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Brazilian Immigrants in Massachusetts Through Documentary Filmmaking

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Brazilian Immigrant Identities in Massachusetts

Raquel Jorge Fernandes '23 – (Sponsors: Professor Hugh Manon & Professor Sarah Michaels)



CLARK UNIVERSITY

How it all started

- When my family moved from Campinas, Brazil to Massachusetts in 2018, I had just finished High School. After spending the first 18 years of my life in the same city, coming to the U.S. with my parents and younger siblings presented many challenges.
- However, we were not alone. Massachusetts has one of the biggest Brazilian immigrant communities in the world—sharing and supporting each other through their journeys adapting to a new culture, language, cold weather, and immigration systems.
- Many Brazilians come to the United States in search of a better life and new opportunities. I see my experience at Clark University as one of the biggest reasons why I moved with my family. Here, I was able to combine my passions and pursue a double major in both Psychology and Screen Studies.
- During the Winter break of my sophomore year, I took a Psychology Qualitative Methods class and noticed many possible connections between research in psychology and documentary filmmaking. This founded the initial ideas for this project:
 1. I wanted to study Brazilian immigrants' identities in Massachusetts using what I had learned with Psychology research.
 2. I also wanted to make a short documentary that reflected what I found. I planned to use film to capture authentic voices and lived experiences of community members with diverse perspectives.
- Overall, this project was a learning experience and a prototype to my goals of using both my areas of interest to complement each other. I believe that combining qualitative research and documentary filmmaking can promote accessibility of many studies' findings to a wide audience. This combination forges opportunity to engage meaning-making and construction of shared knowledge among participants and viewers.



Steinbrecher Fellows 2021-2022

The Steinbrecher Fellowship

- Being awarded the Steinbrecher Fellowship allowed me to not only fund this project, but it also gave me the support I needed throughout the Summer of 2021.
- During the Summer break, I started my project with the help of my sponsors Professor Hugh Manon, Professor Sarah Michaels, and the Steinbrecher cohort.
- I extensively researched the Brazilian immigrant community in Massachusetts from the 1950s to present day, looking into many studies done about this population in the fields of psychology, sociology and education.
- I also engaged with many members of the community and began working on the short documentary's pre-production.

Interviewing & Editing

- During Fall 2021, I began production of the short documentary with the support of Professor Soren Sorensen through my participation in his Social Cultural Issue Documentary Production class.
- I shot three interviews with different women actively involved in the Brazilian immigrant community: the director of the Brazilian Women's Group non-profit, the owner of a Brazilian market in Worcester, and an independent hairdresser.
- When editing, I condensed four hours of interviews and the information I had learned into a 15-minute short documentary that reflects the many stories, challenges, and resiliency shared across this community.

The Documentary

Deixa Eu Me Apresentar – "Let Me Introduce Myself"



Please contact rjorgefernandes@clarku.edu for access to the documentary



Shots from the short documentary *Deixa Eu Me Apresentar*