

Informality, Class Structure, and Class Identity in Contemporary Argentina

by
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The dynamics of peripheral capitalism in Latin America includes the employment or self-employment of a significant proportion of the working class under informal arrangements. The neoliberal transformations of the 1990s deepened this feature of Latin American labor markets, and it was not reversed during the period of economic growth that followed the collapse of neoliberalism. In this context, sociological debates have focused on the relationship between the formal and the informal fractions of the working class. Examination of the biographical and family linkages between formal and informal workers in Argentina and the effect of these connections on the patterns of class self-identification of individuals shows that lived experience across the informality boundary makes formal workers similar to informal workers in terms of class self-identification. This research provides preliminary evidence that the two kinds of workers belong to the same social class because of the fluidity of the boundary that separates them. Instead of a class cleavage, this boundary is better defined as the separation between fractions of the working class.

La dinámica del capitalismo periférico en América Latina implica la informalidad laboral (sea entre trabajadores contratados o autónomos) de una sustancial parte de la clase obrera. Las transformaciones neoliberales de los años noventa profundizaron esta característica de los mercados de trabajo latinoamericanos, y el problema no se revirtió durante el período de crecimiento económico que siguió al colapso del neoliberalismo. En este contexto, los debates sociológicos se han centrado en la relación entre los grupos formales e informales de la clase obrera. Un análisis de los vínculos biográficos y familiares entre los trabajadores formales e informales en Argentina y el efecto de dichas conexiones en los patrones individuales de autoidentificación de clase muestra que la experiencia vivida en los límites de la informalidad hace que los trabajadores formales se consideren similares a los informales en términos de identificación de clase. Esta investigación brinda evidencia preliminar de que los dos tipos de trabajadores pertenecen a la misma clase social.

Keywords: *Informality, Class structure, Latin America, Class identity, Argentina*

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The dynamics of peripheral capitalism in Latin America includes the existence of an urban informal economy that persisted even after a period of sustained economic growth under import-substitution industrialization (Portes and Benton, 1984: 590). The size of the informal economy increased during the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s, which did not deliver the promised sustained economic growth and generated more social inequality (Portes and Hoffman, 2003). By the late 1990s 61 percent of the region's workers were in the informal economy (Tornarolli et al., 2014: 13).

In Argentina as in the rest of Latin America, the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s negatively affected workers' basic rights and the labor market (Beccaria and Maurizio, 2012). By the mid-1990s labor informality affected around one-third of waged workers and 48.9 percent of the labor force (Tornarolli et al., 2014: 35). Job precariousness, informality, and unemployment deepened during the 1998–2002 crisis (Beccaria and Maurizio, 2012). Weakened Argentine unions defended their basic organizational assets but did not struggle for better working conditions or salary increases with an increasingly heterogeneous workforce (Murillo, 2001).

After the collapse of the neoliberal model, Argentina's gross domestic product grew by an average of around 9 percent a year between 2003 and 2011. Under this sustained growth the unemployment rate showed a significant reduction, but informal work arrangements continued to affect a significant fraction of the working class. The combination of a relative reduction of unemployment and persistently high informality is found elsewhere on the continent, where the average country employs 56 percent of its workforce informally (Tornarolli et al., 2014: 13).

In this context, sociological analyses have focused on the consequences of the informal economy for the structural composition of the working class in the region (Dalle, 2016; Maceira, 2010; Nun, 1969; Portes, 1985; Salvia and Chavez Molina, 2007; Wilson, 1998). My research is part a broader agenda that focuses on the structural, cultural, and organizing linkages between the formal and the informal fractions of the working class. In particular, this article analyzes the prevalence of biographical and family linkages connecting formal and informal workers in Argentina and the effect of these connections on patterns of class self-identification.

I analyze data from the Encuesta Nacional de Estratificación y Movilidad Social en la Argentina (National Study of Stratification and Social Mobility—ENES) (CEDOP-UBA, 2007) applied to a multistage probability sample of the Argentine population 18 years old and older ($N = 3,314$).¹ The sample used here consisted of individuals between 25 and 65 years old who were part of the employed labor force at the time of the survey ($N = 2,035$). The dataset was well suited to answering my research questions in that it provided information on the class and informality characteristics of the respondents' current and two previous jobs. For those currently cohabiting, it included information about the current jobs of the respondents' partners. Finally, it included questions measuring the respondents' class self-identification.

CLASS STRUCTURE AND INFORMALITY IN LATIN AMERICA

Capitalism in Latin America is characterized by the combination of a core capitalist sector with the unregulated and small-scale production of commodities. This unregulated sector, which the literature calls the "urban informal economy," includes self-employed workers engaged in subsistence activities and employees of microenterprises. The modernization school of development theory expected these workers to be absorbed by the capitalist nucleus, but the urban informal economy has persisted. The dependency school of development theory questioned this prediction and argued that the structural dynamics of peripheral economies generated "dual societies" in which a significant proportion of the population was never fully incorporated into the capitalist nucleus of the economy (Nun, 1969). It rejected the "optimism" of the modernization school and suggested the term "marginal mass" to label those who were permanently excluded from the modern economic sector. This concept was related to the idea that there were no ties between the formal and the informal economy and that those employed in the informal economy were somehow "marginalized" from mainstream society. The marginal mass was considered classless, and research emphasized its isolation from the core working class of the region (Nun, 1969).

This notion prevailed in the literature until the early 1980s, when Alejandro Portes and his colleagues challenged the idea that the informal economy was on the margins of capitalist society (Portes and Benton, 1984). Portes defined the informal economy as "a process of income-generation characterized by one central feature: it is unregulated by the institutions of society, in a legal and social environment in which similar activities are regulated" (Castells and Portes, 1989: 12). One common feature of informal economic activities was their systematic connection to the formal economy. The reason for this connection was that "the specialized networks formed by unregulated enterprises free large firms from the constraints imposed upon them by social control and institutional norms" (Castells and Portes, 1989: 26). The main benefit for large firms that imposed these types of arrangements was that they allowed them to reduce labor costs and minimize liabilities.

Portes's definition helped to capture not only the traditional urban informal economy but also the informal work arrangements that emerged in firms at the core of the formal economy (Kalleberg, 2009: 2). It was adopted in 2002 by the International Labor Organization, which defined an informal worker as one "whose labor relationship is not subject to labor legislation and tax rules, and has no access to social protection or right to certain labor benefits" (International Labor Organization, 2002). Informal employment included the unregulated survival activities of the self-employed as well as salaried employment that was not legally regulated. Portes's approach has had far-reaching implications for the class analysis of informality. In particular, it challenges the notion of the marginal mass. He has shown that individuals employed in the informal economy are fully integrated into the class structure of Latin American societies, which he sees as composed of the capitalist class, the petty bourgeoisie, the

middle class, the formal proletariat, the informal proletariat, and the informal petty bourgeoisie (Portes, 1985; Portes and Hoffman, 2003).

CLASS ANALYSIS OF INFORMALITY: FAMILY, BIOGRAPHY, AND IDENTITY

The structuralist perspective inaugurated a line of research focused on the links between informal workers and the formal economy (Portes and Walton, 1981: 104). “In place of the dualistic images of Latin American urban economies proposed by the other perspectives, this [new] approach described unified systems encompassing a dense network of relationships between formal and informal enterprises” (Portes and Schauffler, 1993: 48). These studies examine the economic, biographical, and family links between formal and informal workers. Regarding the economic linkage, research shows that informal workers are “often subcontracted or otherwise hired informally by formal enterprises” (Wilson, 2011: 206), as in the case of occupations such as street vendors, brick makers, garbage pickers, or janitors (see especially Wilson, 2010; 2011). These economic interconnections have profound consequences for the lives of workers. Some studies emphasize the shared experience of alternating between formal and informal jobs in the life course of workers (Castells and Portes, 1989; Fortuna and Prates, 1989; Roberts, 1989; Sassen-Koob, 1989), while others focus on the social and family networks that shape the lives of informal workers, particularly women (Wilson, 1998). Finally, there is a growing interest in the study of the links between the organizing strategies of formal and informal workers and its contribution to the success or failure of those strategies (Agarwala and Tilly, 2015; Elbert, 2017).

In this article, I focus on the study of the biographical and family links between formal and informal workers in Argentina and their effects on patterns of class self-identification of individuals. However, instead of considering informality as a class cleavage, I employ Erik Olin Wright’s (1997) 12-class location schema and treat informality as adding complexity to class relations through mediated and temporal class relations. As Wright (2005: 18) points out, mediated locations—linkages to class relations through social relations (especially kinship) other than those connected with their jobs—add interesting complexities to class analysis when people’s direct and mediated class locations differ. In the case of informality this concerns familial linkages between formal and informal workers. The notion of temporal class locations allows the study of the way informality affects “the life-time biographical trajectory of individuals’ locations within the class structure” (Wright, 1997: 393). It has to do with the ways in which lives move across locations over time—in this case, move in and out of informality.

The study of the mediated and temporal dimensions of the class structure is oriented toward determining the degree of interconnectedness between formal and informal workers. On the basis of the concept of the marginal mass, we could hypothesize a society in which informal workers are employed permanently through informal labor relations and have few family links with individuals employed in the formal economy, identifying such a society as one with “segmented informality.” In contrast, “interconnected informality” would

TABLE 1
Class Positions in Argentina

	N	%
Capitalists	17	0.8
Small employers	64	3.1
Petty bourgeoisie	388	19.1
Expert managers	28	1.4
Expert supervisors	55	2.7
Experts	89	4.4
Skilled managers	7	0.3
Skilled supervisors	58	2.9
Skilled workers	380	18.7
Nonskilled managers	1	0.0
Nonskilled supervisors	78	3.8
Nonskilled workers	870	42.8
Total	2,035	100.0

Source: Based on data from ENES (CEDOP-UBA, 2007)

be present if workers moved regularly in and out of informality and family links existed between formal and informal workers sharing households. Given these two ideal types, the empirical task would be to determine the degree of interconnectedness of informality in Argentina and its effects on the dynamics of class formation and consciousness. In the following section I describe the type of informality that characterizes the Argentine class structure in terms of Wright's (1997) location schema, previously measured in Argentina by Jorrat (2000). I then study the prevalence of temporal and mediated informality locations within each class location. I finally test the efficacy of direct and mediated class-and-informality locations in explaining individuals' class self-identification (Jorrat, 2008; Sautu, 2011).

THE BASIC CONTOURS OF THE CLASS STRUCTURE IN ARGENTINA

According to Wright (1997), the fundamental locations in the class structure result from the distinction between those who own the means of production (capitalists and the petty bourgeoisie) and those who only own their labor power (employees). Employees are further differentiated along two additional dimensions: their relationship to authority within production (or possession of organizational assets) and their possession of skills or expertise. These two dimensions lead to the division of the class of employees into two main groups: those in contradictory class locations (because they are subordinated to capital but at the same time possess organizational or skill assets) and those properly located in the working class (subordinated to capital but also subordinated to other employees in the process of production and lacking formal credentials related to their jobs). The distribution of the employed labor force in Argentina in terms of the 12 locations of Wright's schema (Table 1) shows that owners of the means of production who employ workers make up around 4 percent of Argentina's employed labor force, with those properly located in the capitalist class accounting for fewer than 1 percent and small employers (self-employed

individuals with from two to nine employees) for the remaining 3 percent. The last group among the self-employed is the petty bourgeoisie, which includes self-employed people with one or no employees or just the help of family members (Wright, 1997: 48) and represents 19 percent of the employed labor force. The other 77 percent of the employed labor force is composed of employees. The proletariat is the largest class location, with roughly 43 percent of the employed labor force. The majority of individuals in this location belong to unskilled occupational groups such as service workers, agricultural workers, and manual noncraft occupations. The skilled working class is mostly composed of individuals in skilled occupations and represents 19 percent of the employed labor force. Thus 62 percent of the employed labor force in contemporary Argentina is part of the working class.

INFORMALITY IN THE CLASS STRUCTURE

Following Portes, I define an informal economic activity as a process of income generation that is unregulated by the institutions of society (Castells and Portes, 1989: 12). State regulation of the work of the self-employed in Argentina requires self-employed individuals with no employees to declare their activities to the tax collecting agency and pay a monthly tax. Ideally, I would call these self-employed people the formal petty bourgeoisie and the self-employed who work largely outside the regulation of the state the informal petty bourgeoisie. Unfortunately, surveys in most Latin American countries do not include questions about the legal status of employment among the self-employed, and in the absence of these data scholars use completion of formal educational degrees as a proxy for legal status (Gasparini and Tornarolli, 2007: 3). Following this criterion, in this article the formal petty bourgeoisie consists of self-employed individuals who have completed college education, while the informal petty bourgeoisie includes self-employed individuals at lower educational levels.

At the same time, an individual is considered part of the informal proletariat if he or she holds a working-class job and this job is not legally registered by the employer. The empirical indicator of informal status is the respondent's answer to the following question: "Is a monthly social security payment deducted from your salary?" A negative answer indicates that the employee is not legally registered, because the Argentine law requires employers to deduct a monthly social security payment for all legally registered employees. Workers who hold registered jobs but are employed under temporary contracts are included in the informal proletariat because they lack job security, pensions, and many of the rights (seniority, grievance procedures) that permanent workers enjoy and therefore their experience appears to be closer to that of the informal proletariat than to that of the formal labor force (Table 2).

The majority of self-employed individuals in Argentina are part of the informal petty bourgeoisie, which accounts for 14 percent of the employed labor force. The informal petty bourgeoisie includes small shopkeepers, mechanics, and plumbers, among other occupational groups. The formal petty bourgeoisie, which represents 5 percent of the labor force, is mostly

TABLE 2
Class and Informality Locations in Argentina

	N	%
<i>Privileged class</i>		
Capitalist	81	4.0
Formal petty bourgeoisie	97	4.8
Middle class	316	15.5
<i>Formal working class</i>	592	29.1
<i>Informal working class</i>		
Informal proletariat	658	32.3
Informal petty bourgeoisie	291	14.3
Total	2,035	100.0

Source: Based on data from ENES (CEDOP-UBA, 2007)

composed of independent professionals with liberal arts degrees and licensed technicians working on their own. The informal proletariat represents 32 percent of the labor force, and therefore 47 percent of the employed labor force is informal.

THE DEGREE OF INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF INFORMALITY

Regarding the temporal link between formal and informal employment, the main research question is what proportion of working-class individuals alternates between jobs in the formal and the informal economy. I addressed this question by measuring the prevalence of stable and mixed trajectories within each class-and-informality location. A trajectory is designated as "stable" when it does not include jobs across the informality frontier and "mixed" when the individual has had at least one job across the informality frontier (Table 3). Half of the individuals in the formal working class show stable trajectories and the other half (14.7 percent of the labor force) mixed trajectories. In the informal working class a larger proportion of individuals presents stable trajectories (30 percent of the employed labor force) than mixed trajectories (16 percent of the employed labor force). Of the total number of individuals in the working class (1,534), 59 percent have stable job trajectories. Of the remaining 41 percent presenting mixed trajectories, 53 percent have trajectories trending downward (from formality to informality). It is important to note that the study only asked about respondents' two previous jobs (first job and the job that lasted longest between first job and current job). Ideally, we should measure the transition between formal and informal sector jobs in the complete job history of respondents. This would increase the proportion of mixed trajectories in all class positions.

To examine the mediated relations between the formal and the informal working class, I used information from the ENES dataset about the class-and-informality characteristics of the respondents' jobs and those of their cohabiting partners to determine the class-and-informality composition of their households. Households were categorized as "heterogeneous" if the couple

TABLE 3
Types of Class-and-Informality Trajectories in Argentina

	N	%
Stable privileged class	290	14.3
Mixed into privileged class	203	10.0
Stable formal working class	294	14.5
Mixed into formal working class	297	14.7
Mixed into informal working class	333	16.4
Stable informal working class	610	30.1
Total	2,027	100.0

Source: Based on data from ENES (CEDOP-UBA, 2007)

Note: Excludes 8 cases with missing information in description of previous jobs.

TABLE 4
Type of Class-and-Informality Composition in Dual-Earner Households (%)
(N = 942)

<i>Partner 1 Class and Informality Location</i>	<i>Partner 2 Class and Informality Location</i>			Total
	Privileged class	Formal working class	Informal working class	
Privileged class	14.3	10.6	6.9	31.8
Formal working class	3.8	12.3	14.6	30.8
Informal working class	4.9	8.8	23.7	37.4
Total	23.0	31.7	45.2	100.0

Source: Based on data from ENES (CEDOP-UBA, 2007)

was diverse in terms of informality location. The main research question here was what proportion of working-class households was heterogeneous. Excluding from the analysis households including an individual in the privileged class, 40 percent of households were heterogeneous (Table 4). The most prevalent match within this group was the combination of an informal-working-class wife and a formal-working-class husband.

So far I have analyzed the prevalence of temporal and mediated class relations connecting formal and informal workers in the class structure. An overall picture of this interconnectedness emerges when I combine the two dimensions (Table 5). The proportions of individuals with no ties across the boundary are similar in the two groups (16 percent), and so are the proportions of individuals with both temporal and mediated ties in the two class locations (around 9 percent). However, there are significant differences in the cross-diagonal categories. Six percent of the individuals in the formal working class have mediated ties but no temporal ties across the boundary, and this proportion is double in the informal working class (12 percent). Sixteen percent of formal workers have temporal links across the boundary but no mediated links, while this proportion is 9 percent among informal workers. The proportion of individuals with at least one link across the formality-informality boundary is 56.3 for the formal working class and 47.5 for the informal.

TABLE 5
**Working-Class Individuals by Relations across
 the Formal-Informal Boundary (%)**

<i>Temporal Relations</i>	<i>Mediated Relations</i>		<i>No Mediated Relations^a</i>	<i>Total</i>
	<i>No</i>	<i>Yes</i>		
Formal working class (<i>N</i> = 591)				
No	16.1	6.1	27.6	49.7
Yes	15.7	9.6	24.9	50.3
Total	31.8	15.7	52.5	100.0
Informal working class (<i>N</i> = 943)				
No	16.3	12.2	36.2	64.7
Yes	8.5	9.1	17.7	35.3
Total	24.8	21.3	53.9	100.0

Source: Based on data from ENES (CEDOP-UBA, 2007).

a. Noncohabiting individuals, for whom there is no information about the class-and-informality location of a partner.

CLASS, INFORMALITY LOCATIONS, AND CLASS IDENTITY

The class identity of individuals is measured through a self-identification question in the questionnaire. Respondents were asked whether they thought of themselves as belonging to a social class. Those who gave a positive response were asked to identify that class from the following list of options: upper class, upper-middle class, middle class, lower-middle class, and lower class.² For those who did not consider themselves as belonging to a social class, the following question was asked: "Many people say they belong to a social class. If you had to make a choice, which class would you choose from the following list [with the same options as before]?"

In order to assess the relative explanatory power of the different types of structural locations, I tested a series of hypotheses about the relationship between direct temporal and mediated class locations and the class self-identification of individuals:

Hypothesis 1. The percentage of capitalist and middle-class respondents who identify themselves as lower-class should be less than the percentage of working-class respondents who do, and the percentage of formal workers who identify themselves as lower-class should be less than the percentage of informal workers who do.

Hypothesis 2. Within the working-class portion of the matrix, attitudes should become monotonically more lower-class when moving from stable formal trajectories to mixed trajectories and then to stable informal trajectories.

Hypothesis 3. The class attitudes of working-class respondents should become monotonically more lower-class when moving from homogeneous formal households to heterogeneous households and then to homogeneous informal households.

Hypothesis 4. The class attitudes of working-class respondents should become monotonically more lower-class when moving from individuals with neither mediated nor temporal ties across the formality-informality boundary to

TABLE 6
Class Self-Identification by Type of Class-and-Informality Location
(% and Total Number of Cases)

	<i>Middle-Class</i>	<i>Lower-Class</i>	<i>N</i>
Capitalist	87.3	12.7	79
Formal petty bourgeoisie	88.4	11.6	95
Middle class	80.2	19.8	313
Formal working class	68.7	31.3	587
Informal working class	50.3	49.7	941
Total	63.5	36.5	2,015

$$\chi^2 = 160.3, p = 0.000; \text{Cramér's } V = 0.2821$$

Source: Based on data from ENES (CEDOP-UBA, 2007)

Note: Excludes 20 respondents who answered "none" to the question about class self-identification.

individuals with mediated or temporal ties across the boundary and then to individuals with both.

Hypothesis 1 establishes the validity of the measure by testing the statistical relationship between the class structural variables and the class attitudinal variables. If the variable does not behave as predicted, it will not be useful for testing the importance of ties. Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 test the argument about the interconnectedness of informality in the working class. The reasoning is that the presence of ties between the formal and the informal proletariat affects the class self-identification of individuals. The second and the third hypotheses suggest that having temporal and mediated connections across the formality-informality boundary will make individuals in the formal working class similar to individuals in the informal working class in terms of class self-identification. The fourth hypothesis brings these two dimensions together through an index of interconnectedness. The index allows measurement of the impact on class self-identification of having no ties, one tie, or two ties across the formality-informality boundary.

The proportion of individuals who identify themselves as lower-class in each direct class location (Table 6) confirms the predictions of Hypothesis 1. First, it shows that individuals in the privileged classes are less likely to identify themselves as lower-class than individuals in the working class: 20 percent of individuals in the middle class and 31 percent of individuals in the formal working class consider themselves part of the lower class. It also confirms the prediction that formal workers are less likely to identify themselves as lower-class than informal workers: there is a 20 percent difference in self-identification with the lower class between the formal and the informal working class, and the results are statistically significant and the two variables strongly associated.

Hypothesis 2 predicts that formal workers who have had informal jobs in the past will be closer to the informal working class than formal workers who have not. Twenty-seven percent of individuals in the formal working class with stable trajectories identify themselves as lower-class in contrast to 36 percent of those with mixed trajectories. These numbers demonstrate a strong trajectory effect on class identity among individuals in the formal working class. This effect does not hold for individuals in the informal working class (Table 7).

Among formal-working-class men who cohabit with formal-working-class women, 23.9 percent identify themselves as lower-class, while this proportion

TABLE 7
Self-Identification as Lower-Class by Type of Informality Trajectory (% and Total Number of Cases in Each Trajectory)

<i>Informality Trajectory</i>	<i>Lower-Class (%)</i>	<i>N</i>
Stable privileged class	14.9	288
Mixed into privileged class	20.2	198
Stable formal working class	27.1	292
Mixed into formal working class	35.7	294
Mixed into informal working class	49.7	332
Stable informal working class	49.9	603

Source: Based on data from ENES (CEDOP-UBA, 2007)

Note: Excluding cases with missing information in description of previous jobs and cases in the "no class identity" category.

TABLE 8A
Male Respondents' (N = 404) Self-Identification as Lower-Class by Class-and-Informality Composition of Household (%), Dual-Earner Households Only

<i>Respondent's Informality Location</i>	<i>Partner's Informality Location</i>		
	Privileged class	Formal working class	Informal working class
Privileged class	8.6	23.1	11.1
Formal working class	31.8	23.9	58.0
Informal working class	22.2	50.0	49.4

Source: Based on data from ENES (CEDOP-UBA, 2007)

TABLE 8B
Female Respondents' (N = 532) Self-Identification as Lower-Class by Class-and-Informality Composition of Household (%), Dual-Earner Households Only

<i>Partner's Informality Location</i>	<i>Respondent's Informality Location</i>		
	Privileged class	Formal working class	Informal working class
Privileged class	10.4	14.3	42.9
Formal working class	17.0	29.4	30.8
Informal working class	28.9	43.7	52.2

Source: Based on data from ENES (CEDOP-UBA, 2007)

is 58.0 percent for the men of this class who cohabit with informal-working-class women (Table 8A). On the other hand, mediated locations make little difference for informal-working-class men, since the proportion of individuals who self-identify with the lower class is similar among informal-working-class men who cohabit with formal-working-class women (around 50 percent). Among formal-working-class women who cohabit with formal-working-class men, 29.4 percent identify themselves as lower-class, while this proportion is 43.7 percent among formal-working-class women who cohabit with informal-working-class men (Table 8B). Of the informal-working-class women who

TABLE 9
Self-Identification as Lower-Class by Class-and-Informality Location and Interconnectedness Score (%) (N = 2,007)

<i>Location</i>	<i>Index of Interconnectedness</i>		
	Neither Temporal nor Mediated (0)	Temporal or Mediated (1)	Temporal and Mediated (2)
Privileged class	13.8	19.2	35.0
Formal working class	26.2	32.1	51.8
Informal working class	52.3	48.2	43.0

Source: Based on data from ENES (CEDOP-UBA, 2007)

Note: Excluding cases with missing information about temporary or mediated locations and cases in the "no class identity" category.

cohabit with formal-working-class men, 30.8 percent identify themselves as lower-class, while 52.2 of those who cohabit with informal-working-class men do so. Surprisingly, 42 percent of informal-working-class women who cohabit with privileged-class men identify themselves as lower-class compared with 30 percent of the women of this class who cohabit with formal-working-class men. This anomalous pattern may be related to the greater internal inequality within these couples, but further research is needed to understand its causes.

Where formal-working-class men cohabit with formal-working-class women, 23 percent of the men and 29 percent of the women identify themselves as lower-class. Of the formal-working-class men who cohabit with informal-working-class women, 58 percent identify themselves as lower-class, as do 43 percent of the formal-working-class women who cohabit with informal-working-class men. These cells show similar patterns in the interaction between mediated links and class identity. The difference emerges in the comparison of individuals in the informal working class. Among informal-working-class men, 58 percent of those who cohabit with formal-working-class women identify themselves as lower-class, as do 49 percent of those who cohabit with informal-working-class women. Among women, only 30 percent of informal workers who cohabit with formal-working-class men identify themselves as lower-class compared with 52 percent of those who cohabit with informal-working-class men.

When the two dimensions are combined to form an index of interconnectedness on which individuals have a value of 0 if they have neither temporal nor mediated class relations across the formality-informality boundary, a value of 1 if they have one kind of relations or the other, and a value of 2 if they have both, the results confirm a strong relationship between the degree of interconnectedness and class identity (Table 9). Among the privileged classes and the formal working class, the percentage of individuals with lower-class identity is higher among those with one link across the boundary than among those with no links and still higher among those with two links. In the informal working class, in contrast, the percentage of individuals with lower-class identities is higher among those with no links across the boundary than among those with one or two links. The odds ratio for the effect of the two extreme categories in the index of interconnectedness is 3.35 for the privileged class, 3.03 for the

formal working class, and 0.69 for the informal working class, confirming the strong effect of degree of interconnectedness on the class self-identification of individuals for the first two categories. The effect of interconnectedness for formal workers is positive and statistically significant.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The results confirm that the class structure in Argentina presents a fluid boundary between formality and informality with regard to work trajectories and household formation. Around half of the formal working class has had at least one informal job, and around 40 percent of working-class households are heterogeneous in terms of the informality status of the cohabiting partners. Analysis of the relationship between direct and mediated informality locations and the class self-identification of working-class individuals followed Wright's (1997: 260–261) suggestion: "The reason for introducing the distinction between direct and mediated class locations is because we believe that an individual's location in a class structure is consequential and that this distinction provides a better specification of this consequence producing process." Indeed, the results show that the distinction between direct and indirect informality locations is consequential in the study of class identity formation among individuals. In particular, there is evidence of a strong effect of temporal and mediated locations on the class self-identification of individuals within the working class: lived experiences of having ties across the informality boundary and moving across this boundary make formal workers more like individuals who have always been in the informal economy. In more abstract terms, this means that the self-understanding of workers is shaped not just by their current positions in the economy but by their lives.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH ON INFORMALITY

This article contributes to the argument that there are profound linkages between formal and informal workers in Latin America. It also provides evidence of the relevance of these connections to an understanding of the patterns of class self-identification of individuals: lived experience across the informality boundary makes formal workers more like informal workers in terms of class self-identification. This opens up the debate on key questions in the class analysis of informality: What is the class location of informal workers? Is it different from that of formal workers?

In more abstract terms, this debate centers on the question whether formal and informal workers share a class interest and thus belong to the same social class. One possible view defines informality as a class cleavage that divides the working class. In this view, labor fragmentation creates structural divisions among workers that are translated into different life experiences, collective action dynamics, and material interests for formal and informal workers (Portes, 1985; Portes and Hoffman, 2003). Although Alejandro Portes and his colleagues were the first to identify the interconnections between formal and

informal workers, they maintain that these groups of workers have different material interests. This is paradoxical, because the theoretical expectation is that a class cleavage implies a separation between the groups instead of a fluid boundary that connects them.

An alternative view suggests that different groups of workers, in spite of different modes of incorporation into labor markets, have a common class interest based on their shared condition as exploited in the capitalist labor process (Wright, 2015: 166). In other words, formal and informal workers have a common interest with respect to the actions and strategies that would improve their material conditions of life. This research provides evidence in favor of the idea that formal and informal workers belong to the same social class. It shows the profound linkages that connect formal and informal workers in Latin America and the relevance of these connections to workers' class self-identification. On the basis of this evidence, informal workers should be considered a significant fraction of the working class but they do not constitute a "new" class as Portes and colleagues suggest. However, the debate about the class position of informal workers remains open.³ Future research on the structural, cultural, and organizational links between formal and informal workers should help us answer this theoretical question.

NOTES

1. The survey was conducted by a research team that Raúl Jorrot directs at the Instituto Gino Germani, Universidad de Buenos Aires. I thank him and Manuel Riveiro for their help in the preparation of the dataset for this analysis.

2. Ideally, the list should include a "working class" (*clase obrera*) option, because the term "lower class" (*clase baja*) has a stigma attached to it and designates a different kind of demarcation in the society. This measurement problem is especially serious in a country like Argentina, where there is a strong labor movement, because a strong labor movement identifies itself as working-class and sees "lower-class" as something different. When individuals are forced to make the choice between "lower-class" and "middle-class," they are being told to locate themselves in a classification scheme different from the one they would prefer. Levels of lower-class self-identification tend to be lower when compared with surveys that include the "working class" option. For example, the levels of "lower class" and "working class" self-identification in a 2003–2004 study added up to 45 percent (Jorrot, 2008: 61).

3. According to Alejandro Portes (personal communication) the interconnection between formal and informal workers demonstrates the permeability of class boundaries in Argentine society, not the absence of such boundaries.

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