada

Canada is known for its affirmative policies regarding selective skilled immigration as an instrument for promoting its demographic and economic growth. Thus, since 2002, the country has officially defined three basic categories of permanent residence: (1) family reunifications; (2) economic and (3) humanitarian (Fraga, 2018). According to Borjas (1991), migration policies to Canada and to the United States began to diverge from the mid-1960s. While the United States emphasized family reunification and certain ethnicities, Canada sought a selective policy based on professional qualifications and skills. A historical retrospective of migration policies can be found in the work of Knowles (2016). From a broader perspective, Canada is recognized for having adopted multiculturalism as a state policy (Machado and Teixeira, 2019). Nevertheless, migration is still an object of social tensions, specially related to entry barriers to the labor market (Fraga, 2018), either due to discrimination of racialized immigrants (Akbar, 2019) or to other issues, which are common tensions in multicultural societies (Nabavi and Lund, 2016).

Although, according to Fraga (2018), Brazilians that immigrate to Canada are generally affluent, from a middle class, highly educated professionals, who are proficient in at least one of the two official languages of the country (English or French), the majority of Brazilian newcomers find work first in the informal sector, mostly in Portuguese (or Brazilian) companies, in various branches of activity: civil construction; cleaning services; restaurants and other types of lower-paid jobs (Sega, 2018). Brazilian emigration has been pushed by constant political and economic crises, taking off in the second half of the 1980s (Sega, 2018). This migration directed to Canada, Europe and the USA predominantly continued to grow in the 1990s and 2000s (Sega, 2018). Canada became an important destination for Brazilian immigrants because of its economic and social security, as opposed to Brazil (Schervier, 2005). The Brazilian population in Canada, according to Brazilian official statistics, comprised 39,300 people (Brasil, 2016). Toronto (Province of Ontario) holds the largest contingent of Brazilian immigrants in Canada (Sega, 2018), with immigrants of several social levels: members of the Brazilian upper-class residing in Canada for decades with strong ties to the Canadian elite; middle-class citizens with high schooling, working in formal jobs; and informal-sector workers (Sega, 2018). Moreover, entrepreneurship is an important form of economic and societal insertion, as certain ethnic minorities exhibit higher rates of self-employment than locals (Hiebert, 2003). In addition, among Canadian small and medium-sized companies, there is a prominent social and cultural diversity (Gulati, 2013), which was also unveiled by Wang and Hii (2019) studies, which are concerned on how recent changes in Canada's immigration programs have resulted in a substantial decrease in immigrant flow

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entering Canada to venture. Some of these immigrants target “competing countries like the USA, Australia and the United Kingdom, that have more affordable prices and less restrictive investment requirements” (Wang and Hii, 2019, p. 15). While in the past, most immigrants came to Canada as workers and became small businessmen (e.g. shopkeepers and restaurant owners) due to their inability to find skilled, well-paid employment, and recently many immigrants have moved to Canada holding a well-conceived business plan. These newcomers suit the need coming from the post-industrial era of entrepreneurs who can participate and contribute to capital-intensive businesses, which is also reflected in Canada’s recent business immigration policies. Additionally, Wang and Hii (2019) highlight that abolishing the “entrepreneur immigrant program” and the “investor immigrant program” substantially reduced the flow of immigrant and foreign-owned businesses. “blocked mobility thesis” (see Cormier, 2003) explains how skilled workers fail to seek rewarding employment, and when operating a small business, they are not using their skills, on the basis of which they were selected to immigrate to Canada. Strong integration of stakeholders, including all levels of government, business and industry organizations, immigration communities and the Canadian society at large, are needed, as posited by Wang and Hii (2019). Nevertheless, there is a reported evolution of wealth among both immigrant communities and their Canadian-born counterparts from 1999 to 2016, based on data from Statistics Canada’s Survey of Financial Security (SFS) (Morissette, 2019).

### 3.2 Research design

The philosophical disposition of the current research bridges positivist and interpretivist approaches coupling quantitative (descriptive statistics) to qualitative methods (see Lin, 1998). The research design encompassed a three-phase mixed methodology (Creswell, 2003), combining the use of (1) surveys, (2) semi-structured interviews and (3) field observations.

### 3.3 Data collection

*3.3.1 Survey – first phase.* Data collection took six months (conducted in 2019), and during the first approach (o the fieldwork), researchers sent survey questionnaires to 74 established Brazilian entrepreneurs settled in Toronto (Ontario and Canada). A sampling of respondents followed accessibility, being non-probabilistic and intentional (Ghauri *et al.*, 2020). First, the researchers contacted a trader commissioner official of the Canadian Consulate in Brazil, who introduced them to five Brazilian–Canadian entrepreneurs. These initial entrepreneurs introduced them to other Brazilian entrepreneurs through snowball sampling (Goodman, 2011). LinkedIn networking was an important medium for establishing direct contacts with prospect entrepreneurs to be interviewed.

A follow-up session of semi-structured interviewing was conducted with 42 subjects of this pool. The questionnaire itself contained information regarding their socio-demographic profile, visa status upon Canada entry, reasons for leaving Brazil and to immigrating to Canada, business information (age of business, type of business and formality status).

The research involved 76 participants (74 entrepreneurs and 2 members of Consulates, one from Brazil in Toronto and the other from Canada, in São Paulo). Respondents needed to meet several characteristics and criteria, namely: (1) to be Brazilians acting as entrepreneurs, regardless of the industry, size and age of businesses; (2) varying length of stay in Canada; (3) equal share of men and women, preferably; (4) varied ages; (5) varied educational/academic background. The questionnaire included information regarding their socio-demographic profile, visa status upon Canada entry, reasons for leaving Brazil and immigrating to Canada, and business information (business age and type, formalization status, etc.) see Table 1 for sample description.

Initially, the researchers attempted to disseminate the survey using Google Forms, via Facebook groups, following Cruz *et al.* (2020) protocols. However, given the lack of success in this first strategy, the researchers opted for the snowball sampling approach (Goodman, 2011).

Interviewee (ID)	Gender (Male/Female)	Age (years)	Schooling	Time in Canada (years)	Type of business
E1	M	36	Bachelor or equivalent	3	IT (Serv./law-tech)
E2	F	52	Bachelor or equivalent	18	Social/welfare services
E3	M	36	Post Grad.	1	IT (Serv./HRM)
E4	F	58	Bachelor or equivalent	26	Health and wellness
E5	F	62	Post Grad.	25	Graphic/editorial Services
E6	F	57	Secondary	19	Beauty Services
E7	M	43	Post Grad.	6	Graphic/editorial Services
E8	M	49	Post Grad.	3	Food and drinks
E9	F	60	Secondary	32	Food and drinks
E10	F	29	Bachelor or equivalent	4	Food and drinks
E11	M	48	Secondary	29	Grocery and supermarkets
E12	F	72	Bachelor or equivalent	23	Courses and education
E13	M	43	Post Grad.	1	IT (Serv./Fintech)
E14	F	43	Bachelor or equivalent	13	Cleaning services
E15	F	43	Post Grad.	18	Agency Services
E16	F	43	Bachelor or equivalent	22	Health and wellness
E17	M	53	Bachelor or equivalent	29	Transport
E18	F	48	Post Grad.	14	Cleaning service
E19	M	24	Secondary	6	Health and wellness
E20	F	41	Fundamental	14	Fashion and accessories
E21	F	48	Secondary	20	Jewelery and Watchmaking
E22	F	44	Secondary	17	Cleaning services
E23	F	55	Secondary	22	Foods
E24	F	37	Bachelor or equivalent	10	Health and wellness
E25	F	39	Post Grad.	1	Advisory Services
E26	M	36	Post Grad.	4	Food and drinks
E27	F	55	Secondary	11	Beauty Services
E28	M	42	Post Grad.	0.67	IT (Serv./Edu-tech)
E29	M	27	Post Grad.	3	Consulting services
E30	F	37	Bachelor or equivalent	14	Consulting services
E31	M	29	Post Grad.	0.5	IT (Serv./Logistics)
E32	M	29	Bachelor or equivalent	0.5	IT (Serv./logistics)
E33	M	39	Post Grad.	0.5	Fashion and accessories
E34	M	64	Post Grad.	7	Consulting services

**Table 1.**  
Respondents' characteristics

(continued)



Interviewee (ID)	Gender (Male/Female)	Age (years)	Schooling	Time in Canada (years)	Type of business
E35	M	42	Bachelor or equivalent	0.67	IT (Serv./IA)
E36	M	38	Secondary	12	Sports and leisure
E37	M	39	Post Grad.	15	Sports and leisure
E38	F	32	Post Grad.	2	Health and wellness
E39	F	37	Bachelor or equivalent	0.5	Health and wellness
E40	F	27	Post Grad.	5	Food and drinks
E41	M	31	Secondary	10	Construction and renovation
E42	F	37	Post Grad.	3	Consulting services

Table 1.

*3.3.2 Semi-structured interviews – the second phase.* The semi-structured interviews (Ghuri *et al.*, 2020) with 42 entrepreneurs (out of the 74 survey respondents) that aimed at deepening the understanding of mixed embeddedness of Brazilians in Toronto, including (1) individual's migratory trajectory, (2) his/her experience in starting and running his/her own business, (3) specific opportunity structures encountered; (4) the importance of social networks and mechanisms for the survival and success of their businesses; (5) financial issues; (6) advice in administrative or legal issues; (7) partnerships and local suppliers; and (8) logistic issues and business support. The interviews took about an hour, being carried out on the most convenient and opportune days, places and times for the subjects. They were fully recorded on audio and transcribed. In addition, it unveiled aspects of the importance of social networks and mechanisms for the survival and success of their businesses. The qualitative data also allowed researchers to delve into several mixed embeddedness issues (economic, managerial and legal), partnerships and local suppliers, logistics and business support.

*3.3.3 Field observations.* In order to better ascertain whether the businesses (such as Brazilian bakeries, groceries, travel agencies, money remittances and cafes) were in fact owned by Brazilians, researchers conducted informal in loco observations, visiting the places with the greatest concentration of Brazilian immigrants and talking with local entrepreneurs. By identifying a plethora of culture-specific signaling items (e.g., use of symbols that refer to Brazilian nationality, Brazilian culture, Portuguese language, etc.), it was possible to increase the confidence that these businesses were indeed owned by Brazilian entrepreneurs. Brazilian community magazines and newspaper ads provided additional clues to finding prospect respondents. A notebook was used to write down field notes and to record the incursions' impressions and insights. Additional triangulation of data was done with subjects who worked in institutions that support Brazilian immigrants in Canada. This initiative proved to be useful since it was possible to obtain more information on immigration and transnational entrepreneurship, as well as a source of potential contacts for future fieldwork.

### 3.4 Data analysis

*3.4.1 Survey analysis.* The survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviation their socio-demographic profile, visa status upon Canada entry, the reasons for leaving Brazil and to immigrating to Canada, as well as business information (age of business, type of business and formality status).

*3.4.2 Analysis of semi-structured interviews and field observations.* The interview data was fully transcribed and analyzed following Gioia *et al.*'s (2013) indications on their systematic

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inductive approach to concept development. The researchers at first figured out patterns in the data, performing a preliminary step of coding, which would enable further surfacing of concepts and relationships, formulating them in theoretically relevant terms related to mixed embeddedness within Brazilian communities in Toronto. That protocol enabled the scientific criterion of presenting evidence systematically, imposing qualitative rigor and additionally presenting the research findings while showing emerging concepts and connections among data within the mixed embeddedness applied to the context of the research. The results obtained were subsequently compared with the recent literature on the subject in order to achieve the research objectives and contribute to the advancement of research.

A four-step protocol of analysis was conducted (Gioia *et al.*, 2013): (1) First order analysis – this step includes searching for informant-centric terms, which in the current research generated 21 categories, therefore distilled onto other second-order categories; (2) second-order analysis: by seeking similarities and differences among the many; this step aimed at reducing the specific categories to a reduced number of five categories; (3) establishing labels or phrasal descriptors–aggregate dimensions; (4) Building a data structure diagram after completing the full set of first and second-order coding of themes and aggregate dimensions. Field observations were complementary to qualitative analysis collected by semi-structured interviews, and cultural artifacts or signs were illustrative, especially regarding Brazilian firms that use cultural elements as identification or differentials.

#### 4. Results

This section presents first an overview of survey data ( $N = 74$ ) and is followed by the presentation of results of semi-structured interviews with 42 Brazilian immigrant-entrepreneur interviewees and the two consular representatives (one from Brazil and the other from Canada, nominated as RCB and RCC).

##### 4.1 Survey sample and Brazilian community characteristics

The survey data ( $N = 74$ ) served as a first approach to the community, being the majority of respondents female (63%), Caucasian/European (65%), married (67%), in the economically active age and highly skilled. One-fourth of entrepreneurs were already long-term established in Canada having half of the entrepreneurs declared focusing on “Brazilians living in Canada.”

The Brazilian community is concentrated in the West End of Toronto. Some places stand out for the visible presence of Brazilian immigrant businesses, such as St. Claire Ave W (Corso Italia-Davenport), Lansdowne Ave (Earlscourt), Dundas St W (Little Portugal) and Bloor St W (Dufferin/Lansdowne). There are also Brazilian immigrant firms in other cities of GTA (Greater Toronto Area), such as Mississauga, Oshawa, Vaughan, Durham Region, Oakville, Richmond Hill and York Region.

Moreover, the West region of Toronto also holds in July the Toronto International Brazilfest, which aims to celebrate Brazilian culture, taking place at Earlscourt Park (1200 Lansdowne Ave). In this festival, organized by the Brazilian ethnic community, participants are seen wearing green and yellow T-shirts from the Brazilian national soccer team and from other important regional Brazilian teams. During that festival, food trucks sell ethnic Brazilian foods and drinks in (e.g. *açaí* smoothies, manioc and cheese buns (*pão de queijo*), Brazilian churros, *pastel*, *churrasco*, *feijoada*, *acarajé*, *coxinha*, coconut water, *caipirinha*, etc.). Other stands promote products of Brazilian immigrant entrepreneurs.

We now present aspects that emerged from the interviews, which were coded following Gioia *et al.*'s (2013) indications (see Table 2).

First order categories	Quotes or findings	Second-order categories
Social networking	<p>"I think it helps by giving market information and to how to accommodate changes to our work plan..." (E28); "...] in terms of opening doors, in terms of directions, in commercial selling..." (E26); "when the immigrants arrive, they need to build a strong network [...]" (E10); "That was very important. Without this help, you cannot open the company with peace of mind, with quality; you simply cannot open here without this support from the ecosystem. And the Canadian ecosystem helps a lot. They have an organizational logic that really favors the companies that are starting, [...] the support is very great" (E33)</p> <p>"We have used LinkedIn here a lot, for more general communications, meet-ups to create new networks, etc. [...] trying to get to a next meeting, trying to get to an introduction to someone [...] we have participated [...] from then on we can get a "warm introduction" (E31)</p> <p>"From the point of view of entities and bodies, [...] I entered the Brazil-Canada Chamber of Commerce in São Paulo; it was a rich source" (E13); "it was a lot of conversation, introducing people from the academy, meetings, via the Chamber of Commerce, sending e-mails, introducing. And then, I was going to study the market, and we came to the conclusion that the business is viable for Canada, even more viable than in Brazil. It was a lot of conversation, introducing people from the academy, meetings, via the chamber of commerce, they sent e-mails, introducing. And then, I was going to study the market, and we came to the conclusion that the business is viable for Canada, even more viable than in Brazil" (E28); "...] we know CCBK, BCCC and FCBB, we know them all, and so, none of them have a contact here [MaRS]. So, only start-ups accelerator will have contact" (E31; E32)</p> <p>"Yes, we always end up meeting someone. [...]. There is also a very psychological issue, which I think is important for the entrepreneur, really psychological support, in the sense of 'this week was crap', we were unable to do anything we wanted", we received a super no," and whoever is living the same thing ends up helping the other;" I also had a bad week. Stay calm, it will be better;" I think that getting to know other people who have the same footprint helps you both to resolve and to put yourself in perspective, [...]. And you need to because starting a business from scratch is not easy" (E3)</p> <p>"The Brazilian person does not know how to behave; they do not understand the private, personal space of the other. So, they are very intrusive, they speak on the top of others; this is frowned upon [...]. In Brazil, everything is a little more liquid, right?" (E7); "I don't really like working with Brazilians because they demand a lot" (E14); "...] I don't hate Brazil, [...], but the good parts of our culture should stay [...] leaving the bad parts of it aside" (E22)</p> <p>"[...] when I decided to go back to Canada, I decided to have the Canadian mindset [...] (E22); "the difficulty is bringing your Brazilian "luggage" [...] the culture [...] you arrive in a much less complicated country, you are lost [laughs]" (E35); "...] to immigrate is to be born again, [...] and apart from the language, the cultural context [...] difficulty on coping with this adaptation" (E33)</p> <p>"First, if the immigrant has no history in Canada [...] informality or lack of portfolio, etc. [...] 70% of the difficulties to get the first customers were not related to product [...] but to the cultural issue as barrier." (E1)</p> <p>"The difficulty of getting into the Canadian market is twofold for the immigrant (i) [...] you do not have the cultural knowledge of the country" (E1)</p> <p>"My challenge ... the problem that I have faced is the language... I miss opportunities because of language" (E23); "I first I didn't know how to speak English ... I was immersed in the English course for about three months... At night, I did field research going to visit rival companies to talk to them" (E1)</p>	<p>The social integration of Brazilians and their networks</p>
Use of social media		
Social "structures"		
"Support mechanism"		
"Mistrust" among Brazilians		Cultural issues
Cultural adaptation		
Cultural and economic aspects		
Cultural knowledge		
Language		Human capital issues

(continued)

## Mixed embeddedness

**Table 2.**  
Coding of aspects that emerged from the interviews

Table 2.

First order categories	Quotes or findings	Second-order categories
Transparency, honoring commitments, professionalism, efficiency, respecting the law	<p>T. . . ] you have to show that you are Canadian, that you are able to do things on your own, that you are an entrepreneur, that you are resourceful, hardworking, adept easily, do not choose the job and that you are able, above all, to solve problems, to be efficient to be competent (RCB); "The Brazilian is very efficient, and what he does [ . . . ], the product, everything is very serious, there is no such difficulty" (RCB)</p> <p>"This recognition exists, the academic degree will be very important, it is very important that you have a PhD, etc. all of this can be very important, but at a subsequent stage. . . . I mean, for you to enter here, you have to show that you are Canadian. . . . When you prove this, let us say so, more subjective attributes, then some differentials start to aggregate and start to have value, such as academic degrees" (RCB)</p> <p>T. . . ] there is really no prejudice of ethnic origin, there is not [ . . . ], but, of course, there are some unscrupulous entrepreneurs who will take advantage, especially if you don't have a document" (RCB); "I think not. Very different from here, very different. . . [ . . . ] they are very engaged in the issue of women, equality and such, I think this is a fight anywhere" (RCC); "There must be, but I didn't notice anything. . ." (E7)</p> <p>"Let's speak the truth, from this point of view, of a black man, dealing with highly advanced, cutting-edge technology, in the world, the social environment, let's say, it is more comfortable for you in a foreign country, like Canada, than in Brazil. . ." (E35)</p> <p>"By my accent, they realize that I am Latin, that I am of Spanish or Portuguese origin. [ . . . ] because of my husband's last name, they think I'm European, at first sight. But when I speak, they know" (E38)</p> <p>"I found it difficult to get a loan, a lot of difficulty. As the company is still small. . . . they look at me. . . . as I am a newcomer entrepreneur, I am a company, basically. They don't look at the company's revenue, they look at what I earn, what I do, my personal income, which, for them, was not yet eligible to get a loan. So, it is much more difficult. That was to open the store. In the case of my husband, he got a much bigger loan after 6 months from his company. And it is not because he is Canadian. He lived in Brazil for 7 years, and when he returned, zero credit score, he had to start from scratch. After 6 months, he got a loan like that, approval for a very large loan. I don't know if because he is Canadian, I don't know if because he is a man, I couldn't say" (E10)</p> <p>"To get that first Canadian job, I have heard many reports from people who say it is very difficult. The Canadian company has a "Have you ever worked here in Canada?" "No". "So I can't hire you", "I don't want to hire you," and it's very difficult to get that first opportunity. So, if I don't have an experience, I can't get a job, but also if nobody gives me that experience, I won't be able to. I hear that a lot. They call it a Canadian experience. It is a thing of the market there [ . . . ] I think it is not against Brazilians, it is in general. I always heard that about Canada, [ . . . ] that this Canadian experience was the most important thing you needed to have. So you have to find other ways to get involved, to participate in volunteer work, to enter the local community and such, so you can start to establish a network there and then get that first Canadian job. Once you get that job, that's fine" (RC)</p>	Barriers to immigrants, accent, racism and recognition for knowledge
Academic degrees		
Institutional discrimination		
A person of a race		
Accent or of racial discrimination		
Profound masking of structural discrimination		
lack of Canadian experience		

(continued)

First order categories	Quotes or findings	Second-order categories
Black woman	<p>"Since when I was a kid, I never felt a problem with being black. Perhaps because my mother is white, and my father is black, they always showed me that this was never a disadvantage. So I never even felt ... So, today, and when I started to study this more, maybe I already went through bad situations, because I am black and a woman, [...] but I was never able to see it. So that's how I see myself." (E10)</p> <p>"I see myself as an advantage because I am an immigrant [...] the country is made up of immigrants, [...] my mother-in-law is Canadian, and she says that I have – as an immigrant – much more support than she does" (E10); "women still encounter many barriers. Small details, even opening a bank account, getting a loan [...] For women in general. So today I believe it is a disadvantage, but I have an advantage because of these numbers, Canada is obliged to give more benefits to women. I'm trying, let's see. Why not take these benefits? So I think I have that advantage. On top of that advantage, they are also required to give more benefits, because I am black. So this is another advantage. If I just focus on that disadvantage, I think I'll put myself in the role of poor thing" (E10)</p>	
Refusal to look at the business plan		Business issues
Brazilian experience		
Experiences with prejudice		

#### 4.2 *The social integration of Brazilians and their networks*

Researchers identified two groups of Brazilian immigrant entrepreneurs in Canada (or Toronto): (1) those who arrived earlier (around the 1980s and early 1990s) and (2) those who came to the country more recently, mainly after the year 2000. The first group has characteristics in common, such as lower qualification, difficulty in speaking the local language when they arrived, and they had a time of adaptation to the Canadian context (characterized by accepting underemployment conditions). The second group is composed of entrepreneurs with better skills and professional training, mainly screened by selective immigration policies. They tend to be more careful while undertaking (e.g. conducting market analysis and previous studies) and are more assertive in their marketing and management strategies.

The interviewees revealed that social integration and networking was a crucial element to the inception and establishment of business, principally when the main target audience is coethnics (see [Portes and Zhou, 1992](#); [Zhou, 2004](#)). Upon arrival in the country, 95% of respondents decided to settle either in the city of Toronto or in “The Greater Toronto Area” (GTA). According to them, choosing Toronto was due to finding better “job opportunities” as well as “having acquaintances, friends or relatives in the city.”

They declared establishing connections via many different media. First, entrepreneurs highlight the use of social media such as Instagram, LinkedIn and Meetups platforms, using them not only for communication purposes but also to set up meetings and ask for a ‘warm introduction’ to other interlocutors of interest. It is certainly a “strategy” for accessing prospect customers or potential business partners (such as suppliers, consultants, etc.), which tends to work effectively in the Canadian context; therefore, its importance has been widely recognized. In addition, entrepreneurs declared frequent use of the WhatsApp messaging application, widely used by other members of the Brazilian community, following its widespread use in Brazil.

However, when it comes to networking, it is clear that social “structures” tend to promote a ‘support mechanism’ for business, considered a key factor for immigrant entrepreneurship ([Cruz et al., 2018](#)). In addition, it appears that networks tend to facilitate economic opportunities, mainly by leveraging resources, in order to establish immigrant-related businesses ([Drori et al., 2009](#)). The majority of Brazilian entrepreneurs in the Toronto sample (82%) declared that networking was one of the main facilitators for venturing, which is corroborated by some of their quotes:

Getting market information and giving clues on how to change your work plan. . . (E28)

[. . .] tips [. . .] opening doors, [. . .] directions, [. . .] (for) selling. . . (E26)

When the immigrants arrive, they need to build a strong network [. . .] (E10)

Regarding the existence of any type of “mistrust” among Brazilians, which could eventually harm business; some statements shed light to the issue by depicting ethical conflicts between the mindset of Brazilians and that of Canadians:

The Brazilian person does not know how to behave; they do not understand the private and personal space of the other. So, they are very intrusive, they speak on the top of others, this is frowned upon [. . .] in Brazil everything is a little more liquid, right?! (E7)

We were undocumented, it iss complicated [. . .]. So, we received the order for deportation; we had to return after four years. And, we had to comply. So, we had to leave, and on leaving, we had to fight to get back, [. . .] they don’t like liars, who deceive, [. . .] when I decided to go back to Canada, I decided to have the Canadian mindset [. . .] I don’t hate Brazil, [. . .], but the good parts of our culture should stay [. . .] leaving the bad parts of it aside. (E22)

I don't really like working with Brazilians, because they demand a lot, they think you have to do the same cleaning in Brazil, [...] that already changes the type of cleaning, kind of a deep cleaning, then they don't want to pay [...]. (E14)

The first two quotes (E7 and E22) refer to aspects that are somehow seen as unfavorable to a cultural adaptation in Canada; for example, the "difficulty to understanding the other's private/personal space," the "talking over the others," "lying," "cheating," "accommodating things in a smooth way." The third (E14), conversely, concerns both cultural and economic aspects; the extract "they don't want to pay" is possibly due to restrictions that are peculiar to the Brazilian community.

#### 4.3 Barriers to venturing

Entrepreneurs, while reporting their immigration trajectories, declared that a few push factors motivated them to leave Brazil, especially related to "security" issues in a broader sense, involving "lack of security," "feeling of insecurity," or "violence". Cruz *et al.* (2018) posit that disappointment and frustration with Brazil end up generating a feeling of distrust among Brazilians, which in turn affects their entrepreneurial networking. It also curbs the inception of transnational businesses (Drori *et al.*, 2009) since the entrepreneurs feel insecure to invest their earnings in businesses established in Brazil. In addition, economic "instability" of the country of origin also relates to planning their lives and seeking a "better quality of living," which Schervier (2005) corroborates, as well as the following quotes:

[...] security, I think it has reached a terrible level. (E7)

Insecurity, in general, not only public insecurity [...] government [...] political. (E28)

Even day-to-day difficulties, urban violence [...] attract(s) Brazilians to Canada. (RCB)

Others declared a personal search for professional development and engaging in internationalization strategies, participating in a mature innovation ecosystem. Above all, 71.6% of respondents do not wish to return to Brazil, as stated below:

I think I have finally adapted here, it was very difficult, but after a lot of struggle, I wouldn't go back to Brazil because I see a better future here [...]. (E29)

I think that this [...] is the ideal environment for me, for business, [...] a more egalitarian society (E35)

Of the entrepreneurs, only 42% were starting their first business; the rest had already had at least one previous entrepreneurial experience, in Brazil or even in Canada. However, 51% of the respondents did not elaborate a business plan before venturing.

"Cultural adaptation" was also among the main difficulties faced, encompassing "how to do business" and the "lack of a Canadian experience," which is crucial for getting a job or even a bank loan, illustrated by the excerpts below:

The difficulty of getting into the Canadian market is twofold for the immigrant (if) [...] you do not have the cultural knowledge of the country. (E1)

You arrive in a much less complicated country, you are lost [laughs], and I think that was the main shock [...]. (E35)

The main difficulty to undergo here is that you are able to reconcile the whole turmoil of your personal life [...], and apart from that, the language, the cultural context [...], the difficulty in coping with this adaptation. (E33)

More specifically, regarding "how to do business" in Canada, values such as transparency, honoring commitments, professionalism, efficiency, respecting the law are expected.

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English proficiency was considerably high in the sample. Nevertheless, French proficiency was the opposite. [Finardi and França \(2016\)](#) highlight that foreign language education in Brazil is incipient (particularly English). Nevertheless, [Bozorgmehr and Ketcham \(2018\)](#) highlight the importance, for the immigrant entrepreneur's success, of speaking the native language.

Although Canada is recognized as a multicultural society, it is not unreasonable to question the existence of racial, gender and ethnic discrimination. To this end, respondents were asked whether they had already suffered some type of institutional discrimination in Canada ([Pincus, 1996](#); [Teixeira et al., 2007](#)). The vast majority answered no (90%). The ones who recognized some type of discrimination rarely described the act as characteristically "institutional" (e.g. poor service in public offices) but rather to personal or commercial relationships, sometimes hidden or veiled. When, for example (E22), "struggled to rent property, the real estate agent noticed the accent ([Collins and Low, 2010](#)) and said that the property had already been rented, which was not true." One of the interviewees described another episode when "a colleague at the NGO where we work for was hired for speaking Portuguese, and on one occasion she was discriminated against by the way she spoke" (E38) thus "a friend laughed at her for not having fluent English and for making mistakes in the verbal tenses." Others mention the difficulty to rent a space in the financial district, refusal to look at the business plan, negatives to rent deposits or a 3-month delay in the clearance for a bank loan, as shown in the following statement:

Unlike my husband, he (another Brazilian entrepreneur) got a much bigger loan for his company after six months. It is not because he is Canadian. He lived in Brazil for seven years. When he came back, zero credit score! He had to start from scratch [...] I'm going to let that go [...]. Today, unfortunately, women still encounter many barriers. Small details even of opening a bank account, [...] to open an account and pass through the loan analysis are more difficult for women. (E10)

Despite the apparently favorable situation with regard to "institutional discrimination" ([Pincus, 1996](#); [Teixeira et al., 2007](#)), during the interviews, an attempt was made to further explore this issue, especially regarding the experience of "being black in Brazil and Canada," as evidenced by the quote below:

Look how bizarre: (in Brazil) I perceived myself as a person of a race because of others. [...], and my life went on . . . the more I ascended, the more I 'whitened' [...] to the point that my daughter, in high school, says, "Dad, there is no one of my colors there." Something she doesn't say in Canada. [...] Until today, I didn't feel anything! And I see a lot of people in important positions here who are of different ethnicities. Take the Canadian government, the tech guys wear a turban. So, it is so bizarre, Brazil has the myth of the "melting pot" (but) it is not mixed the way one thinks [...], in my midst, there are not a lot of blacks [...] In this meeting with (some important guy) [...] they greeted everyone but me [...] probably, he wouldn't believe I am the CEO of the company [...] And then I heard, "ahhh . . . you're the CEO [...] It's bizarre! But it happened many times." (E35)

Experiences with prejudice (either of accent or of racial discrimination) hold certain complexities and cultural nuances. The subject is the same, but on different occasions, places and cultural environments, the perceptions might change. In Brazil, from the discourse of a "racial democracy," what we see is profound masking of structural discrimination, constitutive of the nation, one could say. In Canada, on the other hand, individuals feel at ease, being respected in their multiple identifications, although the accent ceiling or "lack of Canadian experience" handicap might be present at times.

There is also the case of an entrepreneur, who, despite having declared herself as 'brown' (mulatto) throughout the interview, in its final stage, was speaking as a black woman, of entrepreneurial and empowered character. About this possible discursive "dubiousness," if one can say so, it was not possible to go further during the interview. However, from the point of discrimination, the issue of "gender" and the status of "newcomer" and not "skin color" are



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relevant factors that were manifested. Still, when asked if this situation had more to do with being an “immigrant woman” or gender-related (being “women in general”), she replied

I believe (being a woman) it is a disadvantage, but because of “these” numbers, Canada is obliged to give more benefits to women (E10)

Regarding the possible difficulties for Brazilians to obtain recognition for their knowledge and acquired skills, even in Brazil, the statements below elucidate some aspects:

I would say yes, there is great difficulty. [...] a social issue (class or networks) in Brazil is what is determinant [...] we are a country, mainly, “bachelors”. [...] Canada has another type of ethics, work ethics [...] a deeply utilitarian country. If I have a problem, I want a solution to the problem! So, if you are an engineer (at a recognized university), it does not matter who you are related to, who your father is, [...] completely irrelevant. [...] Recognition [...] can be very important but in a subsequent phase of installation in Canada. I mean, for you to enter here, you have to show that you are ‘Canadian’, [...] that you are an entrepreneur that you are an engineer, a worker, who easily adapts, [...] to solve problems, be efficient and be competent. When you add that, let us say, more subjective attributes [...] some differentials start to add more value. (RCB)

“Have you ever worked here in Canada?” “No,” “So I can’t hire,” “I don’t want to hire”, and it’s very difficult to get that first opportunity [...] they call it a Canadian experience. It’s a market standard there, which is different from here in Brazil. When you see a gringo working here, you don’t say, “Do you have a Brazilian experience?” [...] I always heard that in respect of Canada that this Canadian experience was something more important that you needed to have. So, if you overcome this barrier [...] if you are super qualified but do not have the Canadian experience [...] you have to find other ways to engage, participate in volunteer work, enter the local community and such to start establishing a network there and get that first Canadian job. Once you get that job, that’s fine. (RCC)

From these testimonies, relevant aspects can be highlighted. RCB underscores the different values that Canadians and Brazilians place on verified skills, in comparison with academic degrees. Canadians tend to recognize more the skills proven in practice, like problem-solving or attitudes linked with more pragmatic behaviors. Another noteworthy element, brought by RCC, refers to the previous Canadian experience as a determining factor for the immigrant to enter the labor market.

#### *4.4 Aspects of the educational, cultural and social class of immigrants*

Certain cultural signs of Brazilian identity were identified during fieldwork. Examples are many, such as the Brazilian national flag, the use of its colors, particular “features” on the façade, and the commercial name of the businesses being related to Brazil or regional linguistic expressions. This is evident when certain businesses target their coethnics. In Brazilian food restaurants, for instance, the menus were written in both Portuguese and English. In some cases, the TV set showed Brazilian shows or Brazilian news and, sometimes, Brazilian music was heard. Décor of the businesses premises included framed posters of Brazilian landscapes, people and other regional themes or objects (handicrafts).

Roughly half of the sample (51%) declared hiring their employees among coethnics (Brazilian origin). “Linguistic and cultural ease” were mentioned as crucial factors for hiring due to their choice of the target audience. In the case of the beauty salons, proficiency in Portuguese, as well as an “ethnic” technical skill of the profession, was crucial: “Brazilians have more ability to deal with some more difficult types of hair” (E27). On the other hand, for the cleaning services industry, having an employee of Brazilian origin is not essential, given that business is often not focused on Brazilian residents. However, Brazilians seem to enjoy a good reputation, being recognized as “skilled,” “versatile,” “flexible” and “hygienic.”

Regarding the existence or not of underemployed Brazilians, we sought to find out if it was common for large companies to use small fragile “companies” of Brazilian immigrants in

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order to obtain higher levels of profitability. This question was addressed to the two consular representatives exclusively. Regarding the understanding of one Canadian consulate representative, the response was, "I can't tell you, I never heard of it. I don't know." (RCC). The other representative of the Brazilian consulate, on the other hand, said

Unfortunately, this has happened, unscrupulous companies that employ immigrants precisely in an illegal condition. The illegal immigrant who is employed or who is seeking to undertake informally, in some way, you know, in a dependency relationship with a larger company, [...] these Brazilians are in a situation of enormous fragility [...] So, there are people who take advantage of it [...] while there is no illegal activity on the part of the employer because human dignity issues here are fully respected [...] it is protected, but not economically [...] from the point of view of citizenship, it is, even if it is legal or illegal. (RCB)

During the interviews with the entrepreneurs, it was noted that this informalization of labor relations happened not only in the relationship between large companies and the use of labor by illegal Brazilian immigrants but also exists between co-ethnics firms regarding their Brazilian countrymen. Vulnerability is also revealed on the following evidence:

Because then people start asking you, "do have insurance?" [...] We started like this. [...] demand grew a lot [...] I lost the contract because I didn't have insurance. Then I said, let's make everything right. (E14)

The danger is the same; the risk is the same. The consequence is that it is bigger or smaller. Today, there is [risk] I need to have insurance; I need to be insured. (E22)

#### *4.5 Business inception, establishment issues and co-ethnicity*

Personal characteristics such as the human and social capital of immigrants are crucial for business inception, particularly in Canada (Marger, 2001). The majority of the sample was highly skilled in terms of formal education and English proficiency, which helps them succeed in a competitive environment. Ethnic firms that wish to expand their businesses face barriers regarding bank credit, in addition to overcoming the economic limits of their ethnic community. Credit is granted to entrepreneurs that have previous "Canadian experience" (Gill and Biger, 2012). Companies that focus on the "ethnic market niches" may benefit from a focused market entry strategy. However, they could find limits to their growth, which may happen mainly due to the not-so-favorable socioeconomic characteristics of the Brazilian community. Moreover, 76% of the Brazilian entrepreneurs of the sample would not switch to a salaried job if they received a well-paid job offer in Canada. They state that they prefer "doing the job they like," having the "freedom to manage their own time," "autonomy" and "having fun." The absolute majority (93%) also declare that their main motivation for creating their own businesses relates to "materializing their own company." Only 7% declared that their main goal was "getting rich," which indicates a desire for "personal fulfillment/satisfaction," and that "money is a consequence." In addition, 82% declared that their businesses were formally registered. The ones that were acting informally tend to take more risks and face greater difficulties. Self-owned businesses represented 69% of the sample, being 26% of them with some kind of partnership. Service businesses were dominant in the sample, particularly in the "health and well-being" (16%), "food" (12%), "consulting services" (11%) and "information technology" (8%) sectors. However, most of them also indicated that they understood their business before starting activities (72%). Moreover, regarding sources of financing, 73% indicated "own resources", but other sources were also mentioned, such as "own resource + pre-seed money" (Hub UoT-Creative Destruction Lab), "own resource + family," "family," "friends," "own resource + bank loan" and "bank loan." As for the financial return of the initial invested capital, for 23%, the return "has not yet

occurred,” for 45%, it occurred in “up to 1 year.” Generally, financial resources to expand businesses come from entrepreneurs’ own resources or from retained earnings, due to “lack of credit history,” which relates to the lack of “Canadian experience” (Jones, 2004; Gill and Biger, 2012).

## 5. Discussion

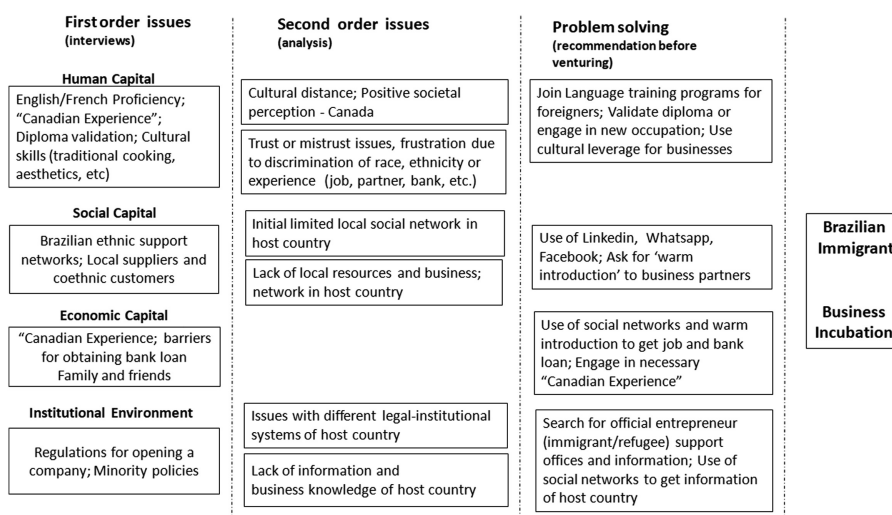
As highlighted, the original concept of embeddedness was developed by Polanyi (1957) and Granovetter (1985), which aimed at explaining how social relations affect behavior and institutions – a classic question of social theory. The term embeddedness expresses the idea that the economy is subordinated (seminal authors use the word subordinated) to politics, religion and social relations.

In the case of Canada, a country recognized for several policies targeted for hosting immigrants. In fact, the history of Canadian immigration policies denotes large migratory flows in certain periods in order to remedy the lack of labor in specific sectors of the economy, alternating with periods of limitations arising from the precariousness of the domestic market (Moura and Uebel, 2016).

From the 2000s onwards, a greater appreciation for humanitarian issues emerged in the Canadian government spheres. Family ties and professional and financial attributes were used as variables for screening immigrants (Sala, 2005). Given this characteristic, it is possible to understand that the Canadian economy follows the subordination suggested by Polanyi (1957) since it must adapt to the social profile of the different groups of immigrants hosted by the country. For that reason, this author was listed in Figure 2 as the fundamental theory of the present text.

This figure was decomposed in the interactive, culturalist, ecological and social embedding perspectives since Kloosterman and Rath (2001) understood that the structures of opportunity-exogenous factors that limit or empower collective actors are not restricted to the market economy. According to the authors, they are rather nested in broader institutional, regulatory and socio-cultural contexts.

Regarding the reality of immigrants, these factors can be assessed through economic aspects (market opportunities and market access), social aspects (migration and networks),



**Figure 2.**  
Business structures of  
Brazilian immigrants  
and their related and  
conditioning factors

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institutional factors (business-friendly regulation and legislation), gender or ethnic-racial gaps and supportive environments for their entrepreneurial activity. Therefore, this discussion focuses on the identification, as prescribed in [Figure 2](#), of “what are the Brazilian immigrant business structures, and which are their related and conditioning factors?” and “how can the study of the ethnic entrepreneurship of Brazilians in Toronto contribute to the enrichment of mixed embeddedness’ s theory?”

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### 5.1 Economic aspects

According to the results of the survey, the socio-demographic profile of the Brazilian entrepreneurial community in Toronto shows a predominance of well-educated individuals from the Southeastern Brazilian states, which correspond to the largest share of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP). Therefore, this challenges the traditional idea of economic migration, driven exclusively by the lack of resources ([Mayblin, 2019](#)). As for the motivation for leaving Brazil, many respondents who lived in the city of São Paulo, highlighted the similarities with Toronto as our reasons. Regarding their occupation, when they left Brazil, the findings are similar to those in previous studies by [Cruz et al. \(2018\)](#), reinforcing that, among immigrant entrepreneurs, the case of exclusively economic migration is not so strong. In addition, it is possible to assume that this immigrant profile may be influenced by Canada’s selective migration policies, which tend to favor immigrants with higher economic conditions from developing countries, with considerably higher educational and cultural levels (human capital).

### 5.2 Social aspects

Regarding the social integration of Brazilians and their networks, the results revealed that social networks were a crucial element for starting and establishing businesses ([Marger, 2001](#)), especially when the main target audience is co-ethnic customers. In this regard, it is clear that these social “structures” tend to promote a “support mechanism” for businesses; they are, therefore, considered a key factor for immigrant entrepreneurship ([Cruz et al., 2018](#)). In addition, it appears that networks tend to facilitate economic opportunities, especially by leveraging resources in order to establish businesses related to immigrants ([Drori et al., 2009](#)). However, we also identified possible mechanisms of distrust among co-ethnics ([Cruz et al., 2017](#)), which may go against efforts to create institutional networks with chambers of commerce and immigrant associations, among others ([Cruz et al., 2018](#)).

### 5.3 Institutional factors

Evidence shows, according to entrepreneurs’ experiences, that “institutional discrimination” ([Pincus, 1996](#); [Teixeira et al., 2007](#)) was apparently not present in Canada. However, it was also found that the immigrant must make an effort toward cultural adjustments. This includes the “how to do business,” which suggests the development of social relations guided by a multicultural perspective, which presupposes a dominant culture that tends to accept, tolerate and recognize the existence of other cultures in the cultural space where it dominates ([Machado and Teixeira, 2019](#); [Santos and Meneses, 2010](#)).

Regarding the accent “ceiling,” the results indicated that, occasionally, this issue might be the subject of some type of difficulty or barrier, corroborating with the idea that speaking the language of the host country fluently is an important success factor for the immigrant entrepreneur ([Bozorgmehr and Ketcham, 2018](#)).

The Canadian Government also promotes the attraction of innovative startups that can generate jobs for Canadians and compete on a global scale ([Canada, 2019](#)). Another issue encouraged by the Canadian Government is the attraction of immigrants willing to settle in

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less populated regions of the country, such as London, Edmonton and Winnipeg (Fellet, 2017).

In the case of Brazilians who bring their start-ups to Canada, they tend to be concentrated in the Toronto Metropolitan Area, and not look for establishing their firms in other less populated regions.

Since 1982, the Canadian Government has maintained a national policy aimed at promoting entrepreneurship in conjunction with funding policies, creating the National Entrepreneurship Development Institute (NEDI). In 1993, the government created Canada Business Service Center (Stevenson and Lundstrom, 2007) and Canada Business Services for Entrepreneurs. Both services simplify access to critical information to start and manage new ventures, in addition to providing information for access to programs to promote small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

#### *5.4 Gender or ethnic-racial gaps*

In Canada, there are also policies to encourage learning and employment that focus on women, as in British Columbia (WorkBC, 2019). It is also worth noting that in Canada, there are regional agencies that sponsor programs specifically targeted at women entrepreneurs, for example, Western Diversification (WD) and Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) and the Women's Enterprise Initiative (WEI) and Women in Business Initiative (Orser, 2007).

Concomitantly with the characteristic of Canadian immigration policy, Brazilian middle- and upper-class emigrants tend to choose countries in which they can improve their living standards, feeling from Brazil's economic and political instability. In this direction, several studies highlight that the Brazilian immigrant generally has a high level of education, as in Cruz and Falcão (2016), who point out Brazilians as the most qualified immigrants when compared to other nationalities who immigrate to Australia.

Another feature of this group of Brazilians in Canada was the declared high level of English proficiency in reading, speaking, writing and comprehension, in contrast to French. In this regard, in particular, Finardi and França (2016) emphasize that the linguistic form of the Brazilians, particularly in the English language, is incipient. On the other hand, Bozorgmehr and Ketcham (2018) highlight the importance of the success of the immigrant entrepreneur of speaking the native language. Therefore, the high rate of respondents who declared speaking and understanding English very well is more linked to the fact that many of them have had previous entrepreneurial experiences or worked as multinational executives rather than being Brazilian. Concerning the lack of French proficiency, given the city of Montreal, the Québec region included Brazil as an area of interest qualified for non-French-speaking immigration (Silva, 2017) promising possibilities are expected to emerge.

#### *5.5 Supportive environments for their entrepreneurial activity*

In the fieldwork, specifically during unsystematic observation (on-site observations), it was possible to see several cultural signs of Brazilian identities, such as the use of the Brazilian national flag, the use of its colors, specific "characteristics" on the facade and the commercial name of companies related to Brazil or regional linguistic expressions, among other aspects, so that these elements can be considered as evidence that some entrepreneurs were targeting their co-ethnics. In this sense, all of these identification symbols reinforced the impression that entrepreneurs had an intense bond with their ethnic group, being more likely to develop enclave strategies (Zhou, 2004). In addition, it is considered that the structures of opportunities and the target audience of immigrant companies are also subject to immigrants' affiliation with their communities (Cruz et al., 2018). From the point of view of the spatial organization of the Brazilian community, evidence shows that several respondents

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named Toronto as the “city of opportunities,” attracting the headquarters of the majority of Brazilian immigrant businesses. Especially the west end region concentrates the majority of Brazilian immigrant companies, being identified as small firms (micro or self-employed), mainly service providers, covering various activities, often aimed at the ethnic community. This suggests the formation of “ethnic market niches” or traces of an “enclave economy,” in addition to the “intermediate minority” and, in some cases, focus on the “mainstream” market, according to the framework proposed by [Cruz et al. \(2018\)](#).

Finally, our study of the ethnic entrepreneurship of Brazilians in Toronto contributes to the enrichment of mixed embeddedness’s theory by applying a multilayered analysis of several elements of mixed embeddedness to a group that is under-researched within ethnic and immigrant entrepreneurship, especially because Brazil is a multicultural and multiethnic country, which further increases the complexity of the analysis.

Authors summarize findings in a proposed framework of analysis, shown in [Figure 2](#).

## 6. Conclusions

Recalling the purpose of this article, it was to investigate how social integration, immigrant networks and barriers to venturing affect the entrepreneurial activities of Brazilians in Canada, using this context for expanding mixed embeddedness ([Kloosterman et al., 1999](#); [Kloosterman and Rath, 2001](#)) knowledge. Throughout our mixed-method analysis, several particulars of Brazilian immigrant entrepreneurs in Toronto were unveiled.

### 6.1 Theoretical contributions

Within the mixed embeddedness elements, first, authors draw a description of several aspects of the socio-demographic characteristics of interviewees, typical of the Toronto Brazilian community of entrepreneurs, revealing that the majority of respondents are white, well-educated and their businesses target co-ethnics.

Second, the social integration of Brazilians and their ethnic networks is evidenced as a crucial element to the establishment of firms, especially for the ones targeting ethnicity. This corroborates with previous works in general contexts of immigrants ([Portes and Zhou, 1992](#); [Zhou, 2004](#)), the Canadian context of immigrant communities ([Marger, 2001](#)) and that of Brazilian communities established overseas ([Cruz et al., 2018](#)). Nevertheless, a Canadian experience is also key to establishing commercial relationships, bank loans and hiring or buying real estate ([Jones, 2004](#); [Gill and Biger, 2012](#)).

Third, although Canada is a multi-racial and multi-cultural society ([Johnston and Soroka, 2001](#)), barriers to immigrant venturing are reported, such as the “accent ceiling,” certain types of racism and gender discrimination and barriers to the recognition of knowledge and skills. Authors compared cultural issues from a Brazilian perspective, as opposed to the Canadian one, showing different angles of embeddedness. However, issues related to the Brazilian culture are present in the relationships between immigrants and institutional spheres, such as business ethics or values. Some vulnerable ethnic firms are also subject to other local firms that take advantage of their condition. Regarding the spatial organization of the Brazilian community in Toronto, there is a condensed community in the West End, showcasing national flags and other visible cultural artifacts, including a Brazilfest. The main findings are summarized in [Figure 2](#).

### 6.2 Practical implication, limitations and future scope

The research findings might generate inputs for public policies regarding specifically immigrant entrepreneurs, based on findings regarding aspects of embeddedness, such as the

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“accent ceiling,” certain types of discrimination of race and gender, as well as barriers to knowledge and skills recognition.

Further, limitations of the current research refer to the sampling method and accessibility of subjects, as well to its exploratory nature. Future research might encompass a quantitative approach using secondary data or broader surveys with the community, aiming to examine relationships that were not explored in this paper. Other qualitative works delving into specific aspects discussed in this paper are also welcome. Issues regarding educational, cultural and social class of immigrants are also possibilities for future studies, as well as cross-sectional studies to assess differences in entrepreneurship patterns.

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### Corresponding author

Eduardo Picanço Cruz can be contacted at: [epicanco@id.uff.br](mailto:epicanco@id.uff.br)

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