The ideological dimension of emotion in the management of cosmetics sellers in a multinational company

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Abstract

This article aims to reveal the ideological dimension of emotion in the management of informal cosmetics sellers working for a multinational company located in Curitiba, Brazil, using situational analysis. Emotion is understood as essential to human subjectivity, associated to thought, activities and culturally shared language, as a valuable social situation. Analysis from in-depth interviews, participant observation and document analysis were carried out using the technique of discourse 'nuclei of meanings'. Results show that emotions are social and cultural products, used as a manageable tool in the organization, through ideological symbols that constitute the subjects. Emotion is the result of the individual experience of the activity (historical, processal and complex) with sense and meaning that serves as a sophisticated instrument of reproduction of the company's ideology. The ideology is supported by the identification of the sellers with social practices and their relations with the world, and it is constituted by their activity.

Keywords: Emotion. Ideology. Management. Activity.

Dimensão ideológica da emoção na gestão de vendedoras de cosméticos em uma empresa multinacional

Resumo

O propósito deste artigo é revelar a dimensão ideológica da emoção na prática de gestão de vendedoras de cosméticos informais em uma organização multinacional, presente em Curitiba-PR, a partir de uma análise situada. A emoção é compreendida como algo essencial à subjetividade humana, ligada ao pensamento, à atividade e à linguagem compartilhada culturalmente, como uma situação social com valor. As análises dos dados, a partir de entrevistas em profundidade, observação participante e análise documental, foram orientadas pela técnica dos núcleos de significação do discurso. Os resultados demonstram que as emoções são produções socioculturais utilizadas como instrumento gerenciável na organização, por meio de símbolos ideológicos que constituem os sujeitos. A emoção está inserida na experiência individual da atividade (histórica, processual e complexa) com sentido e significado, servindo como sofisticado instrumento de reprodução da ideologia da empresa; tal ideologia é sustentada pela identificação das vendedoras com as práticas sociais e as relações com o mundo, constituídas por sua atividade.

Palavras-chave: Emoção. Ideologia. Gestão. Atividade.

Dimensión ideológica de la emoción en la gestión de vendedoras de cosméticos en una empresa multinacional

Resumen

El propósito de este artículo es dar a conocer la dimensión ideológica de la emoción en la práctica de gestión de vendedoras de cosméticos informales en una organización multinacional, presente en Curitiba, Paraná, Brasil, desde un análisis situado. La emoción se entiende como algo esencial a la subjetividad humana, relacionada al pensamiento, a la actividad y al lenguaje culturalmente compartido, como una situación social con valor. Los análisis de datos, a partir de entrevistas en profundidad, observación participante y análisis de documentos, se llevaron a cabo mediante la técnica de los núcleos de significado del discurso. Los resultados demuestran que las emociones son producciones socioculturales usadas como un instrumento manejable en la organización, a través de símbolos ideológicos que constituyen los sujetos. La emoción está insertada en la experiencia individual de la actividad (histórica, procesal y compleja) con sentido y significado, que sirve como un instrumento sofisticado de reproducción de la ideología de la empresa; esta ideología se apoya en la identificación de las vendedoras con las prácticas sociales y las relaciones con el mundo, constituidas por su actividad.

Palabras clave: Emoción. Ideología. Gestión. Actividad.

INTRODUCTION

> [...] *I was beautiful, marvelous and was wearing makeup! Wow! I'm powerful! I'm going to sell like mad!*
>
> [...] *You go to a meeting and you feel like you're going to sell the world!*
>
> [...] *At the beginning of a meeting we thank God for these opportunities, for the closed doors, for the open doors and the doors that will open.*
>
> [...] *I've never received recognition for anything, and suddenly I wasn't making any effort and I was being recognized. I thought it was great!*
>
> (Excerpts from interviews)

What do the phrases above have in common? Perhaps the deep sense of pride that some cosmetic sellers feel due to their being part of a famous world company in this segment, which is a case study that has been analyzed by institutions such as Harvard and Stanford. These phrases can also be expressing a belief of the power of this company to "improve the life of its employees," not just from the point of view of their professional lives but there personal lives as well. These are phrases spoken by people who feel emotion and make others emotional, who express affection, joy, friendship, love, and sympathy (CAMARGO, 2004) among so many powerful emotions revealed in surprising interviews with women with whom we've had the pleasure to interact. Women with various life stories that at some point in their careers have shared a project in common: seeking an alternative form of work associated with success.

Like the modest business plan of a housewife to sell cosmetics to her friends which turned into a corporation worth $4 billion[1]? Why do thousands of women from different cultures, social classes and educational levels join this network? How is it possible to maintain a gigantic sales team on an essentially informal basis for over five decades? And how do they mobilize these sellers to bet on their sales careers as *a* life project and *their* life projects? This study seeks to answer these questions by revealing the ideological dimension of emotion in the management of informal cosmetic sellers in a multinational corporation based in Curitiba, PR in Brazil using situational analysis.

To develop this study, it has been necessary to use a concept of emotion that is distant from those normally used in organizational studies, which is marked by positivist rationality. In this study's approach, emotion constitutes a social situation replete with value and fundamental to the formation of human subjectivity. Emotion is inserted into the individual's experience of activities (historical, procedural and complex) with meaning and significance, serving as a sophisticated instrument for reproducing the company's ideology. This ideology is sustained by the identification of the sellers with social practices and worldwide relationships created by their activity.

This study is based theoretically on Practice Based Studies (PBS), which consider that people really live through their everyday work lives (GHERARDI, 2000). In addition, this study counts on a contribution from Socio-Historical and Cultural Psychology, an approach that considers humans to be concrete, conscious, social, historical and cultural subjects of will and emotions (GONZÁLEZ REY, 2003; CAMARGO, 2006), who intervene in the world through actions and at the same time are affected by this world (AGUIAR, 2009). This text also seeks support from the critical perspective of Yves Clot, for whom work practice cannot be disassociated from emotions and affection; to this author, human activity is not just that which is realized, but also that which isn't realized yet continues to act on the individual, mobilizing this person emotionally and subjectively ("the reality of the activity") (CLOT, 2007; 2010). This article is divided into 5 sections, which are examining: (i) the principal concepts of this study; (ii) the relationships between these concepts; (iii) the methodology used; (iv) the construction and analysis of significance nuclei in discourse; and (v) our final considerations.

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[1]Data published by Forbes, American edition, for Fiscal Year 2014. The non-divulgence of the virtual address is intentional to preserve the anonymity of the company.

THEORETICAL REFERENCES

Emotion is still an incipient theme in organizational studies, even though it has already been studied in various areas of knowledge. Activities such as *negotiating*, *making decisions*, *selling*, and *participating in meetings*, among others, are aspects that assume emotions and feelings, integrating the creation of social relationships and personal expression at work and within organizational life (FINEMAN, 2001). According to Camargo (1997; 2002; 2004), *emotion is movement, explosion, joy, sadness, pleasure, displeasure, love, hate, attraction, aversion, adoration, affection, tenderness, horror, terror, fear* and *panic,* and can also be perceived through other signals such as *feeling one's heart beat* and *holding one's breath*, *tremors*, *tension*, *contractions*, *spasms*, *breathing in* and *breathing out*, in body language and gestures (LE BRETON, 2009). It's a muscular exercise that brusquely disrupts the higher motivational system, which features components of representation, expression and elevated muscle tone, which is what mobilizes an individual to act, as Camargo (1997) concludes.

According to Fineman (2000; 2001), there's a certain distance between the dictates of western strategic thinking and emotions such as anger, anxiety, frustration, joy, etc.; emotions are perceived as a threat to the established order within the context of hierarchical relationships. Even though historically they have been repressed, they are essential to the constitution of human subjectivity (GONZÁLEZ REY, 2003), given that they mediate thinking and language in our communication with our peers (LANE, 1995; 1999; CAMARGO, 1997; 2006). To Le Breton (2009), emotion is a social situation full of value which is sensitive to our relationship with the other (LANE, 1995; 1999), with a social and communicative character that needs to be derived from a culturally shared language to be properly understood. Emotions configure themselves in a process that is fundamental to the behavioral and functional development of an individual, who is continually influenced by events. Emotions within the organizational context are permitted, if they're objectively controlled, or in other words, their strength is adequately managed, and they're in line with the interests of the powers that be and can be channeled into the achieving of corporate success (ENRIQUEZ, 2000).

Emotion reveals itself as the history of an individual unfolds and is linked to the individual's meaning and needs, defining the availability of subjective resources during emotional states expressed by the subject during the development of an activity (GONZÁLEZ REY, 2003). An activity is understood to be the process of human actions in regard to nature and other humans, a concept systematized by Alexei Leontiev, based on Karl Marx's concept of work. The interactions between the subject and the world, mediated by activity, reflect the properties of the object that is being produced, and also orient and conduct the subject's action (ASBAHR, 2005; NICOLINI, 2013). This objective nature of activity goes beyond cognitive processes, reaching the sphere of emotional needs, concludes Asbahr (2005). Emotion configures itself as the genesis and sustainment of the activity when it encounters meaning in the object of this activity (CAMARGO, 1997; 2002; 2004; CAMARGO and CANOPF, 2015), in the same way that the activity also configures itself as the genesis and sustainment of emotion.

The Ideological Dimension of Emotion

The relationship between a person and the social environment in which he or she exists occurs through signs and symbolic and cultural intermediary elements incorporated in the person's actions to reorganize the individual's higher mental processes (VIGOTSKI, 1998; DANIELS, 2002)[2]. Constructed and internalized by people, these signs are used as a type of social influence, fulfilling an ideological role, constituted by conventions, relationships, subtle signs (what is left unsaid), intuitions, and sensibilities, among other things (LANE and CAMARGO, 1995; DANIELS, 2002).

Ideology is a logical and consistent group of representations, norms or rules of conduct that indicate to members of society what they should think (and how to think), what they should value (and how to value), what they should feel (and how to feel) and what they should do (and how to do it) (CHAUI, 1980). Its function is to provide society with a concealed rationale for social, political and cultural differences, offering its followers a social identity. Ideological production creates an imagined existence that seeks to diminish potential for conflict, produce and preserve society, and explain and justify reality, giving varying objects a universal appearance (CHAUI, 1981; FARIA, 2010), to fulfill the needs of some sectors of an economically and politically privileged society. Ideology engenders forms of interpreting reality, proclaiming objectives that in truth mask its real objective according to Chaui (1980; 1981) and Faria (2010; 2011).

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[2]Teixeira (2005) and Rego (1995) explain that higher mental processes, also known as higher psychic functions, include religious feelings, perception, attention and the voluntary recalling of memories, active memorization, conscious control of behavior, sensory-motor activity, deductive reasoning, the ability to plan, and abstract thinking as well as language.

To Freitas (2000), professional issues are channeled into an emotional and psychological plan. This means that emotion is taken as a sign, based on human perspectives (corporal and symbolic), that articulate themselves as a mediating element between management and its subordinates, continually reinforcing the organization's ideology through the reality experienced by its members.

Ideology is associated with the way in which an individual experience acquires meaning and significance within the social processes of an individual's history. According to González Rey (2003), the production and sharing of meanings and significance generated in various scenarios of social life delineate and sustain the social spaces within which people live. To the author, meaning is the result of the conflict between an individual's personal experience and what is socially instituted. It's subjective and unpredictable and is not subordinate to the subject's rationality. It's constructed based on a dialectic relationship between the social and the historic, including contradictory elements, precisely where emotions and affection enter the picture. Significance on the other hand, involves a social construction which is conventional and more stable given that people when they are born encounter a system of significance that is elaborated over time (LANE, 1999; AGUIAR, 2009).

The Group Process

A human group, from the dialectic perspective of Martín-Baró (1989, p. 206), is "a structure of links and relationships between people that channels individual and/or collective needs." In terms of social structure, the group can't be reduced to the sum of the people within it, but needs rather to be considered in its totality, which supposes an interdependent relationship. The group is full of the social determinations and contradictions present in capitalism, which act on individuals, as well as their actions as historical subjects, leading us to consider that the group doesn't exist abstractly and is better thought of as a group process that is being reconfigured with each passing moment (MARTÍN-BARÓ, 1989; LANE, 2004). Such an approach doesn't consider dualities like individual vs. social, competition vs. interdependence, having vs. not having resources (material, cultural and/or personal) to make the other submit to one's interests (exploitation) and dependence vs. independence.

The authors go on to argue that the historical experience of the group, which is the fruit of everyday life, brings various aspects of society to present experience, which are expressed through the contradictions that emerge within the group itself, involving subjective experiences and objective reality. A human's perception of the world occurs to the extent that it has already been internalized, just as the externalization occurs according to the perception of what exists, or in other words, "the capacity of a person to respond due to his or her adaptation to the environment" (LANE, 2004, p. 82); this means the repetition of the activities that have positive results for an individual, which makes them habitual.

This author argues that the process of the formation of habits exists before the group does and is defined by the institution, reproducing social relationships and masking the contradictions inherent in them. The institution, understood as a historic process, possesses rules and norms that become more efficient as they become more solid, and they become control mechanisms for the roles established for members that result in beliefs and values and sustain social differences.

Yves Clot's Reality of Activity

To understand the ideological dimension of emotion in management, this article utilizes the Yves Clot's *reality of activity* concept. Confident that work is not an activity like others, but rather something that "exercises a specific psychological function in one's personal life" (CLOT, 2007, p. 13), the author advances the question of what is "observable" in French ergonomics, switching his attention to the subjectivity within the activity, which interferes in a worker's ability to act. This is the reality of the activity (CLOT, 2007; 2010), or in other words,

> [...] that which you don't do, that which you can't do, that which you try to do without success (or failure), that which you wanted to do or could have done, that which you think you can do or dream of doing, that which you do to avoid doing something, that which you have to do or that which you do unintentionally and [...] that which you have to redo (CLOT, 2007, p. 116).

Even though they're not apparent, activities that aren't performed continue to affect people, subjectively motivating the individual (CLOT, 2006; 2007; 2010). The reality of the activity contributes to the concept of practices in organizations in some ways, such as: (i) being incorporated in the action, in a procedural and concrete experience; (ii) offering the opportunity to not separate *knowing* from *doing*, favoring concrete everyday experiences; (iii) contemplates contradictions and conflicts;

(iv) considers interactions between subjects and objects that are constructed through social practice and that reflect on it, transforming its reality; (v) learning the subjective dimension of an activity, which can take place within the subject at the moment the task is performed; and finally (vi) contributes to making the relationship between a person and work explicit.

Yves Clot's approach proposes an alternative to the traditional view of an individual's adaptation to work, suggesting an analysis that assumes action, which is capable of transforming work situations to make them more compatible with human needs (CLOT, 2007; 2010).

Relationships between the Main Concepts

Figure 1 presents the main concepts, their relationships, and their results, which are: emotion, activity, ideology, meaning/significance and the group process.

Figure 1

Theoretical schema of the relationships between the main concepts
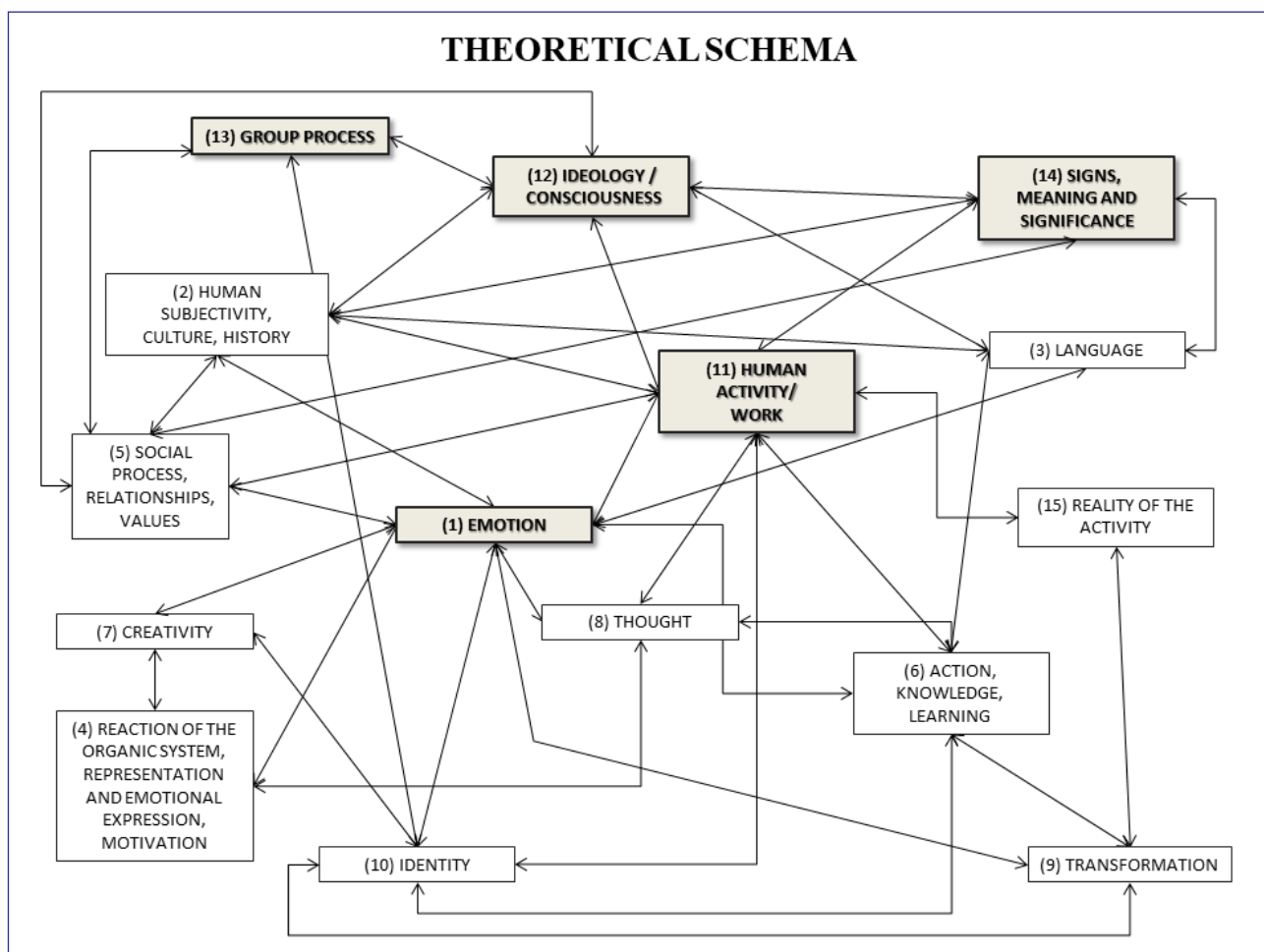
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The first concept presented is **emotion** (1), which is central to the relationships between the other concepts. An important element in the constitution of **human subjectivity (2)**, emotion requires the use of **language (3)**, shared in a cultural way and understood in its significance; language engenders imperceptible emotional codes, which are affected by the consciousness **(12)** of individuals, becoming fragmented due to partial concepts and theories.

Human activity (11) – work – is made significant as a **social process (5)**, constructed through social relationships present in human activity and work. The social determination of consciousness configures itself as one of the assumptions of the concept

of **ideology (12)**, a group of rules of conduct that indicates to a group a given set of rational explanations for social, political and cultural differences and that seeks to hide differences, providing its followers with a social identity. Ideology is connected to the **group process (13)**, which involves **knowledge and learning (6)**, as a way to diminish the potential for conflict, hiding the presence of individual differences and giving everything a universal appearance. Ideology is reproduced by subtle signals that are internalized by humans themselves, or in other words, the **signs (14)** that link the mind and reality in the search for what is "not apparent," transforming social structures and symbolic procedures and contributing to the construction of a society and its institutions.

Emotion plays a **motivational role (4)**, taking the form of movement, an explosion, joy, sadness, etc., which configures it as an organic system, with representational components such as (symbols, ideas, values, and ideologies), **expression (4)** – corporal manifestations. Emotion is thought of in a historical and cultural manner, such as a **valued social situation (5)**, associated with **action (6)** and **creativity (7)**, distant from the cognitive and close to **meaning (14)**. Emotional human social relationships imply the construction of one's **identity (10)**, through a series of renewed social forces and real world experiences which make action possible, making it possible to recreate and **transform (9)** oneself.

Meaning (14) is a human creation engendered by activity, given that it articulates psychological events produced by the human consciousness of reality. **Significance (14)**, on the other hand, makes the socialization of our experiences possible. Finally, stymied activities or those thwarted within the meaning and significance of work – Yves Clot's **reality of the activity (16)**, continue to act on the individual.

METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative, because its intent is to transcend a description of the interviews and learn the subjective meanings behind the subjects' official discourse, especially in terms of how they feel and think (MINAYO, 2010).

The empirical data consists of a single American multinational company that offers direct cosmetic sales that will be fictitiously referred to as CrystalMake. Founded in the 1960s and present in Brazil since 1998, today the company has more than 2.5 million informal sellers (without any steady employment relationship), distributed in 35 countries and 5 continents. The empirical data is made up of the company's culture, history, socio-historical context and the cultural context at the time of its founding, as well as emotional aspects of its management. In addition, the research scenario consists of: (i) informal sellers (active[3] and inactive) who have worked in several locations in Curitiba at some stage in their careers; (ii) information published in the company's virtual space, translated into several languages; and (iii) various videos (short and feature length) that deal not only with the company/founder but also virtual training of the proper way to use the products.

Data Collection

The data collected utilized in-depth interview techniques, participatory observations and document analysis which will be presented below.

In-Depth Interviews

Interviews were conducted with 5 cosmetic sellers (denominated A, B, C, D, and E) at 2 separate times: in 2011, 4 sellers were interview during a specific study conducted at the time. In 2015, a doctoral thesis required 1 interview which justified the cutoff due to the data saturation criterion. Of the 5 sellers interviewed, 3 were very enthusiastic about their achievements; the others stayed in the company for a few months, withdrawing themselves gradually and deliberately. The interviews were semi-structured and conducted individually in a closed environment without interruption for an average length of an hour.

Box 1 presents an operational summary of the interviews; more than questions to be answered, these questions indicate an initial direction for the exploration of the themes in question, suggesting some topics to be investigated based on the interviewee's responses. Even though the script was the same each time, each meeting occurred in a distinct fashion.

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[3]In order for a cosmetic seller to remain "active" in the company, this person needs to meet the established target for the quarter.

Box 1

Topics covered in the interviews

Question that serves as a stimulus	Topics covered
About the work (tasks/operations)	What was your path to joining the company, how did you get to know the brand, what made you interested in the work, what are the activities you perform, the time period during which you dedicate yourself to these tasks, possible conflicts between sellers and directors, norms, codes, controls and contrasts.
Meaning and significance	How do you think and feel about the activities you perform, exploring the interviewee's feelings in relation to work; looking for exemplifications, the frequency and characteristics of work situations in which these feelings occur.
Social relationships (recognition)	How do you perceive the company's recognition practices; how do you perceive the organizational climate; identify with social relationships at work; what do you do to meet your targets.
Difficulties	Identify difficulties in performing tasks: posture, errors, pressure from the director; identify the solutions found to deal with difficulties at work; how do workers stand and face these difficulties, on the material level as well as within the management context.

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Participatory Observations

In addition to the interviews, in 2015 participatory observations were made during a local company event, which was filmed in its entirety with permission from the event organizers. This method proposes a dive into the empirical field to be able to observe the phenomenon from the point of view of a participant, not a researcher. This is supported theoretically by dimensions articulated by Flick (2009, p. 201), and this observation took place in a secret fashion, without standardized schemes, in a "field of interest" located within an exclusive enclosure devoted to such events.

The participatory observations made it possible to investigate the collective and individual behavior of the participants (active and potential sellers), in a space devoted just to them, far from the visual field of customers. The intent was precisely to experience the natural progress of a typical work meeting, especially in terms of what happens "behind the scenes" and not what is verbally expressed by the interviewees. Active participation in this ritualistic event provided important complementary material which could never have been learned without being present within the subjects' reality.

Document Analysis

In terms of secondary data, virtual marketing and training materials available on the company's official website[4], seller blogs, social network records, and marketing emails as well as some videos were collected between 2011 and 2015. Some printed material was also analyzed including a work by the company founder, here fictitiously named Courtney Act, published in 1984 with countless subsequent editions.

It's a work full of historical data, transformed over time and contextualized within various cultures as well as broadened in its conception to meet current demands. The passage of several decades has transformed the original business plan, imposing a certain contemporary look on strategies that previously had been crystallized. Technology has added innovation to this document material, and the document analysis performed absorbed this universe of data. It was also possible to extract the premises of Courtney Act's philosophy about the construction and maintenance of relationships through the use of recognition, praise and applause.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis was performed through the exclusive use of the Nucleus Analysis technique to determine the Significance of Discourse, which considers the meaning construction process and the contradictions present in the subjects' discourse (CAMARGO, 2004; AGUIAR and OZELLA, 2013). The determination of meaning is based on an empirical analysis, which

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[4]Brazilian and American versions.

transcends what is apparent and goes beyond the description of facts, and focuses on the effect of social mediation on the subjects (AGUIAR and OZELLA, 2006). Transcending what's apparent is not an easy task, and it's not easy to reveal meanings; frequently "the subject doesn't even recognize them, doesn't appropriate all of their experiences and doesn't articulate them" (AGUIAR and OZELLA, 2006, p. 229); even when things are expressed, nothing is expressed clearly with an objective significance.

The analyses of the phrases used by the interviewees have been operationalized in three steps (AGUIAR and OZELLA, 2006), which are respectively: (i) the definition of the pre-indicators – based on a first reading that considers the significance of the phrases used by the research subjects empirically; (ii) the determination of the indicators – a second reading that groups together similar items based on criteria such as their similarity and complementary or contradictory nature, reducing diversity and creating thematic content; and (iii) the construction and analysis of each nucleus – articulating similar, complementary and contradictory content that emerges in the construction of meaning and significance beyond what is apparent.

Construction of Significance of Discourse Nuclei

The interview transcriptions, field notes, participatory observations and document analysis served as our starting point for extracting 13 pre-indicators (Box 2). Then the pre-indicators were grouped (in terms of their similarity, and complementary or contradictory nature) into 4 thematic groups, which were: *recognition* (this refers to a policy of recognition through awards that is practiced worldwide); *culture* (this deals with particular company emotion management issues which are consecrated as a different way of working); *identity* (which involves the meaning and significance of being a "CrystalMake" person, which reflects on one's personal life); and *career* (which details the business itself). This thematic content formed the base for the last step of this method: the creation of the significance nuclei themselves, some with the same name as the thematic content, as specified in the last column of Box 2 and analyzed in the following section.

Box 2

Pre-indicators, thematic content and significance nuclei

Pre-indicators	Thematic content	Significance nuclei
(1) Recognition (2) Enthusiasm with first sales	Recognition	(i) Recognition
(3) Golden rule (4) Famíly (5) Different Way of Working (6) CrystalMake	Culture	(ii) The Courtney Act Way
(7) Being a CrystalMake Person	Identity	(iii) Being a CrystalMake Person
(8) Targets (9) The Business (10) Career	Career	(iv) Working at CrystalMake
(11) Recruitment (12) The Team		(v) Sharing Experiences
(13) Difficulties		(vi) "It's not all a bed of roses"

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Analysis of the Significance of Discourse Nuclei

Each significance nucleus was analyzed as detailed below.

i)   Recognition

The results showed 6 distinct tactics employed by the company to recognize the work of their sellers. The first has to do with making a habit of praising, originated by the company founder who believed that praise makes people work harder.

The second tactic refers to providing recognition through awards for high productivity during a given period:

> [...] *I'd never received recognition for anything. The director called me up front and gave me a marvelous purse as recognition for my orders.* (Interviewee A)

To this seller, the symbolic meaning expressed by this "purse" artifact was strong:

> [...] *they wanted me to tell the other sellers what I was doing to achieve so many sales. I wasn't making any effort to sell and yet I was being recognized for it.* (Interviewee A)

In the recognition events, the award winning seller is placed prominently in front of the audience present; and along with social visibility, the company awards titles and prizes:

> [...] *when they called my name, I thought you're sure it's me? She said "I mean you" and pointed towards me. She said "you've won a weekend in Camboriú!" Wow! I was so happy!* (Interviewee B)

Sometimes the prizes awarded to these salespeople represent more than they could acquire financially, which is a satisfaction, however, that is not exceeded by their symbolic value, expressed by the glorification of the seller's achievements.

On the other hand, there's a kind of evaluation of value (material or symbolic) in the prizes that they win which validates the time that they spend on this activity:

> [...] *when there's something that interests me, I really work! I go after it. But when it's something that doesn't interest me, I don't make a lot of effort. I just want my stars when I can get them* [...]. *This makes you popular.* (Interviewee B)

A contradiction in this is that even though the interviewee has rigid criteria in terms of the level of the awards, her joy in just winning isn't discouraged:

> [...] *I like to win, even if it isn't a big thing, but I won, you know?* (Interviewee B)

 An inactive seller points out:

> [...] *there are always little prizes*. (Interviewee C)

It's interesting to perceive the different subjective meanings of the same event: what's marvelous to one person may seem like a "little prize" to another.

The third tactic refers to the significance of artifacts within the group; one of them is a star brooch which is frequently worn during meetings:

> [...] *the little stars of recognition mean that you've got potential.* [...] *you know those generals who have a ton of medals on their chest? It's just like that!* (Interviewee B)

The symbolic value of these artifacts stamps their victories on their chests, which signifies that they're little "trophies" that give them visibility and show their social value within the group. It's curious that this type of artifact has more weight in terms of significance than meaning: a cheap brooch, in another cultural context, would represent nothing. The group process brings

with it various aspects of the group's current experience (MARTÍN-BARÓ, 1989; LANE, 2004). Value is attributed to the brooch by the group (and only by the group):

> [...] *we also win trips, but nobody sees that you went on a trip.* (Interviewee D)

Courtney Act has already said that it's worth more to a woman to be recognized by her colleagues onstage than receiving an expensive present through the mail without anyone knowing about it.

The fourth tactic involves the right to use a new car, symbolizing the realization of dreams, status and respect within the group:

> [...] *the car is a reflection of what I want in terms of independence and success.* (Interviewee A)

> [...] *I want that car! I see these cars and I almost die! One day it'll be mine! I'll get there! I want it, I can do it, and I'm going to have it!* (Interviewee B)

> [...] *that car has the taste of victory. This proves to others that I'm not just selling cheap brands, that I'm a successful salesperson, a director.* (Interviewee D)

> [...] *proves that you've done well in your profession. That's very important to me!* (Interviewee E)

Using the car represents confirmation of a seller's success within this group. According to Camargo (1997), there's a short distance between the construction of identity, emotion and a person's constitution. The company founder believed that making a car available is part of a culture that all employees should internalize. It should be the great career goal of an informal seller which signifies that "one's done excellent work." This is a very important status symbol within the group, which is sufficient reason for sellers not to want to give up something that's considered a privilege internally.

The fifth tactic involves the emotional language that is shared culturally *by* and *within* the company, a type of "ego stroking," maintaining a cult of success for over five decades, within strains of empowerment and overcoming obstacles. Camargo and Canopf (2015) emphasize that the higher psychic functions, which are social in origin, are mediated by language, through which reality appears to humans, mediated by signs that are social and ideological in nature. For example, a simple trip, by the company's standards is transformed into a dream trip:

> [...] *and if you haven't traveled with CrystalMake, you don't what it's like to travel. You're treated like a queen* [...]. *They close an Egyptian pyramid to hold an open air dinner for their directors.* (Interviewee A)

The *glamour* that characterizes the award events offers participants an enchanting experience, which they may never have experienced, and a moment when they can exhibit their rewards, reinforcing (or even recapturing) their identity:

> [...] *you have a queen, a crown, there's lots of recognition with many jewels. There are too many jewels! You have a red carpet, a limousine, these types of things.* (Interviewee A)

However, the emotional tone of CrystalMake language is only offered to productive sellers and it has an expiration date. At the end of each sales cycle, you have to start all over again to meet your target, which implies that a constancy in your results is required:

> [...] *in the beginning, when I was one of the "stars," one of the "sales queens," I received very good service. But when I didn't have time anymore, this phase passed and I was "left aside" a bit.* (Interviewee E)

The fact is that just a select few are able to reach the highest sales levels, which trigger the best prizes, even though all of them are continually trying to achieve these results.

The last tactic refers to the concept of Yves Clot's reality of the activity. These sales people are led to believe that their success only depends on their dedication. Ideologically, it's important to the company that these sellers mobilize at the present moment to arrive at the pinnacle of their careers, in a future that isn't so certain: this is what makes the "machine" work. The emotion that emanates from "I'm going to succeed!" puts sellers in a frenetic race in search of an imaginary victory, which will maximize their dedication to the organization.

Not achieving impressive numbers during the period represents an impediment to a seller's visibility within the group. The emotion that results from this fact subjectively motivates the seller, stimulating actions to transform this situation, further intensifying the employee's efforts. I want the car, but I still don't have it; I want my name on the company magazine, but I still don't see it there; I want to become a queen, but I still haven't become one; I want everyone to applaud me, but they still don't, are examples of unrealized dreams that make the seller enter this race to produce even more during the next period. To Clot (2010), the interaction between the subject and the object as well as the participation of this subject in the elaboration of new types of significance in this new world attribute meaning to the seller's actions.

ii) "The Courtney Act Way"

The company's founder built the company based on her own personal and professional convictions, instilling the "the Courtney Act style of management" in the phrases used by the company's sales people such as: "I have to make the customer the most special person for me at that moment." The company's history represents an important asset in its commercial strategies and seller training. A person who's part of a larger story is always stronger than someone who walks alone (GONZÁLEZ REY, 2004) and CrystalMake's management history is, without doubt, a success story.

An important element in the company's culture is the "golden rule," based on the biblical principle, which governs ethical and moral conduct: each seller should treat his or her peers with respect, justice, honesty and solidarity. No seller has the right to offer products or services to a customer who has already been the customer of another:

> [...] *it's our golden rule, they place so much emphasis on this, and this respect that should exist between sellers is a great reason for our success!* (Interviewee A)

> [...] *it means that we don't try to undermine each other.* (Interviewee B)

> [...] *I always ask if the person already has a sales person. If so, the subject dies right there.* (Interviewee C)

However, you can't ensure that the boundary between the pure meaning of the rule and its illicit use is maintained: behind the apparent harmony, there's fierce competition.

Building a relationship between the seller and the customer is everyone's goal and it engenders undocumented rules which in a certain way can justify that not uncommon transgressions do occur:

> [...] *there are ugly conflicts that occur because of this type of thing.* [...] *I get complaints from my sales people. I get indignant.* (Interviewee A)

> [...] *there are women who don't follow this rule.* (Interviewee B)

Courtney Act founded the company based on what she viewed as the three most important pillars. The first alludes to Christian principles:

> [...] *"In first place, the success of this company is due to God. The only partner the founder had was God."* (Interviewee A)

It's as if this devotion supports the seller's commitment to the business:

> [...] *when I don't have anything on my agenda, what do I do? I get down on my knees and pray: "Jesus I don't have anything marked today, make my agenda."* (Interviewee A)

> [...] *we pray* [referring to the weekly sales meeting]*, we believe in God. At the beginning of the meeting, we thank God for our opportunities, for the closed doors, the open doors, and the door that will open.* (Interviewee B)

The relationship with God fuses with the relationship with the company; one's duty to God is one's duty to the company, thanking God is thanking the company, placing faith in God is placing faith in the company. The seller's dedication to the company should be as strong as the seller's faith.

The second pillar is the family:

> [...] *here at home, we're all CrystalMake people.* (Interviewee A)

The interviewees were unanimous in mentioning the career support they've received from their husbands:

> [...] *he's a true "Crystal husband," he encourages and supports me.* (Interviewee A)

> [...] *my husband gives me force. He said that I had to try. He helps me with the credit card when I have to pay the bill, and stays with the children if I need him to.* (Interviewee B)

The third and last pillar relates to the seller's career, and the founder's image and appearance. Courtney Act idealized the seller that represents the company: a well-dressed woman who's happy, smiling, independent, successful, and elegant and has a professional posture as well as good commercial arguments. However, few of the interviewees displayed knowledge of the company's history, as well as the brand that they've commercialized, even though the mythic figure of Courtney Act remains present on all of the company's promotional material, which is often used for commercial appeal in the recruitment of new sellers.

iii)   Being a CrystalMake Person

Most of those interviewed say they trust the rules established by the company, adopting them as a compass in their own lives:

> [...] *we learn to live better with this company. The principles don't just apply to our work, but to our lives as well.* (Interviewee A)

> [...] *I was so excited about the company, that I adopted it as a way of life!* (Interviewee B)

Some display a feeling of superiority due to their being CrystalMake sellers, and believe that they are better than the sellers of other brands, which they consider "inferior":

> [...] *I understand the greatness of this company and value it a lot.* (Interviewee A)

> [...] *I'm not selling cheap brands, I'm a very successful sales person, I'm a director.* (Interviewee D)

However, one of the interviewees admitted contradictory feelings in facing difficulties at the beginning of her career due to an internal struggle with her own preconceived ideas:

> [...] *In the beginning, we have certain preconceptions, because you see yourself selling brands of inferior quality. They're very humble.* [...] *Like it or not, you have this struggle within yourself*. (Interviewee D)

With the greater dilemma that the social sharing of the company demanded, she was obliged to break these paradigms. Today, her positioning is different:

> [...] *to be a CrystalMake person, to me, is the freedom to prepare beans and interact with a customer. It's being able to earn money, to be useful, because I need to be useful.* (Interviewee D)

According to Lane and Camargo (1995), the appropriation of culture occurs through intersubjective relationships which are emotional, complex and established in this activity:

> [...] *now customers have begun to seek me out. Before I was always Odeti[5] from this high school. Now I'm Odeti from CrystalMake. Wow, how cool is that!* (Interviewee D)

Emotion confers authorship, singularity and quality to an activity which sculpts who you are to a certain extent (CAMARGO, 1997; 2002; 2004; CAMARGO and CANOPF, 2015).

iv)   Working at CrystalMake

For the company, only those who work a lot can reach their targets and therefore receive awards:

> [...] *it's no good joining CrystalMake if you're not going to work. You have to work a lot!* (Interviewee A)

> *I make my schedule for the coming week.* [...] *if someone cancels I go to a store, a shopping center, a real estate office, or an auto dealership, I'm going to do something.* (Interviewee B)

They really believe that this work will enrich them financially in a manner that's very similar to what was insidiously promised to workers at the Scientific Organization of Labor:

_____
[5]Fictitious Name.

> [...] *I never imagined being able to earn what I earn today. When the bonus comes, I say: good heavens!* (Interviewee A)

> *CrystalMake doesn't define targets, you define your own target in accordance with what you want to earn.* [...] *the more you buy from the company, the larger your profit margin will be and the more you sell, the greater your visibility will be.* (Interviewee B)

The approach in relation to new customers is an assertive attitude:

> [...] *I say that I'm starting out and I need help to evaluate the product. I emphasize that these products are for people with good taste* [...] *It's rare for them to say no.* (Interviewee B)

> [...] *I've learned to be brazen* [...] *if I don't know you, I'll find a way to talk with you if I think you could be a potential customer.* (Interviewee D)

Within this context, the seller should be able to project his or her image in a few minutes; it's the possibility of establishing a relationship that's being sold much more than a beauty product. However, not all of those interviewed feel comfortable with these tactics:

> [...] *you're corralled into this. At the time, I told them that I didn't agree with this type of approach.* (Interviewee C)

Maintaining your relationships also requires desire:

> [...] *you need to constantly remind your customers that you exist. You need to call, send emails, etc. This contact was a little difficult to maintain, because I felt I was imposing myself on these people.* (Interviewee E)

Ignoring your emotional world, as Camargo (2004) warns, is equivalent to ignoring being a whole being.

Being part of the CrystalMake network assumes total contractual informality. There is no explicit working connection or any type of documented relationship which guarantees any formalization of the seller's activity. The link between the seller and the company consists of the orders that are placed to the factory during a given period, which if it expires triggers deactivation. The eventual return to the group is tiring; the seller loses benefits such as inviting discounts, the accumulation of points, etc. and has to start out as a beginner again, which represents new costs and less attractive discounts.

Lastly, the layout of the CrystalMake business implies a minimum quantity of products in stock for ready delivery. The more products the seller keeps in stock, the more keen the seller will be and the closer the seller will be to the company and its values. However, the interviewees displayed a certain concern about the security of this investment:

> [...] *the company does the opposite of most by suggesting that you have products ready for delivery, because the impulsiveness of the female customer is very important. However, sometimes you become too enthusiastic because of this* [...] *and you get stuck with a debt.* (Interviewee C)

The seller's initial dazzlement turns into affliction; the career's instability scares these women, especially since easily deliverable, less expensive brands are becoming more and more competitive:

> [...] *I sold very little.* (Interviewee C)

This insecurity is why most of these sellers still look to have a regular job as their main source of income, even though this takes away from the amount of time that they can devote to this business:

> [...] *This company is my second option, because I have a regular formal job and CrystalMake is not a formal job. This job has a few benefits that help me, but I manage to do both.* (Interviewee B)

v)   Sharing Experiences

Sharing the experiences of being a CrystalMake seller makes it possible to build your own team, which implies greater gains through the group's sales. It's not unusual for sellers to take the initiative (sometimes being insistent) in recruiting new participants to the network:

> [...] *my goal now is to build my team so I can feel a bit more secure, because I'll receive a bonus.* [...]
> *I needed some income that would be more secure, without having to go out to sell. It's the best of all
> worlds!* (Interviewee D)

In the eagerness to attract new members, some sellers act in a deceptive manner, frequently manipulating situations so that they appear to be of interest to prospective members, even though with the passage of time it becomes clear that this is a horrible deal.

The seductive language of the invitations to new participants is loaded with convincing arguments that lead these recruits to think the sky's the limit:

> [...] *but who am I going to sell to? "Everyone who has skin."* (Interviewee A)

Sellers starting out are encouraged to not feel fear in facing the public:

> [...] *"get rid of your fear and replace it with faith; if you don't someone else will take your place."*
> (Interviewee B)

   vi) "It's not all a bed of roses"

There are two sides to everything in life, and the CrystalMake experience is no different, revealing its not so glamorous side over time. To build a success story, the seller has to put in an extensive and heavy amount of work, which frequently affects one's personal life, family and even health. The seller's conversation becomes utilitarian over time, making any situation ripe for a business deal, which can make people shy away. A seller's life can become ruled by this work agenda:

> [...] *I own my business. If I don't sell today, tomorrow I'll have to sell twice as much; today I'm at home,
> I'm a mother taking care of her children, but I have a target to meet: selling every day, even if it isn't
> lipstick. I only take Sundays off, which is something I've done for myself.* (Interviewee D)

The same interviewee, however, manifested great satisfaction due to the freedom she has to take care of her children:

> [...] *at the time, I needed it to work out, because I had to stay with my children.* (Interviewee D)

It's seems contradictory to wish to take care of your children and having to meet daily targets:

> [...] *I was the "queen of sales" for the third consecutive month. God knows how I managed to do it.
> With the help of my husband and my mother.* (Interviewee D)

In practice, the flexibility in working hours, which at first is so attractive, proves to be a large time investment in this business, which leads to a full schedule and a difficult daily routine.

The same company that indoctrinates its sellers with priorities that include God, family and career, incites them to enter a frenetic race to meet their sales targets:

> [...] *frequently I find I'm making a mess when I begin with a lot of sales and many sellers get involved.*
> (Interviewee A)

It's as if sellers deliberately transform the order of their priorities, justifying this inversion with the need to provide better lives for their families, and fulfilling this duty in this manner assumes primary importance in their private lives:

> *"there comes a point when the company consumes so much time that the seller stops doing anything
> else."* (Interviewee C)

The Main Concepts and the Reality of CrystalMake

Figure 2 seeks to relate the reality of the organization and the main theoretical concepts displayed in Figure 1 and their details.

Figure 2

Empirical details of the main concepts
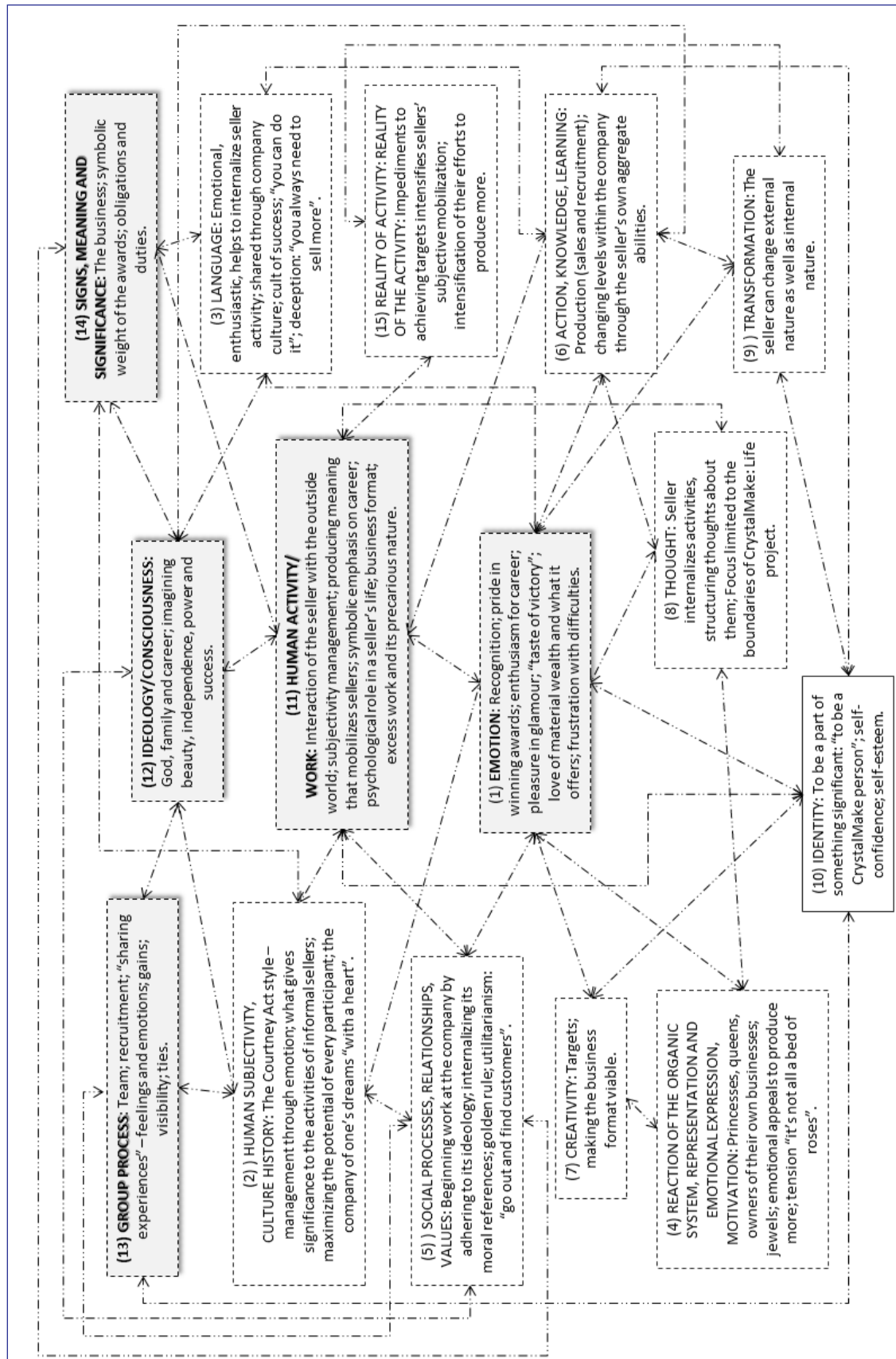
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

The **emotion (1)** of the **activity (11)**, and **meaning (14)** and **significance (14)** were learned through: (i) the subjective dimension of the **subject's action (6)**, expressed concretely in the group's **social processes and relationships (5)**; (ii) the process of constructing the subject's **meaning (14)** – personal – and **significance (14)** – cultural; (iii) the **historic (2)** and **cultural (2) dimensions** of emotions in human activity; and (iv) the components of the representation and expression of emotion (imagination, fantasy, joy, sadness, anger, etc.).

Emotion as a company management strategy is expressed through the interactions with sellers, in a cycle that begins by "dazzling" the seller with the business proposal. Great expectations are constructed based on promises of achieving dreams, which culminate in award programs that represent recognition for production, which elicit enthusiasm, pleasure, pride, admiration and visibility, and perks that have significance within the group – **group process (13)**. Praise and applause play a part in the symbolic and cultural artifacts and reflect important elements in the construction and maintenance of the **participant's identity (10)**, influencing self-esteem and suggesting that the seller has the power to **transform (9)** his or her internal nature, with **motivation (4)** and **creativity (7)**. Company culture is tied to the history of its founder; in an era marked by a reduction of full-time employment, the increase in investment in informal work stimulated the formation of small businesses (HARVEY, 1994). Aware of this, Courtney Act engendered a management style based on controlling **subjectivity (2)**, emotion and affection, giving the activities of informal sellers significance, and thus maximizing their potential.

Company ideology (12) is based on **signs (14)** grounded in Christian principles, which provide support for the seller's commitment to the business. Activity is internalized through the company's socially and culturally shared **language (3)** which structures **sellers' thinking (8)** about their activities, in terms of transforming the business into a life project. However, this cycle doesn't always end in this idealized fashion. Few people regularly receive awards, which signifies that the rest run the risk of becoming frustrated, which requires the company to work hard on its emotion management as a way to stimulate and engage sellers to increase production. Not meeting targets causes sellers to intensify their actions deliberately in the hope of achieving levels that will make it possible to win awards – the **reality of the activity (15)**.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The objective of this article has been to reveal the ideological dimension of emotion in the management of informal cosmetic sellers in an international organization. Emotion when mediated between humans and activities is full of ideological matrices which are employed by the company's management strategies. A critique of the functional use of emotion as a way to reproduce the organization's ideology has been our guiding aim.

The CrystalMake business was constructed during a propitious period historically, in which the reduction in full-time employment led to an increase in part-time and temporary work. The company's management style has been constructed based on social practices and strategies that influence seller emotions, mobilizing them psychologically until they realize their cherished objectives have not been achieved.

The identification of the seller with the image of success represents a type of self-reinvention professionally and personally. This identity is reinforced by the utilitarian use of these ideological symbols in social friendships, which is part of the culture that permeates the organization.

The career project becomes a "life project," that is reinforced by social groups which confer significance to this activity. This implies promises of realizing dreams, through the "language of feeling," which can ideologically unify people from different cultures, social classes and educational backgrounds.

We hope this article contributes to the study and discussion of emotion in organizations, but it has no intention of exhausting this subject. It seeks within its boundaries to broaden the concept of emotion, presenting it as a socio-cultural component of human subjectivity that is present within the subject's interactions with the world.

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