



## Informalidade e Subjetividade: uma análise sob a ótica do trabalhador informal do ramo da alimentação

Diego Cesar Terra de Andrade<sup>1</sup>

**Objetivo do estudo:** a finalidade é compreender a opção e permanência do sujeito trabalhador pelas atividades tidas como informais, uma vez que estudos sobre o setor informal o veem como resultado da descentralização e reorganização dos processos de produção.

**Metodologia/abordagem:** desenvolve-se um estudo qualitativo fundamentado na abordagem teórica da psicodinâmica do trabalho.

**Principais resultados:** dentre os achados, pode se afirmar que a informalidade além de não ser um fenômeno transitório, para os entrevistados, não é tão pouco uma consequência do processo de reestruturação produtiva, mas uma realidade social e estrutural de trabalho e inserção.

**Contribuições teóricas:** uma reflexão abrangente do fenômeno da informalidade a partir da análise da dinâmica subjetiva do trabalhador e na sua relação com o trabalho, concentrando esforços na análise das condutas humanas.

**Relevância/originalidade:** estudos sobre o setor informal o veem como resultado da descentralização e reorganização dos processos de produção, esse trabalho visa contribuir com a ampliação do conhecimento do fenômeno.

**Contribuições sociais:** desmistificação de que o trabalho informal é uma falta de opção.

**Palavras-chave:** Trabalho Informal, Produção dos Sentidos, Análise Socioconstrucionista, Serviços Alimentícios.

### Informality and Subjectivity: an analysis from the perspective of the informal worker in the food sector

**Objective of the study:** the purpose is to understand the option and permanence of the working subject for activities considered informal, since studies on the informal sector see it as a result of the decentralization and reorganization of production processes.

**Methodology / approach:** a qualitative study based on the theoretical approach of work psychodynamics is developed.

**Main results:** among the findings, it can be stated that informality, in addition to not being a transitory phenomenon, for the interviewees, is not a consequence of the productive restructuring process, but a social and structural reality of work and insertion.

**Theoretical contributions:** a comprehensive reflection of the phenomenon of informality based on the analysis of the subjective dynamics of workers and their relationship with work, concentrating efforts on the analysis of human conduct.

**Relevance / originality:** studies on the informal sector see it as a result of the decentralization and reorganization of production processes, this work aims to contribute to the expansion of knowledge of the phenomenon.

**Social contributions:** demystifying that informal work is a lack of option.

<sup>1</sup> contato@diegoterra.com.br-IFSULDEMINAS

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**Key words:** Informal Labor, Production of meanings, Socio-constructivist Analysis, Food Services.

**Informalidad y subjetividad: un análisis desde la perspectiva del trabajador informal en el sector alimentario.**

**Objetivo del estudio:** el propósito es comprender la opción y permanencia del sujeto de trabajo para actividades consideradas informales, ya que los estudios sobre el sector informal lo ven como resultado de la descentralización y reorganización de los procesos productivos.

**Metodología / enfoque:** se desarrolla un estudio cualitativo basado en el enfoque teórico de la psicodinámica del trabajo.

**Principales resultados:** entre los hallazgos se puede afirmar que la informalidad, además de no ser un fenómeno transitorio, para los entrevistados, no es una consecuencia del proceso de reestructuración productiva, sino una realidad social y estructural del trabajo y la inserción.

**Aportes teóricos:** una reflexión integral del fenómeno de la informalidad a partir del análisis de la dinámica subjetiva de los trabajadores y su relación con el trabajo, concentrando esfuerzos en el análisis de la conducta humana.

**Relevancia / originalidad:** los estudios sobre el sector informal lo ven como resultado de la descentralización y reorganización de los procesos productivos, este trabajo tiene como objetivo contribuir a la expansión del conocimiento del fenómeno.

**Contribuciones sociales:** desmitificar que el trabajo informal es una falta de opción.

**Palabras clave:** trabajo informal, producción de sentidos, análisis socioconstruccionista, servicios de alimentación.

## 1. Introduction

Informality is a recurring subject matter in the work of some researchers. See, for example, Morrone and Mendes (2002), Gondim et al. (2006), Sasaki (2009), Rosenfield and Alves (2011) and Pereira et al. (2014). To further incite this discussion, it is questioned: would this be a structural phenomenon that intensified from the productive restructuring process or arises from the inadequate regulation of the current labor relations?

These are two currents of thought: the social one, which refers to capitalist expansion, the quest for greater productivity and profitability, which can lead to technological advancement and concentration of capital and has a direct impact on the world of labor, especially on the reduction of jobs; and the neoliberal economic, which refers to the Consolidation of Labor Laws (CLT) and the state regulation process, which through the granting of labor rights affects the free negotiation between supply and demand, (BORGES, 2005; PEREIRA et al., 2008, 2009 and 2014).

In the Brazilian case, the logical inversion for the flexible view of managerial

adequacy, in which the starting point is the consumption, dictator of the production rules, has as its objective the reduction of the staff in the companies, which characterizes the inseparable relationship between the institution of change and the condition of employability (ROSENFELD, 2003; MANGAN, 2009; KOVÁCS, 2006). These transformations in the sphere of labor are caused by shorter production cycles, changes in the division of labor within companies, consolidation of information technologies, "polyvalence" (emphasis added) and training as essential requirements for new production processes. These factors have great impacts on the work, since they allow workers to accept low-quality jobs or to seek their subsistence in informal or autonomous work, without work card or any type of social security contribution (BARBARA, 1999).

In this sense, it can be seen that studies on the "informal sector" see it as a productive unit, the result of decentralization and reorganization of production processes, the result of economic globalization, which encompasses great productive diversity and is identified by features and essentially technical variables, of which the weak level of regulation stands out. That is, the character of illegality (MORRONE, 2001).

In general, if, on the one hand, the recent literature on informality (regardless of the definition attributed to the term) has sophisticated data processing, on the other hand, it has avoided promoting a broader reflection on the phenomenon, such as whether informality is an option of the individual (FLEIG et al., 2005; RAMOS, 2007). In this way, it is thought that not necessarily informal work is the result of productive restructuring, but perhaps it is a positive externality of labor relations and the identification of individuals to the activities developed, as a mere representation of their preferences, based on beliefs and values (accepted symbolic aspects).

The analysis of the meanings of work has been studied under the positivist approach, in which a great part of the studies is directed to the development of theories and practices geared primarily to cater to economic interests, that is, around the domains of dominant power. This fact made intervention techniques and studies essentially oriented to industrial production and to the prevention and overcoming of human maladjustment in work organization, which are deprecated when one considers neoliberal concepts of competitiveness (MORRONE, 2001).

However, the development of investigations aimed at understanding the phenomena related to the meaning of the work has become significant academic when

related to the historical-social reproduction of the individual. This approach consists in the understanding of the meanings from the analysis of discursive practices, situating it as a form of knowledge that joins the constructivist perspective. The meanings present themselves as a dialogical construction of Social Psychology and, unlike Scientific Psychology that is concerned with the prediction, understanding and control of people's behavior, consist in the observation and study of behaviors in natural situations, as a social process of naturalization of the psychological phenomenon and depoliticization of the discipline (SPINK, 2004).

The theoretical psychodynamic approach of work proposes as an object of study "the analysis of the psychic processes mobilized by the confrontation of the subject with the reality of work" (Dejours, Abdoucheli and Jayet, 1994, p.120), understanding the dynamics as an investigation that takes as its center of gravity the conflicts that arise from the encounter between subject, bearer of a pre-existing singular history and a work situation whose characteristics are, to a large extent, fixed independently of the will of the subject. This implies that it starts from an already constituted subjectivity that will be exposed, in a later period, to the reality of the work. This means that the subject in fact risks not being the same as before the beginning of the conflict, on one hand, and that the reality of the work is in danger of being transformed under the effect of a supplementation of subjectivity, on the other hand (DEJOURS; ABDOUCHELI; JAYET, 1994).

The socio-constructionist approach brings an enriching contribution to the understanding of the meanings of work by proposing a model of analysis that considers different dimensions: the subjectivity of the worker, a singular individual with a life history, particular desires and needs; the organization of work, impositions, norms and standards of conduct; and of the collectivity, hierarchical relations, norms and values of social coexistence (MOITA LOPES, 2002). In this sense, the study concentrates its axis of investigation in the understanding of the subjective dynamics that make workers opt and remain in informality.

The attempt is to contribute to the expansion of knowledge, based on the analysis of the subjective dynamics of the worker and his relationship with work, concentrating efforts in the analysis of human behaviors, with the purpose of understanding their choice and permanence by the activities considered as informal. The study is justified by the fact that this type of activity is not considered a transitory phenomenon, but a reality for the world of work, and not only as a consequence of the

process of productive restructuring (POCHMANN, 2004).

In this sense, a study was developed based on the theoretical approach of work psychodynamics, assuming as presupposition the concept of worker-subject, which encompasses at the same time, psychoanalysis and social theory, and conceives the relation man / work based in the social and individual historical context, responsible for the construction of identity and the recognition of "doing".

For this purpose the present article is structured in five sections. Initially, in addition to this introduction, section two briefly discusses the concept of informality, presents the basic assumptions of the socio-constructionist approach, mentions the changes in work relations based on the analysis of subjectivity and production of meanings. In the third section, we present the methodological procedures, which were based on in-depth qualitative interviews conducted with street vendors selling corn meat patty from a city in the southern region of Minas Gerais. Then the meanings of work are articulated for the individual who acts in informality. Finally, some considerations about the findings in this research are drawn.

## **2. Literature review**

This section aims to present, through a review of the literature, assumptions about informality, the socio-constructionist approach and the changes in labor relations based on the analysis of subjectivity and production of meanings.

### **2.1 Conceptual Bases on Informality: a theoretical frame**

In order to provide a better understanding of the research model, it is necessary to clarify, initially, the concept of informal work. The definition of the term derives from contributions of sociological and economic theory. However, it is worth noting that it is not the purpose of this study to draw up an exhaustive discussion about it, only to characterize it for a better understanding of the research problem.

The first mention of informal work is carried out by the International Labor Organization (ILO), which also identifies it as an informal sector. In other words, it is composed of small companies, simple, competitive and unregulated markets that employ local resources, adapted technology and intensive use of labor (MORRONE, 2001). This concept, although comprehensive, is considered too broad, useless, both at the empirical level and at the analytical level. For it does not contemplate a coherent and articulated set of particular characteristics. Also, a definition based on the ethical

and political convenience that determined the exclusion of illegal activities, such as the sale of culinary products by street vendors (POSCHMANN, 2004).

In advancing this generic concept, the ILO itself proposes a new, more objective concept, focused on a surplus labor force condemned to occasional occupations, which by its informal activity finds its means of survival. According to Dalbosco (2000: 56):

"(...) the informal sector is defined as the sum of the activities carried out by organized enterprises according to a particular economic rationality, whose objective is to guarantee the subsistence of the family group. This rationality differs from that prevailing in the formal (capitalist) sector, whose essential motivation is accumulation. The particular rationality of the informal sector is then considered as the logical source of its other characteristics. The objective of its activity largely determines the organization of production (choice of open or restricted market sector, intensive use of labor) and its main characteristics (low productivity and low entry level).

However, from this discussion, such criteria to define what is informal or not, is placed in the more aggregate scope of the sector concept. In other words, Hirata and Machado (2007) question, "to what extent is it an occupational strategy, to the extent that there is a rational decision behind the choice to enter the labor market as an informal one?".

For Ramos (2007), the recent theoretical and empirical dispute on the concept of informality opens space for some reflections: especially for the question of the "choice" of the individual. In this sense, Machado, Oliveira and Antigo (2008) illustrate well the potential problem faced by models who see employment in the informal sector as a result of a choice.

The decision to self-employ would therefore be the result of a strategy in which the less educated workers obtain higher incomes as self-employed than as wage earners with a formal contract (HIRATA, 2007). Or even the fact that they do not find



formal employment because of this or other attribute that escapes the "eyes" of national research centers, such as the Ministry of Employment or the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA).

In the case of individuals who might find employment in the formal sector, but who choose the informal one, either because of the most advantageous remuneration or because of the desire for a certain flexibility that satisfies specific preferences, the term "choice" is valid. However, for individuals who, for some reason (for example, low schooling) do not find employment in the formal sector, "choice" does not exist.

If workers in the informal sector were all acting through a survival strategy, there would not be as much controversy about the definition of informality as a positional analysis. This is because it would be a sector characterized by individuals who would present human capital indicative variables that would indicate a disadvantage or exclusion from the market, such as low schooling. However, it is known that informal workers in Brazil are very heterogeneous. Family history and concern with quality of life may lead the worker to seek this form of insertion in search of a flexible working day and control of his own business, among other factors (MACHADO; RIBAS; PENIDO, 2007).

## **2.2 Basic Assumptions of the Socio-constructionist Approach**

The research developed under the socio-constructionist perspective focuses on the study of epistemology based on the investigative method or "interpretive repertoires" (MOITA LOPES, 1996, 1999, 2002). The events have different meanings and can be understood according to the focus of analysis, considering innumerable contexts and different situations, as proposed by the dynamics of discursive practices and production of meanings (SARUP and BROOKER, 1996).

The focus of this study focuses on the discussion of the rhetoric of truth, the relationship between Social Psychology and the Sociology of Knowledge movement (SPINK, 2004). This issue highlights the process of production of meanings in daily life as a result of social interaction. In constructionist research the notion of individual is the social construction of knowledge itself and is not based only on the individualist perspective; both subject and object are historical partner constructions that need to be problematized and unfamiliarized (Gergen, 1994; SPINK, 1999).

This positioning abdicates the representationist view of knowledge, which presupposes the conception of the mind as a mirror of nature. If nature's objects are

constituted by accepted categories and if these categories are human artifacts, products of interactions historically situated, then the hegemony of the systems of categories depends on the vicissitudes of social processes and not on the internal validity of the constructs (BERGER, LUCKMANN, 1974). This means that knowledge is neither a representation nor a translation of something that belongs to external reality. However, the defamiliarization of the objectivity implicit in the rhetoric of truth is based on the critique of the conception of truth as knowledge.

For this, the remittance of truth to the sphere of ethics is based, that is, to point out its importance to the characterization of the individual-society relationship (SPINK, 1999). Knowledge is contingent upon linguistic structures (social productions). In this sense Bakhtin (1981) affirms that the analysis of discourse constitutes an important element of analysis, since it implies actions, selections, choices, languages, contexts, in short, a variety of social productions of which they are expression, a privileged way to understand the production of meanings in daily life.

Meaning is a social construction, interactive undertakings through which people construct, understand and deal with the situations and phenomena around them (SPINK, 2004). The concepts and assumptions that provide support for their understanding are based on the analysis of discursive practices. As the denomination itself imposes, the administration is an applied social science, which suffers the consequences of the details and is not constituted as absolute truth. The detailing can impact the decisions, the analysis focus can generate divergent results that do not apply to other realities (SPINK, 1999).

Therefore, mention is made of what is termed the metaphor of binoculars. It is possible to see that different foci produce different objects, irreducible to one another. It is not a question of observing the specificity of the global, nor of observing the global to the detriment of specificity; it is the rupture with the usual or usual that it becomes possible to give visibility to meanings. The scenes or images obtained are different, no matter how much we have observed the same reality.

### **2.3 Work Relationships, Subjectivity and Meaning Production**

The post-structuralist discussion refers to the question of the change in the set of social transformations that provoke the rethinking of labor, confronting the prescriptive characteristics of the development of labor activity and the recurrent reality of capitalism (O'doherty, WILLMOTT, 2001; GRISCI, 2003).



The ambivalent behavior appears as a function of a desire for integration and a resistance to the configuration of "modern" work (DEJOURS, 2004). Integrate because it is an existential need that means material gains and resist because there are doubts as to the social legitimacy of the foundations of this organization and hence the desire not to be part of it. For Sennett (1999) man is losing his character because he can no longer build his "life narrative". Inflexibility, instability, and even the lack of a routine in the present world, prevent man from building a cohesive history and thus defining his identity, his character.

The psychodynamic analysis of work, in the clinical sense (based on the description and knowledge of the relations between work and mental health) and theoretical (conception of the subject that encompasses at the same time, psychoanalysis and social theory), focuses its discussions in the "doing," through the engagement of the personality to respond to a task delimited by pressures filling the gaps between the "prescriptive" and the "real", which is revealed to the subject by the resistance to the procedures (DEJOURS, 2004).

The particular incorporation or enhancement of the individual to face the problems of change leads him to the confrontation between action and failure. The subjective impression of the world and the origin of the movement of conquest of this world lead the subject to rethink labor. Suffering provides intelligence, which forms in and through work. For Deour (2004) this is not innate in man, but acquired in the exercise of activity - "corpopropriation" (DEJOURS, p.29, 2004). Phenomenology explains this relationship through self-experience and interaction with others (plural intelligence, represented in other words by the Moebius Ribbon - subjectivity before being individual, is collective, social, and historical, and relates to the world that generates it - by Maurits Cornelius Escher) (GRISCI, 2003).

In short, what has just been described is related to subjectivity and means that work, in what it possesses as essential, belongs to the invisible world. In general terms, it can be said that there is a dialogue about the theory of work in the perspective of subjectivity. A fact that comes from the process of post-structural transformation of society, more precisely about the conflicts between economic agents. Subjectivity portrays the expressions of how workers are affected by the constant transformations of the world, or of how people as workers are affected by organizational restructuring (GRISCI, 2003).

The question of functional autonomy can be understood, according to

Rosenfield (2003), in two directions. The first, in its positive sense, is the real autonomy at work, which is the autonomy of "doing good", of "doing the beautiful", which is recognized by its peers. This autonomy allows to protect itself, since it preserves the group as an identity base and allows a return on itself, able to give a sense to the work. The second, in its instrumental sense, in which autonomy is granted as an instrument of coordination of labor relations and aims at achieving an economic objective of company management.

The recent changes in the organizational environment, which combine technology with rationalization, foresee speed and are quite paradigmatic in the transformations that the world of work suffers. It says a lot about the ways of working and the ways of producing lifestyles, since it implies in the re-elaboration of the forms of relationship: of the subjects with the own work; between each other in distinct hierarchical positions or not; with the clients; and customers with the new technologies. This issue raises the idea of change not only linked to products / services, but to the design of processes. This strengthens the definition of subjectivity and its relation to the psychodynamics of work (O'doherty and William 2001).

In this way, one can consider that subjectivity varies according to the social, economic and technological determinations that consider the time variable (operators, ideas, images and experiences). Work is then assumed, not as an object of applied instrumental reason, but as an object of analysis of the situation of a changing man through time (O'doherty, WILLMOTT, 2001; GRISCI, 2003).

This is the proposal of poststructuralist analysis. In this case, the importance of evaluating work more comprehensively, not only in its visible aspects, is emphasized. The difficulty exists and can be shown. However, this is aggravated at a time when work activities are moving towards immaterial tasks. For this, some precepts already discussed are used, which seek to address the issue of knowledge construction as part of the process of interpretation of the subject (inductive theorization co-opted by applied social sciences) (TRIPP, 2005).

Institutional logic must break with the idea of time and linear succession to focus on regimes of temporality, in which meanings circulate making networks with the past and the future itself. The studies no longer focus on the understanding of the work process as a result of a visible memory, but opts for the subjective analysis of the invisible. Contrary to what the positivist authors assert, a change is not validated only through the analysis of hypotheses, the core is in the invisible, in contextual or

situational analysis that relates time and subjectivity through the interpretation of meanings, defamiliarizing concepts and building the knowledge (meanings) based on the worker's abilities and attitudes in the development of his / her activities (O'doherty, WILLMOTT, 2001; DEJOURS, 2004; GRISCI, 2003).

The need to "think about work" as opposed to "doing work" must be reported. This relationship highlights the need to reflect on the breadth of workers' actions (considering the time variable to understand the restructuring in the scope of work) rather than the depth of their actions (DEJOURS, 2004).

Nevertheless, it should be noted that depth does not allow us to uncover events in this light, it only shows the intensity of the change and the degree of influence in the work. This allows us to evaluate the importance of interpretive analysis for the construction of "inductive theorization". Three issues characterize this discussion: 1. the diversity of work meanings; 2. the relevance of the variable "time" as a factor to understand the changes; and 3. the problematic of subjectivity in the understanding of the different expressions of change that affect the worker (GRISCI, 2003).

Therefore, social existence becomes labor and it becomes the central reference in the identity of man. It can be said that, after the Industrial Revolution, work took a central role in society and began to condition the time and organization of human life. Given the centrality of work in people's lives, the threshold between private and working life is tenuous, or almost nonexistent for the majority of people who work. On the one hand, work, a source of psychosocial experience, of identification, becomes increasingly demanding - or "demanded" - by society, and on the other hand, with the technological and demographic transformations of recent times, people are seen every time more busy, with less time to "live".

### **3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES**

Human behavior is marked by a tangle of networks of connected and dual meanings, sometimes paradoxically, that combine rational and non-rational, real, self-constructed components in whatever instances, including the world of work. As an attempt to understand the meanings of work for the individual who acts in informality, the present study is situated under the interpretive paradigm of analysis (MORGAN, 1980).

In this same perspective, the discussion about the methodological assumptions of constructionist research, which emphasizes the contraposition of methodological

monism, preaches the unity of the scientific method for all investigations and is characterized by the formulation of hypothesis test, to the epistemology of difference (social science), which is closely related to phenomenology. It is the hermeneutics that, in this proposal, fulfills the role of continuous opening to the new and, in this way, makes it possible to maintain the conversation without ending the discussions early (SPINK, 2004).

The qualitative methodology in the field of research is no longer a purely technical option, associated with the objectives of the research, but rather it is aligned with a specific epistemological position. It is precisely this debate between realism and constructionism that informs the methodological stance. Once the epistemological alignment has been defined, the method can be single or multiple. This creates a link between objectivity and intersubjectivity. The challenge, then, is to visualize one as the basic assumption of the other. It is considered the explication of the processes of interpretation (circular and unfinished) and the understanding of the dialogic in the sense of basic element of the production of the senses (SPINK, 2004). After the interpretation of reality, meaning becomes the means and the end of the research task.

The interpretative researcher seeks to apprehend the processes by which the multiple shared realities arise, sustain themselves and modify themselves, looking at the network of language games, based on groups of concepts and subjectively determined rules. In this sense, the study was developed through in-depth qualitative interviews.

Qualitative research allows the immersion in the phenomenon for the understanding of difference, a posture that opens space for subjectivity. According to Bogdan et al. (1994) this type of approach provides, through the interpretation of the particularities of the behaviors or attitudes of the individuals, a better vision and understanding of the context of the problem. Alencar (1999) states that qualitative methods can provide specific details of a phenomenon, and that these details are difficult to be understood by means of quantitative methods.

The research universe consists of the informal workers, who sell corn patty, a typical product of a city in the southern region of Minas Gerais and recognized as immaterial good of the municipality by the Deliberative Council of Historical and Cultural Heritage, within the class of gastronomic products. At the time of the survey, 16 "carts" were identified along the "main" street, the busiest shopping street in the city, where the big magazines, banks, shops and a square and a church are located.

When defining the universe of the research, non-probabilistic sampling by trial was chosen. Following the criterion of quality of the answers obtained (Alencar, 1999), six individuals were selected from a total of 6 people interviewed, coincidentally all female, plus the normally family member helpers (Table 1) who were in the cart in the interviews or were cited. It should be emphasized that the number of respondents is consistent with the theoretical-methodological assumptions of the research, since the qualitative analysis demands considerable work.

Data collection was done at the end of November 2014, in two days, through interviews based on a rapid socio-demographic survey and a script composed of only two questions: "Please tell me your story of life". " And "What is the meaning of the job for you?". From the approach to the interviewees, some interferences were made by the researcher. The analysis of the data followed the recommendations of Spink (2004): a) immersion in the set of collected information, letting out the interpretations without categorizing a priori; b) definition of categories, present in the organization of language itself, to classify and explain the phenomenon studied. Finally, the results were presented through the discussion of the categories found in the interviews (interpretations) and the concepts that sustain the work.

#### **4 Informality and Subjectivity: an analysis from the perspective of the informal worker in the food sector**

With the objective of understanding, from the subjective dynamics and the sense of work, the option and permanence of the individuals in the informality, this study was carried out with six workers who were characterized as informal workers, who sell corn patty in a city of south of Minas Gerais. Table 1 summarizes the profile of the respondents.

**Table 1:** Synthesis on the profile of the interviewees

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Time working in informality</b>	<b>Past Work</b>	<b>Involved family members</b>	<b>Number of employees not members of the family</b>
<b>A</b>	12 years	Domestic	3 Children	0

<b>B</b>	7 years	Cleaner	Mother, husband and 2 children	0
<b>C</b>	17 years	Food industry	Husband	1
<b>D</b>	6 years	Strawberry Planting	Sister and brother-in-law	1
<b>AND</b>	9 years	Chemical industry	Husband and 2 children	0
<b>F</b>	21 years	Potato plantation	Daughter, two grandchildren and son-in-law	0

**Source:** Prepared by the authors.

In general, based on the analysis of informal workers' statements, there is no concern or aspiration with employment in the formal sector, reinforcing what Machado, Oliveira and Antigo (2008) affirm about informality; for some, it is an option rather than a lack of formal work option.

Adding to this matter, and about the workers' heterogeneity (MACHADO; RIBAS; PENIDO, 2007), it was observed that two of the interviewees, A and B, although they had worked in another place previously, they did not have a record in the Work and Social Security Card (CTPS). The working time of the respondents varied widely, being on average approximately 12 years, with a standard deviation of 5.93.

No individual, regarded as the owner of the "cart" of patties, mixes informal activity with quick "part time jobs" or formal activity. However, in the case of the interviewees B, D and F, some family members who work with the owner occasionally perform extra short work. As for example, the son-in-law of the owner F, who from time to time does chauffeur service, mainly taking and picking passengers from and to the Airport of Guarulhos.

The interviewee C, after 8 years of work in the production area of a national food industry was dismissed, when it was bought by a multinational company, according to her, "without alternative", appealed to what she calls "gastronomic entrepreneurship".



Since then, he has been working in informality, for about 17 years, without contributing social taxes and consequently without fulfilling some of his social rights. In this specific case, it can be attributed to the productive restructuring (*FLEYG et al.*, 2005) the fact of the change and option for informality to have occurred. However, he expressed his satisfaction with the current profession, and the "no" about the possibility of returning to the activities carried out if any company wanted to hire him to compose his staff, is expressed in his answers: "(...) here I actually found what I wanted to do. I would not work elsewhere just to have a formal contract or higher salaries". In the understanding of the "meaning of work" for all the interviewees, at that moment, it was interpreted that there is no interest in changing the work activities nowadays carried out by activities of the formal type.

The family member of the F cart, son-in-law, who also mixes quick "part time jobs" with his purchases of raw material, production, transportation and sales in the cart, says that his work is there and "if he has time" he does other tasks as well. In his speech his option is evident, "(...) This is my main activity, my profession, the others are part time jobs, which I do to earn something more and get a little away from my mother-in-law<sup>1</sup>", contrary to the claim of Morrone (2001), who advocates informality as smaller, less important, secondary activities.

Still on the heterogeneity, subject D, in his history of insertion in the activity was said "tired of life in the field, depending on rain, working under the sun, not that something in life is easy, but life can be less hard-working. From here I have been raising my children. At the beginning the most difficult was to get my husband out of there (countryside), but today corn patty is our way of life, we bought our car, we build and we are, little by little, finishing our house here in the city. In each one can be observed a different story, but also the intersection between them in the fact of informality not being, today, a lack of option. Also, a choice of permanence in this situation.

When analyzing the interaction between work, home and family it can be noted that everyone shares their obligations with some relative. In the words of B, it sums up: "(...) the question of trust, sometimes we fight, we argue, we disagree about some things, but I have no doubt that this is much better..." (...) who already had a boss knows how it is. I've even had an employee, without registration too, but it's a lot of work, now only family, you can only rely on family, even if they let you down we solve". This report corroborates the issue of autonomy, pointed out by Kovács (2006) and

Rosenfield (2003). The choice of who to hire and how to hire. The family relationship also pervades these issues, and may perhaps be considered when discussing succession and culture, since corn patty is a typical local product, a local heritage. Its production and commercialization involves more than one family generation, as is the case of the interviewee F, in which the family third generation is already involved in the activity

As for autonomy, it is also possible to highlight the freedom that individuals have to establish their own working hours. However, there is some commitment due to necessity. "(...) if we do not come to work, we do not earn anything, this may be necessary at the end of the month... but we establish our own priorities. Here we mind our own business. If you want to arrive late you can, but it can not be too late or otherwise you do not find a parking place and the best spots fill up soon (...) (...) If you want to leave early on Saturday you do it, on holidays I do not work. (...) You just can not be too careful, otherwise another takes your place, but here we respect one another. No one lets you do that<sup>2</sup>". That is, the preservation of the group as an identity base, as observed by Rosenfield (2003) is also present.

The six interviewees, at some point in the conversation brought up the issue of pay and the Work Card. It is clear, that in informality they earn more than if they were working with their Work Card (CTPS) regularized. In this sense, it was identified that the two older interviewees, C and F, collect their social security contribution as a self-employed worker over the amount of a monthly minimum wage. The other individuals, however, do not yet do so, but the interviewee A stated that she had this concern, however, she will do so at the age of 45, since "contributing now or starting at 45 will not change the amount received" (Interviewee A). This, once again, demonstrates the question of autonomy, which within one's possibilities makes choices according to what they considers ideal for themselves, showing awareness even about social laws

A statement that draws attention is the issue of work and private life reconciliation. In an excerpt from her speech, interviewee E, who has worked in the production line of a chemical company and who shares the activities with her husband and two children, said:

"Everything has to be adjusted, our day starts in the morning, we load the car, we come here to sell, meanwhile my husband goes to the market to buy

what we need to make what we will bring tomorrow, if something in this 'logistics' of the business goes wrong, at any point, in the end we will have problems "(Interviewed E).

According to Dejours *et al.* (1994), this expresses that the reality of the work runs the risk of being transformed under the effect of a supplementation of subjectivity and is open to interpretation. Although he claims not to want to return to his former occupation, he identifies some discomfort within himself, performing activities that resemble his former profession. Thus, one can again see the strength of functional autonomy for the choice of individuals.

With regard to the meaning of work, in the discourse of all individuals it was possible to interpret that work is an "object of pride" and personal fulfillment. What can be extrapolated to the question of social insertion pointed out by Pereira *et al.*(2014), as for example, in the words of the interviewee F:

"... on the day that I do not come to work, which is a holiday, I am impatient, restless at home, walking from one place to another, I miss the friends here (...), (...) the customers, the merchants we see every day (...) (...) work is everything for me "(Interviewed F).

The reason of how and why each of these individuals opted (or did not choose) to go to the informal market includes a personal and indissociated issue of their history. Generalization is complex, as one might expect in the search for explanations of some phenomena in the social sciences. However, from the point of view, permanence in this type of activity, is, above all, the question and the search for the autonomy of the individual.

## 5. Final Considerations

This research aimed to contribute to the expansion of knowledge about the meaning of work, based on the analysis of the subjective dynamics of the worker and their relationship with their activities, concentrating efforts on the analysis of human behavior, in order to understand their option and permanence in the so called informal

activities. This is justified by the fact that this activity can not be considered as a transitory phenomenon.

Among the findings, it can be stated that, besides not being a transient phenomenon, for the interviewees, informality is by no means an outcome of the process of productive restructuring, but a social and structural reality of labor and insertion. That is, it is possible that for these individuals, informal work is not a temporary matter, lack of alternative, but rather, and, above all, an option.

Through the discourse of these people, it was possible to analyze the meaning of work in their lives by extrapolating questions related to remuneration. But the family issue and the "individual being" is indelible for these workers. In this way, the relation between man and work based on the social and individual historical context, principles that guide the construction of their identity and promote the recognition of their own "doing" is visualized.

With the study, which focused its efforts in understanding based on the socio-constructionist approach, it is hoped to contribute theoretically epistemologically so that other research questions are elaborated and other researches about informal work are approached through other analysis lenses, based on the different actors, through the interpretation of informal actors and / or in different locations, which will allow comparisons and other findings

As limits, it is relevant to clarify, although, in the case of a preliminary study, its realization made possible an initial knowledge and understanding about a limited sample of workers from the informal sector, from a single segment from one city. In order for the issues here studied to be broadened and deepened, it is important that further studies be conducted on the subject. This is a comprehensive and at the same time very private issue with many facets.

As a future agenda one can draw works: from the perspective of power; functional autonomy and culture; social representation; among others. These studies, as presented, can contribute both academically, with respect to the themes of work psychodynamics and social theories, as well as in the scope of management practices, especially public and private for territorial development and for the promotion of citizenship. In this sense, it is suggested the elaboration of "new academic looks", that put the subjects at the epicenter of the investigations, elevating them to the condition of social constructors of their own reality. One should not consider that the origin and persistence of the structure of inequality rests solely on the domination of the non-

privileged groups (dominated) by the privileged (dominant) groups.

### **Remarks:**

At this point in the conversation there was a chill, but some resentment can be translated. Whether it's working under the tutelage of a woman, (e) or still being her mother-in-law.

<sup>2</sup> Sellers are organized by the Association of Autonomous Entrepreneurs of the Food Segment (ASSEASA), which also collaborates to maintain the organization in their activities.

<sup>3</sup> The respondent A demonstrates knowledge about the waiting period to make up the right to retire at the age of 60, in the case of the female taxpayer, which is at least 180 monthly contributions and without interruptions.

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