

BRAZILIAN WOMEN, INVISIBLE WORKERS: THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN
STREET VENDORS IN BRAZIL

by

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Abstract

This study focuses on experiences of women workers in Brazilian street markets, as told in their own words. Feminist epistemology informs this study, including face-to-face interviews as well as participant observation. Participants share how they became informal entrepreneurs, offering a unique perspective of market work that is local and personal.

Two major concepts inform this study. First, local gender regimes emphasizes context as influential in women's practices and perceptions; both opportunity structures and cultural milieux restrain earning potential. Equally important is the second concept, *luta*, or "fighting energy," a concept that emerged from interviews. *Luta* expresses agency that guided these women toward an entrepreneurial decision.

Interviews reveal that traditional expectations, conducive to acceptance of gendered experiences for these women's mothers and grandmothers, were transformed into new meaning in the marketplace. However, they do not openly deny dominant ideological practices. In a process that includes both resistance and accommodation, they maintain their business, but keep religious ideologies of obedience and responsibility for household tasks. These ideologies, mostly unacknowledged, may keep some of them as *feirantes* –market vendors who see themselves and their business as limited. To others, the street becomes a preparatory stage to engage in larger business endeavors; they become *empreendedoras informais*, who demonstrate an entrepreneurial vision to take the business beyond a small market stall.

Findings support the feminist postulate that gendered structural factors significantly shape experiences of women, but also that a strong element of agency marks practices of Brazilian women in the marketplace. In particular, this study contributes to an international scholarship by and for women, exploring cultural influences on their life processes and perceptions. Literature on women and the informal economy should continue to include the pervasiveness of gendered ideologies without neglect to women's capacity for producing change through human agency.

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CHAPTER 1 - Introduction and Theoretical Considerations

On every downtown city block here, men and women sit hawking their wares. From Bic lighters to Snickers candy bars to Brut shaving cream to Japanese television sets.

This helter-skelter commerce is only the most visible part of a vast informal economy that includes home building in Brazil, large parts of the bus system in Lima, Peru, and textile manufacturing in Bolivia. (Nash, 1992)

The introductory quote gives a glimpse of the many facets of the informal economy, and this study unveils a segment of that world where women face and overcome hardships of the Brazilian street economy. The informal economy is defined by Portes and Haller (2005) as the general market sector where certain types of income and the means for its generation are unregulated and which operate within a legal and social environment where similar activities are regulated. No taxes are paid and no regulations are present in this sector of the economy. Therefore, the revenue generated is not included in the government's Gross National Product (GNP), and thus, remains invisible in many ways. Informal workers may be situated within such sectors as a street economy, an underground economy, informal microenterprises or extralegal economies, all of which remain mostly unmeasured. In particular, this study explores the situation in which Brazilian women participate in the informal street market economy in a Brazilian city, Goiania.

Studies on informal work have become a globalized phenomenon in the sense that its variations have been studied in diverse regions of the world within the last 30 years. Examples include Babb's (2005) study of street foods in Nicaragua, Clark's (1994) work with women in the markets in Africa, Cunningham's (2001) study of street vendors in Mexico, and De Soto's (2000) attempts to measure difficulties of establishing a formal business in Peru. While these studies are valuable in assessing a wide variety of informal markets, no systematic research has addressed women's experiences in the Brazilian street economy, which provides an abundance of informal markets and a unique opportunity to observe its various forms within a single location.

As is shown with previous research, the variability of services offered is wide: domestic services, childcare, the sales of food, clothes, crafts, and drugs, to name a few. The informal economy caters to all kinds of needs, following the same rules as the traditional economy. Where there is a high demand for a product, there is an opportunity for business. The informal economy obviously meets the needs of customers and workers, but because much of it is invisible and undocumented, less is known about ways in which women enter its gates, as well as the advantages and disadvantages they encounter.

Unregulated markets carry several benefits for workers. Certainly, it offers opportunities to those who are outside the purview of the traditional economy. The informal economy provides opportunities for income generation and access to goods and services for low-income populations that are denied access to formal sector mechanisms because of the inadequate division of labor, as well as functioning as a "glue," providing form and stability to social life (Maher, 2007: 61).

Benefits of informal markets go beyond individual workers. Even in a big Brazilian city such as Goiania—a prosperous city in a developing country—the population still has great needs to be supplied by affordable goods and services. Domestic services and childcare are vital to guarantee that some women can invest on their careers without worrying about the burden of the social expectations regarding responsibility for domestic labor. Such needs allow other women—mostly immigrants, black and poor—to be hired to do housecleaning and childcare. Sales of accessories, clothes, and food below market price fulfill the needs of those who cannot afford to buy the latest styles or famous brands, or who cannot go home to have a meal. Vendors sell fruits and vegetables, offering the population fresh products at more affordable prices, which

make a big difference for those who are unemployed, or who do not make sufficient income to afford products sold at the grocery store. Moreover, there are those who sell drugs, needles, rent a stem to smoke crack and act as *steerers* and *touts*. While such activity may seem harmful on the surface, others argue that these activities fulfill needs of those who are addicted, without placing them at greater risk. The informal economy is a world that provides for the needs of those who are not in a position of power: customers and workers, women, poor, immigrants, addicted.

Ethnicity, race, gender and age have especially important organizing roles in the constitution of the informal economy (Maher, 2007:64), precisely because of the absence of official regulation. As such, these social statuses take on an exaggerated meaning. Thus, the study of informal economy is directly linked to ways in which categories of social difference interact in complex ways, or intersectionality. This means that several levels of oppression are not stacked up but are interrelated, and in order to understand one system of oppression, it is important to look at how it is shaped by other levels of oppression that are present. Therefore, we need to look at several systems of oppression that are at work affecting the individual or a certain group -- their gender, race, class, nationality, sexuality, and other points of difference. In this paper, I explore the perceptions of women street vendors of such diverse systems of oppression in a large capital in Brazil, Goiania. I propose that the experiences of these women sometimes results in an innovative entrepreneurial vision that instills the creation of a new role -- as informal entrepreneurs or *empreendedoras* -- that defies their past experiences, education and social expectations. This thesis focuses on facilitating the understanding of their experiences and dual lives through their own words. These experiences are analyzed with consideration to the environment that is specific to Brazilian women, in particular women who live in Goiania. For that reason, this study includes a description of the institutional structure in Brazil and in Goiania -- politics, economics, race, and gender relations -- as aspects of the reality of Brazilian women. These particularities of Brazil are included only as a descriptive depiction of the reality that surrounds women street vendors in that particular region.

This descriptive study explores the work life of women vendors in the Brazilian street economy, as they relate experiences in their own words. In particular, the research question asks, how did these women come to develop their street market business, and what are their perceptions of how their work and personal life connect and conflict. The focus is on how they

got into the street market as entrepreneurial women, their negotiation of work and home life, and their vision for the future. In a work context situated between home-based labor and street vending, these women's work often becomes invisible. In this study, I hope to make their work contributions more apparent as they share unique insight on issues such as employment opportunities, cultural expectations, and their emotional engagement in the development of an informal business

Institutional Structure in Brazil

Changing Politics and Economy in Brazil

When dealing with the phenomenon of the informal economy in Brazil, it is useful to assess the political and economical context that contextualizes its occurrence. In recent years, the major change that has happened in the country in political and economical arenas was the introduction of Neoliberal politics in the 1990s.

Neoliberalism can be defined as a political and economic strategy that includes several rules. First basic rule of the market includes liberating private enterprise from any bonds from governments, regardless of how much damage it produces; greater openness to international trade and investment; reduction of wages by de-unionizing workers and eliminating workers' rights; and no price controls. Another strategy includes cutting public expenditure for social services, such as education and health care. Third, Neoliberalism also promotes deregulation, which consists on reducing the government's regulation of everything that may reduce profits. Fourth, privatization is promoted, including that of state-owned enterprises, services and goods such as electricity, water, hospitals, banks, toll highways, to name a few. Fifth, Neoliberal politics also includes a plan to eliminate the concept of public good and community, replacing it with individual responsibility (Martinez and Garcia, 1996).

Martinez and Garcia's blunt definition is illustrated by the results of the policy. According to Bresser-Pereira (2003), the attempt to achieve economic stability through Neoliberalism failed miserably. The country watched its per capita income fall from 21.6% of that of a developed country average in 1980, to 16.5% in 1995, and 15.5% in 2001. These facts are the proof of its failure to combat economic stagnation. Other results of these failed policies were higher rates of unemployment, or underemployment, and the deepening of social inequality. The headlines of the analysis scholars and journalists provided at the time when

Neoliberal politics came into effect are symbolic of its results: “New Ways of Exclusion and Old Ways of Subordination” (Freitas , 2004). Tom Peters, in an article published by the most popular weekly magazine in the country stated that, “to destroy and create has always been one of the capitalistic laws, but now the destruction is not only accepted, but also encouraged” (2003).

As can be noticed, the implementation of neoliberal actions in Brazil has affected the population in many ways. We can contemplate the growth of the informal economy as one of possible results of Neoliberalism. Because of its informal nature, it is possible only to speculate the idea of growth, since measuring the number of businesses that are informal with accuracy is a task that has not been accomplished yet. In an article published in the New York Times in 1992 called “Informal Latin Economy Saves the Day,” the informal economy is referred to as the governments’ best friend in many countries in Latin America, serving as a helpful tool in avoiding social unrest as well as buying governments time to attract foreign investment to these countries:

Many Latin governments are in the delicate and lengthy process of reordering their economies, laying off tens of thousands of workers and cutting back on social programs. But that is not resulting in long lines of the unemployed because the informal economy is creating millions of jobs, feeding families and generating some of the most vibrant economic growth on the continent. (Nash, 1992).

Another article in the same newspaper talks about the street sales of women’s underwear in Argentina:

With the rise in unemployment and illegal immigration from neighboring countries, there has been a blossoming of curbside commerce in Buenos Aires, as peddlers hawk everything from toilet paper and toy guns to roasted peanuts and electric plugs. City officials could not estimate the exact number of street vendors but said they believe the number has risen steeply in recent years. The peddlers set up shop in front of popular stores, and shop owners often call the police to chase them away. (Sims, 1995).

As it is possible to note, even though the growth of the informal economy or the influence of economic changes on this alleged growth were not precisely quantified, the issue

has been discussed in the Media and major means of communication, supporting our understanding of that tendency.

Race, Gender, and Identity in Brazil

The context of race relations in Brazil has attracted not only scientists from the country itself, producing knowledge that would be reproduced around the world (Gilberto Freyre, 1966), but also non Latin-American scientists. Some were intrigued by rumors about race relations in the country: “We heard that the large Negro population lived with ease and freedom among the general population, and we wanted to know the details” (Landes, 1947: 1). In times where racial unrest was a reality in the U.S, Landes was faced with what she described as a different reality in her ethnographic study. “This book about Brazil does not discuss race problems there, because there were none” (Landes, 1947: vi).

Based on the knowledge produced during these early studies, the country has been seen as an example of racial democracy. However, several other studies have been produced afterwards, showing a different reality. The nonexistence of a binary system of differentiation between Blacks and whites granted Brazil and its alleged lack of discrimination with a feeling of superiority in terms of racial issues. In reality, what was found was that racial identity in the country was much more flexible and fluid than in the United States (Daniel, 2006). The idea of miscegenation and the existence of a ternary classification of individuals according to race (*branco, mulato, negro*) made race identity and race discrimination less apparent issues.

Only later in the twentieth century did the image of racial democracy of the country start to be challenged by scientists who started to perceive the subtleties of race and class discriminations in the country. The reason the Black community was in conditions of poverty and lower social status was believed to relate to social class issues, instead of racial ones.

Since millions of whites were experiencing similar disadvantages at the lowest levels of society, policy makers could easily dismiss the idea of implementing race-specific programs, which they most likely would consider racist and against the Universalist and color-blind tenets of the Brazilian Constitution. (Daniel, 2006: 178).

What was found was that “researchers generally agreed that Brazilians who were phenotypically more African were disproportionately located at the bottom of society in terms of

education, occupation and income” (Daniel, 2006: 179). These facts are expressed in popular culture, where black women or *mulatas* have a common role in the soap operas, or *novelas*. Their roles are usually that of maids, nannies, or cooks. The only variance of that pattern is a character performed by a black woman or mulata, who attracts attention by being sensual and malicious, whose best attributes to offer would be her exacerbated sexuality.

In the beginning of every year, during *Carnaval*, the element that is in vogue is a black woman who has no name. She is commonly called “*Mulata Globeleza*.” The *mulata* is the epitome of sensuality and sexuality. In the context of Carnival, the *Mulata Globeleza* performs on a TV ad, dancing samba and wearing nothing but paint, which emphasizes her curves and reinforces the sensual character. Whether it is during Carnival, or performing a role in a soap opera, an African-Brazilian woman is always known for her sensuality and malevolence, or for her domestic abilities.

Similarly, the African-Brazilian man is the individual who has nothing but his malevolence, dance, music and especially his criminal tendencies to offer. This reality is present in Soares et al (2005) ethnographic study on the Brazilian Black youth and violence, where they describe, “a black person walking on the streets of a large Brazilian city is socially invisible, but a weapon is the passport to becoming visible.” That imagery is the reality of many young African-Brazilian men, who become part of the drug trafficking business.

Thus, the reality of Black women and men in the country is that they are still overrepresented in the lower levels of society. Black women are overrepresented in lower positions of the informal economy, illustrating the pattern of stratification of informal labor market. They constitute the majority of domestic labor force. Maids, cooks, nannies are overwhelmingly black. They are part of this niche of the informal economy that comprises the realm of domestic life. This is a reality in the markets that are the focus of this thesis. This is also true in the context of street markets in Goiania, where the majority of participants is white.

Labor Markets

Traditionally, the analysis of labor markets tended to focus on the formal economy, based on the western model. An important influence of Rostow’s (1960) modernization school suggested that the West was the representation of success that the other nations, which were considered primitive, should follow. At this time, the informal markets remained unseen, though

it was present in many developed nations or First World countries, as well as developing nations, or Third World countries, using the categorization of the time. These studies can be considered flawed, since they did not consider the context of the economies of the developing nations and were based on ethnocentric ideas, causing a divide between the “civilized” and the “primitive.”

Later on, with the criticism of the modernization school and the appearance of other perspectives, such as the dependency school (Cardoso and Falleto, 1979), and the world systems school (Wallerstein, 1976), a closer appreciation to the poor nations and their idiosyncrasies took place though never losing sight of the West. The West was still used as a standard parameter to development. At that time, poorer nations were being called Peripheries, or Third World countries, Developing countries, Non-industrialized nations, and so forth -- all representing names that alluded to this comparison. Thus, even though researchers started looking at specificities of other nations, they were still based on a Western parameter to evaluate their findings, showing a Western bias on social science.

Similarly, studies of informal economy have also been limited by bias. This time, a gender bias is imposed. Many studies of informal economy claim to be gender-blind (Wilson, 1998), and gender-blind can be understood in this context as based on a male perspective, or as unacknowledging women’s unique, and relatively less powerful, structural position.. It is estimated that two-thirds of the female active population in developing countries works in the informal economy, and the proportion is as high as 84% in sub-Saharan Africa (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, 2004). Thus, the analysis of the informal economy is also incomplete if the participation of women is not acknowledged, considering they represent the majority of the participants in this type of economy.

Studies on informal economies only included gender as a variable later, in the field of informal labor markets. The prevalence of women in the context of informal economies in developing countries is recognized by several scholars and organizations that dedicate their efforts to discuss the situation of women in this invisible turf.

Informal Economies in Developing Countries and Gender

Several key works provide a framework within which to understand the layers of the informal street economy in Brazil. More specifically, this paper sets out to understand women’s experiences in the street market economy, and how individual and contextual factors influence their participation in the realm of informality. Carr and Chen (2001) say that the link between

working in the informal economy and being poor is stronger for women than for men. For example, greater percentages of women than men work in informal economies worldwide, and their participation is marked by a gender gap in wages and incomes. This is due, in part, to the fact that women are underrepresented in positions of higher payment in the formal economy, and thus are more vulnerable to risk and exposure in the informal economy.

Many scholars recognize the close connection between women and informal work. According to data from Women in the Informal Economy Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), an organization involved directly with women and the informal economy around the world, this phenomenon was once expected to reduce economic growth; it is now seen to provide the majority of employment in developing countries. Recognizing the link between the informal economy, gender and poverty, WIEGO seeks to include those who are excluded.

The informal economy is responsible for about 83% of new jobs in Latin America and the Caribbean. Women in this context are generally home-based workers and street vendors, and their decision to invest in this niche is related to low salaries and changes introduced by globalization, with its dramatic impacts on employment and production, which often leads to the creation of various “non-standard” forms of work. This organization’s efforts at data gathering on women in informal economies provide valuable information that inspires research and activists’ efforts.

Participation of women is key to development of the informal enterprise, but their participation is often intertwined with an intensely gendered character. Husbands and partners often control their business and income, or relegate women to minor tasks that do not develop their management skills (Tinker, 1997; McKeever, 1998). Women’s work in the informal economy is similar to women’s work in the private sphere, in which women are primarily responsible for the household, but their performance is often subordinated to male authority. These facts demonstrate that women’s work in the informal economy is not outside the reality of male dominance.

While patriarchal features of the informal economy are common features of both developed and developing countries, many of its characteristics appear to be much less hidden in developing countries like Brazil. One might affirm that this form of work is more prevalent in developing countries, where poverty and lack of options are widespread.

De Soto describes a common marketplace in Latin America, a scenery that is already part of the landscape of the place, as well as naturality that it is seen by the population of these countries:

You need only open a window or take a taxi from the airport to your hotel to see city perimeters crowded with homes, armies of vendors hawking wares in the streets, glimpses of bustling workshops behind garage doors, and battered busses crisscrossing the grimy streets....Extralegality is often perceived as a 'marginal' issue...In fact, it is legality (De Soto, 2000: 29-30).

The phenomenon of extralegal economy is known to anyone who has been to a developing country. De Soto (2000) justifies the fact that the economies in developing countries are dominated by the informal sector due to what he calls "obstacles of legality". This term is used to differentiate those who do not have "right" contacts or money to hire someone who does from others who are afforded full legal status. De Soto identifies these contacts as professionals involved in the bureaucratic work of public offices, where knowing the "right" person or having money to be able to "know" someone may lead the aspiring entrepreneur to easier access to markets. When studying several developing countries, De Soto realized that bureaucracy and costs of legalizing a business through the honest paths are simply too high. In an attempt to open a new and legal business in Peru, his research team spent six hours a day filling out forms, standing in lines and making bus trips to central Lima to obtain certifications required to have a legally operating business. They finalized the process in 289 days, and its final cost was \$1,231, which is 31 times the monthly minimum wage in the country. Overwhelmingly, for most entrepreneurs, this cost is simply prohibitive.

In response to the law's impediments, the extralegal sector flourishes, accommodating the ones that the legal system excludes in some ways. Even though they are excluded, these informal sector markets unwittingly represent a great source of capital. For example, in Mexico, an attempt to measure income produced by informal "micro businesses" totaled \$2.65 million, in the year of 1994 (De Soto, 2000, p. 29). It is only possible to speculate the amount of capital produced in informal contexts, but considering the prevalence of this modality of work in some regions, the amount of capital produced can be large.

Robert Plummer (2005), in the article, "The Ruses that Spring from Brazil's Woes," comments on these "obstacles to legality" mentioned by De Soto, when he says that high levels

of Brazilian bureaucracy have always encouraged a flexible approach to rules, merely to get anything done at all. There is even an expression that describes this strategy to get around bureaucratic impediments: “*jeitinho brasileiro*” or “little Brazilian way.” In a society where about 60% of the population suffers from lack of schools, housing, health care, and so many other needs, Plummel believes it is very hard to have these same people respect the law when they are not being respected. Even President Getulio Vargas (who ran the country from 1930 to 1945 in a military dictatorship and was democratically reelected in 1951), used to have a saying that was a reflection of this flexibility: “For my friends, anything -- for my enemies, the law.” Thus, this statement illustrates non-standard ways of usage of bureaucratic work, becoming an uncomplicated step for some, or a hindrance for others.

Despite all attention that has been given to many aspects of informal enterprises and women’s participation, virtually no academic attention has been turned to Brazilian women street vendors who traverse boundaries between legal and extralegal markets, between traditional patriarchal structures and independence as informal entrepreneurs. Based on a consideration of informal economy through a contemporary gender theory perspective, this study assesses women’s street vendors perceptions of the formal and informal economy structures, their descriptions of how they were introduced to this niche of the economy, and ways in which their lives, families, and relationships are influenced by informal businesses. The informal street marketplace is regarded here as a local gender regime, which is explored as either repeating the modes of action that are common in the domestic sphere, or as creating new ways of behavior that contest the larger gender order and hierarchical structures of informal economy.

This project addresses previous flaws in the literature and offers some correctives. Based on feminist and contemporary gender theory perspectives, and looking at reality and context of the country of origin of participants, this study represents an attempt to offer a more comprehensive view of experiences of women workers in informal markets in Brazil. This unique setting offers an instructive case study in which the Americanized standard divisions between formal and informal, legal and illegal, markets are not normative. Qualitative interviews in Brazil inform this study. An organizational scheme follows, allowing the reader to have an overview of this project.

Chapter 2 offers theoretical framework and literature review that informs this study. It includes fundamentals and development of gender theory, the acknowledgement of

intersectionality and culture as important organizing structures in the study of women and their work in Brazil. Next, a compilation of studies and issues that have been discussed in the literature about women and the informal economy around the world. At this point, there is a discussion of terms useful to this study, such as opportunity structure, resources, networks, power, resistance, and entrepreneurship. This discussion is followed by a hierarchical model (Figure 2.1) that shows the hierarchical structure that is present in informal labor markets. That model shows the positions occupied by informal entrepreneurs, informal workers, and workers in the criminal economy, and the individuals holding these positions. These individuals not only hold different positions in the sphere of informality, they are also exposed in different ways to risk of poverty and arrest. Last, a conceptual model (Figure 2.2) shows the shape this study took once data were collected.

Chapter 3 is devoted to the methods used in this study and it contains information about the location of the study, researcher's positionality, field entry plans, and what happened in reality. It also contains details on the sample, interviews and data collection, operationalization of concepts, and data analysis.

Chapter 4 contains Data Analysis itself, gathering several themes within the instances present in the Conceptual Model that informs this study.

Chapter 5 concludes this study with a summary of findings, researcher's thoughts on theory, a discussion of research environment as a global marketplace, personal reflections after the completion of the study, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2 - Theoretical Framework and Literature

Review

Gender Theory

Earlier Feminism

Arguments of "naturalness" or of divine determination for differentiation between men and women, prevalent prior to the development of gender theory were soon the cause of debate by earlier feminism. After the Enlightenment, the discussion was opened, because people

would not suffice with the justification that relationships between men and women were defined by God's will. With the rise of science, many questions needed to be answered.

Darwin's evolutionary theory focused on sex as a topic to be observed and questioned. Sexology was created as a field of study that intended to study the sexual variations, with many studies describing what was normal, and what was not.

Freud, an important theorist at that time, analyzed sex in a controversial way. He tried to find biological explanations for psychological processes, but ended up developing a theory that involved the social sphere instead of the biological one. In "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1953), Freud argues the inexistence of any patterns of sexual character as completely established. His theory focused on social relationships, configuration of families, and social contexts of emotional development. Even though his ideas were a source of unrest and controversy at the time, they are still important for the construction of contemporary gender theory, due to its pioneering idea of looking at gender as a process.

Sex roles theory was created following the social theory that was in vogue at the time, functionalism. Sex roles theory is based on the idea that there are social expectations that provide a social script for individuals. This theory was exceptionally influential in gender theory, emphasizing the importance of the socialization process in the development of personality, expressed in various studies. An important study for that moment of gender theory is Lever's (1974) study of children where she stresses the importance of socialization in development of skills that will define their future careers, preparing girls to motherhood and boys for competitive job markets. This frame of thought is still influential in terms of common-sense knowledge of gender, particularly because it has an underlying image of biological sex categories. However, it does not include the concept of power, which is pivotal in any gender theory. Its determinism and lack of focus on power makes it an incomplete theory, which oversimplifies the complexity of gender.

Contemporary Gender Theory

While bodies can be in many ways physiologically different, they are in fact, "transformed by social practices to fit into the salient categories of society, the most pervasive of which are 'female' and 'male' and 'women' and 'men.'" (Lorber, 2000: 14). Contemporary gender theory committed to investigate social components of gender that were dismissed by

earlier theories. Within these developments, various studies are used here to understand the experiences of women entrepreneurs in the Brazilian street economy.

The understanding of gender as a social construction derives from the work of Goffman. Goffman (1976) diverted ideas of gender from naturalness, or essentialism. His focus on gender display and a dramaturgical approach to the performances of everyday life is an important addition to the understanding of gender. The consideration of gender as a social construction provokes an important separation between gender and sex categories, and ultimately opens the possibility to admit that gender can structure distinctive domains of social experience (Stacey and Thorne, 1985). The shift from biological to social construction of gender opened possibilities for the study of several instances of social life structured by gender.

Connell (1987) proposes three domains shaped by the meanings attached to gender, the division of labor, power and cathexis. These three dimensions represent three realms in which differential expectations and rewards are granted for men and women based on a gender ideology. These dimensions determine work opportunities, social power, patterns of emotion attachment and desire differentially for men and women. These elements, while still disguised on arguments of essentialness, such as men are “naturally tough,” women are “naturally emotional”, function as constraints for further practice, in which individuals are under constant scrutiny, as to whether or not they fit in expectations created for their gender.

West and Zimmerman (1987), through the concept of “doing gender”, further discuss the construction of gender “not merely an individual attribute, but as something that is accomplished in interaction with others” (p. 135). Under this theory, the construction of a gendered self is described as a product of interactional work, where individuals are evaluated constantly as to the appropriateness of their behavior and attitudes to their gender. Several studies have analyzed the gender system and its mandates, as well as consequences of going against them in a context of uneven distribution of power (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Lucal, 1999; Fishman, 1978; Yancey Martin, 2003; Smith, 1990). However, gender theory tended to consider women a homogeneous group, with similar experiences. The concept of intersectionality came to offer some correctives.

Intersectionality

The development of feminist theory while certainly a great advancement did not prevent feminists to have the same exclusionary practices they were trying to combat. Early feminist theories, by claiming to be universally applicable to women, promoted “the notion of a generic

woman who is white and middle class.” (Hill Collins, 1990). Thus, as feminist theory sought to give women a voice, they ended up silencing all women who were not part of the dominant group.

Attempts to consider experiences of women who did not fit the white stereotype relied on mathematical metaphors (Epstein, 1973). These models were firmly rooted in dichotomous systems, in an either/or perspective, which led to an understanding of difference as a ranking system, where one category is privileged in relation to the other.

Patricia Hill Collins (1990), in *Black Feminist Thought* introduced the idea race, gender, class, nationality, and other categories of difference as part of an interlocking system of oppression, termed intersectionality. This model replaces either/or standpoints for a both/and stance, where individuals are affected by several systems of oppression in which they may occupy positions of oppressed or oppressor dependent on the social circumstances they are inserted.

From the understanding of gender as part of an intricate system of domination, arises the need for inclusion of different perspectives, bringing out difference as an indispensable element. This movement is focused not only on difference, but it intends to unveil power relations that accompany difference. Based on that standpoint, feminist scholars in the United States have produced a host of studies trying to demonstrate the workings of interlocking systems of oppression, and how differently situated social groups have varying degrees of social power (Baca Zinn and Thornton Dill, 2003; West and Fenstermaker, 1995; Williams, 2002b; Ferguson, 2001).

Internationally, scholars have also concentrated efforts on illustrating elements of difference. Espiritu (2000) shows how Filipina women assert cultural superiority, attempting to decenter whiteness, through the maintenance of the gendered discourse of morality. While Filipinos see the U.S. as the “land of opportunity” economically, they also question moral practices in *America*. Similarly, Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (2000) unveil transformations on meanings of motherhood for Latinas experiencing “transnational motherhood,” because of women’s financial struggles in global capitalism. While this new meaning accommodates situations of temporal and spatial separations, it also contradicts models of motherhood in white, middle class groups, as well as Latinas’ ideologies of motherhood.

As it is possible to note, culture is another important element of difference that needs to be addressed in the discussion of intersectionality. Even though the term had been commonly seen as solely including race, gender, and class, it is important to keep in mind the countless categories of difference that must be given significance. Thus, cultural milieu is another layer in the understanding of women's experiences of oppression and resistance, particularly for the women in this study.

Cultural Milieu

Within the issue of intersectionality and difference, issues of race and class are commonly seen as the main categories of difference. Nevertheless, culture must be considered as another source of difference, especially in this study. The experiences of women street vendors in Brazil are not only affected by their status of women, of their race, and class. Their experiences must be understood in the light of the ideological background that permeates their lives, and differs from that of women elsewhere. For that reason, cultural milieu is included here as another level of difference to consider.

Several ideologies support the gender regime that will frame the lives of women street vendors in Brazil, and will be the source of their resistance efforts. Brazil is the largest Catholic country in Latin America, and as such, religion is a relevant matter in the construction of ideologies of righteousness, and moral behavior. On that note, the ideology of *Marianismo* is significant to the understanding of gender ideology in that reality. This ideological construct is based on the cult of Virgin Mary as an icon of femininity, in which personal and sexual identities are associated with virginity and motherhood (Young, 1989).

“Blessed art thou among women”, a verse of Hail Mary (catholic prayer) illustrates how the devotion to the Virgin results in the imagery that puts women in the position of guardians of the family. Women are the ones responsible to hold the family together both spiritually and emotionally, with the mother's steadfast dedication, mirroring the commitment of Mary to her son, Jesus and to humanity. Mary is the epitome of motherhood, womanhood, and purity, as Jesus was conceived without sin, or sexual intercourse. The intervention of the Holy Spirit impregnated Mary with the child that would be the impersonation of God, and came to be sacrificed for the sake of humanity. That ideology supports a gendered division of labor, passive role of mother, and wife, with the woman as a tireless caregiver, passively receiving the Lord's rules, maintaining her purity. (Payne and Nassar, 2008).

As a predominantly Catholic country, profound religious values are internalized in Brazilian population. That is a reality even in individuals who do not profess any religion at all. Religion becomes, then, a matter of cultural identity, reinforcing values that are representative of the prevailing social structure, influencing community values, family expectations and the life experiences of women. These values are representative of the larger Gender Order, a general pattern of gender relations. This structure is embedded in the expectations around gender of religions, cultures and all institutions of societies. Hence, the need to consider the particular cultural milieu that contextualizes the lives of the women street vendors studied here.

Gender Order and Local Gender Regimes

Connell (1987) defines Gender Order as the pattern of power relations between men and women” (p.99), where the distribution of power is dependent upon categories of gender, and it is supported by a gender ideology. Based on the assumption of natural differences, this ideology takes a status of objective reality, regardless of factual evidence to the contrary.

Within the larger Gender Order, individual institutions or places have their own tenets of gender relations that are consonant with the prevailing gender order. Connell defines these tenets as “local gender regimes”, or “the state of play gender relations in a given institution” (p.120). Connell defends that even “Diffuse institutions, like markets, large and sprawling ones like the state, and informal milieu like street corner peer-group life, also are structured in terms of gender, and can be characterized by their gender regimes” (p.120). The concept of gender regime adds cultural milieu as an intrinsic part of the understanding of gender, indispensable in the study of women informal entrepreneurs in Brazil.

Local gender regimes is a concept that has informed a host of studies, in the understanding of gender relations. These studies have focused in the most varied contexts, such as the gender relations in the workplace (Connell, 2006), the development of young women’s identities (Williams 2002 a; Williams 2002 b), or gender relations in the Middle East (Doumato and Posuney, 2003). All of these studies take particular focus on the local gender regimes that contextualize the lives of particular women, in order to produce a gender analysis.

In the light of this concept, it is proposed here that local gender regimes are the basis of our understanding of the processes in which gender is present as an organizing structure in the

lives of women street vendors in Brazil and their work, and how they negotiate and provoke change in that context.

Women and the informal economy around the world

As mentioned previously, there has been a variety of studies and findings in regards to the presence of the informal economy in developing countries. Several of these studies focus on the argument of the mechanisms that make possible the existence of the informal sector, such as “obstacles to legality” or the usefulness of this type of economy to the state, known as the “cushion” function. The “cushion” function is related to the contribution of the informal economy to the political stability and economic viability of poorer nations. In other words, by employing the unemployed and offering services and products at a lower cost to the population, the informal economy compensates for the states’ inability to promote economic stability (De Soto, 1987; Centeno and Portes, 2006; Guersi, 1997). These studies, perhaps for their focus on larger structural issues, neglect to inform the demographic composition of the informal economy.

Other studies focus on the prevalence of women’s work in the informal sector of the economy, concentrating in diverse regions. The importance of the local gender regime defines the meaning of women’s work in markets in diverse localities. That meaning may be as a source of dignity and affirmation of gender identity as documented in West Africa (Clark, 1994) or , a means of survival or a strategy for raising standards of living in a new environment, for immigrant women in The United States (Fernandez-Kelly, 2000). Hence, the importance of awareness of culture, as an essential factor that informs the behavior and attitudes of women.

Studies on women in the informal economy with a feminist perspective, understand women as a majority who is largely excluded from the privileges of ownership of a business and the control of their income. With attention to structures of inequality, many studies have described the stratification of the context of informal street economy. These studies illustrate the prevalent social inequality and uneven distribution of wealth and power existent in the informal economy, where women are in a position of subordination, and despair, struggling to survive (Clark, 1994; House, 1984; McKeever, 1998; Kibria, 2000; Wilson, 1988; Cunningham, 2001).

Descriptions of women street vendors as entrepreneurs are rare in this field of study. What the present study brings to the informal street economy literature is an innovative context of informal markets where women engage in based on an entrepreneurial vision. For the

purposes of this study, I define entrepreneurial vision as the attitude particular of entrepreneurs, of engaging in an enterprise, envisioning innovative ways for its development, and increase profitability. This entrepreneurial vision is developed in a particular Brazilian gender regime that provides women with mostly gendered skills, which, in its turn, does not suffice economically to meet growing family needs faced daily. This entrepreneurial vision is seen here as leading them to the development of an informal business, producing an income that is significantly larger than opportunities offered in the formal economy, and providing much more than only survival needs.

The structure of the informal sector has a very similar pattern of stratification to that of the formal sector, having a hierarchy of power and status. The structure of the informal street economy is described here in two basic categories, the informal entrepreneurs, who own businesses and the informal workers, who work for the informal entrepreneurs. The former is a class that is formed predominantly by white males; the latter position is occupied by women, immigrants, and people of color.

White working class males tend to have greater access to work in the top tier areas, whereas minorities, women, and immigrants are disproportionately represented in the least-stable, lowest-paying and lowest-status secondary jobs (Maher, 1997:65). Statistics show that the participation of women in the position of entrepreneurs is 32%, while they represent 68% of the informal workers (International Labor Office, 2002: 18). Women not only have different experiences than men in matters of ownership, but they also face differently situations of risk.

Informal entrepreneurs are in a situation of lower risk compared to informal workers. However, the discussion of risk has to take place within to the context of gender. Informal entrepreneurs do have a lower risk of poverty, because they are already in a situation of superiority. By owning the means of production, they actually have a source of capital, should the business face a crisis. Nonetheless, this privilege is not equal for both sexes. It is dependent upon differential expectations for both sexes, dictated by the Gender Order and the Local Gender Regimes of a certain area.

Power, Resistance and Entrepreneurship

Sexual ideology organizes discourse, symbolism, and practice, and must be understood, according to Connell (1987), with attention to context, institutionalization, and group formation

(p. 242). Within this context, gender and power can be described as intimately interrelated concepts, where the interpretation of gender relations is disguised by biological justifications. The naïve participant in this scheme will thus see gender and its accompanying outcomes as a natural phenomenon instead of an ideological practice.

The understanding of gender relations defined as a natural phenomenon is the difficulty of dealing with gender theory. The separation between men and women appears natural, becoming an objective reality. On that note, gender scholars challenge the “naturalness” justification. This challenge has profound consequences to society, bringing the analysis of gender not as a biological fact, but as socially constructed, leading to the discussion of gender as a social structure.

This social organization also comes along with a power ideology that is imperative in all relationships in which the social actors engage. Dorothy Smith (1990) affirms that knowledge, ideology, ideas, concepts, and interpretations are socially organized and constitute practices in which women have been silenced in society. The social world is generally created without women’s say in it, causing a disjunction between how a woman experiences the world and the concepts and theoretical schemes by which society’s self-consciousness is inscribed. Further, she says that under the traditional gender order, a man’s success is connected to a woman’s work in keeping the house, caring for the children, looking after him, and managing his life behind the scenes. The better she does her job, the more it goes unnoticed. She links this fact with Marx’s concept of alienation, where work women do contribute to the strength of the very gender order that oppresses them. Wilson (1998) exemplifies this idea when describing women who work in the informal economy with their families, where they refer to their participation not as work, but as only “help.”

Smith further adds that there are relations of ruling, “a complex of extra-local relations that provide in modern societies a specialization of organization, control and initiative” (Smith,1990:6), represented by bureaucracy, administration, management, professional organizations, and the media. This complex includes scientific, technical, and cultural discourses, which intersect, interpenetrate, and coordinate the multiple sites of ruling.

There is, in fact, a silent organization of power, which organizes discourse, interpretation, media, and all the others sites of ruling. This organization of power organizes people’s activities, creating a version of the world based on the modes of ruling, without any interest for actual

reality. Smith (1990) points out that “the subjects entered into these virtual realities are displaced as speakers” (p. 84), the “social organization of the production of facts is forgotten, invisible” (p. 86), and categories are established. Finally, there is a disjunction between lived experiences and the social organization producing their representation. She adds criticism to the psychiatric practices, saying:

The organization of psychiatric care serves to separate an individual from the contexts in which her actions arise; she is taken from that context” and “everything that contextualizes her has been rendered invisible or has been packaged into reports that use the observer’s experience to replicate an organizational form, and that practice structuring procedures. (p. 92).

This experience is a reality in the experience of women not only in mental health, but in all realms of social life, where women’s experiences are located in this context, as separated from their situatedness, and rendered subordinate to relations of ruling.

However, where there is power imbalance, there should be resistance in some level. Connell (1987) understands contestation as an integral part of ideology. The symbolic opposition that it brings about arises from the potential human practice has of recreating humanity. Processes of resistance, then, are always present to a varying extent, contesting the prevailing sexual ideology.

Various kinds of women’s resistance to unequal structures of power have been documented in several studies, following various definitions of resistance. Women’s engagement in more subtle, everyday resistance has been shown in diverse settings. Mihelich and Storrs (2003) studied Mormon women negotiating the conservative ideal of womanhood present in the religious ideology, through their commitment with higher education. Williams (2002b) focused on Latina girls and their acts of resistance to the pressures to acculturation. For instance, Latina girls expressed their resistance through their refusal to commit to appearance rules in *America*.

More open and public acts of resistance have also been documented, in particular in Latin America where the structure of social movements have been changing in recent years. The increasing participation of poor women, focusing their demands on the State in their struggle for basic survival and against repression. This change provokes the reshaping Latin American

women's self-definition, an indicative of positive social change taking place in Latin America. (Safa, 2000).

In this study, resistance is understood based on Rose Weitz's (2001) definition of resistance, as actions that not only reject subordination but do so by challenging the ideologies that support that subordination. Weitz also adds that accommodation is an essential part of resistance, and that women combine accommodation and resistance to grapple with cultural expectations and struggles (p. 669). She defines accommodation as actions that accept subordination, by "either adopting or simply not challenging the ideologies that support subordination" (670).

Weitz, in her definitions of accommodation and resistance (2001), supports the idea that any given action has both aspects of resistance and accommodation, and avoids understanding women's actions as those of "docile bodies," or of free agents. She proposes that women use both accommodation and resistance in everyday life, as they relate to social expectations and norms. Thus, less visible forms of resistance expressed through women's everyday lives are seen here as part of the struggle to balance home and street life among women street vendors in Brazil. This understanding challenges the androcentric conception of resistance, limiting acts of resistance to those pertaining to the public sphere. "Reconceptualizing resistance has led to a richer understanding of the complex ways women negotiate gendered organizational norms and regulations within patriarchal institutions" (Mihelich and Storrs, 2003: 405), in more subtle ways.

In the case of this study, the description of the efforts of women engaging in the Brazilian street economy is the focus. Through what is called here an entrepreneurial vision that contests the opportunity structure of Goiania and the cultural milieu of that gender regime, factors that would together direct these women to a path very different from the entrepreneurial one, are challenged by the establishment of a small, informal, but real business.

The term entrepreneur and entrepreneurship are common themes in scholarly publications in the realm of economics (Timmons, 1989; Timmons, 1990; Seglin, 1985). These publications are generally focused on Western entrepreneurs, commonly men, in corporate environments. Definitions of entrepreneurship in the realm of economics is often based on a combination of particular economic conditions. Little has been written on the influence of culture in the development of entrepreneurship, and certainly not gender. A recent development of studies on

entrepreneurship has been to focus on the entrepreneur outside the U.S., especially those in developing countries, initializing the need of redefinition of the concept. Berger (1991) agrees with the absence of studies on the non-western entrepreneur:

What is less well appreciated in much of the literature is the fact that the inhabitants of the *barrios* and *favelas* of Latin America, the shanty towns in Africa, and the steaming cities of Asia have prevailed against all the odds, despite being left to their own devices. There too exists a rugged dynamism at the bottom of society, which may provide the social, economic, and political foundation for a more prosperous future. At the center of these transformations stand family, household, and entrepreneurship. (Berger, 1992: 28)

The definition of entrepreneur is source of a lack of consensus among scholars in the field of economics. Some scholars focus on the uncertainty bearing function of these individuals (Knight, 1965), others emphasize the innovation capacity (Schumpeter, 1961), or criticize the stereotypical definition of the entrepreneur as a combination of hard work and risk taking, urging for a redefinition for the term (Phizacklea, 1991). Measuring this quality is another issue that has not been solved and is still based on Western models. While some models measure entrepreneurship in terms of number of stocks, others focus on the development of new business, entrepreneurship is certainly a term that urges and adjustment. (Parker, 2008). The image of the entrepreneur depicted here is that of a white man who owns a corporation, well known in Wall Street for the profitability of dividends produced.

The definition of entrepreneur used here intends to include the large number of anonymous businesspeople who do not achieve the requirements for the Wall Street-format of entrepreneur. Entrepreneur is an individual who engages in the development of an enterprise of any size, in an adverse environment, and assumes the risks involved in the development of the business endeavor, committed to constant innovation and development of products and enterprise. I define entrepreneurial vision as the attitude of engaging in an enterprise, overcoming hostile conditions, and envision innovative plans for future developments and ways to accomplish more out of the enterprise. The three main points present in this definition, hostile conditions, commitment to innovation and expansion, and presence of risks, makes the term entrepreneur all the more inclusive than the Wall Street parameters do.

Studies concentrated on women's entrepreneurial activities have been growing in recent years. Such studies focus varied issues such as the growth of participation of women in business enterprises (Greer and Greene, 2003; Carter and Williams, 2003); barriers to women's engagement in entrepreneurial activities (Greer and Greene, 2003; Langowitz and Morgan, 2003; Connolly et al, 2003); or balance of personal and business lives (Ng and Ng, 2003). Studies on Immigrant women focus on ethnic economy. These studies see the women's engagement in this economic niche not only as a strategy of income generation, but as strategy of resistance to acculturation, through the creation of a business that connects them to their culture (Josephides 1988; Baxter and Raw, 1988; Bachu, 1988; Warriar, 1988).

The concept entrepreneur is commonly used when discussing the formal economy. However, informal businesses have been largely excluded from the studies of women entrepreneurialship, in particular, the informal street economy. The term entrepreneur is used in this study of women street vendors that includes and acknowledges their work as entrepreneurial activity, regardless of their disconnectedness with legal ties.

Informal businesses studied here, though exposing these women to risks -- just as any entrepreneur -- may carry the key to the opening of a new role. The work in the informal street economy may be for some of these women, a solution for a situation of unemployment or financial crisis, or a temporary solution in which the presence of risk is experienced solely at the business start-up. Later on, these women may either leave the informal street economy or lead the business in a stagnant way. However, there are others for whom the business becomes a moment of training and practice for a role to which they have been excluded from. These women continue taking risks, and investing on the expansion of their managerial skills and the business. These individuals, characterized by continuous engagement in taking risks and innovation, are considered here as having a true entrepreneurial vision, and called *empreededoras informais*, or informal entrepreneurs. This spectrum of entrepreneurship, in the creation either of an entrepreneurial decision, or of a true entrepreneurial vision, is the focus of this study.

Gender Stratification and Risk of Poverty and Arrest in the Street Economy

The concept of local gender regimes, which is the foundation to this study, informs several elements in the Brazilian street vending context studied here. In particular, local gender

regimes are relevant in the development of the opportunity structure, and the cultural milieu of a certain place.

The opportunity structure and the cultural milieu embody patterns of gender stratification, or the unequal distribution of power and prestige based on gender. These patterns take concrete shape through differential sets of community, family, and religious expectations, differential resources, employment opportunities, and networks that are offered to women and men (Elements of the opportunity structure will be more fully discussed in the conceptual model, following this section). Under this arrangement, men are afforded knowledge and training that prepares them to the public sphere, and are expected to assume the role of provider. On the other hand, women are prepared to fulfill roles of caretaker, and in constant dependency of a provider, which is not the case for many women.

On that note, men and women are exposed to different levels of vulnerability to poverty. In the context of street vending, these patterns are made clear when the structure of the informal street economy is closely analyzed. Informal entrepreneurs are in small numbers, and are predominantly male, whereas informal workers, a large group, are predominantly female. In addition, women who do work outside the home work, in average, fewer hours than men, resulting in lower wages, due to women's long hours in unpaid household labor. As a result, women are the majority of the poor worldwide:

Women's access to paid employment is lower than men's in most of the developing world.... Women are less likely than men to hold paid and regular jobs and more often work in the informal economy, which provides little financial security (UN, 2005).

Under this reality, women are offered little financial security, and social protection is inexistent. Thus, their situation is of heightened risk of poverty.

Women in the informal economy are not only in a heightened situation of risk in terms of poverty, but also risk of arrest, in particular, women in the criminal economy. The classification of the criminal economy is a matter of contradictory discussion among researchers. It is seen by some scholars as part of the informal economy (Maher, 2007; Jimenez, 1989) while others consider it a sphere separate from the realm of informality (Portes, 1989; ILO, 2002). The criminal economy entails the group of activities that employ individuals who perform their work informally--thus, without social protection, registration or social security benefits--and deal with

products that are considered illegal by mainstream society. The focus on the process of production or the product itself is the parameter that these scholars use when defining whether the criminal economy is a segment of the informal economy or a separate category.

However, when the focus is on the process, and the individuals involved in the process, it is possible to observe how these two areas converge. In many ways, the informal economy and the criminal economy share basic characteristics: the unregulated character of the work, the patterns of gender, social, class and race inequalities in the distribution of hierarchy, the absence of social protection, vulnerability and invisibility.

The criminal economy has undeniable idiosyncrasies that characterize it. The workers are in a position of heightened vulnerability, due to the issue of addiction, as well as experiencing even more vulnerable positions in terms of race, gender, and class. While it is not true that all individuals involved in the drug economy are addicted to the substances they commercialize, the prevalence of addiction is increased in the lower levels of the hierarchy of the street-level drug economy (Maher, 2007). The experiences of workers in the trade of legal and illegal products also differ in regards to the risk and the severity of being arrested. That particular issue is even more critical in the U.S. where the so-called “War on Drugs” is rampant, leading to the increase of the incarceration rates in general and among women a 700% increase in the last thirty years (Frost et al, 2006). Whereas there are similarities between the informal extralegal and the illegal economies, this study is focusing in factors in which the women street vendors in Goiania are in a position of advantage compared to their sisters in the criminal economy. In this study, structural issues of race, class and gender are decisive in the determination of what type of informal market the individual has access, bringing diversified outcomes to the participants.

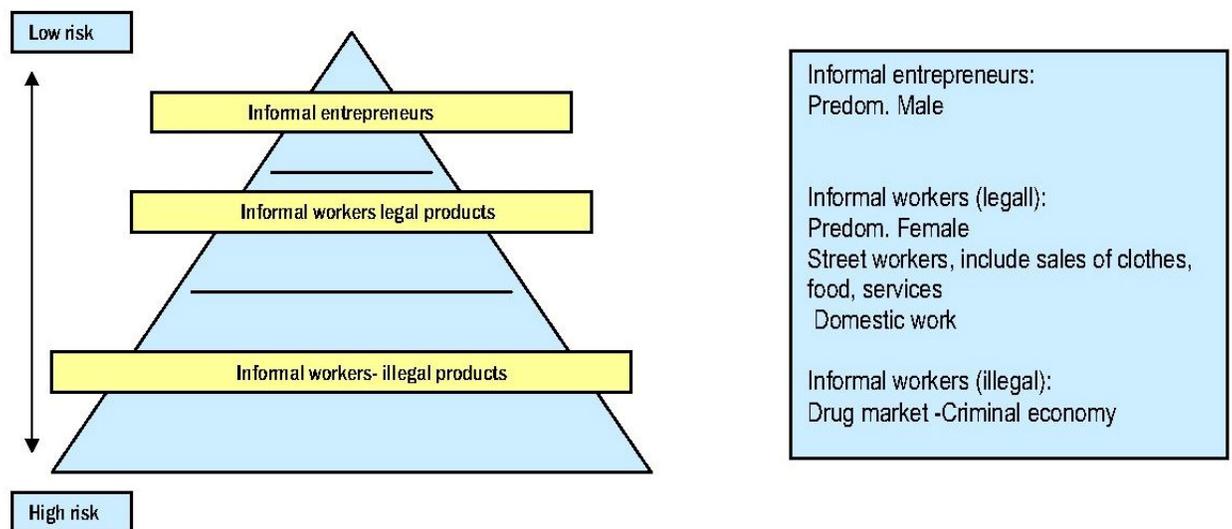
All these elements together compose a complex system of power relations, to which individuals may react in the form of resistance and accommodation to the restrictions that the regime imposes. In the present work, the perceptions of women of the opportunities available, and their responses to the limitations presented to them are described.

Hierarchical Model

Based on the aforementioned hierarchical structure of the informal street economy and risk of poverty and arrest, a hierarchical model attempts to illustrate the aspects that remain

invisible to those who are not part of the informal street economy. This section contains a description of the model, as well as the literature's contribution to this knowledge. While all elements of this sphere of the economy are significant, this study focuses on one particular position in which women in this study occupy. The participants of this study occupy the position of entrepreneurs, a situation of low risk of poverty and arrest. However, this security is differentiated in terms of gender, putting these women and their businesses in more heightened risk than those of men.

Figure 2.1 Stratification of the Informal Street Economy and Risk of Poverty and Arrest



The informal entrepreneur has the lowest risk of both poverty and arrest, and is a position predominantly occupied by men. This is true whether it is in the informal street economy or the criminal economy. The opportunity structure available to men makes them less vulnerable to poverty, for favoring men in the entrepreneurial world. The employment opportunities, careers, education, and networks men and women lead are highly influenced by gendered expectations, having strong influence in whether or not they engage in business, and what type of business they may begin, as has been demonstrated in previous research (Brush, 1992; Greer and Greene, 2003). Invariantly, men will count on knowledge acquired throughout their lives to invest on a more costly but profitable business. Women generally cannot count on that inventory of knowledge, becoming more prone to avoid engaging in business, or if they do so, these are smaller and low risk businesses. Women in the position of entrepreneurs are more protected from poverty compared to informal workers, because of their access to capital through their

products, but are in a position of more vulnerability to poverty compared to their male counterparts.

Informal workers dealing with legal products are hired by informal entrepreneurs and thus, have no ownership rights to the business. They are hired as salespeople in general, or may be involved with production. This public is generally female. Informal workers involved with the sales on legal products are in a position of higher risk of poverty due to the lack of social protection that is characteristic of the informal realm. They have only their labor power to sell for a low remuneration, and have no social protection to rely on. They are, however, in a situation of higher risk of arrest compared to that of entrepreneurs. In terms of risks, those who operate in areas not designated to street vendors are also in a position of risk. The risks vary from having their products taken by the police, to being arrested if they are found repeatedly working in a non-designated area.

Workers in the street criminal economy are in a position of highest risk of poverty and arrest. Not only they face low remuneration and absence of social protection, but also their situation of vulnerability is increased due to the kind of product they trade –illegal substances. The risk of poverty that affects these women and men is high, especially if these individuals are addicted to the substances they trade. Under those circumstances, their payment may not come in cash, but in the form of a certain amount of the products they trade. They are also in a situation of high risk of arrest, because of the nature of the products they sell. Women are in even more heightened risk according to Maher (2007), who documented that women working on the street criminal economy are designated to work on shifts during the time the police are around the neighborhood, increasing the risk.

Thus, the situation of risk is defined by many more factors than only the individual's position in the hierarchical structure. This model illustrates how structural factors, such as the influence of gender, and opportunity structure, determining different outcomes for individual people. Having in mind that differential trajectory, a conceptual model follows, which illustrates the experiences of women studied here.

Conceptual Model

The conceptual model is a guide to help the reader visualize the elements present in this study. The model is informed by feminist theory and previous studies related to local gender

regimes, but it was further refined and shaped by the participants input after data collection. This revision process enabled a more dynamic version of the conceptual model, rather than forcing their discourse into previously determined categories.

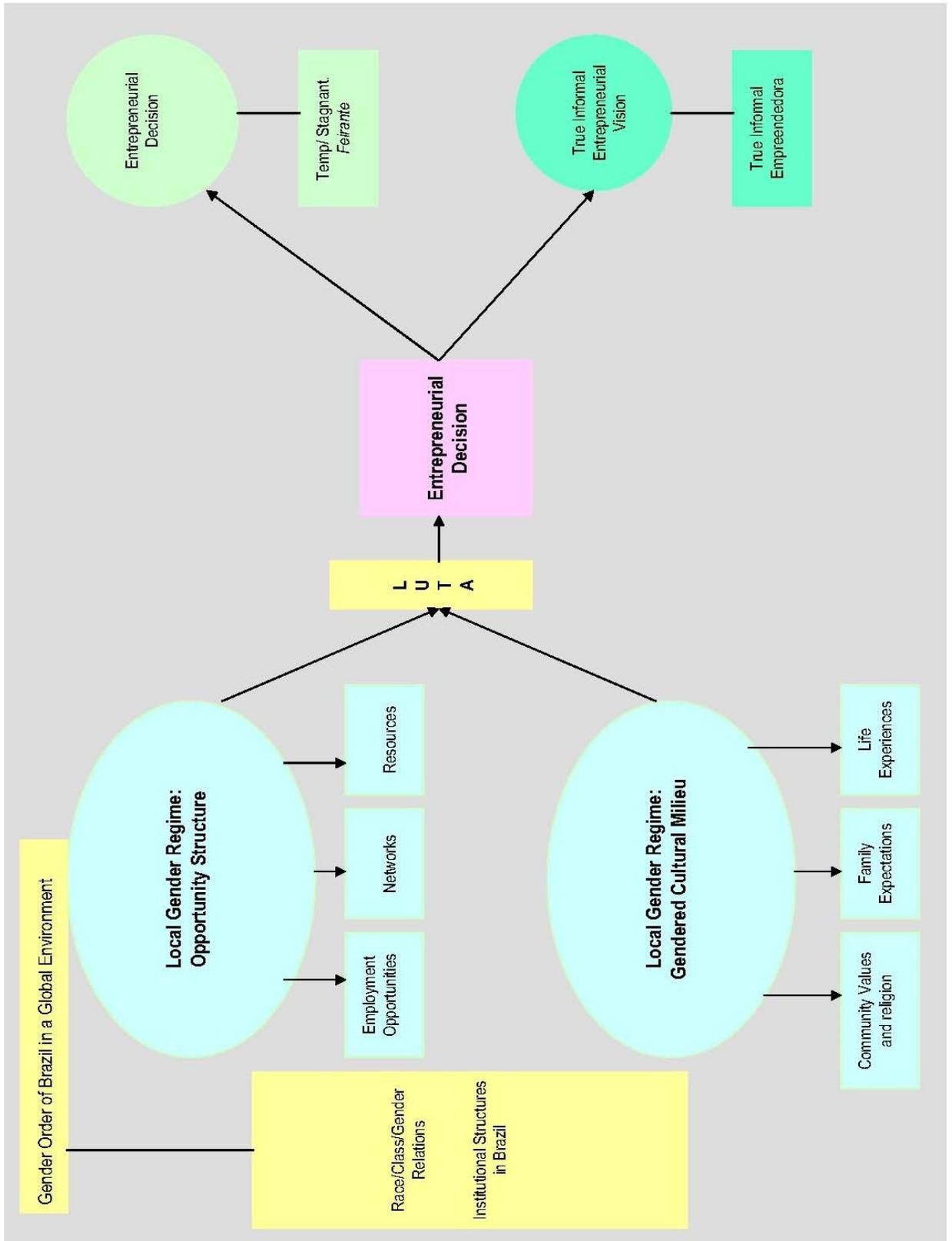
On the top left corner of the model, it is possible to see in yellow a reminder that the gender order in Brazil is contextualized in a global environment, which influences class, race, and gender relations, as well as institutional structures in Brazil. The first element, race, class and gender relations in Brazil, is related to the condition of social interactions in the country. That is, how do race, class and gender influence the distribution of wealth and power in the country? The institutional structures are manifold, but for the sake of objectivity, only two are chosen as relevant aspects in the matter of women's participation in the Brazilian street economy. The first is the reality of changing politics and economy brought by Neoliberal changes introduced in the 90's. The second is the analysis of labor markets and the ways in which gender, race, and class define a division of labor, creating an uneven distribution of work opportunities, among the formal, informal and criminal economies.

The two structures, represented on the yellow rectangle on the left side of the model, represent the environment that will shape the local gender regime that is the focus of this study. This local gender regime is divided in two other elements, opportunity structure and cultural milieu, both concepts proposed by Villemez and Beggs(1993) and also used by Williams (1997). This division is merely a didactic one; in reality, these structures are operating in concert. The first element of the local gender regime studied here are the opportunity structures of Brazil, represented on the green circular figure on the left of the model. The opportunity structures are composed by three other elements: employment opportunities, networks, and resources, symbolized by green squares. The second element of the local gender regime is the gendered cultural milieu, composed by community values and religion, family expectations and life experiences. These elements, also shaped by the environment, create a situation of restricted activities for women.

As discussed previously, resistance is an intrinsic part of ideology. Facing the pressure of constant limitations to the lives of women in Brazil, created by ideologies on gender, race and class, the concept of *luta* arises, represented by the yellow rectangle in the center of the model. It is the representation of resistance, in the words of the women interviewed. It means "fighting energy," and it is the core of this study. From the idea of *luta*, a creative entrepreneurial

decision, represented in blue in the model, is the dependent variable that is analyzed here. From this entrepreneurial decision, it is hypothesized that women may take two paths: they lead their work as stagnant or temporary *feirantes*, or develop a true entrepreneurial vision and become informal *empreendedoras*, or informal entrepreneurs. Each theoretical concept will be more fully described below, as well as supporting literature.

Figure 2.2 - Conceptual Model



Opportunity Structure

Gender relations shape the opportunities offered to individuals in a certain location. The opportunity structure of a place is defined by Williams (1997) as “a certain matrix of factors present, often unique to any given place, which may both influence and constrain the selection of a course of action” (p. 20). The opportunity structure is seen here as shaped by the structure of gender relations in a specific gender regime. It is influenced by the division of labor, power and cathexis, element present in any gender order or gender regime, and it contributes to women’s situation of risk of poverty in the markets.

The division of labor is defined by the distribution of particular types of work to particular categories of people. It is a socially constructed ideology, which becomes a constraint to further practice, by regulating employment opportunities based on gender categories. A gender system organizes the division of labor by defining what is supposed to be men’s work and women’s work, organizing the kind of labor commonly related to power and control as men’s work, which is usually referred to as the realm of production. Women are typically left to jobs related to housekeeping, child rearing, and other not socially valued positions, disempowering women and leaving them relegated to the realm of reproduction. This ideology is sustained in practice by differential education and training accessible to different gender categories, which ultimately results in the offer of differential employment opportunities for men and women.

While it is not an absolute division, the gendered division of labor is marked by the configuration of power of a society. In the prevailing gender order, it can be said that “if authority is defined as legitimate power, then we can say that the main axis of the power structure of gender is the general connection of authority with masculinity” (Connell, 1987: 109). Hence, women are in a situation of relative powerless compared men and are in a position of disadvantage in society, a fact that is supported by an ideology that regulates all social relationships. Women are in a greater risk of poverty than their male counterparts are, because they face the business generally as a starting point for their entrepreneurial careers. They were not afforded the skills and tools necessary to face the entrepreneurial world.

Employment Opportunities

Studies on Brazilian labor markets show constant rates of participation in the work force between 1992 and 2004, with small variations around 66% overall. When analyzing the data stratified by gender, an important trend is evident. Men’s participation in the labor force

maintains approximately 80%, while women's participation remains consistently lower, around 50%. (Ernst, 2007). These data show the pronounced difference in labor force participation of men and women in Brazilian society, but does not include much of the informal work, where women are more likely to be located. In other words, much of their work is not counted in official data and therefore is invisible.

Greer and Greene (2003) discuss about the role that women's work experiences play in shaping their entrepreneurial behaviors. With the prevalence of occupational segregation still taking place in work environments, there is indication that those institutional barriers of custom continue proscribing certain activities to either gender. The consequences of those barriers were seen by Brush (1992) in her study of women entrepreneurs that the educational and occupational choices of women and men are enacted into gender related constraints on work experiences, affecting the types of businesses women may start. "The 'glass ceiling' remains an institutional limiting factor to gaining the general knowledge and experience that could be leveraged to entrepreneurial success" (Greer and Greene, 2003).

Women's vertical placement in the authority structure has a direct effect on a woman's entrepreneurial activity, as women are less likely to hold top management positions in corporations, they lack the ongoing experience of the skills needed to lead a business. This factor also contributes to women's situation of risk. Invariantly, their work experience does not lead to the development of entrepreneurial skills, increasing their difficulties to deal with a business, and the risk of poverty they are exposed.

Resources

The resources offered in a determined gender regime are shaped by a gendered division of labor. They have an important organizing role in the development of a professional career, and in the case of this study, in the development of an informal entrepreneurial vision. These resources can be of various natures, such as education, training, work and life experiences, networking, and access to loans.

Greer and Greene (2003) discuss the importance of resources in the development of an entrepreneur. These scholars point out the significance that the types of educational programs women select or are placed in have in their future labor market activities. Women are still underrepresented in science or engineering educational programs, and are overrepresented in liberal arts programs. In the formal sector, Greer and Greene argument that this factor may make

women's entry in technologically sophisticated business less likely, in areas where greater income and profits are generated. In the informal economy, this element has similar effects. Women in Brazil are still being trained and performing gendered activities and careers that little contribute for the development of entrepreneurial skills, or the making of a higher income.

Having access to loans and financing is another important element when starting up any business. Access to capital is an additional factor that may limit women's entrepreneurial advances. Women, in particular those in Brazil, are already in a disadvantageous situation in terms of job market placement and compensation. The possibility of saving money is almost nonexistent, when individuals in lower and even middle class are just making enough to get by. When applying for a loan, not only women will have a small or sometimes a nonexistent income, but will also not have assets to put on a loan application. Having their own house is the number one of the list of Brazilians' dreams of financial security, and it is not a reality to many Brazilians. In addition, when there is an asset, it is not atypical for it to be registered in the male spouse's name. This kind of difficulty limits the amount of capital women can acquire – if any – to start a business. In the case of the women in this study, this variable defines the type of product the informal entrepreneurs will produce. With limited funds to start the business, the entrepreneur invests in products that will not have a high cost of production, but in consequence, will produce a limited return, showing how the restricted access to social and financial capital puts women in the street vending economy at a position of disadvantage.

Hence, the combination of the educational, occupational segregation of women to the business world, combined to their restricted access to capital, puts women in a situation of heightened risk of poverty, compared to men.

Networks

Women are also in a position of higher risk of poverty because of their network capability. Networks are vital tools in the development of a business, a context where who the aspiring entrepreneur knows may define the access to information about the market, access to loans, or taxation, especially in a context such as the Brazilian informal street economy. Considering that the openness and easy communication is one of Brazilian cultural characteristics, the idea of networking is a reality for Brazilian men and women. However, following the structure of the prevailing gender order that proscribes differential educational and

career paths for men and women, the characteristics of networks made by men and women differ as well.

Women's networks have shown to be less useful or less effective in conducting business compared to that of men. Studies have shown that women's networks are similar to that of men in size, although they differ in gender and relative power. It is more probable that men share networks with higher status professionals of diverse fields, than women may have. They are generally composed of other men, who are in positions of higher social and economic power than that of women (Greer and Greene, 2003). That has important influences in the development of a business, as networks are a source of resources and assistance for entrepreneurs.

Kin and community groups are the most common networks formed by women. The information shared varies from job opportunities (Bhattacharya, 2004), the discussion of the use of contraceptives (Adams et al, 2004), policy changes and the provision of economic and social support by authorities (Husain, 2004; Fallon, 2004; Purushothaman et al, 2004), changes in gender relations (Creevey, 2004).

Thus even though it has been documented that women's networks are an effective tool of support and social change (Purkayastha and Subramaniam, 2004), women's networks do not offer the same immediate assistance as those of men in the business arena. Networks with bankers, lawyers, accountants, or any contact with high economic or legal power can be very helpful especially when starting up a business without previous experience in the field. These professionals are not part of the networks of most women. Women in the street economy of Goiania face many of these obstacles, and yet overcome them in the establishment of their business enterprise. They accomplish their goals by establishing and using the mostly informal networks they have at hand, which are primarily other women who are facing the same hardships. They often offer support and assistance to each other.

Cultural Milieux

Cultural milieux are local cultural patterns that "captures the essence of the context" (Williams, 1997) where individuals are located. Gender is intertwined in cultural practices, as it organizes major aspirations and expectations differently for men and women, but "although male dogmas are common in contemporary nation-states, the patterns vary" (Nader, 1989: 323). Thus, these expectations may vary from culture to culture, but they are all embedded in gender. These

differential expectations are present in the local level in terms of community and religious values, family expectations, and life experiences.

Community Values, Religion, Family Expectations and Life Experiences

Cultural traditions are present in community values and religion, shaping social interaction differently for men and women. In many cultures, the division between community values, religion, family expectations, and life experiences becomes diffuse, as religion informs these values in many ways. Feminist literature has greatly documented women's agency when facing restrictive values. Different communities have specific values shared that are shaped by gender, such as Gerami and Lehnerer (2001) discussed women's strategies when negotiating impositions of Islamic fundamentalism in Iran. In that context, religion and state become one entity, generating and enforcing restrictions. Mandatory veiling and dress code, state impositions on where and what hours one might work, and practices of victimization are part of the reality these women have to face

Correspondingly, Mihelich and Storrs focused on how Mormon women negotiate the strict boundaries of this religious denomination, which a strong emphasis on marriage, the role of motherhood, and deference to the males in personal, public, and spiritual matters. These values strongly inhibit women's involvement in the workplace and access to higher education.

Virgin martyrs as the depiction of most Catholic female saints, epitomizing a feminine Christian ideal was studied out by Young (1989) as reinforcing patriarchal mandates of behavior. Under this context, "cultural paradigms of virginity and martyrdom have implications for the construction of sexuality, codes of reproduction, gender identity, and life experience for Catholic women." By emphasizing suffering as a means of redemption, and femininity as a synonym of motherhood and submission, Catholic values shape women's lives, by making their behavior accountable not only in the eyes of the community, family, and themselves, but also in the eyes of God.

Although community values and religion are rooted in patriarchal structures, and have been documented in diverse cultural context, women's strategies of everyday resistance have also been illustrated within feminist literature.

“Luta”

Luta is a concept emerged in this study and it is how resistance is expressed in the discourse of women street vendors in Brazil. It represents the element that inspires women to challenge hostile conditions provided by the cultural milieu and the opportunity structure.

Resistance takes several forms in different contexts within feminist theory. Hill Collins (1990) points out the cultural context as the site of Black women’s resistance, expressed in “Black women’s relationships with each other, Black women’s the Blues tradition, and in the voice of contemporary African American women writers.” (p.228) Mihelich and Storrs (2003) also focus on the cultural milieu. They reveal how women members of the Church of Latter-Day Saints negotiate the boundaries of the gender ideology of their context, by creating a coherent identity of a “good LDS women” and legitimate their will to pursue higher education. In South India, Kohler Riessman (2000) documents childless women resisting social stigma that society where childbearing is a source of social power, a matter that is intimately related to social class. Women in that society resist in three main ways: by taking a stand in interaction (speaking out and acting up), refusing to internalize a deviant label (resistant thinking), purposefully evading confrontation (strategic avoidance), or rejecting motherhood altogether. All of these stances of women’s resistance in diverse regions and cultures show the indispensable role of cultural factors in the process of resistance.

Luta is a path that some women decide to take, ignited by a constellation of structural factors, which for them acts not as a constraint, but propels them to give a new response to old traditions.

Entrepreneurial Decision

While entrepreneurial decision-making is used on mainstream economic literature as an intrinsic characteristic of entrepreneurs, (Ucbasaran, 2008; Timmons, 1989) the concept is used here in a more restricted form. Entrepreneurial decision is seen here as entrepreneurial decision-making limited to business start-up. All participants are considered here as having the entrepreneurial decision of starting their business in the markets, but the presence of this element at that stage does not guarantee its persistence. After this decision, women may follow two different paths, that of a *feirante*, or an *empreendedora informal*.

“Feirante”

After the entrepreneurial decision at the start-up of the business, women street vendors may decide to maintain the business in the same state permanently, for either lack of energy, or lack of resources, or any other external conditions. They are called here *feirantes*, a person who has a business in the street markets.

The characteristic of taking risks, which is intrinsic to the entrepreneur, is present when starting the business, but after that phase is complete, the street vendor does not maintain the characteristic of risk taking. Instead, the street vendor does not plan on changes or growth, and focuses on the difficulties of the business, rather than its opportunities. As a result, this vendor becomes what is called here a temporary or stagnant *feirante*. This individual plans to continue being a *feirante*, without any changes of products or span of sales, or plans on giving up the business.

“Empreendedora Informal”

The second path from the creation of the entrepreneurial decision is the development of what is called here a true informal entrepreneurial vision. Under this condition, women in the markets engage in the process of taking risks and creating new possibilities for their businesses, attempting to reach new heights, despite unfavorable conditions.

The women who present characteristics of taking calculated risks and as Timmons (1989) referred to “thinking big”, that is, making future projections for the increase of sales and profitability, are called *empreendedoras informais*. These individuals not only have plans for growth and formalization, selling abroad, or expanding the gamut of products offered, but also are committed to make that become a reality.

CHAPTER 3 - Methods

This study intends to unveil the perceptions of women entrepreneurs in the street markets of Goiania. They share how they perceive elements such as employment opportunities, and cultural milieux, and how these issues contributed to the development of a business in the markets. The women interviewed in this project are seen as informants who are knowledgeable of the work of women as street vendors in the position of informal entrepreneurs.

Research Design

Location of the study, Description and History

A brief description of Goiania, followed by a description of the markets, informs the reader about the physical, cultural, and economical context the participants of this study are located.

Goiania

Goiania, the capital of the state of Goias, is the twelfth largest city in Brazil, with a population of more than 1.25 million. Its metropolitan area gathers about 2 million people. The city is the capital of the state of Goias, a large Midwestern state, well known for its economic emphasis in agriculture and cattle breeding-- in 2005, the state of Goias had a herd of 20.7 million head (Federacao de Agricultura e Pecuaria de Goias, archives, 2005).

A large industrial sector is a strong component of the economy in the state, and it is based on supplying for agriculture and cattle industries. Motor trade industry is the second largest industry in the city, where the production, sales and repair of motorcycles are the main businesses. This economical trait is a reflection of the number of vehicles existent in the city. Goiania is ranked first in the country in numbers of vehicles per capita (1 vehicle per 1.7 inhabitants), and it has the largest fleet of motorcycles per capita in the country. It is the second largest in absolute numbers of motorcycles, losing only for Sao Paulo -- population of 10,888,510. (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatistica, 2007).

The third largest contributor to employment opportunities is the government civil service, as the city is the capital of the state and holds major government offices. Telecommunications and IT service have demonstrated intense growth in recent years, providing another venue for job opportunities.

As far as educational opportunities, Goiania hosts several colleges and universities, including a big state University (Universidade Federal de Goias) -- providing students with higher education free from tuition --, and two large private Universities (Universidade Catolica de Goias and Universidade Paulista) -- offering diverse courses at higher costs. In addition, the city hosts several small colleges, offering a variety of different degrees, at lower costs than the major private schools.

Informal street markets are a distinguishing characteristic of the capital that in 2007 hosted 144 *Feiras Especiais* and 24,000 registered *feirantes*, with numbers continually growing (Fernandes, 2007).

Street Markets of Goiania

The participation of women in the informal economy, specifically in the garment/shoe sales and production in Goiania-Goias, Brazil, is a microcosm of the overall informal street economy. The city is famous for its many street fairs, which is possible to find everyday of the week, in diverse locations, where various “micro businesses” do their sales. They gather in specific places in the city, previously designated by the government as marketplaces. Although there are men involved in the informal sector, it is not difficult to see that it is a typically female event. Just by walking around one of these fairs, one can see battalions of women doing their sales of mostly clothes, shoes, accessories for women, food, with a few directed to children’s products. The shoppers are also predominantly women, and a few men accompanying their girlfriends or wives, visibly discontent with the shopping trip. Hence, the street fairs are visibly a female event for and by women. The products they sell are mostly produced in the city, by the very businesswomen, or by other women, who are also part of an informal transaction. Few are bought from large retailers outside the state. All of these events take place with the city’s permission. However, the earnings of these transactions are not taxed, none of the participants are provided any social security benefits, and invariantly these women also work at home.

The products sold are based on the latest styles seen on TV, magazines and movies. The informal economy deals with the exclusion the fashion industry imposes -- giving a chance for all women to have access to the status provided by appearance, at a reasonable price.

Historically, this type of informal market started on the streets, where the vendors would set portable tables on the sidewalk of the busiest streets. Later on, the accumulation of “informal businesses” got so extensive that the police started an intense fiscalization, which left informal businesspeople two options: stay and watch the police take away their products and therefore lose the money and time invested, or pick up everything and run. The latter option was the most common. They would even prepare themselves. They generally used a tablecloth on the table, put the products on top of it, and if they had to leave, they would just gather up the edges of the tablecloth, turning it into a big bag, and run. There was a great deal of solidarity happening at this time, when the first vendor to see the police cars would scream as loud as possible (a code word, “o rapa”, a slang that made reference to the police), warning the others of the imminent danger. The one to be first seen and let the others know was most likely caught, losing all of the products and probably the only source of income.

Recently, the government designated specific places for the street vendors. Certain areas were considered acceptable to the existence of markets; most were city squares or dead-end streets, which were established as a location of a street market, or *Feira Especial*, generally specifying one day of the week for it to happen. The first step for candidates to become part of a *Feira especial* is to stop by the government agency that is responsible for controlling the functioning of the markets (SEDEM). There, they fill out a form and pay a tax that costs about 6 reais (or approximately \$3 U.S. dollars). That guarantees them the documented authorization to work in that market. Available spots in new markets are soon taken, and, people who did not have a chance to get a spot are only able to set up the market if someone gives their spot up. Many people do give up the market, but not freely. So, it is common to hear about *Feirantes*, who pay rent for the spot in the market or paid large sums to own the spot.

These kiosks allow *Feirantes* to expose their products and to have a plastic cover over it, protecting them from rain and sun. These installations are put up by another class of workers who benefit from these markets: the *montadores*. They are predominantly males, and their job is to put up the stalls before the markets begins, and put them away when the sales are over. The *Feirantes* pay a fixed amount per month to guarantee the installation of their stalls. The stalls

also have electricity, through an electricity cord that goes through all the stalls, for which the Feirantes also pay a fixed amount every month. These monthly fixed costs can vary, from market to market, from 28 reais to 50 reais. Some of the Feirantes complain that it is too costly, and some even say that sometimes, especially at times of low sales, they do not make enough to pay these costs. *Feirantes* and customers also have access to portable restrooms located in the area of the markets.

Nowadays, there are very few street vendors that risk being on the streets without an authorization, but the “street fairs” prosper. The biggest ones happen on Saturdays and Sundays: Feira da Tarde and Feira Central. The first one happens in a reasonably wealthy area of the city, with about 1,000 vendors working from about midday, until eleven at night, focusing mostly on retail sales. Feira Central, which happens on Sundays, is the most traditional one, operating since the 1970s, and it is located in a poorer area. Both retail and wholesale sales are made, but mostly wholesale. People from all over the country come to this fair in order to buy products and sell them in their cities. There are approximately 6,000 vendors, working from 1:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Sales start at night because the biggest buyers come from other parts of the state or the country by bus, and if they finish their businesses before morning, they have a better chance to pass by the police stations on the roads (which verify transportation of merchandise) unnoticed. Every product must have the receipt and proof of purchase, a guarantee that taxes will be collected. However, most of the sales made in Feira Central do not “exist”; that is, there are no receipts, and that is what makes it possible to make bigger profits. Several other smaller markets take place in the capital daily, such as *Mercado dos Trabalhadores*, *Feira do Artesanato*, *Feira da Tarde*, *Feira da Noite*. All of them adopt the same rules, and happen on different days of the week, allowing *Feirantes* to participate in several markets.

Visually, the markets investigated here are alike in many ways. They happen in open spaces such as streets, or city squares, and can be recognized by an accumulation of wire stalls covered with colorful plastic. The stalls are in the shape of a cube, and occupy a space of about 5 feet long, by 6 feet tall, and 4 feet deep. The products are hanging on the sides and from the top of the stall, and are displayed on the table set in the “cube”. The plastic protection is uncomfortable. It is hot and its bright colors reflect a lot of the sun light, making it difficult to see. The markets usually smell like oil, from the stalls in the “food court” section, that most likely serves deep fat fried meals. For details of each market, refer to Appendix A.

This setting became the research site of this study. As a native Goianian, I was able to blend in somewhat in the marketplace crowds and use my knowledge of the area to gain access to street vendors.

Positionality and researcher bias

Researcher's positionality and bias is an important issue when qualitative research is being conducted. Even though I am Brazilian, and grew up in Goiania, the location of this study, this project can be considered a big challenge. Overall, I share a few commonalities with participants in this study; we are all women and share the same nationality. Other characteristics might be considered bridging apparatuses. I am a white, middle-class woman, with a degree in psychology, who has worked with women in contexts of marginality, such as HIV+ women and single mothers who were rejected by their families. However, I am also seen as living outside the standards of the street vendor women. At the time of the research, I was in a Master's program in the U.S.A, which is considered a very high level of educational attainment for the Brazilian standards. I have only had jobs in the formal economy, including my own business, which was legalized and registered according to the law -- another exception to Brazil's reality.

Despite all the differences, I had to overcome some of my own biases and try to take a glimpse of the world where these women live, and to be true to their meanings. It is not possible to abandon who we are and analyze the world without our own biases, but it is expected that once these biases are out in the open, it is possible to a greater awareness of them, and reduce its effects. The participants and their voices are given primacy in this research endeavor.

Field Entree, Gate Keepers and Reality

Once I got to Brazil after spending a year away, in the U.S., I was caught by many surprises. I was sincerely expecting everything to be the same in the city. Obviously, that was not the case. I had to spend an entire week gathering information intensely about: structural changes in the city, new malls, changes in traffic; old businesses closed, new businesses took their place. Changes were more surprising especially when it comes to the street markets. I was a constant consumer of street markets products and had in mind I would visit the three major markets I had knowledge of at the time I left the country in 2006.

To my surprise, by 2007, the three markets I knew of were not the only ones in town. Partly because I never knew about most of the markets that were not around the area where I

lived or worked, and because new markets were created during that year. I found out that there were more than one hundred of them happening weekly, every day of the week, in different neighborhoods of the capital. The first lessons I learned: everything changes at every minute. And never assume that you know anything. You are, most likely, wrong.

I visited the three markets I had knowledge of and two more that were new to me. I selected five different contexts of the street vending reality in Goiania: *Feira da Noite*, *Feira do Artesanato*, *Feira da Tarde*, *Feira Central*, and *Mercado dos Trabalhadores*. These markets are located in various areas of the city and happen in different days of the week, all happening at the same time. The objective was to optimize a sample within each venue. I imagined I would interview women in each of these markets and that they worked exclusively there. That way, I could do a comparative study. I was wrong again. On my first interview, I talked to a woman who worked in four of the five locations I was interested in. That was the case of the majority of the interviewees.

Initially, I had a gatekeeper, someone who worked in one of the markets for some time, and who committed to facilitate my contact with the *Feirantes*. However, I was unable to count on that source. The woman who was supposed to facilitate my field entry was dealing with a serious illness, which led her to seek medical attention in a larger metropolitan area, keeping her away from Goiania for the whole time of the field research. Due to this change, I was left without contacts to assist in my introduction to the markets, which left me with only one strategy: the direct request for an interview.

In each market, I attempted to arrive early, at a time when *Feirantes* are setting up their stalls and customers had not arrived yet. At that time, it was possible to talk without interruptions, and it was less likely for *Feirantes* to deny participating. The first contact was always harder. To be honest, I was very nervous. Luckily, my first request was accepted, which made it a lot easier for me to continue. From the first interview, I always asked for a reference for the second interview. No more than two interviews were possible for each day of work, due to time constraints. By the time the second interview was over, the market was overcrowded with customers, making it impossible to carry on a conversation. I knew I had a bigger chance of having a request denied, so once the market started to get too crowded, I knew it was time to leave.

I was also expecting to make interviews outside of the markets. I wanted their undivided attention, without interruptions, so I could get the most out of the interviews. It did not happen. I was lucky I understood that very fast. After a couple of attempts, I found out I had to get the data any way I could. So, as I mentioned, all the interviews happened in the markets and another lesson was learned: have common sense. Respect the routine of your interviewee. Do not try to put your interests before theirs.

Sample

As mentioned above, the sampling technique used was snowball sampling. In each market, I attempted to arrive early, at a time when *Feirantes* are setting up their stalls and customers had not arrived yet. At that time, it was possible to talk without interruptions, and it was less likely for *Feirantes* to deny participating. The strategy to make a request for an interview was to ask the first *Feirante* who made eye contact with the researcher when arriving at the market. From the first interview, I always asked for a reference for the second interview. No more than two interviews were possible for each day of work, due to time constraints. By the time the second interview was over, the market was overcrowded with customers, making it impossible to carry on a conversation.

Fourteen interviews were conducted, with women with ages between 26 and 63. One of the women interviewed worked alongside with her husband, who did most of the talking. All but one of the interviewees lives in Goiania. All but one of the respondents was white, as most *feirantes* in the markets. To find out more details about each of the research participants, refer to Appendix A.

Participant observation was another method used on this study, when I thought I could bring an understanding close to an insider's perspective in the market. Generally, when I was done with my interviews, I walked around the market, for about 40 minutes to an hour, observing the work, and the relationships in each context. I took notes when I got to my car, after observations. If there is interest in reading some of my field notes, check Appendix B.

Data Collection and Interviews

Data collection happened in the months of June and July of 2007 in the referred city of Goiania, a large Brazilian capital. Interviews took place in the informal markets, while the participant prepared the stall for another day of work. A total of 30 hours were spent

interviewing participants; another 50 hours spent on participant observation, and around 20 hours making contacts and strategizing to get access. That makes for a total of 100 hours in the field.

A semi-structured interview schedule, which took from 35 to 120 minutes to be administered, was the instrument of collection of data. The interview was audio recorded and field notes were taken of non-verbal expressions. Issues covered on the interview were personal background, street vending experience, networks, earning power, life changes, and plans for the future. Tapes were transcribed in a word processor computer password-protected, and hard copies of the transcribed interviews were kept in a locked filing cabinet. Identities of interviewees and names of markets were kept confidential, and pseudonyms were used instead of the participants and markets' real names. Participants were also provided with contact information of the researcher (telephone number both in Brazil and in the U.S., and e-mail address), in case they had any questions about the study that should arise after the interviews. If there is any interest, they can request a report of the research findings after the study is finished. In addition to the interviews, participant observation was another method of data collection.

The main interest of this research is to get to know the reality and life circumstances of the women who are involved in the street vending context in Brazil, as well as to produce broader knowledge about women's participation in the informal economy in developing countries. Having that in mind, the interview schedule focused on crucial topics that would facilitate the understanding of their reality.

Questions were relatively open-ended. First, they were asked about their work, and the reason for this question to open the interview was to act as an icebreaker and make the participants feel more comfortable. Theoretically, this question targeted a description of the markets as Local Gender Regimes and Division of Labor.

Second, the participants were asked about the business start-up. In this section, they could share some information about the Opportunity Structure offered to them in Goiania, and the discussion of that structure as favorable or not to the business start-up. In addition, participants share their ideas that are called here Entrepreneurial Vision, discussing the business development, and their reasons to start a business.

Participants were asked about household responsibilities, focusing on a discussion of Division of Labor, which described in more detail the Local Gender Regimes and their Cultural Milieu, with the expectations and values of the context they are inserted.

Earning power was another point of interest, and women street vendors reveal their gains and the profitability of their businesses, an important element that is part of their entrepreneurial vision.

The matter of social networks is questioned as well, adding more information about the opportunity structure offered to women.

They were asked about their plans for the future, and this question gives them another opportunity to share their views as either a *feirante* or as an *empreendedora*; for the business as an entrepreneurial decision or as a step in their paths as true informal entrepreneurs.

Finally, they discuss life changes after their engagement in the markets. This discussion is related to the Gender Regimes they are located and how their work affected their lives compared to their lives prior to the markets.

In general, the interview schedule worked well with the purposes I had. Questions were mostly easy and non-threatening. I was more careful about asking about their income. I feared to appear rude to my participants. I never asked them directly how much they made. I usually asked “how much is it possible to make working in the markets?” With this question, they could talk about *feirantes* in general, or if they chose to do so, they could talk about their income. Half of them did not have problems giving me a range of their gains, and the other half gave me indicators of that value. I felt that this strategy worked very well for my purposes, since their exact income was not relevant.

Operationalization of Concepts

It should be emphasized that the most pivotal concepts for this field study are Connell’s *local gender regimes* through the analysis of the opportunity structure and the cultural milieu of the city, providing information about the situatedness of the women street vendors’ experiences. Other concepts investigated are Connell’s *division of labor, power* and *cathexis*, which may shape an attitude of resistance, in the form of their entrepreneurial vision and its outcomes. These concepts were analyzed both during the interviews and during participant observation.

Local Gender Regimes: Opportunity Structure and Cultural Milieu

The concept of local gender regimes is examined here in terms of the opportunity structure and the gendered cultural milieu of the location where the research took place.

The opportunity structure of women street vendors in Goiania is specified in three different categories: employment opportunities, networks and resources available to them. .

- Employment opportunities are examined in the interview in a discussion of previous employment, and skills training experienced throughout their lives. The interest here is to gather a description of the opportunity structure offered to them, and verify the extent of influence of gender rules limiting the advancement of women in that society. This question most often brings up a description and their own analysis of what opportunities are and what are not available to them.
- Networks were another factor analyzed here in order to approach the opportunity structure of the women street vendors' gender regime. This issue is examined in the questioning about their introduction to the market, whether there was an agent that invited or helped these women in the markets, as well as contacts that serve as mentors in the process of starting up a business, and having access to capital. In other words, what kind of networks did these women have in hand to serve as support and in the process of building a business?
- Resources are measured here in terms of educational and skills training available to these women throughout their lives. It is questioned here what kind of formal and informal education these women received and how these factors weigh in when starting up a business.

The second aspect of interest here, in the analysis of the local gender regime of focus in this study, is the gendered cultural milieu. The gendered cultural milieu is divided in three other elements: community values and religion, family expectations, and life experiences.

- The community values and religion are elements that represent the presence of ideologies that shape the beliefs and behaviors of women in Goiania. These are present throughout the interview schedule, and show glimpses of what the values instilled by the community and religion in that context.
- Family expectations are represented in the descriptions of the questioning of how these women balance their work and family, if they count on any help or housekeeping services and what is expected from them when they get home.
- Life experiences are important in the assessment of what kinds of experiences have been through, whether it is at work, at home, in the family, relationships, and

the like. Opportunities for the description of life experiences are present throughout the interview schedule.

Overall, the interview schedule attempts to approach the idea of the opportunity structure and cultural milieu available and operating in the lives of women who are street vendors and how these issues act as push or pull factors in the development of acts of resistance through the development of a business.

Resistance and Entrepreneurial Decision

The concepts of resistance and entrepreneurial vision are intrinsically related in this study. Both concepts represent a disconnection with the ascribed gendered rules in regards to work, and the creation of a new role as an entrepreneur, and in life. They are investigated in the interview in terms of reasons to start working in the markets, and the process of creating the business itself and the choice of products.

Resistance is understood in this study as actions that not only reject subordination but do so by challenging the ideologies that support that subordination (Weitz, 2001). It takes shape in women street vendors' discourse through the concept of *luta*, or "fighting energy". This concept envelops the reasoning behind the action of breaking patterns. It represents their rejection to jobs or careers that do not fulfill their needs – personal or financial --, their rejection to an opportunity structure that does not provide them with tools that they need, but are consonant with expectations that are imposed on them. *Luta* represents also their rejection to the passive role of accepting things, as they are, a religious ideology. *Luta* represents their way of rejecting all those elements and looking for a new response to their needs.

Entrepreneur is defined here as an individual who engages in the development of an enterprise, and assumes the risks involved in the process. Their resistance to established patterns of behavior is embodied in the entrepreneurial decision of investing in the markets. This concept is demonstrated in their discourse in their description of plans and actions taken in materializing the project of a business, and the risks taken in the development of a business.

Through the discussion of elements of resistance and entrepreneurial decision, this study intends to show the attitudes of women, who even though are immersed in a limiting local gender regime, show elements of strong agency against their position of social powerlessness.

Beyond the Vision?

Elements of resistance to mainstream ideas demonstrated in this study by the development of an entrepreneurial decision are twofold, producing what is called here a single entrepreneurial decision, or a true entrepreneurial vision. These indicators were investigated in the interview schedule by questioning their plans for the future, as well as their stories about business start-up.

The entrepreneurial decision is the process of creating the informal business, and therefore taking risks of making that choice, but producing a stagnant or temporary *feirante*. I recognized the *feirantes* by their description of the business in which, after its establishment, no actions were taken to continue engaging in entrepreneurial decisions, such as diversification of products, expansion to new markets, or even the idea of continuation of the business is uncertain.

I recognized the true entrepreneurial vision in participants who showed engagement with the enterprise, envisioning plans for future developments and ways of achieving more. I had in mind that “thinking big” is an important element of an “entrepreneurial mind” (Timmons, 1989), and I could see that in the individuals I consider having this entrepreneurial vision. These women make use of the informal markets as a platform for more ambitious dreams. They describe the markets as the beginning of a new career. These women are called here *empreendedoras informais* or informal entrepreneurs.

Analysis

After data collection, a conceptual model was created, as an attempt to “make some abstract sense of the reality encountered” (Lofland and Lofland, 1984: 135). The conceptual model was revised and restructured several times to approximate to what was expressed in the interviews. A final version of the conceptual model that was created for purposes of this analysis is described in Chapter 2.

Interviews were transcribed and simultaneously translated to English by the researcher in full, taking 50 hours of work to be completed. Special concern and care surrounded the translation of terms and ideas from Portuguese to English. I had several discussions with my advisor on the meaning of certain words, how they would be more appropriately translated to English, trying to be true to the participants’ messages. As a result, some of the themes were kept in Portuguese, followed by a description of their meanings in English.

Data were hand coded, and themes emerged by repetitive scrutiny of the data. Following standard procedures for qualitative data analysis, the interviews were read several times to identify theoretical themes and these themes were used in the first attempts at coding the data. Part of the themes, referring to employment and cultural milieus, were previously determined, guided by the theoretical frame used in the conceptual model, and deliberately sought in the interview. The other themes (“luta”, “beyond the decision?”) emerged from data analysis. The inclusion of a theme was dependent on the percentage of the sample that referred to it. In this study, themes were included if they were present in a minimum of 50% of the interviews. Some themes, such as “God gives me the strength”, “*Luta*”, and “The way things should be” were present in 100% of the interviews.

From the themes, more elements were added to the conceptual model, and relevant quotes were selected, which attempted to identify the recurrent themes in the participants’ words. Transcriptions were reviewed repetitively, theoretical themes continually added, combined, and/or refined.

CHAPTER 4 - Data Analysis

“More important, my hope is that others who were formerly and are currently silenced will find their voices. I, for one, certainly want to hear what they have to say.” (Hill Collins, 1990: xv).

In this section, each of the concepts proposed in this study are analyzed separately. It starts from the perceptions of women street vendors surrounding the elements of local gender regime of Goiania, moving to indicatives of women’s resistance through an entrepreneurial vision, and finally providing an analysis of the outcome of the combination of environment and resistance. Analysis of the data revealed two different outcomes for the combination of factors referred previously a single entrepreneurial decision, resulting in the creation of a stagnant or temporary *feirante*, or the development of a true entrepreneurial vision, in the role of a true informal entrepreneur.

A day in the life of a street vendor in Goiania

Clara

Clara is 26 years old and she has her own informal business, which she partners with her mother. She is thin, average height, and has long platinum blonde hair. She is wearing jeans, and a top that shows her midsection. She seems to be a very communicative person, she smiles all the time, and greets everyone walking by her stall.

Clara sells her products in two markets, *mercado dos trabalhadores*, and *feira central*. She is also a college student, and will get her degree in business administration from a private college in Goiania. Clara has a very busy schedule; her work in *mercado dos trabalhadores* happens from Monday through Saturday, from 9am until 5pm. She goes to *feira central* on Sundays, from 7am until 3 or 4pm.

Her mother is responsible for production, and Clara is responsible for sales. They concentrate their business in producing tops for women. Clara and her mother both start their day at 6 am, when Clara starts getting ready for a day of work. She takes an hour long trip by bus to get to the market, and gets there at 8am. Her products are kept in a rented locker in a garage close to the market. She sets up her stall, hanging some products, folding others, and by 9am, she finishes the set up process, and is able to focus on sales.

Clara is a very outgoing person, and an experienced salesperson. She greets everybody who is around her, whether they are customers or other vendors. When she has exams at school, she tries her best to study while she is at work. At lunchtime, she buys a meal from another vendor in the market, and eats sitting by her stall, between customers. She counts on the help of her “neighbors” to be able to go to the restroom. They watch each other’s stalls when they need to be away, so they need to be always in a good relationship with each other, to be able to count on their help.

Clara stays in the market until 5 pm; by 4:30pm she starts putting away her products in a cart, and the *montadores* take this cart to the garage where she rents a locker. From work, she goes straight to college, as she does not have time to go home between work and class. She has classes from 6:30pm until 11:00pm, and takes a bus home. She will get home at about midnight, when she can finally eat dinner, take a shower, and get some sleep before she has to get back to work again.

Helena

Helena is 44 years old, and she, together with her husband, daughter, and son in law, work together in an informal business. Helena's tanned skin differentiates her from the average Goianian. She has long hair, parted in the middle, no make up or jewelry, except for her gold wedding band. She is wearing a T-shirt, jeans, and sandals. From her tired appearance, she seems to spend little time taking care of herself, but a lot more time taking care of the business. She and her family come from Tocantins (north of Goias), and decided to move to Goiania, to have better sales opportunities. From Tocantins, they brought an interesting product called golden grass, with which they make earrings, necklaces, purses, and bracelets.

They work in four different markets, which keeps them busy from Wednesday through Sunday. Production has to be intense, in order to have enough products to offer in the markets.

She explains that they wake up at 6am, when the family, who lives together, starts the production process. They diligently work all day, and Helena takes a break only to prepare lunch for the family. Some products take an hour to make, others take the entire day to produce a single product. They work until 1 pm, when two of them have to get ready to go to the market, while the other two stay home and continue the production.

Helena has to wrap everything up carefully so as not to damage the merchandise, and she and Mariano (her husband) leave for the market. They own a car, but her husband is the only one who has a license. For that reason, Mariano is always in the markets. They stay there until 9pm, when they pack up again and head home. They get home at about 10pm, and try to get a good night's sleep to start the next day in the same routine.

Local Gender Regime: Opportunities

Four themes were identified describing the opportunity structure of Goiania. These themes are related to women's perceptions of financial and age restrictions in the formal labor market, types of work these women were trained to perform, and the networks that supported them in their business.

“This pays a lot more” (Clara)

Having in mind the restrictive situation of the job market in Goiania, where the majority of jobs offered in Goiania are in the industrial sector, the situation of employment opportunities and their compensation was one of the issues addressed in interviews with women street vendors.

When discussing the issue of employment, most women agreed that it is possible to find jobs in the city. However, the matter is what kind of jobs and salaries were offered. Women street vendors agree that the opportunities they had in the formal economy offer salaries that are too low for their subsistence. Clara, a 26-year-old college student compares the gains of her former job in the formal economy to her informal business:

CLARA: Now, I have about R\$ 1.500,00 a month left after paying for raw material.

RESEARCHER: Did you make as much money when working in the formal economy?

CLARA: No, this pays a lot more than any job I have had. I was a secretary and I made about R\$700, 00 or R\$800, 00, but never more than that. I could pay for college and a couple of bills, and the money was gone before the middle of the month.

For Clara, the small stall in the markets has proven to be more compensating than any other job she had before. Her gains in the informal economy double the gains she had in the formal economy, because the positions available to her were low-level positions. Even women holding college degrees attest the difficulty in finding jobs and when they do, the payment is not encouraging:

FLAVIA: I have a degree in education from UEG (University of the State of Goias) but because of the few job opportunities in the area and the low payment, I could not find a good job and use the knowledge I acquired at school.

RESEARCHER: What made you give up that profession?

FLAVIA: The payment, because the payment was terrible.

Similarly, for Flavia, the job market did not offer opportunities that are rewarding, and the years she spent in college do not mean that she would have a job with adequate compensation. .

Tatiana, 30 years old, who sells women's lingerie with her brother, agrees:

TATIANA: I was trying to improve my income. I was a nurse, but I was not making enough money.

Thus, even qualified individuals with higher education cannot find jobs that would be sufficient to support these women's needs. The economy in Goiania, highly focused on the industrial and agricultural sectors areas that are predominantly dominated by men, does not offer opportunities with sufficient compensation to these women, a factor that operates as a push factor to the participation in the informal economy. These women are giving up their jobs in

areas where they had to invest time and money to earn a degree, because of the low pay these jobs offer. Instead, they are investing in the informal markets. They are attracted by the possibility of making a higher income, with which they can support their families.

“No work if you are older than 40” (Clarice)

Another theme that was common in the discussion of job opportunities was triggered by a characteristic of the sample and the markets, which is composed by a majority of women older than 40, who express similar discontent with the employment opportunities available to them. They agree that the possibility of getting a job when you are older than 40 is almost null.

Clarice, in her forties, is the coordinator of one of the markets who engaged in years of struggle to open that possibility for women to have a chance to generate income. She expresses her reasons to spend so much time and effort:

CLARICE: 90% of the *feirantes* are women. There is not available work for women in the formal economy, especially for women older than 40. There are no jobs available for us and we are all coming to the markets, because there is no age limitation to work here.

With a career as a teacher and later, a housewife for most of her life, Clarice felt that the venue of the informal markets would be more inviting to women like her, who were struggling to achieve their personal and financial needs. This reality is true for women of all skill levels, as described by Janaina, 65, who is retired from a government agency:

JANAINA: I work because I think I retired too soon. I had to retire then, but could not find another job after I retired. I did not want to be free all the time, because I would stay at home, doing nothing. People who stay at home get sick. I don't want that for my life because I think I am still too young for that. I am 63 and I think I am too young (*she laughs at her statement*).

Janaina did not want to spend the rest of her life at home after she retired. She had to retire due to her age, but she also felt that if she stayed home without any other activities, she would get sick and die soon. Her interest in the markets was more as a occupational therapy than a financial need. Used to work since she was in her teens, as many other women in Brazil, Janaina did not have many other activities she could dedicate her time once she reached retirement age.

Teresa, 55, lost her job after the state telecommunications company she worked for 12 years was privatized, showing that even though most Brazilians dream with a government job

because of its stability, the future is not always that certain. With two of her children still in college, she felt the markets were her only choice:

TERESA: I have always worked as a government worker. I worked for Embratel (Empresa Brasileira de Telecomunicacoes) until it was privatized. After that, I kept working for another company that was going to do some of Embratel's work. I was teaching the work I was doing for 12 years at Embratel. I stayed that for 1 year, and then the business was extinct and my job was extinct too. At 55, the chances of getting another job were close to none. And we have a son who lives in Sao Paulo, and we support him there, as well as our daughter, she just started college.

Teresa did need to be creative and find a solution to unemployment. In that context, not only employment opportunities are restricted to women in general, but also women who are older than 40 years old become obsolete, despite growing family needs. The age selective formal market also acts as a push/pull factor to the entry of women in the markets. This might be a difficult start, but it is perceived as a positive change, where they finally engage in something that not only is lucrative, but also gives them a chance of doing something they really love, and for many reasons could not engage in before. The informal economy becomes an alternative that offers these women acceptance, regardless of their age, where they can shape their own product and business.

The same Teresa, who lost her job and still had to pay for her children's college, attests the rejuvenating power of her work:

TERESA: It was difficult at first. But now, I want to keep doing this work (in the markets). I never want to be closed in an office again. This is what I love. This is such a great environment. I am not tired, I feel great because I love my work.

Thus, these women's work in the markets brings them both monetary and psychological advantages. As work is generally tied with a sense of identity, a loss of a job or retirement may bring a series of issues such as depression and alcoholism, both for men and for women. Had it not been for the markets, Teresa and Janaina -- women who worked their entire lives --, would have few chances of employment.

“Gendered Training, Powerless Jobs”

Many women street vendors discussed their educational background and training as following a gendered division of labor, in which, they are trained and educated in occupations

that are traditionally related to women, or even when they get degrees in traditionally male occupations, they are excluded of the job market.

Joana, who is 45 and sells cosmetics, tells about her life:

RESEARCHER: And how far did you go in school?

JOANA: Up to the fourth grade, only.

RESEARCHER: And how old were you when you started working?

JOANA: Since 12 years old, my mother got me a babysitting job, and I stopped studying. And I never stopped working. Like a machine. In her mind, that was the job women should do, so I never really learned to do other kinds of work, besides cleaning house and taking care of children.

This is a fact, especially for women of lower class, in which parents do not believe there is nothing else they should do, besides getting married, being a housewife, and higher education is just an unattainable dream. Women are certainly part of the labor force, providing invaluable work to society, but the jobs they are trained to do, and the skills they gather during these experiences, contribute little to achieving positions of higher status and payment. Even those who achieve the goal of obtaining a degree are not safe in this restrictive job market.

Sara, 38, has a degree, but could never get a job in her field, finances. Her career took a different direction instead:

SARA: I have a degree in accounting, but I have never worked in the area. As soon as I left college, I never found a job that had decent payment, so I never really worked as an accountant. Then I went to the U.S. and did housecleaning for one and a half year. When I got tired of that, I came back and got married soon after.

Even though Sara got a degree in a non-traditional area of study, the limitations that are posed for women who tend to step out of the common female occupations are strong. Facing the restrictions of the job market in the financing field, Sara takes the direction of traditional gender expectations.

Out of the 14 interviews, all but three were in occupations that are traditionally women's and offered low payment: 6 housewives, 1 tailor, one babysitter, one nurse, and two teachers. The two exceptions are Janaina and Teresa, who were government workers in a University and a Telecommunications company. One had a degree in accounting, Sara, but never worked in the area, and Clara is getting a degree in Business Administration, a career she got interested in after working in the markets. The gendered job opportunities offering low salaries are important

elements in the development of an attitude of resistance and the creation of an entrepreneurial vision, leading these women to the street markets.

“They helped me get started” (Janaina)

In terms of networks helpful in the business start-up phase, all but one woman had no help at all. Most of them counted on the help of other women in their family. The exception was Tatiana, 30, who started a business with her brother, gathering the small savings she had while working as a nurse. She describes her surprise to find out that the loan she had applied was approved:

TATIANA: We had to buy machinery and the spot in the market, so we needed R\$ 35.000, 00. I still cannot believe we got that loan, because we did not have anything. I think the bank believed that this business was going to make money and believed in us. I don't know. .

She explains that in her experience, it is rather unusual to see *feirantes* in the market who actually got a loan to start up the business. This supports the idea that women have limited access to loans due to their limited networks and the existence of assets registered under their names (Greer and Greene, 2003). In Tatiana's case, the presence of the brother as a partner can be speculated as a factor for their access to the loan. He may have been, in the eyes of the banker, in the position of “supervisor”, supporting the myth that a woman knows nothing about business and she needs a mentor, a man to make sure she does things right. Therefore, as long as there is a man in this business, it should not fail. In Tatiana's case, this could not be further from the truth, considering that both she and her brother had no business experience at all, and she became the financial mind of the business, while he is the specialist in the production process of women's lingerie.

Help given from other women in the family, both financial and organizational is a more common pattern in these women's stories. Women helping women, either sisters:

JANAINA: We are three sisters who work with this product. Each one of us has a stall at different markets. They started this before I did, and they helped me get started.

CAROLINA: My sister was already working at the markets and she said she would help me. So I decided to come. It has been five years now that I am here.

Or mothers:

KAREN: We started off with R\$ 100,00 that my mother gave me, and with that money we started buying the materials to start making our products. Out of this

R\$ 100,00 we have been able to start working in the three markets and have enough products to show.

Whether it is a mother who gives the money to start up a business, or a sister who helps the other to get a better income, these findings also support what has been shown in the literature about women's networks as predominantly female, with neighbors, family members, friends. The common theme here is the fact that women are helping women. Whereas the help of family members was instrumental in the development of the business, the kind of businesses developed are dependent on the amount of capital invested. Therefore, despite having the encouragement and moral support of their families, these women started their businesses with limited capital, limiting also the kind of products they choose to offer. The lower the capital available to start up the business, the cheaper the product has to be, both to be produced and to be sold, offering limited profits. Nevertheless, the higher the amount of capital available to invest, the entrepreneur has a chance of choosing a product that has better return, in the case of Tatiana, lingerie.

Local Gender Regime: Cultural Milieu

The cultural milieu that structures the gender regime where these women are located is highlighted here as instrumental in the development of the attitude of resistance that makes possible the entrepreneurial vision described here. At the same time these characteristics act as constraints, they also operate as incentives to the contestation of the spoken and unspoken rules that limit the lives of these women to gendered positions and thus, leaves them powerless -- and penniless. Of the themes found that are illustrative of the cultural milieu, religious influence was emphasized, present in 100% of the interviews. The religious factor appears though, as a push factor, after women's negotiating strategies, one that protects and gives strength to pursue goals, called here as "God Gives me Strength". Other cultural factors that functioned as push factors to the acts of resistance of these women are ascribed rules as to "The Way Things Should Be", present in that culture. A third theme discussed in terms of a description of the cultural milieu of women *feirantes* is discrimination faced daily in their work, where customers devalue their work and disregard their value, as women and as citizens. Finally, the last theme illustrates experiences of women street vendors and events that led to their entrance in this profitable and innovative work is called here "If I need money, I have to find a solution". This theme describes

the events – sometimes traumatic -- that compelled them to react in an innovative way, going against what they have learned so far, and venturing in a risky but rewarding way of life.

“God gives me strength” (Sara)

God was a repeated theme in the conversations I had with women street vendors. A constant need to show appreciation and thankfulness, in a meaning that was different from just the mechanical way of saying “Thank God” without meaning it. This omnipresent figure was pointed out not as a figure that offers restrictions, but as the one who made their dream possible. The faith these women express in their appreciation to God, regardless of which religious denomination they follow or not, has profound influences in the way they see their achievements. Their discourses present ambivalent beliefs. At times, they adopt a passive attitude, when they transfer to God all the achievements and success they have had, and the strength they show to keep going. This mechanism is consonant with the ideology of *Marianismo*, where women are instruments in the hands of a superior being. Overwhelmingly, their discourse about God expresses this figure as a constant companion, who is there for them throughout the difficult times.

Some read the Bible, and find comfort:

JOANA: I read the Bible a lot, and God gives me comfort, because sometimes I get really exhausted.

Or appreciate the position they are now:

JOANA: Sometimes, I see some people who only have the bus ticket, not a dime to spare. For women with children it is even more difficult, if the child wants a popsicle, the mother says “no, we only have money for the ticket”. That is sad. Thank God I have an alternative. We go through hard times, but we are blessed by God.

ANA: God gives me a lot of strength to work and I provide for everyone.

SARA: On Saturdays, I stretch my arm and feel that I am sore, because of all the heavy lifting, and I always say: “Thank you Lord”.

Share their fears and ask for help:

TATIANA: We made a loan. I got all my savings and the loans, and prayed: “My God, help me, because if this does not work we are in serious trouble”. He did help us, and we are almost done paying for the loan.

God is not perceived by these women as a punitive and restrictive being that limits the opportunities of women to being a mother and a wife, as some religious ideologies support, but offering constant companion, guidance and confidence through difficulties, or disappointments. By attributing to God their work and success, they manage to maintain their status of compliance, mandated by their religious beliefs, but still maintain their business.

“My work is worth nothing to these people” (Karina)

The *feirantes*' image in the general population's eye generates disappointment and discouragement to these women who have extenuating work routines. The vendors feel that they sometimes are looked down and not valued for the work they do. They feel strongly that they are not as respected as they would be if they were in a formal business. Maria, 45, expresses her surprise when she started working in the markets. She was a jeweler who had lived in Europe and several parts of Brazil until she settled in Goiania, and now makes purses and sells them in the markets:

MARIA: At first, it was very hard for me to interact with people for the big gap, a social and cultural one, there is between me and the rest of the people working in this kind of market. After some time, I had to adapt and adjust. Sometimes people look at your products and never say hello, thank you or goodbye. At first I was shocked, because I believe everybody everywhere deserves at least these basic words.

She grants the devaluation to a difference in social class, between her and the other *feirantes*, and that she is “mistakenly” seen as similar to other *feirantes*. Coming from a separation that left her without any assets, she says she has to support herself for the first time in her life, and the markets were a window for the products she was producing.

Karina explains what she believes is the image of *feirantes*:

KARINA: There is a belief that people who work in the markets is poor and did not have any other opportunities to work, is here to avoid paying taxes while everyone else has to pay them, and that the *feirante* will never do more than that. People look at the crochet products, and say, “that is so easy to make, the yarn is very cheap, you are charging too much for it”. I feel so offended, because I had spent an entire day making that piece. So, my work is worth nothing to these people.

Feirantes are seen as lower class, limited and unsuccessful people, an image that is reflected in the behavior of many customers. The mistreatment of *feirantes* provokes feelings of discouragement and sadness in several of them:

ANA: Some people are rude, we get sad, but other days we have great customers, so they even out. I have been offended a lot here, I guess some customers leave home in a bad mood and come here to look down on us. I have to forget this otherwise, I won't be able to continue. I have to forget about it.

To others, this devaluation not only affects them emotionally, but also financially:

MARIANO: Feiras are bad because your products are not valued as much as they would if they were in a store. I really wanted to sell my products at a mall, where the price and respect could be much higher.

The lack of dignity and respect towards the *feirantes* and their work is an important factor in the outcome of their entrepreneurial decision. To some, it will be a push factor, which supports their plans to expand the business, gain the public's respect, and increase their profits. To others, it generates feelings of discouragement and bitterness towards the markets, keeping the business stagnant or even leading to the abandonment of the markets.

“The way things should be”(Clara)

Traditional patterns of behavior that demonstrate the patriarchal structure of the gender regime in Goiania is demonstrated in the discourse of women street vendors. Either these structures are described as roles these women still keep and have to juggle now with the addition of the role of entrepreneur, or as issues they must challenge if they want to succeed. In both cases, these passages illustrate the influence of patriarchy in shaping the lives of men and women in Goiania.

Clara, a 26-year-old college student, shares the difficulties of having a relationship with the work routine she has-working seven days a week, and going to college at night:

RESEARCHER: How does your work affect your personal life?

CLARA: Having a boyfriend is complicated. It is hard for men to understand and accept me working as much as I do, because they expect a lot of attention and I cannot give a boyfriend a lot of my time and attention. So, sometimes, there are arguments because the boyfriends do not understand my work, and why I am so tired. They see it as a lack of interest or that I don't want to be with them. See, they are expecting a girl who works weekdays, gets home and gets all dressed up to wait for him. I cannot do that. I have to wake up early, I have to take care of

my business. I guess I don't follow the rules of "the way things should be", you know, I am not a typical woman.

It is possible to notice gender differences in the sales strategies used by both men and women who work in the markets. Through observation, I could see that men who work in the markets adopt a more "aggressive" approach, occupying the aisles of the markets, trying to convince customers to see their products. They are persistent and sometimes rude. Women, on the other hand, adopt a more passive approach, waiting for the customers to come to their stall. They sit behind or beside the stalls, they are diligently observing the crowd and making eye contact with people passing by, with a smile. As it is possible to note, "the way things should be" represents an ideology that affects the lives of women and men in more ways than those they can express in words.

Maria describes how her relationships always came first in her life, her husbands were the providers, and how this issue affects her today:

MARIA: because of my last relationship, I gave up my work as a jeweler. I was married, and my ex-husband and I moved to a small farm in rural Rio de Janeiro. We did not have electricity in the place, so it made it impossible for me to make jewelry without electricity. I was married a couple of times, totaling 21 years. I had a provider for all this time. I ended up getting too involved in the relationship and not in my professional life. I was working, but I did not have the commitment of supporting myself. I was not prepared for that. I believed that once you got married, that it was for the rest of the life, and I never thought about separation. Now, I have the need to deal with that problem. It is urgent. And I am getting older, I am a grandmother already, it was something I was supposed to have done twenty years ago. So, now I feel the weight of having to learn this at this point of my life.

Maria expresses how these traditional expectations are deeply ingrained in her attitudes and how they affected her life up to that moment. Her life was limited to being a wife, and now that she is not in that position anymore, she struggles to learn to be by herself. Housework, caring for the children and the elderly are tasks that are still part of their routines between production and sales. Housekeepers are not a reality for many of the women interviewed, even though this other form of informal work is cheap, and even more devaluated than the vendors' work:

RESEARCHER: And what about the house work? Who does it?

JOANA: I take care of everything. Everyday I do a little of the housework. Men don't help (*Joana has a husband and three adult sons, unemployed and living at home*). I mean, sometimes they do. When they can, when they want to, but men never want to do housework. I get so tired.

Clarice divides her time taking care of her elderly mother, the house, coordinating the market, working as a politician's assistant and producing vases from recycled material to sell in the market:

CLARICE: my mother lives with us, she is 95 years old and she needs constant attention. I need someone full time living with me to help me take care of my mother and help me with some of the house work.

Julia feels the weight of taking care of her granddaughter and still managing production and sales, while the child's father is away:

JULIA: Now my son is out of town, so I am the sole responsible for his daughter. So, I get home at about 11 at night, and she is waiting for me to put her to bed. This is very difficult.

To these women, Hochschild's (1989) "second shift", is still a reality. There is still a separation between what is supposed to be "women's work" vs. "men's work," and neither housekeeping nor childcare is in the description of the latter. However, when these rules are challenged, strong reactions may follow:

TATIANA: *About the customers' reactions to her brother selling women's underwear*: He faces a lot of prejudice, from customers who don't accept being helped by him. Older women, for example, usually don't want him to help them. He gets so upset with that. A woman the other day said "I think this is wrong, this is absurd for a man to be working with women's underwear, I cannot imagine buying panties from a man". He is mulatto, but when he heard that, he got so pale. He gets very upset sometimes, with people's reaction to him. People are really narrow-minded. And to think that he is the expert in producing women's underwear, he is actually the one who can describe the products best. But because he is a man, he is not supposed to be involved with that.

Tatiana delivers a very thoughtful analysis of the reality of women in Goiania:

TATIANA: I can see the other women who are married and who have children that are in this situation (*giving up their careers to take care of the family and the house and ending up being considered unproductive citizens*). They face pressure at home and at work, of doing their best, but they are torn in so many activities and their work is not valued at home or at work. My life is different, but I may be in the same situation in the future. So we have to unite and support each other and become independent and successful.

Thus, the expectations of appropriate behavior according to gender, or “doing gender,” are present in the lives of these women. For several of them, these expectations kept them from developing themselves as independent individuals for a long time, but these beliefs are not holding them back now. Even though they display acts of resistance, by the initiative of starting a business, they are still responsible for housekeeping and childcare, conforming to the gender structure. They seem to feel that as long as they fulfill these duties, and do not allow their role as an entrepreneur to interfere with what is expected from them, they do not jeopardize their status as women in the eyes of society, as well as their own. Working, and having a business is acceptable for women, as long as it does not interfere with their “womanly duties.”

“If you need money, you have to find a solution” (Sara)

When searching for the reasons these women turned to the informal economy to support themselves and their families, each one of them had a particular story to tell about the reasons to engage in an informal business. It has not been easy for any of them; they have been through several difficulties.

Maria tells about how at age 40, she saw herself having to learn to support herself after a separation:

MARIA: my husband and I separated and I ended up coming back to Goiania. With this separation, I came out of the relationship without anything. There was no division of assets, I was in a very difficult situation to start a business and support myself.

As discussed before, Maria also had to face a selective job market that rejects applicants with age exceeding 40. Thus, not only did she have to face the hardships of a separation, in which she did not claim any assets that she and her husband has accumulated over the years, she also had few options of employment to turn to, until she got a stall in a market. Difficulties encountered when dealing with a separation, together with restricted job opportunities for women older than 40, are seen here as push factors to the entrepreneurial decision to start a business. This theme was repeated several times in various interviews, as with Sara, a 38-year-old housewife:

RESEARCHER: What attracted you to this kind of business?

SARA: I think the necessity. If you need money, you have to find a solution, you have to work. I wanted to offer my daughter a better life than what we were offering.

Between the option of staying at home, counting only on her husband's income, having to learn to live with less, and find another way to increase their income to offer more to her daughter, she preferred the latter. To Sara, the greatest motivation to her entrepreneurial decision was offering her daughter a better future.

Ana, 51 years old, also tells her reasons for working in the markets:

RESEARCHER: And why did you start working here in the markets?

ANA: My husband had an excellent job, and he decided not to work anymore. For no reason. He just quit, without discussing anything with me, nothing. It has been four years now, his money is gone, and the responsibility fell on my shoulders. It was difficult, he was in debt, and my daughter's job does not pay much. The markets were a solution for me to have some extra money to do groceries and pay bills. As you know, taxes here in Brazil are high. So, it is difficult for me to make more money just counting on the store (*Ana has a store in a small town near Goiania*). That is my story, but I have friends who need what they make her to put food on the table. At least I have another source of income.

For Ana, when her husband did not play the role of the provider anymore, she also had to choose between lowering their standards of living even more, and trying something new. In her case, she had a formal business not too far from Goiania, but high taxes were keeping her from making profit, as De Soto's (2000) obstacles to legality informs us. Not only high taxation and bureaucracy are keeping people from having formal businesses, these factors are also making small businesspeople recur to the informal economy as a means of income supplementation. To Ana, the markets came as a solution for the problem, without having to lower their living standards.

Even though each of these women have a particular reason to start a business in the markets, the common thread in all these stories is a situation of need, whether a need of survival, of improvement, or keeping finances stable. Their entrepreneurial vision was motivated by the needs they had to meet, pushing each one of these women to the informal markets in search of a solution to their financial problems.

Resistance

When tracing back to the moment they decided investing in the formal markets, women vendors point out not only growing family needs that needed to be met, but also their need to change their lives. To them, conforming to the role of a housewife and mother, or conforming to

a low paying job was not enough anymore. They express their search for a better life, without accepting what was expected from them, which was not sufficient according to their goals.

“Luta” (Tatiana)

PESQUISADORA: Se voce pudesse descrever seu trabalho em uma palavra, qual seria?

TATIANA: Luta, muita luta. E a luta que faz meu trabalho possivel.

RESEARCHER: If you could describe your work in one word, what would that be?

TATIANA: Fighting energy, a lot of fighting energy. It is this fighting energy that makes my work possible.

The overarching theme found in terms of resistance is called here “Luta” as Tatiana exemplifies in the opening quote, and it encompasses all the shapes their resistance efforts take in their discourse. Some express their discontent with following the history of their mothers and grandmothers, the fate of being solely wives and mothers. Others express their apprehension about getting involved in a relationship, as they can see the lives of their friends and fellow *feirantes*, and fear losing the autonomy and independence they have accomplished. But all of them indicate an element of agency that is clear on their discourse.

Sara tells about her decision of starting a business, how dissatisfied she was with her choice of being a stay-at-home mom, not without emphasizing her love for her daughter and husband.

SARA: I was staying home and taking care of my child, but realized that I needed to do something with my life. I did not want to follow that pattern of being just a wife and a mother anymore. I thought I should also work to increase our income and give our daughter a better future.

The decision sometimes may come with guilt, due to the difficulty to break with established forms of behavior and thought, when she emphasizes how much she loves her daughter and husband. However, she found something else she loves:

RESEARCHER: What has changed in your life since you have started in the markets?

SARA: It has changed everything. I am much more relaxed. I was so tired of staying at home taking care of the house and my daughter. I do love my daughter and my husband and taking care of them is very important to me. But *I love* this work, because I am in a different environment, meeting different people, talking about different things. *I love it*; I look forward to Fridays now, because I know I

am going to come here. I start preparing for it, and it is very exciting, *I love it*. I call my customers and let them know that I have new products to show.

Carolina, a single mother of a 24 year-old, tells about her decision of coming to the markets. Her sister was already working in the markets and helped her through the bureaucracy. They work in the same markets now and help each other:

CAROLINA: I am from a small town not far from here, and worked 12 years doing secretarial work at a drugstore. There is a moment in your life when you see that you have to do better, you have to grow. That is when I moved here and started this business. I wanted to have something of my own, be independent. I felt so insecure, depending on a job, I never knew what was going to happen.

She also displays resistance to the idea of a relationship, discouraged by the relationships of the other *feirantes* she sees in the markets:

RESEARCHER: Are you married?

CAROLINA: No, I am single. It is just my daughter and myself in my home. Men nowadays see women facing work, with all its difficulties and they get so comfortable, I see that a lot. Men see women working hard, and they leave them, or they stop working and start depending on the wife's work. We get scared of having a relationship. Life is hard as it is.

A position shared by Clara:

CLARA: I don't want any boyfriend right now. Men do not understand my strength and will to have a better life. I don't want to change that. I don't want a relationship to change me.

And Ana agrees with Carolina about men's accommodation, and tells how she sees women nowadays:

ANA: I think women have been taking charge of the situation. They are tired of being poor and helpless and they are taking the responsibility for making money. Women never give up, whether they are young, old. I know women who are 70 years old and do this. I think men are very comfortable. They see that the women are taking charge and they are just sitting back and waiting for the results.

The women interviewed for this study expressed discontent with their lives and the work they were performing prior to their commitment to a business. The family and community expectations laid on these women were too restrictive to them. These values and expectations served as a motivation to the development of this fighting energy that led these women to decide to work in the markets. Similarly, the avoidance some show of having relationships is linked to

the attempt not to fall back to following the same expectations they want to stay away. Both aspects of resistance and accommodation are present in this process, as they manage home and streets.

Beyond the Decision?

Outcomes of entrepreneurial decision are twofold. One path remains stuck in the present, the other reaches beyond the current position. Their dissatisfaction with the paths they were taking, following cultural expectations, led them to a change, the entrepreneurial decision of investing their money and time in the markets and to attempt to create a business. All of the women interviewed here presented this breaking point, where they had to search for something more lucrative to fulfill their needs, whether financial or emotional. However, the sample splits in two when the outcome of this entrepreneurial decision. All of the individuals in the sample took the entrepreneurial decision of establishing a business-a high-risk move. However, part of the sample, after the establishment of the business choose to keep it without changes, permanently, or see it as a temporary solution to a financial problem, not intending to give continuity to the business. These individuals are called here *Feirantes*, and they are characterized by the fact that they took the entrepreneurial decision of starting a business, but choose to lead it in a stagnant or temporary manner, avoiding taking risks after the business is established.

The other part of the sample is composed by women who see their business as the beginning of an entrepreneurial career. They have plans to expand, diversify, formalize and export. These individuals are seen as having a true entrepreneurial vision, and are called *empreendedoras informais*, or informal entrepreneurs.

Feirante: "This is good enough for me" (Sara)

The decision to become a *feirante*, and keeping the business as it is, without making plans for growth or changes, and thus, keeping risks low, can be a result of several factors. Participants justify their decision with a variety of issues, such as health problems, fear of losing money, lack of interest in increasing income.

Sara is happy with her business just the way it is, and prefers not to expand:

SARA: I don't think about working in other markets, or making any changes, because I have a heart problem, so I cannot exaggerate on physical activities. So,

the way things are today, I think it is great. I am not thinking so much about the future, because there is a lot to think about right now. If I were to expand, there would be a lot more work and expenses, hiring other people, things that come with that. I am not interested in that, because it would not leave me any time to take care of my house and my family. I want this business, but I also want to be a good mother and a good wife.

Sara does not want to return to her old routine of wife and mother, but have no interest in changes, diversification or growth for the business because that would also interfere with her responsibilities as a mother and a wife.

Joana, who has been working in the markets for ten years now, is in the same position she was ten years ago, and may quit working in the markets and sell products on demand, she says she is tired:

JOANA: I don't have plans for working in other markets, or starting a store, because the taxes are too high to have a formal business. I just want to stay here. I think about quitting, and just selling products to friends and family at home. I don't know. I am just so tired of all this.

To Joana, who has maintained her business mostly stagnant for the last 10 years, the markets have become a source of frustration. She is tired of the routine, and feels that her health has deteriorated from the market experience.

Janaina, who is retired from a government job, sees the markets as a distraction and has no plans of growth, and wants to keep risks low from now on:

JANAINA: I don't have plans for working in other markets, or starting a store, because the taxes are too high to have a formal business. I just want to stay here. This is enough for me, I don't want to get too involved with the complications I can have of diversifying and expanding. I don't want to lose any money, and I know the way I am now, there is no way I can lose. This is good enough for me.

Janaina sought the markets for personal, instead of financial fulfillment, and so she does not express any motivation to expand. Her experience as it is now is fulfilling her needs. The behavior of these women lacks the idea of risk taking and constant innovation that is particular to the definition of an entrepreneur. Hence, they are characterized here as *feirantes*, individuals who are selling products in the informal markets. This attitude seems to be a preference, in which the business is a source of income and relative pleasure, but it is not a choice for a career. Thinking about expansion is a source of anxiety, to which these individuals respond by conforming what they have accomplished so far, so they will not compromise their finances or

their families. I speculate whether this choice is a permanent one, or whether it fluctuates, depending on the circumstances these individuals are going through. A longitudinal study would certainly be able to reach this question and define with more precision the permanence of these women's choices.

Entrepreneurial Vision: A Window to Possibilities

With the combination of all these factors that are present in the local gender regime, these women show that they have developed an entrepreneurial vision, which will guide them through the creation of a business, even though most of them have no experience or preparation in the business field. This entrepreneurial vision is demonstrated in three main themes present in their discourse. First, "Following tendencies, taking risks", an inherent part of entrepreneurship, shows the ideas developed by aspiring entrepreneurs at the business start-up phase. It connects to their choices of products based on their incipient market research, looking for products that the public would be interested in purchasing, and the choice of spending time with production or not. Secondly, the theme of the profitability of the markets, showing the advantages of working in the markets as opposed to the jobs offered to them in the formal economy. These two themes encompass the definition of entrepreneurship, that is, the act of starting up a business and the behavior of taking risks.

"Following Tendencies, Taking Risks"

The business strategies adopted by women street vendors highlighted here intend to demonstrate the entrepreneurial vision that shapes their entrepreneurial behavior. The characteristic of following tendencies and taking risks is certainly descriptive of entrepreneurship and is demonstrated here in the discourse of women street vendors. This characteristic may take diverse forms; some focus on popular products and attempt to work in as many markets as possible to maximize sales. Others invest in singular products that cannot be found elsewhere, or focus on seasonal markets, also maximizing sales through the focus on the tendencies of the markets. All of these are strategies that have shown to be fruitful in the business world that are the street markets.

Carolina, 45 years old, who did secretarial work for 12 years before she decided to start working in the markets tells her reasons to choose not to make the products she sells:

CAROLINA: I don't make any of my products, because if I did, I wouldn't be able to work in so many markets...And time goes by so fast in the mornings, when I am not in the markets so I would not have time for production. It is better for me to buy the products in Sao Paulo. I do some research on the products that are more on demand, and I try to find those that the competition has not started selling yet. I try to stay a step ahead of the others.

She works in six different markets from Wednesdays through Sundays, which allows her to make more sales than working in fewer markets. The products of her choice are accessories, which she buys wholesale in Sao Paulo once a month. The trip is long-about 12 hours by bus-, but she makes sure she leaves on Mondays and returns on Wednesdays in morning, just in time to go to the market on Wednesday afternoon. She weighs the strategies that will maximize her profits, such as choosing not to produce the merchandise. In addition, she tries to keep up with the latest styles and does not commit to a certain product. She describes diversification as her strategy to try to beat the competition.

Karina, who has a partnership with her daughter, describes the decision of selling accessories that they produce themselves:

KARINA: About how she decided to come to the markets- we noticed that a more lucrative business would be accessories (rather than selling purses, their first idea). After all, women need only a couple of purses, but they need several earrings, necklaces, belts, etc, because the soap operas are showing new things all the time. We know that if it in the soap opera, everybody will want to get that accessory. Accessories are a great business. So, I started the idea, and she (her daughter) liked it a lot, so we started our partnership. We used to sell to friends and acquaintances, and after six months, we saw that the markets would be a great window for your products. It opens many possibilities that are going to be useful for the plans we have in mind. It puts our product out in the public, which in turn may produce some contacts to achieve what we want, which is selling to big stores, to other states. So, the market is a window that opens these possibilities.

She also justifies their reasons to make their product instead of buying them re-selling them:

KARINA: Our product is new, and so it takes time for people to accept these products and start buying. Had we been selling ordinary products, we would be selling a lot more, but since our choice was to innovate and create our own products without copying from someone else, creating our own style, it takes some time to establish the product in the market.

Karina and her daughter have ambitious goals and try to differentiate themselves from the competition as well, by focusing on products that are exclusive.

In addition, women street vendors describe their marketing strategies for the periods of time when the sales are low. Clara reveals her approach to make sure she always has money to pay for her college tuition and support her family:

RESEARCHER: When the sales are down, do you have any strategies to deal with that, such as reducing the prices?

CLARA: I travel to rural areas and small towns. We work on what is called “*Festas do Interior*” some religious events, or stock shows that attract many visitors. There is always one of those happening. From April thru November there are several *Festas do Interior*, which happen in *Goias* and *Tocantins* (*a neighbor state*). When I see that I will not be able to pay my bills with the sales here, I pack up and go to one of those. It is retail sales, but it helps a lot because the amount of people is larger. I take a tent and stay in town for about four or five days, sleep in the market, in my tent- so I don’t spend any money with accommodations. I stop selling in the market here for a week and try these other options. Wherever I will make more money that is where I will be.

Through these comments, it is possible to see that these women are in the markets with plans to make money, and succeed. They have a plan, and despite not having any experience; they are engaged in learning more and more in order to make their business lucrative. The attitude of risk-taking is present in their discourse, in which they take risks with the eyes in future profit.

“Wherever I will make more money that is where I will be” (Clara)

Another indicator of the entrepreneurial vision of women street vendors studied here, is the profitability of working in the markets. The objective measure of the profitability of having a business in the informal markets in Goiania is demonstrated here, where women street vendors reveal their gains in the Brazilian markets. An important information that can serve as a parameter for the values revealed here is the minimum wage in Brazil. In 2008 the minimum wage was raised to R\$ 415, 00 a month, or US\$ 248, 00, a 9% raise from the 2007 minimum wage (The Herald Tribune, March 2008).

While some of them provide actual numbers, others offer a more subtle idea about their gains, as Tatiana did. The concern not to reveal the exact amount she makes is more a protection against the jealousy of her neighbors than any other concern.

TATIANA: *About the loan of R\$ 35.000,00 they had to get to start the business:*
We have almost finished paying it, after only two years.

Tatiana and her brother have managed to support their family-Tatiana is single, and her brother has a wife and a child- and are close to paying off a loan of R\$35.000, 00 in two years, from their lingerie business, an impressive accomplishment.

Flavia, interviewed on her first day in the market, also selling women's underwear, expresses her expectations, based on what she has heard from other people working in the markets:

FLAVIA: I need to make at least R\$ 2.000,00 a weekend, working in two markets, in order to be worth it. And I believe that I can make it. This expectation is not so high. Many people are achieving that without many problems. For those of us who sell wholesale, it is not that difficult to make that kind of money.

Flavia believes that she can reach her goal without problems, according to information gathered through her networks with other women in the markets. She evaluates the prospects for the future and decides that the markets are a good venue for the commercialization of her products. Obviously, the gains vary depending on the kind of product sold. Carolina, who sells women's accessories such as earrings, necklaces, scrunchies, reveals her income:

CAROLINA: I believe I make about R\$ 1.500,00/month. It varies, depends on the time of the year (*selling products costing between R\$ 0,50 and R\$ 15,00, and the cheaper products, are the most popular*).

Helena and Mariano, who sell accessories-earrings, necklaces, purses- made of Golden Grass, working in four markets, reveal their impressive income, showing the public's preference for their products:

HELENA AND MARIANO: We can make an average R\$ 3.500,00 to R\$ 4.000,00 (*selling products with prices ranging between R\$ 2,00 and R\$ 35,00-the product that are most popular are the bracelets and earrings costing R\$2,00 each*).

The gains of these women selling their products in the markets are significantly higher than minimum wage, showing the rewards of working in the markets. The fixed costs they have, are: a fixed Federal tax for working in the markets paid to SEDEM, an annual cost of R\$ 150, 00 for working in up to three markets, the weekly payment for *montadores* that costs about R\$ 12,00 weekly, and electricity, that varies between R\$ 10, 00 and R\$ 50, 00 monthly. These gains

show also their entrepreneurial vision, in envisioning a lucrative activity to invest their time and limited capital.

Empreendedoras Informais: “My greatest dream is to have a store” (Tatiana)

The second theme that was present in the discourse of women street vendors in the markets of Goiania, was what is called here the demonstration of what a true entrepreneurial vision is, making these women not only feirantes, but empreendedoras informais, or informal entrepreneurs. The attitude of these women towards the business is that of a training session, or a starting point. This business is seen by them as a first step in an entrepreneurial career, that is, a career marked by innovation and calculated risks, with the goal of achieving success.

KARINA: We were talking about taking a course to learn to plan the business better, and learn to make our work more efficiently. Right now, I am charging R\$ 9,00 for a necklace that takes me two hours to make. That means two hours of my work are worth only 9? This is wrong, and we have to fix it. We are not making money. The problem is that people think handcrafts are not worth the price, they think that it is not work. But we want to change this. We are planning to fly high. This is such an innovative product, and we intend to market it abroad, because we understand that handcrafts are more valued out of Brazil. We are getting familiar with E-Bay, and have thought about having a website to market our products.

Karina and her daughter have several plans to make their line of products more popular and profitable. Despite not being regular internet users, they recognize the relevance of that tool to popularize their products abroad as well, showing their thirst for success that intends to overcome all limitations.

Flavia takes the example of a friend to inspire her in her search for success:

FLAVIA: I have always admired a friend of mine who went to college with me and she started making jewelry and sold it at college, for the classmates. I thought it was nice that every time there was a student organization meeting- I have always liked to be part of student organizations- she took her jewelry and sold a lot. She always paid for the trip with the money she made with the sales during the trip. Nowadays, she has a bigger business, selling not only jewelry, but also clothes, handcrafts, and has a store. As we live in a touristic town, she is making a lot of money with her business. So, I admire her a lot, for the courage she had to start so small, selling in the classroom, to having her own store, bought a house, it is great. That is what I want, you know? I don't want to be rich or anything, but work and make enough money to take care of my family, I want to have my own line of lingerie and be recognized.

The goal is providing for her family, stop paying rent and having her own place, as well as success and recognition. She knows she will not achieve that by being a stagnant *feirante*, her aspirations have to be higher.

Clarice, the coordinator of one of the markets is working on making that market as profitable for the women working there as possible. She created the market and went through many difficulties to create that market, in order to give women a chance for a higher income. She tells about her plan:

CLARICE: As Goiania has two other big markets that are well known in and out of the state, we have the goal to make it well known too. That way, we would attract people from out of the state. It is a fact that markets that happen on the weekend sell more, because that is when people have a chance to go out or travel, in the case of people who do not live in Gyn. If we achieve that goal, we will be part of the route of weekend markets, making a big difference for the women working here. That is my goal.

And Tatiana tells about their expansion plans selling lingerie. They are looking for not only profit, but also comfort:

RESEARCHER: And what are the plans for the future for your business?

TATIANA: We want to open a store. My greatest dream is to have a store. Continue selling a lot, but with air conditioner.

The plans and the aspirations of these women are far from being a stagnant *feirante*. Their attitude and goals are indicative of the qualities of a true entrepreneur, even though this term is commonly used to describe individuals in formal markets, the same characteristics can be seen here, in the informal economy. The limitations of the gender regime where they are located have restricted their chances of engaging in formal businesses. However, they have encountered in the informal markets a place where they have an opportunity, regardless of their gender, age, or class to learn about business. The informal markets are to the informal empreendedoras, a stage, in which they play a new role, the role of an entrepreneur. This preparation will strengthen their confidence, increase their capital and provide them with the tools necessary to enter the formal economy, in a globalized way.

CHAPTER 5 - Conclusion

Summary of Findings

This study illustrates the gendered makeup of the lives of women in Brazilian street markets and their strategies to negotiate these boundaries while they develop a business. In this research endeavor, special relevance is given to the perceptions of women street vendors of the particularities of the context where they live. They are located in a local gender regime that while consonant with the larger gender order, retains unique characteristics that are consistent with Brazilian reality. That local gender regime produces an opportunity structure and a cultural milieu that is perceived as restrictive to women's engagement in lucrative positions in the formal labor force. In particular, this study adds to the literature on international work, informal labor, and women's experiences within this context.

Structural factors that are part of Brazilian women's perceptions of reality are composed of restrictions in employment opportunities, resources, and networks. These elements are conducive to the subordination of women, restricting them to a limited participation – if any – in the formal labor force. In the context of Goiania's formal labor force, a distinct division of labor is present, in which the economy is based on agriculture, cattle production, and a growing telecommunications industry – all of which, are highly male-based. In that context, there is a clear distribution of power, in which women are relegated to minor and low pay positions. Similarly, women older than 40 years of age are not welcome in the formal labor market. In a context in which gender traditional values are of great significance, women are limited to skills that are marked by gendered expectations; their networks consist of other women who share the same difficulties, creating an inhospitable environment to women's success outside traditional cultural boundaries.

Interactional factors also offer constraints to change. Community leadership, religious practices, and family values produce a set of expectations for women's duties *as* women. Marriage, motherhood, household responsibilities, and care work are crucial for their position as Brazilian women. They describe their environment with a clear division of labor, leaving little time and encouragement to invest in anything other than these duties. These factors are not different in kind from gender traditional expectations placed on women in the U.S.; degree is made more intense, especially by the strong religious nature of the Brazilian culture. Ageism is more entrenched, and options for all women are fewer than, for example, in the U.S. economy.

The women who are part of this study are also in situations of substantial financial distress. To them, traditional positions for women do not suffice for their survival needs.

Despite facing severely limited conditions, they resolutely venture in a new direction. The growth of the informal markets offers a possibility for developing a business, a unique opportunity to them under these conditions. They describe the source for the courage they have of attempting something new, as *luta*, or fighting energy. *Luta* is the unifying characteristic shared by these women of different ages, education, and life stories. Note, for example, the wide range of educational level among these women – from elementary “drop outs,” to those with a full college degree. Yet, they found common ground in the street markets, all carried to their marketplace business, and perhaps beyond, through this connection to *luta*. This emotional determination carries them toward a new direction, to engage in an entrepreneurial decision, which comes only through careful negotiation with religious beliefs and household duties.

Despite their determination to change predetermined patterns of behavior, the women studied here also manage other aspects of their lives, which they cannot abandon, characterizing the coexistence of resistance and accommodation in their experiences. For instance, all women in this study make reference to their religious beliefs and repeatedly attribute their business and their success to God. This position of compliance, very different from their discourse about *luta*, led me to believe that what they implied was a negotiation strategy. They balance their involvement with their business and their religious ideology by attributing their achievements to God. This strategy allows them to maintain what is expected from them as a Christian woman (usually identified as a “good Catholic woman”), without being rebellious to tradition and to their own ideologies. Similarly, they maintain their household and caring duties, which make for a second or third shift, but protects them from being evaluated in their position as “good mothers,” or “good women.”

Two paths are the results of these women’s investment in an informal business. One group of women maintains their business, but prefers to keep it relatively stagnant. They feel that they should not take more risks, and do not want to spend any more time in the markets, which would keep them from doing their tasks at home. These individuals remain as *feirantes*, a position that enables them to make more money than they would in the formal market, but also does not threaten their performance as women.

Other women, called *empreendedoras informais*, decide to continue with the business, planning greater accomplishments. They see the markets as an initiation, a “window to possibilities.” Women in this position have strategies for increasing profitability, and take

calculated risks to develop the business. They still manage their gendered duties and negotiate religious ideologies, but choose to seek higher achievements, showing a distinctive taste for business.

In the conjunction of factors that are part of the local gender regime of Goiania, street markets thrive as a stage where women discover that from their investment in a stall, their gains may go beyond monetary. Whether as a *feirante* or *empreendedora informal*, the same factor, *luta*, unite these Brazilian women in the contexts of the markets. Their accomplishments are described by them as a result of this fighting energy against all difficulties. The pleasure of achieving their goal is evident in their own words, expressing the need to follow a different direction, in order to reach the profitability they seek. Their work is to them more than a means of income generation, but a source of happiness and pride.

Theoretical Thoughts

Some theoretical concepts are instrumental in this analysis of women street vendors in Brazil. Two main concepts, local gender regimes and *luta*, inform this study and serve as guidance in understanding the paths of women in Brazilian markets. While local gender regimes remind us that even though the fundamentals of the gender order are pervasive globally, the shapes that these patterns may take are local and personal. Thus, it provides an inventory of structural factors influencing gender relations in a certain location, whereas the concept of *luta* introduces human agency to the analysis.

With the combination of these two concepts, it is possible to see women street vendors not as impoverished victims of the limiting gender order to which they are submitted, but as active actors negotiating with resilient structures of the gender regime. Without acknowledging structure, this study would be unfeasible; without acknowledging interaction, women would be hapless victims of patriarchy. Hence the need of including these two theoretical frames is paramount.

Another concept that facilitated the understanding of data in this study was Connell's (1987) concept of cathexis. Cathexis, a Freudian term originally, was used by Connell to describe "the construction of emotionally charged social relations with 'objects'" (Connell, 1987:112). Connell uses cathexis specifically to explain the socially determined direction of emotional and sexual attraction to heterosexuality. In this study, I use cathexis in its more

general definition. I am more interested in the emotional engagement with an object that in this case is a business. Yet, the term *luta*, is more than simply an attachment to an object. It is almost spiritual – not in a religious sense, but as a deeply intense emotional engagement that drives women to such courageous accomplishments. It was present in many interviews, always as an entity, a “thing,” that they could not describe or explain. In the markets, a place where communication happens without concerns or the boundaries of Western standards, the existence of something that was indescribable led me to think that it was an emotional construct. The concept of cathexis helped me make sense of this construct.

“Doing gender” (West and Zimmerman, 1987) was also instrumental in the analysis of women and their negotiating efforts of gendered expectations. Doing gender demonstrates structure and interaction in concert, in which women’s conduct is evaluated in relations to normative conceptions of appropriate activities for particular sex categories.” (West and Zimmerman: 134-135). It is visible in this study through women’s concerns about doing household tasks and caring work, but not willing leave behind the opportunity of having their own business. They are torn between what is considered normative for their behavior as women, and what they want to do, which at times, do not coincide. Their involvement with the markets comes with the price of having to balance their own business and the responsibilities of childcare and household duties. They express concerns that have an underlying message that if they dedicate themselves excessively to the markets, leaving behind some of the other duties, they would be less of a mother, or a wife, and consequently, less of a woman.

Additionally, the concept of “doing difference” (West and Fenstermaker, 1995) is instrumental in this study. It reminds us that gender is not the only system of oppression women in this study face. These factors make their lives all the more different than the lives of women located in different social positions. Their position in terms of gender, race, and class are significant in their placement in the markets. It is not coincidental that women of color are underrepresented there, in a harsh hierarchy of the streets, they are not privileged enough to serve even in the street work. One would have to move to the criminal economy or to domestic work to find women of color in number – something that was beyond the scope of the current project. Doing difference was a constant reminder throughout this study that gender, race, and class cannot be analyzed separately.

Importance of the Study

This study contributes to international scholarship on women and cultural differences in their life processes. It emphasizes the context in which they are located and recognizes the relevant factors in that context, without trying to universalize women's experiences to one model. Their own voices and standpoints are given primacy here.

Contributions also expand to scholarship in the informal economy. This study provides an account of unique aspects of the informal street economy, an area that has received little if any attention in the literature. First, while several studies have been done in Latin America, street markets in Brazil are still largely unexplored venues. Secondly, this study presents an account of a different reality than most studies on the street economy. While women are most often in the position of informal workers in the hierarchy of the informal street economy, participants in this study are in the position of entrepreneurs, and with gains that reach up to ten times the minimum wage of the country. Thirdly, we use the term entrepreneurship, not simply as a measure of formal economic arrangements and success, but also to describe women's attitudes and devotion towards developing their business. This extension represents an attempt to offer new and more nuanced meaning to the term, other than the Westernized model.

Overall, this study reminds academics that our work in investigating this realm of the economy, invisible in many ways, is far from complete. As new perspectives are illustrated here, many other aspects and circumstances certainly remain under the surface. Investigations of diverse and innovative contexts like this add valuably to literature and may contribute to policy creation strategies.

Importance to Cross-disciplinary/ International Work

While informal labor markets provide income to large proportions of the working poor, it is unacceptable that individuals have to resort harsh conditions merely to survive. The informal economy most often offers low payment, no social protection, and many times puts individuals in poor working and health conditions. Street markets are a creative solution for the working poor but symbolize much larger structural problems.

Through constant cross-disciplinary work, not only can scholars understand better the intricacies of informal economy, but also may ultimately provide more innovative solutions, and provoke change without giving primacy to one or another discipline. Interdisciplinary work can

provide a more comprehensive and complete view of the work of women in the informal markets. For instance, in my own work, I brought knowledge both in sociology and psychology fields. It allowed me to reach the idea of cathexis from their discourse, and make sense of it in terms of a larger structural context.

By the production of constant cross-disciplinary and international work, scholars can also join efforts to understand and discuss strategies for improvement and change in particular contexts across the globe, with a holistic and international perspective. With the conjunction of disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, economics, business administration, and the contact with diverse cultures, each of these fields are forced to abandon their focus in a singularly Western/ traditional perspective, instead engaging in the broader realities of the markets. As evidenced by the experiences of a diverse range of women who share Brazilian culture, signified by their market stalls in Goiania, valuable information in this street context can be used to assess changes in markets around the world. The conjunction of individuals with diverse backgrounds both culturally and methodologically may produce results that differ from the ones created by those who are embedded in that culture.

Reflections

Personal, Political, Positionality

My interest in informal markets was stimulated from the realization that they are part of my reality, but that they are not a “natural” part of the scenario everywhere. Moving to Manhattan, Kansas I noticed that the scenario was different from what I was accustomed to. The markets that were a very familiar part of my life in Brazil are totally absent in Kansas. Although other forms of informal work surely take place here, this much more evident form of informality that are the street markets, were absent from my reality, but present in my thoughts for an entire year.

The constant presence of that reality that I took for granted for so long was combined with my studies of feminist theory, another new endeavor for me. Inspired by a new perspective, another realization hit me: the majority of informal work is done by women. While this seems obvious now, it was a thought that never crossed my mind as a part of my home culture; it had become a taken-for-granted assumption. The project was taking shape at that moment. I was so surprised to realize that after years as a constant visitor of street markets, not once had the

question cross my mind: “Why is it that most vendors here are women?” That realization made me aware of my ignorance, and that there was a lot more to unveil.

I was so far removed from the realities of women in the markets that I was oblivious of their existence. My reality could not be more different from theirs. I was part of a privileged, select group of white, middle class women. I did have many jobs -- more than three simultaneously – but my life did not even remotely approximate the lives of street vendors. After I moved to the U.S., in which I could feel more intensely my position of marginality as an immigrant, I opened myself up to other women in marginal positions. While I am here in the U.S., I am marginal; when I am in Brazil, I am part of the privileged. That was a real life experience of the definition of intersectionality.

Politically, I could also reflect on other taken-for-granted matters. While governmental openness to regularize markets was an important advancement for vendors, a hidden agenda lies behind that change. It guarantees vendors the right to do their work, but it conceals the government’s inefficiency to allocate these individuals in formal labor markets. Problems are multi-tiered: growing number of markets indicate decrease of formal job opportunities and payment. Even there, high participation of white women exist, whereas women of color are absent in those contexts. The avoidance to discuss these issues maintains the matter as unsolved, and no policies are created to address them. What remains invisible and unacknowledged, remains unchallenged and unchanged.

Those that were left behind

I leave some women behind in this study. I give primacy to women who work in the Brazilian street markets, selling products that are considered legal in mainstream markets. I leave behind intentionally (though regretfully) those women who work in the criminal economy, and unintentionally, women of color. I recognize their vulnerability that is even greater than that of women who participate here. Women in the criminal economy are left behind because of time and safety restrictions that are related to producing a study in the environment of which they are part at least for now.

Women of color are absent here -- except for Tatiana – as they are absent in the informal markets of Goiania. They are excluded from that reality, a relatively better off reality in the realm of the informal economy, and are located in other segments of the informal economy.

They are the few ones who could not attain the right to work in the markets, have a stall in the markets, and sell their products on the streets. They may be the home-based workers, whose perform services for the women studied here, such as sewing, knitting, or painting. Domestic services, care work, or the criminal economy are some of the other layers of the informal economy where women of color can be located, as they are not present in the markets. All of these situations place them in a situation of greater vulnerability and invisibility. I recognize them; they were left behind, but were not forgotten.

Carrying the Work Forward

Future Research

Future research must include the combination of local structural factors that operate in the reality that is being studied, as well as interactional factors taking place, including women's agency when negotiating changes. The mix of these two elements gives relevance to context and difference, removing the focus from the researcher's point of view and giving primacy to the participants' standpoints. Moreover, including interaction and agency to the common discussion of social structure, the focus changes from fixed patterns to a window of possibilities, and opens the dialogue for the creation of feasible policies.

Further, follow-up studies must be carried out in contexts as the one studied here, to verify changes produced by their entrepreneurial vision and negotiation strategies over time. This study identified individual efforts of women in resisting and negotiating traditional expectations. However, women acting alone can provoke a limited amount of change. It is important to identify new ways of individual and everyday resistance and the extent to which they provoke changes, but also what factors may contribute to a shift to far-reaching group consciousness that will reach beyond individual women.

Policy/Conferences

Policy implications generated by reflections of this study are both local and global. Due to street vendors marginal social position, and the political agenda behind the existence of the markets, there is a much greater interest in making them invisible than otherwise. For these reasons, street vendors cannot count on other actors to defend their interests in policy-making decisions.

Workers in street markets have the right to work. As governments fail to offer opportunities for all citizens, street vending becomes a source of income generation, to which they must be entitled. All markets in Goiania recognize vendors' right to vend, but that is not a reality elsewhere. An additional measure to improve women's conditions in the markets is to enforce market rules more strictly, so they will not be corrupted. Spots in the markets should be given to those who are interested, not sold or rented at absurd values. This makes the participation for some people in the markets unfeasible.

Women's work in the markets must be visible and valued. Even though informal work is an issue studied by world-renowned organizations, such as the United Nations Development Fund for Women and Women in the Informal Economy Globalize and Organize (WIEGO), still little is done on local levels. The work of small and large organizations on the local level can address countless needs, such as to discuss and improve access to credit and micro financing to women, upgrade women's skills in order to compete effectively in the markets, share information on other women across the globe. These actions alone, would promote improvements for individual street vendors, and contribute to ward a feeling of interconnectedness with other women internationally.

Finally, street vending must become visible. International conferences are significant in discussing issues in a global perspective, but little of their span reaches individual women in marginal contexts. Conferences on national, state, and municipal levels must be held to discuss the relevance of the informal economy in specific contexts. These events facilitate the visibility of street markets, to the public in general and to potential sponsors to support the cause of these women.

Unique contexts call for unique solutions for problems. In the same way particular environments are studied as the site of the development of informal markets, the strategies of improvement taken in different contexts also must be investigated cross-culturally. Cross-cultural collaborative work is a possibility, bringing two different contexts to focus. This kind of work is of extreme importance for academia, as well as for each woman who works in informal markets. Organization, solidarity, and an understanding of their interconnectedness to other women around the world are of great importance for women in the informal economy to take charge of their situation. Information about women in the informal markets internationally, though available to academics, is unknown by other street vendors.

Women in Brazilian markets are unaware of the advancements that their colleagues in the Philippines, Ghana, Croatia, or Benin have achieved through the development of unions and organizations. While successful, these efforts become isolated ones when they cannot go beyond borders. This isolates not only those who are creating new solutions, but also the ones that cannot hear about them.

Global Marketplace

This study demonstrates that women in Brazil, though affected by ideological, economical, and personal restrictions, are not determined by them. They have the courage to take risks and create something new, all under adverse conditions. Although this study produces a local account of unique individuals and circumstances on street markets in Brazil, it also deals with issues that resonate with women everywhere.

In a conversation in a local street market, discussions of global tendencies take place. When I hear women in Brazil talk about their difficulties to find jobs in the formal market, I could also hear women in Ghana, Mexico, and the Philippines. Although they have their own particular stories and experiences, they can also relate to what women in Brazil have to say. After all, women across the globe are overrepresented in the informal economy, due to exclusionary formal labor markets. Therefore, even though it cannot easily be visualized, we are interconnected, embracing our differences and recognizing our similarities.

While the voices of individual women are vital in this study, the ultimate goal is to bring the discussion of the informal economy, as well as the situation of women, to individual vendors in the markets, to activists in small and large organizations, to scholars, and to policy makers. The goal here is to acknowledge the world a global marketplace, and through our interconnectedness, facilitate contact, knowledge, and above all, solutions.

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Appendix A - Description of Markets

Table 1.1

Market	Mercado dos Trabalhadores	Feira da Noite	Feira da Tarde	Feira do Artesanato	Feira Central
Working day and hour	Mondays thru Fridays from 8 am until 6 pm Saturdays from 8 am until 2 pm	Saturdays from 2:30 pm until 10 pm	Wednesdays from 2:30 pm until 10 pm	Fridays from 2:30 until 10 pm	Sundays from 2:30 pm to 10 pm
Geographic location	Downtown Goiania	Middle class neighborhood	Middle class neighborhood	In the limits of middle class and working class neighborhoods	In the limits of middle class and working class area
Description of location	Physical installation (roof, bathrooms, fitting rooms) market on working hours, and used by community rest of the time.	City square, traffic is blocked so the market can happen. Accommodates about 2,000 stalls. Chemical bathrooms (6)	Street –traffic is blocked on days of market. About 100 vendors at the time of data collection (can accommodate more). Chemical bathrooms (4)	City square. Accommodates 400 stalls. Chemical bathrooms(4)	Parking lot of a large grocery store (chemical bathrooms, 6)
Public	Mostly working class women, with their	Diversified. Majority is middle class and	Middle class public (mostly women), who	Middle class/ working class public-women.	Middle class/ working class public-women

	children and other women	above who live in the area	live or work in the area.		
Products	cosmetics (Avon), women's clothes, shoes, accessories, children's clothes, imported articles (toys, radios), men's clothes, food	Mostly women's and some children's articles. Huge area that works as a "food court"	Women's articles, few baby clothes, few stalls that offer food	Besides the usual women's and children's articles, there is a number of stalls dedicated to selling crafts.	Women's articles, few baby clothes, few stalls that offer food

Appendix B - Description of Participants

Table 2.1

Participant	Age	Marital status	Market (s)	Educational level	Product	How long?	Income
Clara	26	Single	Mercado dos Trabalhadores, Feira Central	Junior in Business Administration	Tops (R\$ 5,00)	10 years	R\$ 1.500/month
Joana	45	Married-husband does not work with her	Mercado dos Trabalhadores, Feira Central	Elementary school	Cosmetics (from R\$ 0,50 to R\$ \$45,00)	10 years	R\$1.000/month
Flavia	26	Single (has a boyfriend)	Feira da Noite, Feira Central	College degree-education	Lingerie (from R\$2.50 to 30.00)	First day	R\$2.000/weekend (projected)
Helena and Mariano	50s	married	Feira da Tarde, Feira da Noite, Feira do Campo, Feira dos Jovens	Elementary school	Accessories made of “Capim Dourado”	1 year	R\$4.000/month
Maria	42	Divorced	Feira da Tarde Feira do Artesanato, Feira do Dia	High school	Purses (from 20 to R\$55)	2 years	R\$1.800 to 2.000/month
Rosa	45	Single mother	Feira da Tarde, Feira da Comunidade, Feira da Amizade, Feira das crianças, and Feira Central and Feira da Noite	High school	Accessories: earrings, hair bands, small things(R\$0,50 to R\$25,00)	5 years	R\$1.500/month
Teresa	55	Married	Feira do Artesanato	High School	Wood Decor	3 months	Not Defined
Janaina		Single	Feira do	College	Women’s	3 months	Not revealed

	63		Artesanato	(Geography)	clothes		
Carolina	45	Single Mother	Feira da Tarde, Feira Aberta, Feira Popular, Feira Central and Feira dos Trabalhadores	High school	Accessories	5 years	R\$1,500 to 2,000/month
Sara	38	Married	Feira do Artesanato	College (accounting)	Women's clothes	3 months	Not revealed
Karen	45	Married	Feira do Artesanato and Feira Popular	High school	accessories	1 year	Not revealed
Clarice	50	Married	Feira do Artesanato	Junior High School	Ceramics Decor	3 months	Not revealed
Tatiana	30	Single	Feira do Artesanato and Feira da Noite	College (nursing)	Women's underwear	2 years	Not revealed
Julia	56	Divorced	Feira das Nuvens, Feira da lua, Feira Hippie	Junior High School	Tops and leggings	8 years	R\$ 3- 4,000/month

Appendix C – Field Notes

Note: This is a sample of the notes that I kept after visiting markets. For practical purposes, only short descriptions of three visits are posted.

Day 1: Mercado Aberto is a relatively new market (about one and a half year old) in downtown Goiania. It was a solution the City mayor came up with for the problem of the vendors who were accumulated on the sidewalks of the city. They built a large covered area with bathrooms that is used by the vendors from Monday thru Saturday during daytime and is available to the community at night and on Sundays. It is located in an “island” between the lanes of Paranaiba Avenue, an important avenue in the city.

The traders in this specific location are small entrepreneurs, and their products range from less than R\$ 1 (a radio) to R\$ 40 (a pair of jeans). The majority of the customers are women of all ages, who come with their children or other women. They are buying jeans, dresses, men’s shirts, ties (the kind you don’t have to tie a knot, they are already tied and you just use an elastic band around the neck), lingerie, bags, sandals, baby clothes and few sell food. There are men and women working in the market but it is possible to say that the majority is female, few are black. Its products cater to a lower income customer.

The idea of working at Mercado Aberto came up when I got back to Brazil, and could see what it turned out to be. I did not have any contacts but ventured trying to ask someone to help me. I decided to walk around the market, to get to know the place and eventually find someone interested in participating. It was about 3 p.m. The market did not have a lot of buyers and the vendors were trying to keep busy. Male vendors were grouped either talking or playing cards. Some stalls were unattended but later I noticed that every time the owner of the stall had to leave, they asked their “neighbor” to keep an eye on the business. So, there was sometimes, one person watching three or four stalls simultaneously. In this kind of market that is operating everyday, the traders do not have to face crowds continuously, like they do with markets that happen only once a week, leaving them plenty of time to spare.

There is a difference between women traders and men: the men stay either in front of the stall, on the corridors, moving around, trying to ask everyone who walks around the market to see the products, they virtually talk to everyone who walks near their stall, inviting them to take

a look at the product. Women are almost hidden. They do not occupy the corridors, but are either sitting on little stools located within the limits of their own stall or in the miniscule space there is between stalls (a little less than 2 feet). They were usually located in that space, knitting, counting money, doing inventory, one of them even had her pedicure come over and was having her toenails done during working hours (the pedicure of course, is another worker in the informal economy). While walking around the market, I found my first participant: Clara.

Day 2: The second day I went to Mercado Aberto, it was morning. At about 10 a.m., I decided to take a look at what the market looks like in the morning. Some stalls were still empty, no products or traders, who were probably not there yet or were not going to work that day. The traders who were there were busy either putting the products up on the stall or trying to do business with the many customers who were around the market. Mostly women, these customers were more interested that morning in the children's and men's articles. The other traders, who were not busy with customers, were mostly reading the newspaper, by themselves, or for one another out loud, probably for a "neighbor" who could not read. Some women were making inventory, accountability (doing some calculations on a napkin); another was kissing a man passionately in that little "hidden" spot between stalls. There was a fight between two traders also, apparently because one put some trash in front of the other's stall. Overall, all the traders were very busy either with customers or with their own activities, and the observation of the market was telling more than any words that I wasn't going to get any interviews that morning.

Day 3: It is a weekly market that happens on Saturdays in a relatively healthy neighborhood in Goiania. There are about two thousand stalls and the public encompasses all social classes, but it is possible to notice that there are a large number of wealthy women shopping, wearing Louis Vuitton bags, and Dior glasses (the original ones). It starts at about 2:30 p.m. and goes on until 10 p.m. The vendors are never alone, the amount of people circulating is enormous, and they usually come with kids, husbands, friends to help with the sales. In order to get any interviews done, I have to arrive early, at about 2 or 2:30 p.m. when the vendors are still arranging the products on the stall and the battalions of women are not there yet to do their shopping. Each stall has a plastic protection. The vendors pay other informal workers, *montadores*, men whose job is specifically to put the stalls up and down before and after the market. Each vendor pays about 15 *reais* a month to have their stall put up.

When the customers arrive, it becomes hard to walk around the market. I see many – about 80 or 100 -- women trying to look at clothes, shoes, belts, and accessories. The market is kind of divided in areas by products: you can tell there is an area that the stalls specialized in baby clothes are located. Pregnant women about to have their babies are fighting the crowds to do all their shopping before the baby is born. Some women with babies that look like they have just left the hospital are joining their moms in the crowd.

There are also other kinds of informal vendors without a stall, just fighting the crowd trying to sell their products: cds, sunglasses, the “miracle bra”, popsicles, water, beer, soda. These are generally men, screaming their lungs out, in trying to attract attention to their product.

Appendix D – Glossary

Empreendedora (s) Informais: Informal Entrepreneur, individual who demonstrates entrepreneurial vision.

Feira (s), Feiras Especiais: Name given to the regularized markets in Goiania

Feirante (s): Name commonly used for individual who works in the markets. Term used in this study to designate person that does not demonstrate entrepreneurial vision.

Luta: Fighting energy

Montadores: People who are hired to set up and put down stalls, before and after the markets..

SEDEM: Government agency that regulates the functioning of street markets

Appendix E - Interview Schedule

NOTE: I anticipate that interviews will be relatively open-ended, as dictated by the exploratory nature of this project. I have provided questions below to indicate the nature of the topics to be covered.

Question	Probes	✓
<p style="text-align: center;">About Street vending</p> <p>Can you tell me a little about your work?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How many hours a day do you work? <i>local gender regime</i> 2. What time do you start? <i>local gender regime</i> 3. How do you get to work (bus, car, ride...)? <i>local gender regime</i> 4. How far is it from your home to the place you work? <i>local gender regime</i> 5. What are the arrangements you make to eat and use the bathroom? <i>survival strategies</i> 6. What are the customers like? Do you have any strategies to sell (like offering discounts)? <i>survival strategies</i> 7. Do you have any business partners? How is the work divided? <i>division of labor and power</i> 8. How is the market? When are the ups and downs of the sales? How do you manage that? <i>survival strategies</i> 9. What do you do when you are sick or when you go on a trip? <i>survival strategies</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9.
<p style="text-align: center;">About street vending</p> <p>How did you start in the business?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What kind of advantages did this line of work offer? <i>local gender regime</i> 2. What were your expectations? <i>local gender regime</i> 3. What is necessary to do to get started? <i>local gender regime</i> 4. How much initial investment is necessary? 5. Did you have any help to start? <i>cathexis, local gender regime, division of labor and power</i> 6. Do you remember the comments family, friends, partners made about your decision to start in the informal economy? <i>local gender regime, division of labor, power and Cathexis</i> 7. What are the differences between your expectations and the reality of your work? 8. What kind of job did you have before? <i>local gender regime, division of labor, power and cathexis</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8.

<p>Household and childrearing responsibilities</p> <p>I know your work takes a lot of time. How do you balance your personal life, your house, kids and work?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you have a maid? <i>local gender regime, class and race inequality</i> 2. Did you have a maid before you started this kind of work? 3. Who takes care of the children and house when you work on weekends? <i>division of labor, power and cathexis</i> 4. Does your partner help? How? <i>division of labor, power and cathexis</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4.
<p>Earning Power</p> <p>Can your work and your income alone support your family? <i>local gender regime, division of labor, power and cathexis</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How much, in average, do you make during a month? 2. Is that more or less than you made in your last job? 3. How about your partner, does he make more or less than you? 4. Who would you say, contributes more financially to the household expenses? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4.
<p>Networks</p> <p>How would you describe your relationship with the other vendors at the “Feira”?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is there any organization, association or someone who represents the interests of the workers in the informal economy in your place of work or city? 2. What kind of action has been taken by this person or association? 3. How would you compare yourself to the other vendors you know? <i>Cathexis</i> 4. Is there any age, class, race differences, educational achievement or would you say it is a uniform group? Does that matter? <i>Race and class inequalities</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4.
<p>Plans for the Future</p> <p>Can you tell me what your plans for the future are?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you expect to expand, formalize, or invest in a different business? <i>Cathexis</i> 2. Do you think of retirement, and what are your plans for then? When do you intend to retire? <i>Cathexis</i> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2.
<p>Life Changes</p> <p>What kind of changes has your life gone through since you started your business? <i>division of labor, power and Cathexis and local gender regime</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has your relationship with your partner changed? In what ways? 2. Did it change your social life? 3. Financially? 4. Daily routine? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. 4.