The Brazilian *catira*: identities and rationalities

José Vitor Palhares[*], Felipe Fróes Couto and Alexandre de Pádua Carrieri

*Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Avenida Antônio Carlos, 6627, 31270-901, Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil. *Author for correspondence. E-mail: titopalhares@hotmail.com*

ABSTRACT. The free exchange, trade or *catira* is still an important form of circulation of goods in various communities of Brazil. However, its practitioners and all practical knowledge are still marginalized in management studies, under the justification that these practitioners would be amateurs, devoid of rationality and technical knowledge. This paper analyzes the identity construction of Brazilian *catireiros* to understand what types of rationality guide their trading practices. To this end, we interviewed 31 traders currently residing in *Triângulo Mineiro* and *Alto Paranaíba* regions, and the data collected were analyzed through French Discourse Analysis. The research pointed out that *catireiros* initially sought to identify and distinguish themselves from others using nouns, hence demonstrating who they are. Subsequently, the respondents used verbs that characterize their everyday *catira* practices, hence demonstrating what they are. In this sense, actions such as establishing contacts, getting to know people, negotiating, and understanding the market are some practices that constitute, (re)construct, and materialize the daily identities of such workers. It is also important to highlight that *catireiros* can also exercise different types of rationalities in different social contexts and although many have not achieved higher education, they should not have their trading practices delegitimized by the academia, since it is from these practices that they live, raise their families, and expand their business.

Keywords: identities; rationality; *catira*; *catireiros*.

A catira brasileira: identidades e racionalidades

RESUMO. A troca, permuta ou catira ainda é uma importante forma de circulação de bens em diversas comunidades brasileiras. Contudo, os catireiros e todo seu saber prático ainda são marginalizados nos estudos de gestão, sob a justificativa de que tais praticantes seriam amadores, desprovidos de racionalidade e de conhecimento técnico. Nesse sentido, este artigo teve como objetivo analisar a construção das identidades de catireiros brasileiros, bem como compreender os tipos de racionalidades que orientam suas práticas na catira. Para tanto, foram entrevistados 31 catireiros que residem atualmente nesta região e os dados coletados foram analisados por meio da Análise Francesa do Discurso. A pesquisa aponta que os catireiros, inicialmente, buscam se identificar e se diferenciar dos demais por meio de substantivos, demonstrando quem são. Posteriormente, os respondentes utilizam verbos que caracterizam suas práticas cotidianas na catira, demonstrando, a partir daí, o que são. Assim, ações como estabelecer contatos, conhecer pessoas, negociar e entender do mercado são algumas práticas que perfazem, (re)constroem e materializam cotidianamente as identidades desses catireiros. É importante destacar ainda que os catireiros também são capazes de exercer diferentes tipos de racionalidades em diferentes contextos sociais e que, ainda que muitos não possuam Ensino Superior completo, eles não devem ter suas práticas de negociação deslegitimadas pela academia, uma vez que são por meio dessas práticas que eles (sobre)vivem, criam suas famílias e expandem seus negócios.

Palavras-chave: identidades; racionalidades; catira; catireiros.

Introduction

The free exchange, trade or *catira* is one of the primitive forms of business relationships established by the human being. However, it remains recognized as a valid form of purchase and sale relationship (Article 533 of the Brazilian Civil Code). According to Búrigo (2001), it is a type of business that has increasingly been marginalized and fallen into disuse, given the hegemony of trading relationships operating through an artificial, colonial and globalized monetary system based on the concentration of wealth through pecuniary accumulation. However, trading is still one of the important forms of movement of goods in traditional communities and indigenous populations and has been adopted in alternative experiences such as solidarity economy, alternative currencies, exchange clubs, etc. (Búrigo, 2001).

This study analyzed the identity construction of *catireiros* coming from the Brazilian regions of *Triângulo Mineiro* and *Alto Paranaíba*, based on the daily practices of the ordinary man (Martins, 2008), to understand which types of rationalities guide their *catira* practices. But what is *catira*? *Catiras* are frequent negotiations of all sizes occurring in these regions; they involve the exchange, usually of animals, for consumable goods, agricultural or livestock products, money, or shares of each of these. These negotiations are the cornerstone for the generation and increase of income for many rural families in the state of Minas Gerais (Ribeiro & Galizoni, 2007; Santos, 2016).

In addition, the *catireiros*, who usually have the *catira* as their primary occupation, are extremely dedicated to this practice and are recognized by the other members of the local community by their labor activity. That is, *catireiros* "[…] have to be known, have to have their own assets and a network of informants; they have to know where there is an animal or good to be bargained and where there is someone interested in what they have or can get. Yet, above all, they must have a good name" (Ribeiro & Galizoni, 2007, p. 72). However, the practices used by *catireiros* in doing their business, along with all their knowledge, especially in the rural market, are not well received by technicians and experts, who often judge the searches by these subjects as useless, justifying that such ordinary managers do not have rationality or technical knowledge about the rural market (Ribeiro, 1986).

It is worth mentioning that for Barros, Cruz, Xavier, Carrieri, and Lima (2011), there is a lack of interest and contempt in administration for investigating small or individual traders, whose practices are classified as inefficient from the market point of view, due to what they call 'a lack of rationality, reasonableness, and poor elaboration'. According to Brant (2004), Lima (2009) and Holanda (2011), the ordinary man is marginalized by the academia due to the fact that scholars regard such practitioners as amateurs, by affirming that these subjects lack professionalism or credibility in their actions and rely on excessive improvisation in their business.

We start from a non-essentialist perspective of identity, whence identities are not static and enduring, but rather construction processes – or human activities mediated by the various uses of language and related to the socialization of the individual through their interaction with the environment (Caldas & Wood Jr., 1997). Thus, to achieve the proposed objective, we have resorted to the qualitative and exploratory method. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 31 Brazilian *catireiros*, and data analysis was carried out through French Discourse Analysis (FDA). This paper is structured in four sections in addition to this introduction. Next, we delimit the theoretical framework of the study, which deals with the notion of identity as a practice and the types of rationality of individuals. In the third section, we describe the method and procedures used in this research. In the fourth section, we analyze the construction of the identities of the *catireiros* of the regions of *Triângulo Mineiro* and *Alto Paranaíba*, state Minas Gerais, Brazil, and the rationalities that guide their actions, before concluding with the final remarks in the fifth and final section.

Theoretical framework

Identity in organizational studies

The concept of identity concerns the need for a person, group or organization to interact with other agents or entities appropriately (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000). Well, to establish social relations, one needs to understand who he or she is and who the other subject is – only then can agents situate the moment of social relation according to the roles of each one. In this sense, identity is a term used every day to answer the questions 'who am I?' and 'who are they?'. The answer to these questions is the composition of characters in a narrative that involves agents in a historical plot (Pimentel & Carrieri, 2011).

According to Caldas and Wood Jr. (1997), identity issues have been founded on classical thinking and philosophy, which gave rise to a wide range of perspectives on the elaboration of this concept. In Parmenides' philosophy, identity refers to a radical tautology that affirmed the meaning of subjects in their own existence, that is, something is because it is. From this perspective, identity would be the ontological affirmation of a being, derived from the attributes of oneness, continuity, stability, infinity, eternity, homogeneity, and indivisibility (Pimentel & Carrieri, 2011). On the other hand, for Heraclitus of Ephesus, identity is defined as the continuum of changes that an agent experiences when opposing theses and antitheses. In other words, it would be the synthesis of dialectically experienced conflicts and changes (Caldas & Wood Jr., 1997).

The development of identity studies is currently interdisciplinary (Souza & Carrieri, 2012). In Organizational Studies, there is a notion attributed to Albert and Whetten in their study called '*Organizational Identity*', that in the field of

management, it is valuable and necessary to understand what is distinctive, lasting, and central in an organization, which perennially circumscribes, contextualizes, stimulates or constrains the actions of subjects. Therefore, shared beliefs and values in a given environment, when central, distinctive and enduring, would be sufficient to delimit a scientific notion of organizational identity (Souza & Carrieri, 2012; Saraiva, Carrieri, & Soares, 2014).

In its various conceptual forms, the identity offers creative ways to understand a variety of organizational arrangements while creating dialogue channels between the micro and macro levels of an organization and is a useful category for dealing with a variety of topics such as leadership, motivation, gender, ethnicity, power and control in organizations, from the perspectives of agents and their respective cultures (Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008). The identity reflects the environment of an organization without leaving out the influence it receives from external structures that make up subjectivities (Saraiva et al., 2014).

Carrieri, Paula, and Davel (2008) suggest three possible perspectives for understanding the notion of identity: multiple, fluid, or autonomous. According to the authors, the multiple identity derives from poststructuralist views, according to which agents perceive themselves as having several identities, depending on the role played (father, child, etc.) or the level of analysis in which they are inserted (individual, group, organization, or community).The fluid identity, on the other hand, is inspired by the works of Zygmunt Bauman, who incorporates change as a continuous flow into the subjects – so there would be no fixed identities. Finally, the identity can emerge as an autonomous agent's ability to transcend the roles and functions exercised over life to bring out their own, personal identity. Along these lines, a stable and metaphysical identity core would exist (Carrieri et al., 2008; Saraiva et al., 2014).

Whatever the perspective adopted by the researcher, it is undeniable that identity (a noun which assumes identity as autonomous or multiple) and identify (a verb that assumes identity as fluid) are powerful terms because they are directed to a wide variety of entities that allow a deeper glance at the self-definition of social phenomena – in the same way that it allows analyzing the distinction, it allows analyzing the link between the entities (Albert et al., 2000). It is a versatile concept that allows theoretical developments and important revelations about organizations and the plots that constitute subjective relations between agents in everyday life.

Identity as a practice

Human beings are the only species that can express how they differ from others, and such a distinction is expressed at the moment when they act in the world (Arendt, 2004). Therefore, in acting, in addition to assuming the condition of being human and interacting with others, individuals reveal themselves through their words and actions. According to Ciampa (2005, p. 86) "[…] one is only someone through social relations. The isolated individual is an abstraction. Identity is embodied in social activity. [...] An identity that is not realized in the relationship with the other is fictitious and abstract; it is false". It is the desire for attributes that will characterize and identify human beings, attributing them to identities, and these identities can be reflected and reinforced by social relations, which occur in everyday life (Souza, 2010).

Ciampa (2005) reports the difficulty of expressing the identity of a being who acts in and on the world only through nouns. For the author, nouns become common because there are several names in society, and as we search for difference, we are faced with equality. However, we can represent our identities in other ways, since nouns cannot distinguish us or even reach our singularities. Then we begin to identify ourselves through verbs. In this way, we should not refer to 'who' a person is, but 'what' he is or what he does (Ciampa, 2005).

It is in this context that the understanding of identity emerges as a metamorphosis. Ciampa (2005) infers that reality is in constant movement and transformation, and that 'doing something' is always an activity in the world, interacting with others. If the subject is something he does, we can say that our identity is changing through our established social practices and relationships with others in our daily lives. Thus, the idea of identity as a metamorphosis concerns the fact that "[…] we are changing permanently! We are human beings; we are matter; through practice, we are changing! And transforming the environment" (Ciampa, 2005, p. 111, own translation).

Therefore, by acting in the world (the activities of individuals in the world), subjects reveal and position themselves, and build their identity. According to Ciampa (2005), Souza (2010) and Souza and Carrieri (2012), to understand identity one needs to perceive it as a product, yet without leaving aside the understanding of identity as production, since a subject is not exactly something, but what he does, instead. Moreover, for Ciampa (2005), while taking into consideration the actions in the world and the relationships between a given

individual and others, to study identity is not only the descriptive art of understanding identities (Certeau, 1998); it is also necessary to understand the implicit meanings and analyze the game of appearances.

The notion of identity as a practice investigates identity through the practices, actions, and interactions of individuals with each other and with the world around them since it is through these daily activities that identities can be (re)constructed and (re)defined (Souza, 2010). The everyday practices that (re)construct the identities of subjects are guided by actions of an instrumental and/or substantive feature, which will characterize the rationalities of these actors at certain moments (Serva, 1997). However, according to Certeau (1998) and Tureta and Lima (2011), the actions carried out in everyday life are not always planned consciously nor intentional. In this sense, it is important to understand the rationalities that involve agents in the constitution of everyday action.

Rationalities and practices

The discussion about the rationalities of agents is complex and, like the issue of identities, is not confined to a single field of knowledge (Serva, Caitano, Santos, & Siqueira, 2015). Rationality can be understood as a methodological and systematic activity, submissive to what is perceived as real and which stems from critical intelligence that aims to refine the knowledge of nature to the action of subjects (Pereira, Muniz, & Calbino, 2011). For Couto, Saraiva, and Carrieri (2016, p. 13), "[…] rationality is an individual human reason, precisely because it is one that is based on the experiences of the subject and his logical thinking." That is, it is a way for the subject to express his logical intelligence in relation to the conditions and perceptions that he possesses of reality and of himself.

Serva et al. (2015) understand the concept of rationality spanning two strands: the instrumental and the substantive. The instrumental rationality would be characterized by the calculated action, by the finalities, by utilitarian projections, and by the maximization of results, that is, by several organized but not necessarily ethical actions, which aim to achieve pre-established goals with maximum efficiency (Serva et al., 2015). On the other hand, substantive rationality is constituted by elements such as self-realization, ethical judgment, autonomy, emancipatory values, and social welfare, when the individuals' actions are oriented toward achieving the fullness of human potential or ethical values that transcend calculation and utilitarian projections (Tenório, 1990; Serva et al., 2015).

Due to the social structures in which they are inserted, subjects often behave in a calculating way, objectifying interests and situations that are favorable to them, such as "[...] interests and conveniences that are radically analyzed, interests and conveniences of the capital (and not of the human being, who thus remains an actor attached to the imposed sameness)" (Ciampa, 2005, p. 165). Hence, the individual becomes depersonalized, once their actions become normalized, acting only as a subject who has a certain role in maintaining social structures, and who retains their produced identity, which can be understood as instrumental (Souza, 2010). On the other hand, when subjects become capable of acting autonomously, with judgments that do not depend on believing in the established roles in society and may reflect on their own convictions and the possibility of transformation of the social system, they rely on substantive rationality, unveiling its true essence, its substantial identity (Serva, 1997).

One of the differences between instrumental identity and substantive identity lies in the fact that the former relates to the roles established in society, to acceptance by others, and to convenience, while the latter concerns the authentic identity, the individual's self-knowledge. In this sense, Souza (2010) infers that the rationally instrumental behavior allows revealing what the individual is in a certain context, and the conduct of substantial rationality reveals who the subject truly is. In addition, a study by Lima, Hopfer, and Lima (2004) on these two notions of identity pointed to a growing concentration of instrumental identity in administration, this being one of the main reasons for the influence of labor and its derived utilitarian projections in the identity construction process. However, according to Ciampa (2005), individuals are also able to practice their authentic identity in contexts marked by instrumentalism, when they transform themselves and the conditions that repress them.

Following this, Certeau (1994) infers that our daily life is formed through the bricolage of various subjects, rationalities and discourses that share the same space, which, considering the power relations, interact with one another (and build their identities on those grounds) through practices. It is worth emphasizing that based on Certeau's ideas, one can acknowledge that the process of identity construction occurs in everyday life, where subjects are constantly (re)appropriating the symbolic context of the space where they are situated (and where they act) and, from this, (re)constructing their identities.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that to study identity as a practice, it is relevant to comprehend the use of certain practices performed by individuals in their routine, since these daily practices reveal to us who they are (individual identity), what they are (social identity) and to which group they belong (collective identity). In this way, the practices employed in the daily life by the subjects (re)construct and (re)define their identities, being, therefore, a manifestation of them (Souza & Carrieri, 2012).

Methodological procedures

To reach the proposed objectives: 'to analyze the identity construction of *catireiros* from the Brazilian regions of *Triângulo Mineiro* and *Alto Paranaíba* and to understand what types of rationality guide their *catira* practices', we have used a qualitative and exploratory approach. In this sense, we corroborate the work by Chizzotti (2003) when the author states that although qualitative research has assumed several paradigms and possibilities of analysis, its focus is on investigating phenomena located in certain places, as well as the meanings attributed to them by the subjects.

The research corpus comprises semi-structured interviews with 31 *catireiros* residing in the regions of *Triângulo Mineiro* and *Alto Paranaíba*, in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. The semi-structured interviews were prepared by combining discursive and multiple-choice questions asked by the researcher as if in a casual conversation with respondents (Boni & Quaresma, 2005). Among the 31 *catireiros* interviewed, 28 are men, and three are women. The age of the subjects range between 25 and 82, and their schooling ranges from elementary school to higher education. The cities of residence of the interviewed *catireiros* were Sacramento, Uberaba, Araxá, Prata, Conquista, Perdizes, and Patrocínio, all in the regions of *Triângulo Mineiro* and *Alto Paranaíba*.

The selection of respondents considered those who identify themselves as *catireiros* and the place where they conduct their negotiations. Thus, the delimitation of such subjects was not by what they negotiate, nor the place of residence in the rural or urban area. The respondents in this sample trade animals (the most common) as well as goods and services. In addition, we chose Minas Gerais because this is one of the Brazilian states where the art of *catira* is consolidated, especially in the mesoregions of *Triângulo Mineiro* and *Alto Paranaíba* (Ribeiro & Galizoni, 2007).

It is also worth noting that the selection of respondents also took into account the convenience factor. That is, the respondents included were those who accepted to participate in the survey. In addition, the recruitment of these subjects involved, a priori, a network of contacts that we had as researches, and others could be found through snowball sampling, a technique widely used in qualitative research (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). This consists of having the *catireiros* share, recognize, and recommend other respondents with similar characteristics to those of research interest. This method was chosen for, as evidenced by Ribeiro and Galizoni (2007), the *catireiros* need to be recognized and have a good name. In this way, the *catireiros* could recognize and recommend other individuals who share similar characteristics.

As a method of analysis, we opted for French Discourse Analysis. This strand seeks to link a historical perspective to the reflective study of texts, being exercised from an interdisciplinary interpolation of fields (sociology, history, politics, etc.) with the purpose of explaining the relationship between language and the ideologies of the speakers (Garcia, 2003).

Discourse analysis assumes that a given text is opaque and that its hidden meanings must be captured (Cabral, 2005). These meanings remain inaccessible for as long as the text is not subjected to a systematic analysis that aims to generate not only a single meaning or truth, but several possible meanings that can be inferred from a text or speech (Carrieri, Silva, Souza, & Pimentel, 2006). In this sense, we are interested in what goes beyond the superficial face and analyze what is interdict, bringing to the fore what is implied, implicit, and silenced (Silva, 2005).

To delimit the analysis, we adopted the structuring of discursive levels as proposed by Maingueneau (1997), which divides discourse into three levels: discursive universe, discursive field, and discursive space (Carrieri et al., 2006). As a discursive universe, which is constituted by the whole thematic range in relation to discourse, we delimited our analysis to the identities of the *catireiros* residing in *Triângulo Mineiro* and *Alto Paranaíba*. As a discursive field, which are the structuring themes of the discourse, we delimited three themes considered central to the analysis: self-image, practices, and the rationalities of the *catireiros*. Finally, in the discursive space, which are the interrelationships between possible discursive formations, we delimited the possible relations between rationalities and practices in the constitution of *catireiros*' identities.

In the intra-discursive level, we analyzed the discursive construction of the characters (themes and figures), the lexical analysis of the respondents, the explicit and implicit contents of their speeches and the semantic paths of the respondents' discourses. In the interdiscursive analysis, we analyzed the relations of support, contradiction or other ways in which the respondents' discourse positions themselves before others (Souza & Carrieri, 2014). Finally, we analyzed the agents' speeches, composing a central narrative subdivided by themes emerging from their answers, from which the respective analyzes were then carried out.

Results and analysis

The weight of the *catireiros'* name

The first topic in the interviews that we would like to emphasize regarding the semantic path of identification is the nominal presentation. At the beginning of the conversation with *catireiros*, already on the first question, we asked them to tell us a little about who these individuals were. At no point did we ask them to tell us their full name. However, when they were asked about who they were, the interviewees sought to identify themselves and differentiate themselves from the other *catireiros* primarily through nouns and their proper names, as already reported by Ciampa (2005). After this, some tried to add more singularity when reporting how they are known in the city (their alias or nickname) and then resort to their year of birth or even their family name, which differentiates them from the others.

> 01: My name is 'Beltrano dos Santos Santana'. From the ancient *Santana* family here from Sacramento, right?! I was born, in [...] I'm 52 years old. You do the math, then (laughs). (C13).
> 02: My name is 'Fulano Sicrano da, Silva'. But the people know me as 'Cicraninho'. I was born in November 1979, and I'm now 36 years old. (C17).

The name issue seems to have a certain importance. It is a distinctive meaning for the *catireiros* since the respondents were enthusiastic to say their full name emphatically. It was as though from that moment onwards, we could already have a sense of whom we were talking to. What is implicit in this is the fact that, in order to settle their businesses, the *catireiros* "[…] must be known [...] and, above all, they must have a good name" (Ribeiro & Galizoni, 2007, p. 72), that is, good reputation. Otherwise, if they are known for doing bad business and trickery, they will have their names and identities associated with dishonesty and

mistrust. This is why the respondents give so much emphasis and begin the interviews by telling us their full names, as a form of legitimation and validation of the accounts they gave during the interviews.

Besides, in fragment 02, it is interesting to highlight the grammatical choice of the word 'but' and the meaning it confers to the context. Since the enunciator uses this contrast conjunction, he demonstrates that, in the social dimension, his individual identity is more singularized by means of his nickname than by his own full name. In the sequence, still in the semantic path of identification, another theme that emerged after the nominal presentation for the identity construction of the respondents, and which distinguish them from the other individuals in the sample is the element call 'transfiguration or metamorphism'. As for this topic, the respondents gave even more discursive subsidies to differentiate themselves from the other *catireiros*. However, this time it happened using verbs.

Practices that make *catireiros*

It is in everyday life that the understanding of identity arises as a metamorphosis, an identity that is constantly moving, in constant transformation, since it is (re)constructed through practices of how one acts in the world and their interaction with the other members of society (Ciampa, 2005). Therefore, in constituting the image of themselves, 'subjects no longer refer to who they are, but to what they are and what they do'. This practice was perceptible throughout the interviews. It is interesting to observe the styles embedded in the discursive practices of the respondents, of how the *catireiros* constructed their images in their own testimonies.

> 03: I am a versatile woman. I'm a marketer, housewife, farmer; I'm a little bit of each. I started my professional life... After I got married and became a widow, I found myself pretty busy. What was I going to do? It was the situation that made me so. That's when I started my professional life. I began to study; I began to understand things, I began to do *catira*. (C31).
> 04: My name is [...], I'm 43 years old, and I graduated in pedagogy, I did business pedagogy at graduate school, and ended up in the handicrafts business, which is where I adapted best. I taught, I was a coordinator, but I adapted more to crafts, where I fulfill myself and do some *catiras*. (C04).
> 05: I lived in the countryside until I was 12. From there [...] I came to the town. I worked in trade, a fabric shop around. Then I did an agricultural technical course in the sixties. I have worked with reforestation; I've worked in milk production, I've always worked a bit with cattle [...] And today is my

passion is the *catiras*, right? I was always working with the purchase and sale of animals. (C11).
06: My name is [...], I'm 46 years old. I have already done a lot, but today I'm a driver, a rancher and do a little *catira* here, a little there. (C28).

In the fragments highlighted above, it is possible to understand through lexical relations that, for the enunciators, their actions in the world and their everyday practices occur mainly through labor because almost all of them used this word in their speeches. Those who did not imply the term by using nouns, as in Fragment 03, in which the speaker, in the social dimension, acts as a merchant, housewife, farmer, and dealer, alluding to the broadness of her labor activity. Thus, in all the excerpts the subjects demonstrate that they act in the world through their professions.

Another convergent point between the respondents that can be identified in the fragments above is that they come to identify themselves by what they 'do' (verbs), and the point of belonging or mutual identification between them is that all of them do *catiras* (and therefore were chosen to be surveyed, as stated in the methodological procedures). Thus, the identification with the practice of *catira* among all respondents brings about an identity aspect of the respondents' group, which is to act in the world also through the practice of *catiras*.

As we are talking about the theme of transfiguration or metamorphism in the semantic path of identification, we believe the fifth section (05) is a good example of why we have referred to this theme as such. In this fragment, the speaker makes clear in his testimony, through the tenses, the changes that were taking place in his everyday practices and influencing the (re)construction of his identities. In the passage, the respondent claims to have lived in the countryside, then moved to the city, worked in trade, completed a technical course, also worked with reforestation, with milk production, purchase and sale of animals and now works with his passion, which is *catira*. Thus, this *catireiro* demonstrated in his speech how the metamorphosis operates (Ciampa, 2005) in his occupational identifications in the social dimension, and how his identity is constantly changing and moving in the dimension of his practices and actions in the world.

Origins and socialization of *catireiros*

Another theme that can be explored in the semantic path of identification is what concerns the origin of the respondents. It was possible to note that the *catireiros* often began their speeches by

seeking to identify themselves through the evocation of their hometowns, trying to differentiate themselves and assign singularities about their individual identities. However, it is worth remembering that in the context of a collective identity, all respondents were born or did their *catira*s in municipalities located in the *Triângulo Mineiro* and *Alto Paranaíba* regions. So, in that respect, they are no different from one another.

07: I was born on the farm, but I was raised here in Uberaba, right? It was here that I had the first contact with *catira*. It is the city of Nellore [an ox breed], right? So, a lot of people do *catira* with cattle here […]. That's why I like here a lot. (C20).
08: Oh, here in Araxá we can do very good business. There are also nearby towns where everybody does so much *catira*. But as I was born here and made my life here [...], I've chosen to stay here. (C22).

As we can see, the speakers identify themselves with their towns in the first person. It is through this feature that *catireiros* can be located spatially. Thus, municipalities constitute the spatial elements of identification, where subjects were first socialized, born and/or raised as well. For many respondents, the municipality is where they had the first contact with *catira*, as reported in the Fragment 7 by C20.

The daily life and practices of *catira*

After describing 'who they are' and 'what they are', the next semantic path that guided our results concerning the practical identity of *catireiros* was the *catira* practices. What we analyze here is what *catireiros* do in their everyday lives, and how are given the everyday practices in the art of *catira*. By doing this, we aim to analyze the (re)construction and characterization of their identity, as can be seen in the following excerpts:

09: The *catireiro* is that person who is out there on the streets looking for business. They visit farms wondering what the guy has to *catirar* (trade). That's it, that's what the *catireiro* is. (C01).
10: The *catireiro* must have no shame (laughs)! He has to be, how am I going to explain? [...] How can I say it? […] Let me think a little bit here [...] They have to have attitude and initiative to go there and take forward, to go after other *catireiros* to negotiate, to ask what you have to *catirar*. Those who are behind the bush don't do *catira*! They have to take forward. They have to be shameless because there is a lot of people, who want to be *catireiros* but can't hold it for having too much shame. (C04).
11: You have to walk a lot. The *catireiro* can't be lazy. Sometimes the opportunity comes, but then one says "oh, I won't go!". Sometimes, if you lose a good deal. If you get lazy [...], You're never going to do good business with laziness. You can't be lazy! You

have to chase [things]! Walk, search for those who are *catireiros* and see what they have to negotiate, to know a bit of everything. (C09).

12: The *catireiro* has to be a good negotiator and buy all kinds of things nowadays. They also have to speculate things, know how to argue, show, talk, the same as a salesclerk. I trade fat cow, calf, lean cow, anything, right! Because if you specify "I trade calf only", then you go on the farm, they don't have a calf but have a lean cow there. "No, I just want a fat cow". You will end up losing; then you may even denigrate (sic) your reputation. (C06).

Thus, as can be seen by the lexical relations above and on the other interviews that are not in the excerpts, the practices of *catireiros* in everyday trade are expressed through verbs, such as walking, look, ask, negotiate, buy, argue, show, talk, meet, speculate, among others. All *catireiros* made evident that one of the main practices in the art of *catira* is to be a walker, that is, the *catireiro* must 'walk far to speculate' about who are the possible *catireiros* with whom they can relate and trade in their daily routine.

Besides, in Fragment 10, the respondent uses the nouns 'attitude' and 'initiative' to demonstrate that *catireiros* cannot be lazy (as is also mentioned in Fragment 11), they have to *chase* other *catireiros* to make deals. The use of these nouns to describe what a *catireiro* does in his everyday life reinforces what the speaker says at the end of his speech, for 'attitude' and 'initiative' are practices that people who have too much shame often fail to do in their routine. Therefore, shy individuals would find it very difficult to do *catira*.

In Fragment 12, the speaker describes the necessary actions for the practice of *catira*, such as 'to speculate', 'to argue', 'to show' and 'to speak'. He uses a simile to make an analogy between *catireiros* and salesclerks, both of whom need to be good negotiators so as to build a positive image of the goods and/or services they are offering. In addition, this respondent also pointed out that the *catireiros* should not limit the products or services they trade because if they do, they will *denigrate* (sic) their reputation. That is, according to this enunciator, the practitioners must chase a bit of everything so as not to lose business opportunities or tarnish their reputation.

Rationalities, experience, and knowledge of *catireiros*

From the previous statements (Fragments 09-12), it became clear that a true *catireiro* remains updated about the market, the prices of goods, and the *catireiros* and what they have been negotiating, since their businesses range from farms to ships,

chickens to cows, cars to horses. Thus, a *catireiro* must always know the value of these products, as well as their price in the local and not-local financial market, so that they can calculate the exchange ratio for trading in goods or money.

Thus, it is not possible to state that the practices of the *catireiros* are inefficient from a marketing point of view since the *catireiros* from *Triângulo Mineiro* and *Alto Paranaíba* regions follow and stay updated about local and regional market aspects. Besides, their practices are constantly guided by instrumental rationality and are efficient, since many of them have made a living, raised their families, and expanded their businesses through the art of *catira*.

Although many have not achieved higher education, this does not mean that they are amateurs, because these practitioners acquire knowledge about the market through their own *catira* practices. Therefore, the characterization by researchers of the ordinary man – in this particular activity, the *catireiro,* and its ordinary management – as an amateur practitioner that has no professionalism or credibility, as pointed out by Brant (2004), Lima (2009) and Holanda (2011), has been proved to be an invalid argument according to the data obtained.

Catira as a hobby or leisure

Moving forward, the discourse contained in the fragments below show that the practice of *catira* is not only a way to generate and increase income for these subjects. In the fragments below, what stands out is the 'taste' and 'pleasure' by practicing *catira*.

13: Look, to me [...] because I like working with cattle, right? And I ran out of options off the livestock activity and to make some money, a working capital. (C10).
14: But it is more of [...] a hobby. Because I took the milk, it gave me a good income. And then I went to deal with *catiras*, to win another buck. (C14).
15: Today I [...] I have a handful of professions [...] I have more than one. But I do not do *catira* as a full-time thing... I do *catira* because I like it (laughs). (C17).
16: Well [...] It is the branch that I like since I was a boy [...] It's something that I understand [...] Since I don't like to study and is a branch that [...] Well, it gives easier money in this case [...] Today it is not my main activity, it complements the income, right? I have a cargo truck, right? So, I do *catira* and haul cargo as well. (C26).
17: Oh, I started doing *catira* because I like it [...] But today, *catira* is my retirement. (C27).

As the respondents have reported, doing *catira* could be considered a hobby. This word conveys the idea of fun; an activity practiced for enjoyment.

However, while all the speakers claim to carry out this continuous activity because they enjoy it, as a *hobby*, they nonetheless report that *catira* is a form of additional income (as evidenced in Fragments 13-17).

Moreover, it is worth noting that in Fragment 15 the speaker, by revealing to have multiple jobs, is keen to deny the practice of *catira* as one of his occupations, since he does it for the sake of pleasure. Hence, the respondent's discursive practices implicitly distinguish what is considered work and what is not. In his view, *catira* cannot be considered his occupation, for occupations cannot deliver the joy that *catira* offers.

The 'to like it' discourse contained in these excerpts highlights the feeling of belonging and identification among these *catireiros* (Serres, 2000a; 2000b) with the context of *catira* (the practices, their results, the other *catireiros*, and the social and cultural context surrounding this practice). In the case of *catira* as a hobby, it is clear now that the practices of the *catireiros* are conducted not only by instrumental rationality – characterized by action and calculated by purpose, utility projections and the maximization of results – but also for substantive rationality. These are practices embedded by elements of self-achievement, autonomy, and values that transcend utilitarian projections (Serva, 1997; Serva et al., 2015).

Final remarks

The goals of this research were to analyze the construction of the *catireiros*' identities and to understand what types of rationalities guide their practices in *catira*. We sought to contribute to the understanding of management from different perspectives, as this study allows us understanding the construction of common individuals' identities, who are marginalized on the field for scholars and researchers. The *catira*s and *catireiros* from *Triângulo Mineiro* and *Alto Paranaíba* keep and (re)construct daily stories, identities, and rationalities that need to be highlighted in the Management, as they can contribute socially and academically to new forms of thinking.

Therefore, we can affirm that the *catireiros* initially sought to identify and differentiate themselves from others by using nouns, hence demonstrating 'who' those subjects are. However, as the study progresses, respondents started using verbs that characterize their everyday *catira* practices and express their identities, showing, from that moment onwards, 'what they are'. In this sense, actions such as walking, meeting, establishing contacts, creating a

name and a reputation, meeting people, finding goods, negotiating, understanding the market, searching, playing, taking risks, being trusted, being honest, among others, are some of the practices that construct and daily materialize the identities of these *catireiros*.

In addition, the identities of these practitioners could also be characterized and identified as those of nomads and walkers, as one of the most verbalized practices by *catireiros* in everyday life of *catira* is to walk far and to meet and speculate on the market in which they are inserted. However, we do not intend to summarize or reduce the identities of *catireiros* to what has been said about it. As mentioned before, their identities are multiple, inconsistent and fragmented, and materialized through the diversity of their actions in the world.

Besides, it is worth noting that the actions of *catireiros* in the context of *catira* are guided mainly by instrumental rationality. This study has shown that *catireiros* know the rural products market quite well since they closely monitor economic changes and negotiations made by other *catireiros*, culminating in accurate market knowledge, that is, the context in which they are inserted. Therefore, even though many of these practitioners have not achieved higher education, they cannot be characterized as amateurs, or have their trading practices delegitimized by experts and scholars in the field, since it is through these practices that they generate income, raise their families, and expand their businesses. It is important to emphasize that the *catireiros* are also able to exercise different rationalities in different social contexts, as with those practitioners who carry out the activity as a hobby. These *catireiros* approach a substantive and authentic identity, but no less instrumental than the other practitioners, because they still need to make deals.

Thus, this research has aimed to highlight the ordinary subject, their identities, and their local knowledge, which remains marginalized by the technical knowledge spread by the mainstream. Our goal was to try to understand who these subjects are and what their ordinary business are – which are inappropriately regarded as unprofessional. Despite having their practices characterized as devoid of rationality, the *catireiros* are guided instead by a sort of instrumental rationality that fosters the generation and expansion of income.

As for the main challenges of this study, we can mention the scarce theoretical basis on the subject, not in the scope of identity and rationality, but on the practice of *catira* and the *catireiros*, and the ambient noise that interfered with the interviews conducted at livestock auctions. Finally, as

suggestions for further work, we propose a further study on the everyday business practices of these ordinary businessmen and their relationship to their success and/or failure in *catira*. Added to that, we also suggest the conduction of studies on the identity construction of other small rural traders and ordinary subjects that remain in the margins of management research, such as small farmers.

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