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Original Article

Health and Safety at Work: Analysis from the Brazilian Documentary Film *Flesh and Bone*Luciano Mendes^{1,*}, Heliani Berlatto dos Santos¹, Elisa Yoshie Ichikawa²¹ School of Agriculture "Luiz de Queiroz" (ESALQ), University of Sao Paulo (Brazil), Piracicaba, São Paulo, Brazil² State University of Maringá (Brazil), Maringá, Paraná, Brazil

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ABSTRACT

Background: The objective of this article is to make some analysis on the process of work and accidents occurring in slaughterhouses, evidenced in the Brazilian documentary film called *Flesh and Bone*. As such, it was necessary to discuss an alternative theoretical concept in relation to theories about health and safety at work. This alternative discussion focuses on the concepts of biopower and biopolitics.

Methods: The use of audiovisual elements in research is not new, and there is already a branch of studies with methodological and epistemological variations. The Brazilian documentary *Flesh and Bone* was the basis for the research. The analysis of this documentary will be carried out from two complementary perspectives: "textual analysis" and "discourse analysis."

Results: *Flesh and Bone* presents problems related to health and safety at work in slaughterhouses because of the constant exposure of workers to knives, saws, and other sharp instruments in the workplace. The results show that in favor of higher production levels, increased overseas market sales, and stricter quality controls, some manufacturers resort to various practices that often result in serious injuries, disposal, and health damages to workers.

Conclusion: *Flesh and Bone*, by itself, makes this explicit in the form of denunciation based on the situation of these workers. What it does not make clear is that, in the context of biopolitics, the actions aimed at solving these problems or even reducing the negative impacts for this group of workers, are not efficient enough to change such practices.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, organizational studies have marginalized the problems related to health and safety at work [1]. In this context, scholars have focused on studies related to psychological distress [2], burnout [3], bullying [4], and symbolic violence [5]. These interests marginalize the problems associated with lesions to the physical body [6].

The explanations for this lack of interest are diverse, but do not justify the fact that the number of workplace accidents has been growing every year, even with the existence of a legal system that tries to prevent that. Data from the Ministry of Labour and Employment in Brazil show that the number of industrial accidents at São Paulo State grew by 84.9% between 2001 and 2011, whereas in Rio de Janeiro, deaths from occupational accidents increased by 29.6% over the same period [7].

These numbers may not be accurate, as the information was obtained from official sources, which often ignore those accidents reported by different sources other than the workplace. As a way for companies to streamline their occupational accident statistics, many of them report workplace accidents as occupational diseases. The Brazilian Protection Yearbook, since 2007, has evaluated occupational diseases that do not have the "Work Accident Statement." This caused a large increase in the number of workplace accidents, introducing more than 180,000 cases in accident statistics [8].

These data show a serious situation and highlights the need for analysis, given the ambiguities in the system. On the one hand, there is a complex set of laws and regulations that aims to eliminate or prevent workplace accidents [9]. On the other hand, you have a whole statistical survey showing growth in the number of serious accidents and work-related diseases [10].

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From these considerations, it is possible to raise the following questions: What is the rationale behind this marginalization of workplace accidents? What causes contradictions between the legal system and the number of workplace accidents? These theoretical and practical issues can be answered through a theoretical basis, but also with the development of a research. Thus, besides the need to discuss an alternative theory about health and safety at work, the research was carried out on a Brazilian documentary film about slaughterhouses. This type of research has been well accepted in the context of organizational studies, with multiple opportunities to contribute to this field of study [11,12].

The objective of this article is to analyze the process of work and accidents in slaughterhouses, as evidenced in the Brazilian documentary film *Flesh and Bone*. It is possible to link health and safety issues to working conditions and the exercise of the function [13]. The organization of work, forms of management, and the work environment, have a direct influence in triggering diseases, accidents, and deaths in the workplace [14]. In addition to the legal aspects, Michel Foucault's thoughts on life and government forms (biopolitics) will be the vital in the context of this article [15].

For Zamora, life is “unprecedented, unpredictable, cruel, uncontrollable, a Dionysian party, the pulsation, becoming, desire, movement, body and soul. But life is also captured, manufactured, patterned, serialized, controlled and predictable” [16]. The introduction of the term “but” in the concept of Zamora expresses the eccentric in modern life; life is produced, managed, and entrenched. Life in modernity, as Foucault emphasizes, has been politicized. In the politicization of life is allowed to die, to segregate, and also mutilation a disposal, but also to make it live, use, explore, and increase useful life [15].

2. Methods

The use of audiovisual elements in research is not new, and there is already a branch of studies with methodological and epistemological variations [17–19]. Films and documentaries can often express these audiovisual elements. As Turner [20] points out, films, television, and advertising are means of representations that give the images their cultural significance. He further notes that culture is a process that builds lifestyles of a society where this whole system produces meanings, sense, and consciousness. Turner considers that these elements constitute audiovisual objects of research and “textual” analysis because of its potential representation [20].

This discussion considers that arts are cultural events that allow different representations of societies. Thus, Metz [21] believes that movies are texts opened to interpretation. According to him, the great syntagmatic is best used in narrative films because the purpose is to make even imagery aspects into interpretable texts (dramatic units/phrases). Metz [22] points out that films have three types of codes: perceptive (ability to recognize objects), cultural (recognition of cultural elements), and specific (arising from audiovisual elements contained in the movie) [22]. Although films and documentaries are both artistic and audiovisual events, there are important differences.

Gauthier [23] explores the differences between fiction (invention) and documentary (reality). The author states that a documentary film is actually an approach of “reality,” organized from a project in which filming, setting, and spectral device are capable of legitimacy. There are also purposes involved in the production of a documentary. These purposes, according to Gauthier, go from propaganda investments of imperialist policies to social functions to portray social causes [23]. In the latter case, the documentary becomes a weapon in the service of people. With that stated, *Flesh and Bone* will be the basis for the study proposed in this article.

Produced and directed by Caio Cavechini and Carlos Juliano Barros, *Flesh and Bone* shows the arduous daily work in Brazilian slaughterhouses of poultry, cattle, and pigs. In 2010, Brazil achieved world leadership in beef exports. This strength, however, has generated a negative impact in the work routine of these slaughterhouses. This negative impact is evident in the documentary film context.

Given these considerations, the analysis of this documentary will be carried out from two complementary perspectives: “textual analysis” and “discourse analysis.” Both analyses are produced in the French context. The first analysis (textual analysis), according to Metz [21], must be held from the movie division in dramatic units, connecting sounds and images. *Flesh and Bone* has an introduction, with short accounts of people interviewed and several pictures of the work in slaughterhouses, which allows important insights into the documentary film context. The introductory part of the documentary will be used according to Mertz's technique, dividing it into dramatic and phrases unit.

Next, we will use a discourse analysis in Foucault's perspective, as it has relation to the theoretical framework. Foucault's discourse analysis explores—besides the idea of the said and the unsaid—the discourse as events. Foucault emphasizes that it is important to find the matter to be investigated, that is, the very fact of discourse, which is given from the possibilities of statements (all speeches effectively pronounced) [24]. These are statements that reveal what has been said and what has never been told, which reveal the events on what is or what is not allowed. The construction of the theoretical framework will allow findings on biopolitics and the problems of health and safety at work, from revelations of statements and images contained in the documentary.

3. Theoretical framework

Sievers [25] makes an important discussion about life and death in organizations. This author points out that these issues have been distant from organizational discussions because some see organizations as immortal organisms (that exceed generations). Thus, the lives of individuals are diabolized (from the Greek word *diaballein*, meaning separate, divide, fragment) of organizations. Life in its ordinary manifestation is beyond organizational boundaries, which neutralizes these organizations of negative influences on the lives of individuals [25].

To Sievers [25], organizational theories always emphasize life beyond organizations, the daily lives outside the organizations. Therefore, death is not an event in the organizational context. He also questions: “At what times do we recognize the potential of organizations to generate death?” To which the author replies, we recognize it during tragic events, such as Chernobyl. In serialized or diabolized events, there is no relationship between deaths and organizations [25].

Artaud [26] also states that the epidemic evidence and the lack of control of communicable diseases can put social order in crisis. If the idea of organizations favors this social order, then any traces of illness or death should be discarded. Despite the belief that organizations are separated from death or illness events, Sievers [25] points out that, in fact, organizations are in symbolization (from the Greek term *symballein*, meaning connect, join, merge) with these elements [25]. This shows organizations as creators and producers of death and sickness.

This diabolized dimension makes organizational agents mere bureaucrats. As Arendt [27] pointed out, these bureaucrats are difficult to hate (by analyzing the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem); they are not bloodthirsty killers, but mere “ordinary” bureaucrats. These people, who only fulfill orders, appreciate a well done job. Arendt [27] points out that in today's society there is a “banality of evil,”

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