

## ***The Daily Life of Italian and Italian-Descendant Children in Tenements, Work and School (Sao Paulo, Late 19<sup>th</sup> And Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century)***

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**Abstract:** From the late 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards, men, women and children from the Italian peninsula started playing an increasingly relevant role in the history of Sao Paulo, Brazil. The text herein aims to investigate the presence of Italian and Italian-descendant children in Sao Paulo, especially among the lower social classes, focusing on their daily survival conditions and also in their roles as workers and students. In order to carry out this investigation, our time frame spans the two last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – a period of significant arrivals of Italian immigrants to Sao Paulo. It was also a fruitful time in terms of the creation of Italian Schools and School Groups in neighborhoods where immigrants lived, as well as the creation of media content, written in both Italian and Portuguese, covering everyday life in factories and houses. Document analysis of references from Cultural History and the History of Childhood, as well as newspapers, official letters, consular dispatches and reports, public school yearbooks and publications about the city of Sao Paulo was performed. This revealed that Italian and Italian-descendant children learned, together with their parents, to live, coexist and survive living in unhealthy places, with little or no access to city benefits, usually with insufficient or inadequate food. Despite the many barriers to attending school, many parents faced strenuous sacrifices so that their children could go to an Italian School or to a Sao Paulo public school.

**Keywords:** Children; Childhood; Child Immigration; Italian Immigrant.

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### **1. Sao Paulo economic expansion and immigrants: some initial considerations**

Brazilian society has gone through several transformations in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, among which stand out the crisis of slave-mercantile economy and the replacement of slave by free labor. The decay of traditional farming and the rise of

coffee, during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, have shifted the country's economic power from the Northeast to the Central-South region. The West of Sao Paulo, as a new plantation region, became more relevant than Paraíba Valley, which had been the first region occupied in the beginning of coffee expansion and was declining due to the decrease of labor force, as well as inadequate use of the soil, among other reasons (Costa, 1999).

From 1867 on, a train hiss announced the dynamization process of the Brazilian province of Sao Paulo, with the inauguration of the *Sao Paulo Railway Company Limited*. Then, in 1873, there was the *Ituana* Company; in 1875, the *Sorocabana* and the *Mogiana* companies; and finally, in 1877, the Northern Company (*Companhia do Norte*), which connected Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, capital of the Empire at the time. The creation of a railway system allowed the circulation of all kinds of goods: it connected coffee, from production areas to exporting stations; men, merchandises and ideas, which, through the rails, arrived to end-of-the-line cities, such as Sorocaba, Mogi das Cruzes, Jacarei and Taubate (Bruno, 1991, pp. 1056-1060).

In 1875, after the approval of a *Conduct Code* by the *City Council of the Imperial Municipality of Sao Paulo*, the town that had grown and developed according to geography and personal interests gained a plan to guide its order. Thus, amidst assumptions and commandments about sanitation, hygiene, order and security, the Sao Paulo citizen, who was «usually suspicious and sometimes not very sociable» (Zaluar, 1975, p. 124) [our translation], had to adapt to a new mentality, which demanded, for example, «pavement in front of houses or lots of land with carved stonework; closure of vacant lots with two-meter walls» (Martins; Barbuy, 1998, p. 60) [our translation], in addition to a prohibition to use wood in hinges and balconies and an obligation to paint front and side *façades*, doors, windows and knockers in the second trimester of each year.

But the new civility standards were coming slowly. Conditions were still very fragile and uncertain. Streetcars and tilburies pulled by donkeys went about the streets, mostly unpaved. Streetcars services had been inaugurated on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1872, by the *Companhia Viação Paulista* (CVP) [*Paulista* Railroad Company] and, according to Bruno (1991, p. 1076), cars were small, open, with three, five or seven seats, very slow and derailed very easily. On that topic, Morse (1970) stated:

In 1873, there were ten streetcars for passengers and eight for cargo [...]. In 1877, there were seven lines with 25 kilometers of railways, 319 animals and 43 cars that transported 1,500,000 passengers a year. In addition to these lines, a small railroad connected Santo Amaro, in the suburbs, to the city (p. 258) [our translation].

The first census in Brazil was carried out in 1872 and informed 156,612 inhabitants in the Sao Paulo province, of which 27,557 lived in the capital of the province<sup>1</sup>. Slowly, the scholastic profile was being absorbed by commercial capital, which was optimized by coffee, railroad and press. The population became more

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<sup>1</sup> On that topic, see Brazil Census in 1872. [https://biblioteca.ibge.gov.br/visualizacao/monografias/GEBSIS%20-%20RJ/Recenseamento\\_do\\_Brazil\\_1872/Imperio%20do%20Brazil%201872.pdf](https://biblioteca.ibge.gov.br/visualizacao/monografias/GEBSIS%20-%20RJ/Recenseamento_do_Brazil_1872/Imperio%20do%20Brazil%201872.pdf)

diverse and contrasts, more marked. This way, «next to the old canon wearing a worn cloth cloak and a timid, moldy and very modest miter, there was the fine *bourgeois* dressed as a Parisian and the *cocotte* in showy and seductive looks» (Martins; Barbuy, 1998, p. 61) [our translation].

As a sign of the changes occurred in the process of capital accumulation in the Sao Paulo province, in less than fifty years the capital population increased by more than twenty times. From 1870 to 1920, Sao Paulo changed from a «students' burgh» to a «coffee metropolis»<sup>2</sup>, turning into the economic and political center of the Sao Paulo State in the 1920s.<sup>3</sup>

From 1880 on, lots were made in vast farms in the surroundings of what used to comprehend the urban center, that means from Patio do Colegio to the parishes of Se, Santa Ifigenia, Bom Jesus do Bras and Senhora da Consolacao. Farms were transformed into the neighborhoods of Santa Cecilia, Barra Funda, Bom Retiro, Campos Eliseos and Bela Vista, among others. In this period, urban area has advanced in some points, with a ray of more than 2.5 kilometers from the city center. That was a significant fact, considering the previous 300 years during which the city center had remained «cloistered in a modest area with a ray of no more than 1 kilometer» (Azevedo, 1945, pp. 22-3) [our translation].

The city continued to grow and to become more beautiful, «in the turn of the century, it looked like a construction site» (Costa; Schwarcz, 2000, p. 34) [our translation]. Thereby, Sao Paulo gained a certain European air, with wide tree-lined avenues in the Higienopolis area and around the Paulista Avenue – regions predominantly reserved to the elites –, as well as commercial buildings dedicated to business and leisure. There were also neighborhoods for the working class, in a region that was known by the people of Sao Paulo as the *Brazilian Manchester*.

Nothing can be as emblematic as the inauguration, in 1901, of the *Luz* Station, a replica of the station of Sidney, Australia, all built with materials imported from England. From that station, coffee and other goods were sent to exportation and products were imported for consumption in the country. Also from there, «left the Luz-Bras line, heading to the North Station, in Bras, from where trains left to Rio de Janeiro» (Costa; Schwarcz, 2000, p. 35) [our translation]. In this intense coming-and-going, circulating around stations, there were coffee barons, capitalists, factory owners, salesmen, and also merchandise and mail. In these very same trains, but in lower-class wagons, also came the immigrants, mostly Italians, who had crossed the ocean and arrived at the Santos Port, and from there to the Immigrants Inn, in Sao Paulo, to work at coffee plantations.

Most immigrants who entered Brazil in this period were sent to coffee farms, to do the work that used to be done by slaves. Not all of them remained at these

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<sup>2</sup> According to Cruz (2000), the expression «students' burgh» was adopted by Levasseur in 1889, in his work *Le Brésil*, while «coffee metropolis» was created by Manuel Bernardes in 1908, in the book *El Brasil*. However, it was through Richard Morse (1970) in the work *Formação histórica de São Paulo [Historical Formation of Sao Paulo]* that both expressions became more known.

<sup>3</sup> The *state* designation started with the Proclamation of the Republic in 1889. During imperial times, *province* was the designation adopted.

farms, for many chose cities as their destination and others just left to look for better conditions of life and work.

With the arrival of immigrants, especially Italian ones, the population of the city of Sao Paulo increased significantly. In 1872, there were 23,243 inhabitants; in 1886, 44,030; in 1890 it got to 64,934 people; and in 1893, to 192,409. It was precisely at this time of population growth that industries started to develop (Morse, 1970, p. 238).

Many of these immigrants came bringing their families, their children. In the book by Ostuni and Stella (2005), there are many images of entire families travelling in trains that connected small towns to places of departure, sitting on the ground, for they usually did not have the money to check into hotels while waiting for the moment to board ships. On that topic, authors present the narrative by priest Pietro Maldotti:

It was not unusual to see hundreds of families promiscuously lying on wet floors, or in sacks and benches, in long rooms, in miserable basements or attics with no air nor light, not only at night, but also during the day. Food, sold at high prices, did not feed the unfortunate (p. 32)<sup>4</sup>.

Children, along with their parents, were part of a social group that usually had left the Italian Peninsula in a situation of hunger and misery and faced the hardships and famines of the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean, climatic difficulties, lack of hygiene, illness, unbalanced and poor nutrition and wrecks, to finally arrive in Brazil.

This text aims to investigate the presence of Italian and Italian-descendant children in Sao Paulo, especially among lower social classes, regarding their daily survival conditions and also as workers and students. Based on references from Cultural History and History of Childhood and having document analysis as a procedure, this text finds its sources<sup>5</sup> in newspapers, official letters, consular dispatches and reports, yearbooks of public instruction and publications about the city of Sao Paulo.

We adopt, herein, the concept of Childhood by Kuhlmann Junior and Fernandes (2004), for whom it is «the conception or representation that adults have about the first stage of life» (p. 15) [our translation] and must be investigated considering the limits that broaden and restrict the reach of this concept, «regarding aspects of its duration, domination, universality and geographical, social, cultural and historical features» (p. 15) [our translation].

Approaching the History of Childhood as the history of society, of culture, of adults, in relation to children, still according to Kuhlmann Jr. and Fernandes (2004), childhood must be understood from a social and historical context, starting from a premise that it is «not the same thing here and there, yesterday and today, for

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<sup>4</sup> «Non era raro vedere centinaia di famiglie sdraiate promiscuamente sull'umido pavimento, o sui sacchi, o sulle panche, in lunghi stanzoni, in sotterranei, o soffitte miserabili, senz'aria e senza luce, non solo di notte ma anche di giorno. Le derrate vendute a prezzi favolosi non sfamavano mai gli infelici» (p. 32).

<sup>5</sup> Texts in Italian were translated by me and originals are in footnotes.

there are as many childhoods as there are ideas, practices and speeches organized around and about it» (Lajolo, 2001, p. 231) [our translation].

In order to carry this investigation out, our time frame covers the two last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the two first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which is a period of expressive arrival of Italian immigrants in Sao Paulo. It is also a fruitful time for what concerns the creation of Italian Schools and School Groups in neighborhoods where immigrants lived, as well as the creation of press, written in both Italian and Portuguese, covering everyday life in factories and houses.

Thus, we ask: how would have been the life of Italian and Italian-descendant children in Sao Paulo between the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century? Would they have been used as labor force? Would there have been time, economic resources and places for them to attend Italian Schools or Sao Paulo public schools?

The text is organized in three sections: in the first one, elements of children's daily life in Sao Paulo, like housing, health and illnesses are presented. In the second section, comes the inclusion of children as labor force and their main occupations. The third one problematizes the access to formal education at Italian Schools and School Groups.

## **2. The daily life of children in Sao Paulo**

Until the 1890s, the distribution of populations throughout parishes was quite indefinite. As opposed to the idea of a clear geographical separation for social classes until the 1920s, Kowarick and Ant (1982) and Bonduki (1982) chose to indicate that the segregation process would have started only after the 1930s. However, before that, even though social distances were not enormous, there was already a concentration of working classes in certain neighborhoods.

Wealthy families usually lived in new areas, such as Campos Eliseos, Higienopolis and Paulista Avenue, in upper parts of town. Those regions had gone through transformations, with wide avenues and streets being opened, as well as mansion and small palaces being built (Cruz, 2000).

According to Bertolli Filho (2003), the city of Sao Paulo of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century was organized in four district groups, named as central, middle, peripheric and suburban. The central one had 9.9% of the population in 1920 and was composed of the Se and Consolacao districts. In higher grounds and in their baselines, they built mansions, townhouses and administration buildings painted in ink pen that composed the collection of Dr. Eldino Brancante, presented by Lopes (1998). These areas, chosen by the *bourgeoisie* and wealthy middle-classes were privileged by public administration and received, before every other, paved tree-lined streets, telephone lines, «streetcars line, electric lighting in houses and public spaces [...] water and wastewater networks, established over there before that happened in more populated areas» (Bertolli Filho, 2003, p. 41) [our translation].

The middle district group was composed of Liberdade, Bela Vista, Santa Ifigenia and Santa Cecilia, which gathered 33.1% of the population. According to Bertolli Filho (2003), most inhabitants of these regions were immigrant workers and the areas closer to Se and Consolacao concentrated part of middle classes. In what concerns services, «only the buildings that were located close to the main streets

could count on water and wastewater networks and lighting. Pavement, lighting, public transportation and garbage collection were rare» (p. 43) [our translation]. The available alternative for this population were the tenements, usually «composed by aligned rooms, with doors and windows facing a common area» (p.43) [our translation] or, sometimes, less well-planned, with some kind of «sheds built with boards and covered with zinc panels, located in the back of stables or deposits of building materials» (p. 43) [our translation]. For they were mostly located in regions likely to flood, garbage accumulation and epidemics were rather common.

In peripheric districts like Bom Retiro, Bras, Mooca and Belenzinho were 36.6% of the population at the time. Tenements, according to Bertolli Filho (2003), were their only possibility. Located close to factories and to railroad tracks, usually in areas that were often subject to inundations, they had lower prices for rents. Those were the living standards for most of the working population, that lived in precarious conditions and subject to many illnesses. In a study about Bras, Torres (1969) stated:

Regardless of the progress of the neighborhood, the aspect of the streets is modest, most houses are aligned, without any gardens, poor and humble. Countless tenements, with a single entrance, are a peculiarity of the Gasometro Street in the 1890s, to the point that, in 1886, the City Council allowed the construction of two urinals, one on Gasometro Street and another in the lane with the same name, next to its walls (p. 150) [our translation].

According to Bruno (1991), although the neighborhoods of Bras, Bom Retiro, Mooca and Belenzinho did have access to some urban equipment, those were few and often of low quality. Lighting was only available for the main public areas and pavement did not cover the whole district either. Water and wastewater services were precarious too, as mentioned by Bertolli Filho (2003):

The water that was offered to the populations of these districts came from the Tiete River. From 30 analysis made between 1906 and 1908, 16 concluded that it was «non-drinking» water. That was due to the fact that it was not only mistreated, but also because water distribution and wastewater collection was quite often malfunctioning and causing both systems to be in direct contact (p. 44-5) [our translation].

In the suburban districts of Cambuci, Santana, Lapa, Penha, Sao Miguel, Nossa Senhora do O, Butanta and Vila Mariana, lived 22.4% of the population, mostly without any access to Municipality services. As described by Bertolli Filho (2003), the only link between these districts and the city was the telegraph. Such isolation was due to the lack of passable roads, but also to the high prices of travelling tickets:

A round-trip by streetcar, between Penha and the city center, costed 1\$200, which represented 40% of the daily earnings of a skilled worker, while between Santana and the city center a train ticket costed one thousand *reis* (p. 46) [our translation].

Because of those mobility difficulties, people living in these places usually worked at the few regional factories, brick yards, in the production of charcoal and in horticulture. Bruno (1991), referring to kinds of housing, described them as «small houses and tenements» (p. 956, 1032) [our translation].

Even though some would live in central districts, most immigrants lived and worked in the middle, peripheric and suburban ones. The same way adults did, children tried to survive day by day, despite the unhealthy and precarious housing conditions. Indeed, the lack of drinking water and wastewater treatment, along with poorly ventilated and badly illuminated crowded houses, often flooded and contaminated by rats, human waste and garbage, affected everyone's life and were unmerciful towards children.

Along the pages of the *Anuario Demographico Sanitário* [Yearly Directory on Demographics and Sanitation] of 1903, one finds information about causes of deaths between the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> one, mostly typhoid fever, malaria, yellow fever, smallpox and whooping cough. In what concerns typhoid fever, Dr. Emilio Ribas, who was in charge of the Health Services in the State of Sao Paulo, stated that its easy spreading was due to the «presence of sick, convalescent and germs carriers from ships to town in the time of intense immigration» (Bruno, 1991, p. 1194) [our translation], but stressed that there was another important reason for it, related to unhealthy housing, with no wastewater installations nor water closets.

Verona's (2010) research on death registration at Bras Cemetery between 1893 and 1895 aids to understand child mortality. In 1893, 437 of the dead were between zero and one year old. In the following years, this number increased, getting to 590 deaths in 1895. On that rise, the author stated:

The increase of such index points, on the other hand, to a complete absence of preventive measures and minimum attention needed to stop it. It denounces and makes visible the existence of a working population completely abandoned to its own faith, or so to say, to its own misfortune, without any access to medical care nor primary hospitals (p. 277) [our translation].

Regarding *causa mortis*, prevalence was of diseases of the gastrointestinal tract for children from zero to seven years old, which explains the high number of deaths by dysentery and gastroenteritis. According to Verona (2010), the propagation of these diseases was due to personal and collective conditions of living and working of immigrants and their children.

Along with precarious conditions of housing, the environment at factories was unhealthy and salaries were so low that they were insufficient even to feed parents, who had to work strenuously and restlessly. Children, deprived of essential nutrition, became easy targets. Adults or children, the whole working-class family suffered of a slow progressive death (p. 281) [our translation].

In addition to gastric problems, there were so many others that consumed children. Their poor or inadequate feeding caused protein-calorie malnutrition; the lack of iron caused anemia; the lack of vitamin C caused scurvy. Children lost

weight, presented hypothermia, roughness, their skin dried, they had edemas and finally, died. There was a high number of respiratory diseases, such as bronchitis and bronchopneumonia; and measles took the life of so many children, who were usually already weak due to nutritional problems.

They lived in unhealthy places, with little or no access to city benefits such as water, wastewater services, lighting services, paved streets. Often poorly and inadequately fed, Italian and Italian-descendant children would build their identity processes together with their parents, day by day, learning to live, to coexist and to survive.

### 3. Immigrant childhood and labor in Sao Paulo

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the changes that Sao Paulo went through – according to Morse (1970), as mentioned above, from a students' burgh to coffee metropolis – reflected in the increment of commercial and industrial activities, sometimes exclusively done by Italian immigrants and their children.

In the capital of Sao Paulo, many Italian immigrants were peddlers. Thus, side by side with the old greengrocer ladies with trays in their hands, often transferred from a place to another by the Municipality for they disturbed traffic, it was common to see, as Bruno (1991) states, Italian adults wandering around, «doing business with flowers, fruits, vegetables and fishes and shrimps brought from the seaside» (pp. 1131-1132) [our translation]. Amidst those street vendors, there were Italian children selling newspapers. According to the author, sales of individual newspapers had started in 1876 and in 1890, most vendors were little Italians from ten to fourteen years old, who collected newspapers from many typographies around the city and distributed them throughout Sao Paulo districts.

It was quite fun – wrote Raffard – to watch these *bambini* as they left typographies. They monopolized the sales of newspapers and announced their titles with a strong Italian accent. At the same time, or a bit before that, street shoeshine boys had appeared: little Italian immigrants who went about the railway stations and the city streets and squares. They were usually from ten to fourteen years old and earned three *vintens* for their services. Those boys, who were not so many, according to the notes by Antonio Egidio Martins, went to almost all the squares and streets of Sao Paulo every day (Bruno, 1991, pp. 1137-1138) [our translation].

Still according to the same author, what had started as child labor, was later shared by adults, who were screaming around streets and squares, to announce: «Ingraxatorie!» Or they sang: «Ingraxate, ingraxate, la mode de Parisi, que seja de inverno, que seja de cordovone». (Bruno, 1991, pp. 1137-1138) In 1890, as it was already incorporated into the city's daily life, these services gained some comforts, with the installation of «shoeshine chairs, covered with huge parasols, where clients can comfortably read their newspapers» (Bruno, 1991, pp. 1137-1138) [our translation].



In addition to those occupations, Italian immigrants have engaged in other marginal activities and underemployment. As Trento (2000) reports, many worked as water vendors, umbrella fixers, knife sharpeners, carriers, waiters, carmen, and others.

Many Italians have opened their own shops, usually using familiar labor, including small children. There were many small shops located in the back of warehouses and inns, mostly, according to Bruno (1991), «shoe shops, carpentry, factories of pasta, grease, oils, writing inks, foundry, shoes, clothes and hats» (p. 1182) [our translation].

Beyond their little shops and factories, Italian presence was very expressive in industries. Whether with Italian owners or not, they were about 60% of the labor force, between 1900 and 1915. An example of that is Sao Paulo's textile industry, according to a report by the State Bureau of Labor in 1912, with parents and their small children working at the same place (Sao Paulo, 1912).

Working conditions of both Italian immigrants and Brazilians were very similar to those experienced in European countries during the first years of Industrial Revolution, between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. As Trento (2000) describes: «Endless workdays, arbitrary dismissals, payment per parts, strict discipline, low payments and a widespread use of women and children labor with payments lower than those of adult men» (p. 82) [our translation]. Such conditions, widely presented and debated by both Portuguese and Italian-written press at the time, indicated the terrible working conditions at factories, as well as low payments, like in the following excerpt:

How can we achieve that, when our income barely pays for a narrow room without any light or ventilation, in a forced promiscuity with rational and irrational beings, and to buy food that makes us compulsorily vegetarians, for more nutritional options are beyond that which our money can buy? (O Trabalhador Graphico, 05/05/1904, p. 1) [our translation].

Children started to face the difficulties of working very early, some at an age of seven or eight, according to Maram (1979). Others, as Bruno (1991) states, even earlier, at the age of five, and invariably earning lower salaries than the already very low ones adult received. On that matter, according to Bruno (1991):

There was a considerable number of minors, from five years old on, in factory services, earning payments that started from two hundred *reis* per day. Italians were not only the majority of workers, but of industrialists too (Bruno, 1991, p. 1182) [our translation].

News brought by the press also presented another side of the harsh reality faced by immigrants: the many families in which only men got jobs and, in addition to the precarious conditions at work, there was an unhealthy situation in districts and at their houses, with women and children subject to misery. It is touching how the newspaper *A Terra Livre* describes such conditions:

There are workers who, despite of their thirst for justice, suffer of endless misery and bulks of shame [...] as they notice they are one day, and another, and their entire lives, working like beasts, for 12 and even 15 hours a day, in a factory with no air, no light, no space and under a master's inquisitive look [...] who, when coming back from such drudgery, at the sties in which they vegetate, instead of finding consolation along their wife and children, find the women withered, dirty, tattered, barefooted... and children in the same conditions, playing around tuberculosis and doomed – like their parents – to ignorance and to be drudge for a repulsive and hateful *bourgeoisie*; and after swallowing just any stir food, made with deteriorated and usually insufficient ingredients, go rest their bodies on a pallet which can well be said to be another torment, for it is, just like everything else, dirty, hard and full of parasites already known to workers (A Terra Livre, 07/02/1906, p. 1) [our translation].

The situation of immigrants who lived in farms was quite similar. Although jobs were different, housing conditions were also precarious, workdays were strenuous, and payments were low. Just like in the city, families suffered with such situation, above all women and children, as described by the newspaper *A Terra Livre*, in its section *Ecos das fazendas* [*Echoes from the farms*]:

The life we live in farms is to work from four in the morning until seven or later in the evening. [...] There is no compassion towards our naked and starving children, nor towards our women, who are not used to this kind of work. They do not want to see them at home and do not mind if children die from not being taken care of (A Terra Livre, 07/02/1906, p. 3) [our translation].

In the same edition, the newspaper discussed how vicious was the exploration of workers in general and of children in a special way. As they started to work precociously, their possibility to study was compromised or made impossible and thus, according to the journalist, «as they cannot get instruction, they cannot get out of the numbness that, since childhood, brings them down in suffering and ignorance» (A Terra Livre, 07/02/1906, p. 2) [our translation].

Socialist newspaper *Avanti!*, in an article entitled *Istruzione e lavoro*, went in the same direction, denouncing that even though the law gave everyone the right to education, that right was not extended to workers and their families, who «due to their poor economic conditions, they cannot attend school regularly and must also do housework» (Avanti! 29/01/1902, p. 1) [our translation].

Leaving Italy in order to *fare l'America*, an expression widely used by Italian immigrants that meant «to make it in America», translated a desire for a better life, with proper working and living conditions. According to Petrone (1990), there was «an almost religious worship of work and of a pragmatic attitude that the immediatist needs stimulated» (pp. 607-8) [our translation]. Amid so many adversities and the indispensable material conditions to attend school, a lot of parents faced strenuous sacrifices so that their children could go to an Italian School or to a Sao Paulo public school.

#### 4. Italian and Italo-Brazilian children school education in Sao Paulo

Many Italian and Italian-descendant children attended schools, whether Italian or public<sup>6</sup> ones. Table 1 aids to visualize the distribution of school in different districts during the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Table 1 – Schools in the city of Sao Paulo in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.**

District Groups	Districts	Number of Italian Schools	Number of Sao Paulo School Groups
<b>Peripheral</b>	Bras	32	4
	Bom Retiro	27	2
	Moooca	5	1
	Ponte Grande	2	----
	Belenzinho	---	1
<b>Middle</b>	Bela Vista/Bexiga	18	4
	Santa Ifigenia	8	2
	Luz	6	---
	Liberdade	5	1
	Santa Cecilia	---	1
<b>Suburban</b>	Barra Funda	8	1
	Cambuci	7	1
	Vila Mariana	5	1
	Lapa	2	1
	Largo de Guayanazes	1	-----
	Penha	----	1
	Santanna	----	1
<b>Central</b>	Se	14	3
	Consolacao	5	1
	Campos Eliseos/Vila Buarque	4	1
<b>Undefined</b>		8	----
<b>Total</b>		<b>157</b>	<b>27</b>

**Source:** Table created by the author, based on data collected from the *Appendix 1 – Particular news on the elementary Italian schools I have visited in the State of Sao Paulo (1907) [our translation]; List of Italian Schools in the State of Sao Paulo (1905) [our translation]; Fanfulla (1906, p. 801); Royal General Consulate of Italy in Sao Paulo (1895); Pepe (1916) and Dell’Aira (2011); São Paulo (1907, 1910,1913); Almanak Laemmert (1891-1940).*

There was a concentration of 66 Italian Schools (42,03%) and eight School Groups (29,62%) in peripheral districts, especially Bras and Bom Retiro. There were 37 Italian Schools (23,56%) and eight School Groups (29,62%) in middle districts, mostly in Bela Vista and its subdistrict Bexiga. As these schools were

<sup>6</sup> For more on that, see Panizzolo (2018 a): *Italianizar os brasileiros, paulistanizar os italianinhos: um estudo sobre os livros de leitura que circularam nas escolas em São Paulo no início do século XX [To Italianize little Brazilians, to paulistanize little Italians: a study on reading books at Sao Paulo schools in the early 20th century].*

located in districts with an important concentration of factories, they were attended by children of families who worked and probably also lived there.

In suburban districts there were 23 Italian Schools (14.64%) and six School Groups (22.22%). That seems to be a higher number, if one considers the difficulty of access to these places and the social isolation of their inhabitants. However, it is important to notice the presence of immigrants who worked at brick yards, charcoal factories and horticultures located in these districts, whose children possibly studied at schools nearby.

There were 23 Italian Schools (14.64%) and five School Groups (18.51%) within the central districts of Se, Consolacao and Campos Eliseos. It is possible to formulate a hypothesis according to which these schools received children of immigrants born both in Brazil and Italy and were part of the middle class and the *bourgeoisie* living in that region. They probably hosted children of those who worked there and also of families living in bordering districts like Santa Ifigenia who, for some reason like preference for a certain school, costs, comfort, access, among others, would have opted for these schools.

In what concerns Italian Schools, in 1898, the *Almanaco del Fanfulla* published an article with the title *Italian Schools in Sao Paulo*<sup>7</sup>, stating that there were numerous Italian Schools in Sao Paulo, and that they were almost entirely run by private initiative. The first school that is known to have been funded in Sao Paulo was *Sempre Avanti Savoia!*, in 1887; then, in 1889, there were the schools *Italiana*, *Regina Margherita* and *Giuseppe Garibaldi* and until 1898 there were 29 private schools opened in the city. This number doubled by 1906 and got to 157 until 1910<sup>8</sup>.

Italian Schools in Sao Paulo, carried out by private initiative, were, along their existence, subsidized by the government of Italy and, under some specific conditions, by the Brazilian government too. They also received donations from the Dante Alighieri Society<sup>9</sup>.

One of the conditions for the aid of Italian government was to accept supervision of the royal general-consul. Support came as money or books and materials, being the latter the most common form of subvention from the government of Italy. They were sent to the consulate or acquired in Sao Paulo with funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> *Le scuole italiane di S. Paolo.*

<sup>8</sup> It is necessary to explain that the data obtained up to this moment do not allow to assert if the 157 schools kept working until 1910 or if some of those were already closed.

<sup>9</sup> For more on the allowances sent by Brazilian government and Dante Alighieri Society, see Panizzolo (2018 b): *O processo escolar entre italianos e seus descendentes: a escola italiana em São Paulo, no século XIX e início do século XX* [The schooling process among Italians and their descendants: Italian School in Sao Paulo in the 19th and early 20th century]

<sup>10</sup> There is a note on the publication *Il Brasile e gli italiani* (1906) about those books: «The Ministry of Foreign Affairs often sends, as its subvention to Italian Schools abroad, school materials that have no conditions of being used, selected without any didactic criteria, actual leftovers of publications that, with the aim to protect the disastrous politics that is in charge of public administration, always at the disposal of the Ministry of Public Instruction. These materials, always obtained through great and sometimes humiliating difficulties, has more than once made Brazilian citizens laugh, as they become proud of the progress of their primary school and believe ours is lesser than the one of other European nations» [our translation].

The education offered by Italian Schools in Sao Paulo was called Elementary Course, divided in two sections. The under one was composed of first, second and third grades, and the upper one, of fourth and fifth. However, some schools have created a hybrid model, with the lower level going until fourth grade (Ministero Degli Affari Esteri, 1905)<sup>11</sup>.

Regarding physical structure of the schools, a document with the title *Appendix 1 – Particular news on the elementary Italian schools I have visited in the State of Sao Paulo*, in 1907, informed that of 55 schools approached, 33 had a single classroom and probably at the teacher's house, like the *Scuola L'Educatrice Italiana*, described as «a classroom in a small room, beside the kitchen and the bedroom, a poorly arranged class [...] that gives a very unpleasant impression»<sup>12</sup> (Regio Consolato Generale D'Italia in San Paolo, 1907) [our translation].

Even with a single classroom, many offered both under and upper elementary school and that is likely to have compromised children's learning. In the document, these aspects translate into notions like «very poor, almost null and not totally scarce»<sup>13</sup> (Regio Consolato Generale D'Italia in San Paolo, 1907) [our translation].

Other 15 schools were presented as having 2 classrooms, but the problems remained almost the same. Rooms are often described as dirty and small. The *Scuola Amor di Patria* (by Angelo Arena), for example, had «two rooms with very poor light and a small area»<sup>14</sup>; while the *Scuola Italo-brasilera* (by Enrico Casini) had «two small rooms, with little space, poor light and almost no cleaning»<sup>15</sup>; the *Scuola Orazio Coclite* (by Filippo Cerri) was «an extreme burden, with two small rooms, one of which has no windows and receives light and air from the other one»<sup>16</sup>. Even when descriptions are not entirely bad, there is always something missing. For example, the *Scuola Italiana* (by Caterina and Luigi Ori) has two rooms that are «discrete for their capacity, but barely clean»<sup>17</sup>; the *Scuola Alessandro Manzoni* (by Antonio Pratola) was «discrete in what concerns circulation of air and lighting, which are insufficient for their capacity»<sup>18</sup>; the *Scuola Studio e Lavoro* (by Salomone Rosia) was «clean, but small for so many»<sup>19</sup>. There are some, though, that stand out positively. One of them is the *Scuola Giordano Bruno* (by Filoreto Fondacari) presented as having wide rooms; another one, the *Scuola Principe di Piemonti* (by Gabriele de Rosolino), which was «clean, with enough seats»<sup>20</sup> (Regio Consolato Generale D'Italia in San Paolo, 1907).

<sup>11</sup> *Elenco delle scuole italiane nello stato di San Paolo nel 1905.*

<sup>12</sup> [...] l'aula è una piccola camera, contigua alla cucina e ala camera da letto, una camera mal tenuta [...] che produce sgradevolissima impressione.

<sup>13</sup> [...] scarsissimo, negativo, quase nullo e non del tutto scarso.

<sup>14</sup> [...] due camerette con pochissima luce e poca area.

<sup>15</sup> [...]: due piccole camere, con poca area, poca luce e poca pulizia.

<sup>16</sup> [...] penosa impressione, le due aule sono piccole; sono due camerette, di cui una, senza finestra, riceve la luce e l'area dall'altra.

<sup>17</sup> [...] sono discrete per capacità, ma sono poco pulite!

<sup>18</sup> [...] discreta per area e per luce; sono insufficiente per capacità.

<sup>19</sup> [...] pulite, ma piccola per tanti.

<sup>20</sup> [...] pulite, i banchi sono abbastanza.

Finally, the document addresses the existence of seven schools that provided both under and upper elementary school. There seems to be, among them, one that functions in a proper building. The *Scuola Sempre Avanti Savoia*, founded by Teacher Francesco Pedatella, is an example of that kind of school. It was located in a two-story house, specific for that end (Regio Consolato Generale D'Italia in San Paolo, 1907).

In 1904, the document *Programs for Elementary Schools in the State of Sao Paulo*<sup>21</sup>, proposing an organization of five grades, along which were distributed Italian Language (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades); Portuguese Language (3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades); Practical Arithmetic (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades), History, Geography, Rights and Duties in Brazil and Italy (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades), Calligraphy (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades), and without any specific grade recommendations, Varied Notions (focused on Brazil), Drawing, Singing, Gymnastics, Handcrafts (Regio Consolato Generale D'Italia In San Paolo, 1904).

According to the Commission that elaborated that document, it was necessary to make changes in the Programs adopted in Italy, in order to include a limited local program for Italian Schools in the state of Sao Paulo, for «many of our children were born here, many will spend most of their lives here and many will end up not ever knowing their true motherland, except for hearing about it»<sup>22</sup> (Regio Consolato Generale D'Italia In San Paolo, 1904, p. 2) [our translation]. This way, according to the Commission members, such measure was not at all antinationalist, as it only sought to give Italians the conditions they needed to understand the so to say commercial relations of the country, like «...address their interests better. How to work in industries, to perform a given function, without knowing the language and the main rules of the country?»<sup>23</sup> (Regio Consolato Generale D'Italia In San Paolo, 1904, p. 2) [our translation].

To form the soul and the character of children and teenagers, school should keep and enhance Italian ethnical features, preserving a strong attachment to the motherland, or, in the words of the Commission, the «true motherland», by teaching Italian Language, Italy's History, Geography, great figures and achievements. So, the Program indicated, for example, for the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, the study of the main historical facts about Italy; for the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, the studies on Italian *Risorgimento* between 1848 and 1870; for the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, remarkable facts and great men of Roman and Medieval History; for the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, the political and administrative order of the Kingdom.

According to Panizzolo (2018b), 6,547 children have attended to Italian Schools in 1908. This number represents 16.26% of the attendance of the entire population in school age, that means, 40,256 children. In 1910, there were 43,905 children in school age, of which 6,282 attended to Italian Schools, that means, about 14.30% of the places the government of Sao Paulo offered (São Paulo, 1908 and 1910).

<sup>21</sup> *Programmi per le scuole elementari italiane dello stato di S.Paulo (Brasile).*

<sup>22</sup> [...]molti dei nostri figli hanno avuto qui i loro natali, molti qui passeranno la maggior parte della loro vita e molti qui la finiranno senza aver conosciuto della loro vera patria se non quel tanto che ne hanno sentito dire. (p. 2).

<sup>23</sup> [...]tratar bene i loro interessi, come applicarsi ad un'industria, ad un mestiere, senza la conoscenza della lingua e delle misure principal del paese? (p. 2).

Back on Table 1, we observe that in neighborhoods where Italian immigrant presence was expressive, the number of School Groups was significantly lower compared to Italian Schools. However, a quantitative comparison must be put in perspective, considering that many Italian Schools consisted of a room at the teacher's house and thus limited capacity of receiving children, whether for the lack of space or the difficulty families had to pay for fees and all the costs of supporting a studying child.

School Groups represented quite the opposite of the precarity of Italian Schools described above. This new school model, adopted «in the monumentality of buildings, to make the recently inaugurated Republic seen» (Carvalho, 2003, p. 203) [our translation], created «temples of wisdom» (Souza, 1998, p. 29) [our translation] in the landscape of the city of Sao Paulo, through a «school that was renovated in methods, teaching processes, programs and didactical-pedagogical organization» (Souza, 1998, p. 29) [our translation].

Instead of a few students in a precarious room, School Groups concentrated a lot of students in a same building, which favored the organization of bigger and more homogenic classes and made it possible to carry out a graded program. The teaching program established for School Groups in Brazil in 1905 included classes of Reading (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years), Oral Language (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years), Calligraphy (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years), Arithmetic (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years), Geography (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years), Geography and Cosmography (3<sup>rd</sup> year), Physical and Natural Sciences – Hygiene (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years), Civic and Moral Instruction (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years), Gymnastics and Military Exercises (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years), Music (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years), Drawing (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years), Geometry (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years), Handcraft (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years) and History of Brazil (2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years).

The Program of School Groups aimed, beyond elementary knowledge like reading, writing, counting and notions of hygiene, at the formation of citizenship, through inculcating love for the homeland, acknowledgement and worship of heroes, values, language and great deeds, Brazilian and often Sao Paulo's monuments and landscapes<sup>24</sup>.

In neighborhoods where they lived and worked, those were the possibilities of education for the children of Italian immigrant children. The choice was difficult when, on one side, there was the Italian School and, consequently, the teaching of language and values of a motherland that was left behind and implicated in costs often higher than the families' possibilities, and, on the other side, there was the School Group, public, for free and that maybe would provide a better integration in the land where they currently lived, but without lessons to keep Italy alive, when each day it became more distant.

## 5. Conclusions

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<sup>24</sup>For more on that topic, see Panizzolo, C. (2019). *Livros de leitura e a construção da identidade nacional de crianças italianas e descendentes (São Paulo no início do século XX)* [Reading books and the construction of a national identity in Italian children and descendants (Sao Paulo, early 20th century)]

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, social and economic inequalities in many regions of Italy were determinants of an increase of the emigration flow. Not only men and women, but also children and teenagers, have left looking for a better life, working abroad in several occupations.

When arriving in Sao Paulo, they have found a city that lived between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a time when cities were growing, jobs were becoming more diverse and industries were in effervescence. Men, women and children spent most of their time inside factories, shops or in street sales, receiving salaries that did not pay for their basic needs, than means, a quite similar situation to the one they faced back in Italy.

Living conditions were conditioned by their short economic power and together with working conditions, resulted in serious health problems in children, usually associated to chronic malnutrition. To meet the demands of capital, many have died, after living almost exclusively for work.

Of the numerous Italian immigrants who came to Sao Paulo, just a few could, despite all difficulties, enroll their children in Italian or public schools, probably dreaming of a better life, with more dignified conditions of living and surviving.

As we get to the end of the narrative about some aspects of the history of the childhood of Italian immigrants and descendants between the late 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is important to remark that even though sources reveal a history of suffering, misery, illness and all kinds of misfortunes, they also show the struggle for better conditions, which were probably only enjoyed by following generations.

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