

Fatalism and occupational accidents: a reading of the experience of injured people from Martín-Baró

Fatalismo e acidentes de trabalho: uma leitura das vivências de acidentados a partir de Martín-Baró

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Abstract

Fatalism refers to the attitude of treating negative situations as inherent to destiny or as outcome of divine will. Considering the fatalism consequences impact in the transformative action and having elected Martín-Baró as theoretical reference, the present article reviewed the nuances of fatalism in the narratives of industrial workers, who reported on the repercussions of work accidents on their lives. From the data of a previous qualitative investigation, conducted through open and in-depth interviews, three interviews were selected whose narratives represented different facets of fatalism. The information accessed was analyzed and categorized, at which time the elements of the experiences that ensured the maintenance of fatalism and the movements of consciousness that, also from experience, challenged conformism and indicated a potential rupture with fatalism were highlighted.

Keywords: Accidents, occupational; Occupational risks; Psychology, social.

Resumo

O fatalismo refere-se à atitude de tratar situações negativas como inerentes ao destino ou como produtos da vontade divina. Considerando suas consequências para a ação transformadora e tendo Martín-Baró como referencial teórico, no

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presente artigo foram analisadas as nuances do fatalismo nas narrativas de trabalhadores industriais que relataram as repercussões em suas vidas, dos acidentes de trabalho que sofreram. Do acervo de uma pesquisa qualitativa anterior, realizada por meio de entrevistas abertas e em profundidade, foram selecionadas três entrevistas cujas narrativas representavam diferentes facetas do fatalismo. As informações acessadas foram analisadas e categorizadas, momento no qual foram destacados os elementos das vivências que garantiam a manutenção do fatalismo e os movimentos da consciência que, também a partir da experiência, desafiavam o conformismo e indicavam uma potencial ruptura com o fatalismo.

Palavras-chave: Acidentes de trabalho; Riscos ocupacionais; Psicologia social.

Fatalism in Martín-Baró and occupational accidents: conformism and rupture

Despite the high number of occupational accidents and Brazil appearing in the world ranking on the subject (Cavalcante, Cossi, Costa, Medeiros, & Menezes, 2015), this is a little-publicized and debated subject in the country. According to the Ministério da Fazenda (2018), 1,177,453 occupational accidents were recorded among male and female formal workers in the period from 2012 to 2016. It is noteworthy that investigators like Cavalcante et al. (2015) point out the possibility that part of the occupational accidents are not reported by employers, which allows us to suppose that the numbers of accidents and deaths are even higher. Cordeiro (2018) points out to the inadequacy of the official categorization of accidents and their consequent underreporting. Legally registered workers who suffer occupational accidents are guaranteed social rights aimed at protecting their integrity, but access to social protection in Brazil is configured as a true ordeal and available only for a portion of the entire population (Mendes, Wunsch, Machado, Martins, & Giongo, 2015).

Understanding which aspects characterized the different ways of coping with the situations that workers experienced after the accidents (Silva, 2018) led us to the concept of fatalism developed by Ignacio Martín-Baró in a seminal article entitled "*O latino indolente: caráter ideológico do fatalismo latino-americano*" (Martín-Baró, 2017)². Therefore, the objective of this article is to present the experiences of workers who suffered occupational accidents in factories and to review the manifestations of fatalism perceived in their reports in the framework of the reading of this important Salvadoran author.

It is worth mentioning that there is a growing interest in Martín-Baró's work, which has produced an important deepening of his contributions, as shown by Lacerda Júnior and Dobles (2015) and Ratner (2015). The same movement can be seen in the understanding of fatalism, as in the work of Martins and Lacerda Júnior (2018). However, in our survey, only one article was found which aim was to establish a relationship between fatalism and occupational accidents (Borsoi, 2005), reviewing such accidents among construction workers, which demonstrates the importance of further studies on the subject.

According to Martín-Baró (2017), fatalism refers to an attitude towards situations that, although extreme, are considered "normal" or "natural", that is, treated as inherent to destiny or as an outcome of the divine will. According to the author, the fatalistic attitude is based on the understanding that fate leaves nothing that can be done, but accepting the life situation as predestined and not insurging against it, as this attitude would be of no use. In fatalism, life is seen as a plight to be accepted with dignity and bravery (Martín-Baró, 2017).

The author stresses that what produces the fatalistic attitude are the experiences in society that reinforce the need for submission to an oppressive social structure. This structure, unequal in its configuration due to

² English edition: Martín-Baró, I. (1996). The lazy latino: the ideological nature of Latin American fatalism. In A. Aron & S. Corne (Eds.), *Writings for a liberation psychology* (pp.198-220). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

the capital-labor conflict, structuring capitalism in all of its historical moments, is ideologically justified through the individual liability of socially produced situations (Mendonça, Souza, & Guzzo, 2016). Thus, the fatalistic attitude emerges from the subjects' experiences in the capitalistic society, since workers are exposed daily to situations that make them believe that efforts to change do not result in favorable outcomes.

The fatalistic attitude, therefore, refers to a set of actions aimed at adapting to social situations, since, according to the author, "historical inevitability becomes more acceptable when the destination is perceived as natural" (Martín-Baró, 2017, p.186). Apparently, even if the situations considered inevitable are socially produced, they are imperceptible to the subjects.

This attitude can be present in all the domains of life, being quite visible in the work domain. In this connection, the worker feels powerless in the framework of situations of exploitation in which he/she is entangled, which prevents him/her to struggle to try to change the social reality or to claim for the social rights guaranteed by law. Thus, fatalism has conformity among its components, and fulfills the function of acting as the foreshadowing of an unfavorable and immutable fate that, when experienced as predetermined, becomes accepted without scrutiny (Cidade, Moura Júnior, & Ximenes, 2012).

It should be emphasized that many social situations and discourses are widely used to maintain the fatalistic attitude among people. Martín-Baró (2014)³ points out that one of the ways often used to justify the exploitation of the Latin American people is the diffusion of the image of the "indolent Latin". The author, when scrutinizing these characteristics attributed to workers, identified as naturally undisciplined, little dedicated to work, lazy and festive, states that this false idea is used as a justification that aims to legitimize the idea of domination of people (Martín-Baró, 2014). The lazy Latin fallacy supports conformity with exploitation, while at the same time making individuals work hard and accept degrading conditions to show themselves different from these socially negative stereotypes.

We can affirm that the fatalistic posture is still very present in the workplace today and, in this connection, the ideas propagated by flexible capitalism, for example, are an important driving force for maintaining the fatalistic attitude (Dardot & Laval, 2016). After all, in the neoliberal new language, the worker is treated as a "collaborator", and he/she should make all efforts to meet the business goals to deserve to be considered a "partner" of the company, offering him/her the promise of a relationship of mutual gain (Seligmann-Silva, 2011), as if they were in a relationship between equals. Those who oppose current forms of work and do not collaborate deserve discredit and a potential exclusion from employment possibilities (Seligmann-Silva, 2011).

The permanent threat of exclusion from work often appears subtly in business actions, but companies also adopt strategies aimed at excluding from the labor market those workers who stand up against unfair conditions. Discrimination by retaliation (Lima, 2011) consists of discriminating against workers who complain or who oppose what is illegal. A concrete expression of this practice is the illegal disclosure of the so-called "black lists" or "dirty lists", which contain the names of the workers who brought labor claims against companies in order to avoid their hiring by other employers (Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil, 2015).

Martín-Baró (2014) found the same thing: Latin workers who unite via trade unions to fight for their class interests and social rights are often coerced through repression. Such a situation, added to the cooptation of some union members by the dominant interests, can cause workers to avoid approaching struggle groups, or even see them as enemies and, by not fighting, they resign to conditions considered unfair. As we will see

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³ English edition: Martín-Baró, I. (1996). The Political Psychology of Work. In A. Aron & S. Corne (Eds.), *Writings for a liberation psychology* (pp.84-102). Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

below, the different ways of coping with occupational accidents reported by workers express nuances that range from conformism to a potential break with fatalism, and allow establishing counterpoints in relation to the conceptual discussion about fatalism in the neoliberal context.

Method

The reports of workers presented below were extracted from part of the collection of interviews from a previous investigation (Silva, 2018) in which industrial workers from different field were included in the investigation because they experienced occupational accidents. For this article, three of these interviews were used, as they represent different facets of fatalism. The participants were retrieved through the investigators' informal network, an intentional survey advocated by Duarte (2012) in qualitative studies, due to the contribution that such sources can bring to the investigation results. The names used here are fictitious, in order to guarantee the non-identification of the participants. It should be noted that the investigation adopted the qualitative perspective that, according to Minayo and Costa (2018), is relevant when the intention is to deepen the understanding of the meaning of the respondents' actions.

The information presented in this article was accessed through in-depth open interviews. According to Simões and Sapeta (2018), these are interviews in which participants can freely talk about their experiences, so that it is possible to understand their facts of life. In the interviews, the workers' life stories were investigated; these are narratives that articulate elements pertinent to the social and psychological universe the subjects went through in their interactions (Nogueira, Barros, Araújo, & Pimenta, 2017). The details of the stories told by the participants can be found along the analysis of the information collected.

For the analysis, the speeches of the participants were understood within the framework of the labor environment that they described, from the work situations and from the social situations reported regarding their relevant life histories. They were also contrasted with theoretical issues about fatalism, as pointed out in the introduction above. From this understanding, categories of analysis associated with fatalism were constructed. It is an analysis based in hermeneutic-dialectical features (Cardoso, Santos, & Alloufa, 2015).

Presentation of the participants and of their occupational accidents experienced

Maria, 49, partially attended elementary school, is a migrant from the interior of the state of *Minas Gerais* and, at the time of the interview, had moved to the state of *São Paulo* 7 years before. At the company where she suffered the occupational accident, Maria was in charge for sifting and frying popcorn sold ready for consumption, as well as passing them through a hot syrup of caramelized sugar. Her activities were carried out with the use of a kind of large wok, with gas cylinders close to the precarious machine in which she worked.

The accident happened at the beginning of the production shift, when she approached the machine and noticed a gas leak. She immediately informed her supervisor and left the site for the repair to take place. Her boss, when informing the release of the machine for production, also said that the machine "cannot be stopped". When Maria started the machine, an explosion occurred and she was hit by the fire and the hot syrup from the bowl. She ran to escape and managed to leave the place alone. She suffered second degree burns on her head and neck. The company provided assistance at the time of the accident, but did not acknowledge the event as an accident nor did they issue the necessary documents so that she could take absence of leave and receive the social security support until she would be able to return to work.

Antônio, 66, was born in the State of *Bahia*, but since he was a little boy he lived in the *Rio-São Paulo* axis. He attended elementary school partially and developed his career primarily in industries, and he

worked most of the time in the same production process and in the same type of machine. As it is a very specific production field, the details have been intentionally concealed to preserve the participant's identity.

Regarding the occupational accident, Antônio reported that he was performing a routine operation and the product itself pulled one of his hands and the fist into the machine, making that part of his body pass through a narrow space between axes. As the machine's safety system did not interrupt its operation, another axis moved up to the height of the worker's neck, almost hanging him. The participant suffered a serious hand, wrist and arm injury and it was recommended, initially, the amputation of his hand – a situation later reversed thanks to his insistence that he still “felt” the hand. The company provided first aid and issued the documents so he could get away from work.

João, 44, was born in the interior of the state of *São Paulo* and worked since the age of nine in different occupations. He finished high school and took a technical course in accounting, in addition to several professional training courses – such as a lathe operator, multifunctional operator and Toyota production system. In the automobile company in which he suffered the occupational accident, he traveled abroad to receive training on the productive processes he developed, he received two promotions, and the last position held was similar to that of a multifunctional operator. He was responsible for replacing the workers in all positions on the production line where he worked, including the leader.

The reported work accident occurred at lunch time, during the working day where a small number of people are present. The line's activities were planned for a staff of twelve, but due to the fact that they had produced fewer cars than the goal set in the morning, he and five other colleagues continued to produce during lunch hour. It was then that a car body caught on the line and he and a co-worker had to lift the car manually. When he placed the car back on the mat, he felt a strong crack in his spine and intense pain, which increased in intensity in the days that followed. João kept working even in pain, for two days, to the point where he could no longer move without using strong medications. João developed a herniated spine as a result of the accident, which the company did not recognize. The company did not issue the *comunicação de acidente do trabalho* (work accident report) and did not provide any assistance for his recovery.

Life situations, fatalism and occupational accidents: the cases of Maria and Antônio

Maria started working very early to help support her family and did not continue her studies. Religiosity is part of her history. In her hometown, she worked at home, cooking and serving meals to truck drivers. When she arrived in the city where she currently resides, she worked for a long time as a house maid and, due to gradual increases in her workday, requiring her to work on weekends, she resigned. Then, she got a temporary job in a cleaning company in another city and, working the night shift, she had difficulties to return home. At the time, she did not report questioning or requesting changes in relation to working hours but asked to be released for leaving too late. After these dismissal requests, Maria was unemployed for a long period, reporting that she was even approved to work in a supermarket, but due to bank problems, the company suspended hiring. She describes this moment with regret, saying that “*it seems to be the person's bad luck*” and that not having a bank account made it difficult to get a job. At this point, it is already possible to reflect on fatalism and its constitution through experiences in society (Martin-Baró, 2017), given that the situations to which Maria was exposed seem to have been lived as in a path without alternatives, to which you have to submit to face the adversities of life.

Receiving in cash and hired as a production assistant in the industry in which she had had an accident, Maria did not report having complained about the very precarious working conditions to which she was exposed, and said that when her co-workers complained, nothing was done to improve the conditions of work. Throughout the interview, Maria described several situations in which she seemed to feel coerced and

humiliated by her supervisor, by the owner of the company and the way the company organized the work, stating that she had become accustomed to working in fear.

Despite this scenario, Maria describes a great deal of involvement with the employer's guidelines, saying that she always tried to work in the best possible way to meet the required standards and to avoid that her work would be the object of complaints or gossip. She said that if the company paid her correctly, she would not question the tasks to be performed and, even when she was in conditions that she deemed unfavorable, she remained dedicated and did not request changes. An example of this was her working hours: she left after 10 pm and reported being very scared to return home by bus. Although, in theory, she could request a change in the schedule, she said that *"it is what God gave me, so I was scared but came. I took the bus and came"*.

Unfortunately, the accident reported above was not the only one experienced by Maria in this company. In a previous work accident, she was compelled to sign a document in which she took the blame for what had happened. It is noteworthy that blaming workers for accidents is a common practice in Brazil (Oliveira, 2007). There are companies that give warnings and punishments to workers who suffer occupational accidents, as well as exclude them after the accidents, as pointed out by Seligmann-Silva (2011). The exclusion pointed out by the author is expressed through moral harassment and disqualification, justified by a supposed reduction in the ability to work after the injury. Butierrez and Mendes (2016), when talking about discrimination against workers who are victims of accidents at work, point out that they are often dismissed after the trial period, as well as being intentionally marginalized, in order to force them to ask to be dismissed.

Maria said she considered that she should have been able to realize that the company did not care about her as she expected, as they took no measures to help her after the accident. In her words: *"I put them as high as I could, I put them at the highest level, doing everything possible and they were not considering me, they had no respect for my work"*. In this sense, there is a certain dismantling of the idea of collaboration (Seligmann-Silva, 2011).

In addition, the participant demonstrates blaming herself for the accident, especially when she believes that she was wrong in fulfilling her production leader's request, even though such an attitude was part of her daily life. More than that, she was immersed in a work context that kept her under constant pressure to meet production goals, permeated by threats and violence. Seligmann-Silva (2011) points out the confluence of elements related to the organization of work in connection with occupational accidents, in which the worker did not demonstrate to be associated with the accident. It should be noted that it happens in a context in which behavioral explanations still have a major influence on accident prevention practices (Simonelli, Jackson-Filho, Vilela, & Almeida, 2016).

Maria, at times, also seems to attribute the occurrence of the accident to her boss, whom she calls "inspector", saying that the accident was due to an oversight on his part. It can be understood that Maria does not see the boss as a member of the working class or as an official who carries out orders, but sees him as someone who personally hurt her. Thus, she ends up attributing to the person the situation experienced and not to the conditions of exploitation present in the social relations of production (Mendonça et al., 2016). However, she continues saying: *"but I am not angry with him (...) I will not accuse him of anything"*.

Although Maria apparently became disillusioned with the company after the accident, even though she did not feel able to work, she tried several times to return to work, something she experienced with great anguish. She reported that the boss was insisting for her to return to work and that she tried, but *"on the first day I couldn't take it (...) I couldn't stay inside, it weighed on me"*. She tried twice more and, in one, the boss accused her of being guilty for the accident. She reported thinking *"I'm not going to stay here"*, and she said: *"Then I went crazy"*. Maria also showed several marks in her body of previous accidents and said that she always had the "courage" to return, but that this time she was unable to continue. At the

same time, since the reality is contradictory, it can be considered that Maria's stance of acceptance is not watertight, since she shows oscillations as to what she thinks about what happened: most of the time, she says she believes the supervisor is not to blame for the accident and realizes the company's negligence, but she says, at other times, that she thinks she should have not accepted the order to turn on the machine that caused the explosion. It is a dilemmatic thought (Billig et al., 1988).

In a new contact with Maria, about a year later, she said that she had been terminated for cause by the company where she suffered the accident. She had not been able to get back to work, apparently due to the trauma and a possible development of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder resulting from the accident. Seligmann-Silva (2011) points out to this disorder as one of the possible consequences of occupational accidents, especially when it is potentially life threatening, such as the explosion experienced by Maria.

The participant said that the company strongly insisted that she go there and, when she did, she was asked to sign a document that, after arriving at home, she realized that it was a letter of resignation for just cause. Faced with this situation, she seemed to regret, but she did not seek to have her accident recognized or reverse the termination, executed illegally during the period of mandatory job maintenance.

Antônio, despite not having completed elementary school, reported at various moments during the interview that his knowledge of the productive process in which he worked was widely recognized by his colleagues, bosses, owners of supplier companies and even by customers. Apparently, his knowledge was an instrument of power in relation to his work, since it allowed him to impose himself in front of everyone when a technical issue to be resolved arose. In that sense, he was quite combative and debated at the same level with all the people with whom he was connected. Despite being combative in daily work, it seems that he avoided approaching collective labor struggles, as he had experienced situations in which companies dismissed employees who participated directly or indirectly in strike movements.

His combative stance seems to have changed after the serious work accident he suffered. When talking about the company, he just mentioned that *"even though I got hurt there, with their machine, they do not assume, they say that they don't have that obligation"*, showing a mixture of acceptance and indignation, instead of the combative stance of yesteryear.

The participant saw his financial situation worsen considerably and, about a year after the accident, he had not yet recovered his previous financial level. According to the labor collective agreement, he would have the right to receive an income supplement, which would prevent him from experiencing any financial distress, but it is assumed that he was not aware of this information, since he always kept a distance from his Union.

In addition to financial issues, the participant reported that when he returned to work, even despite more than thirty years of experience in the same production process, in which he felt profound pride and felt strongly recognized, he started to develop tasks totally different from his experience, in lower status and low complexity activities. The strategy of transferring the injured worker can be understood as a form of disqualification, quite frequent after occupational accidents (Seligmann-Silva, 2011).

Although he acknowledges that the company has not shown concern for his conditions of survival after the work accident, Antônio said that he intends to continue working in the organization. Despite this intention, he believes he will be dismissed after the end of his tenure and considers that this will be his last job, given the physical limitations resulting from the accident and his age. He only expects the company to correctly pay the amounts to which he is entitled. Resigned, he said that, as a survival strategy, he thinks about moving to the northeast region of the country. In other words, the participant was left with the option to give a new meaning to his plans for the future, aiming at what will be possible to achieve after the work accident.

Apparently, the life situations reported by Maria and Antônio can demonstrate nuances of the fatalism expressed in relation to the occupational accidents they suffered. The participants' reports demonstrate passive

attitudes towards the actions taken by employers, both before the occupational accidents, when they occurred, or in the periods after the relevant events. Martín-Baró (2014) describes, as one of the expressions of fatalism, the attitude of acceptance of the conditions of exploitation, a situation in which the worker tends to degrade himself, at the same time as he attributes to himself the responsibility of the unfair situation he experiences.

As pointed out by Martín-Baró (2017), fatalism is built through the social situations experienced on a daily basis, which demonstrate that actions aimed at challenging conditions considered unfair are not successful, in which case conformism is an adaptive way of facing reality. According to the author, fatalism has its origins in the unchangeability of the reality in which people and groups are modeled.

If we take into account Maria's living conditions prior to joining the company, which include difficult childhood, extended unemployment, indebtedness, the precarious work situations to which she was exposed, the relationship with the supervisor and the owner of the company, and the fact that she was treated as guilty in a previous work accident, we can consider that these experiences may have led her to understand that reality is impossible to be changed based on her actions. In addition, the entire unemployed period and the possibility of receiving in cash at this company seem to have contributed to building a feeling of gratitude and, at the same time, submission to the degrading working conditions offered by the organization.

In relation to Antônio, the expressions of conformity in the face of work accidents can be reflected from the weakening of his self-esteem, strongly supported by the recognition of his technical competence. When he was prevented, due to the repercussions of the accident, from working on the activities he mastered, this also seems to have undermined his will in relation to plans for the future. Also it should be added that, in Brazil, the chances of elderly people getting a job are quite limited.

Apparently, the maintenance of fatalism is also associated with the lack of knowledge about the social rights guaranteed to workers. Namely, according to the Ministério da Previdência Social (2016), in the case of occupational accidents, these rights include a better compensation for accident assistance in relation to health assistance, stability for one year after returning to work, as well as payment of labor dues just like working workers. There are still others depending on the professional category, as in the case of Antônio, as previously mentioned. Maria and Antônio, each in their own way, apparently did not know about their rights as injured workers, especially in relation to job stability and financial supplementation. This has the effect of keeping workers in conditions of submission typical of capitalism (Dardot & Laval, 2016; Mendonça et al., 2016), essential to fatalism (Martín-Baró, 2017): when they do not know how to react and struggle for their rights, they stop claiming, keeping employers in a comfortable condition to disrespect the legislation and not to bear the costs resulting from illness.

In addition, it seems that the low education of both, motivated by humble conditions and the need to work since an early age, may have contributed to the lack of knowledge about their rights, as well as the attribution of their misfortunes to God or to an inevitable fate, which appear as a possible explanation, given the uncontrollable situations experienced by the participants.

The reality of exploitation and labor litigation; rupture of the fatalistic attitude? The case of João

Like the stories of Maria and Antônio, João's also has nuances of conformism. After the worsening of his injury and the intensification of pain, he had to constantly be absent from work and went through several sick leave periods, all characterized as sickness benefits with Social Security (Ministério da Previdência Social, 2016). In these cases, the link between injury and work is not considered and the worker suffers the losses, since the company stops depositing taxes related to the employment contract, as well as not receiving benefits and salary increases resulting from labor collective agreements. Despite this situation, the participant tried

to continue working, returning whenever his pain subsided. However, when resuming work activities, the pain returned, since he needed to make movements that were incompatible with recovery from the injury.

Apparently, the strong enchantment he had for the company, especially in relation to its economic power, as well as the possibilities of financial recognition that he experienced, may have contributed to his trying to keep working. However, as we will see below, after being dismissed by the employer, a challenging stance in relation to what he considered unfair can be noticed in his actions; in his history a marked possibility of rupture in relation to the fatalistic attitude developed.

Martín-Baró (2017) states that fatalism is not a homogeneous phenomenon. Found equally in all those who make up the oppressed classes, it has different nuances. It is a phenomenon liable to rupture, since "the seed of rebellion, of refusing an unfair fate, does not need to be sown (...) it just demands to find a favorable circumstance to sprout" (p.197).

Faced with the conditions of subordination to which workers are exposed, Martín-Baró (2014) states that there are three possible responses: acceptance, accommodation or rebellion. The author stresses that, "in each case, the answer changes according to the cause attributed to the state of subordination: to attribute it to the incapacity or lack of effort is something very different from attributing to the justice or injustice of the work system" (p.619). With this in mind, it is possible to understand that João's reactions to the repercussions of the work accident in his life are close to what could be considered a break with fatalism, at least in his individual trajectory.

After a long period of attempts to return to work and leave with sickness insurance, João was dismissed without any justification. He said he was very upset and said to the person who communicated the dismissal that he was *"leaving broken down, I want to make this very clear to you, I came in very well here and I'm just leaving as a skeleton"*. João stressed that he was upset due to having needed the company and not having received any support. The accident was a rupture, not only of João's physical condition, but of his involvement with the company.

João had been dismissed approximately nine months before the survey interview and had just filed a lawsuit against the employer, requesting, among other things, the recognition of the work accident and his reinstatement, as he was dismissed illegally (Ministério da Previdência Social, 2016). Such a suit would guarantee the benefits that he would have received during the period of dismissal and the job stability to which he is entitled to due to the accident.

Although the financial issue was important to him, the act of the company taking responsibility for the illness was even more significant, demonstrating the important relationship between the struggle for his rights and the possibilities of breaking away from fatalism: *"I left there with an injury and it's getting in the way of my future, I think there is nothing fairer than the firm paying for the injury, which was caused inside their facilities. It was my sweat that I gave them"*.

Sometimes he wonders if he really made the best decision when suing the company. He says he was called to work elsewhere, but he is prevented from returning to the job market because of the intense pain he feels. Furthermore, he thinks that if he went back to work, he could cause the impression that he is able to work and be seen as a profiteer for suing the company. He reported having thought long before starting the lawsuit, as he did not want to appear opportunistic, but he reflected on it and concluded that the company took advantage of the fear of people who do not sue the company to reduce costs: *"they sent away fifty 'people' with the disease, if ten or fifteen do not file a suit, it is guaranteed money, if thirty file a suit and out of these, some cases we lose (...) 'it is interest that we are earning, let it go"*. Such report suggests that the work accident experienced by João, apparently, allowed him to start to perceive nuances of the unequal relationships, which are reupdated in labor relations, and on which capitalism sets its basis (Dardot & Laval, 2016; Mendonça et al., 2016).

Since the development of consciousness is a continuous process that takes place in the relationship between man and reality, Clot (2014) based on Vigotski's concepts, emphasizes that consciousness is a movement that "(...) 'emerges' from life. It is one of its moments. But when it burgeons, it begins to define life" (p.126). In the same sense, Martín-Baró (2017) states that the contradictions present in reality allow the movement with reality to bring about new ways of understanding the situations experienced. In this movement with reality, the possibility of understanding the contradictory elements present in everyday experience are available to the subject. In the case of occupational accidents, the same movement is pointed out by Oliveira (2007), who describes how the conceptions about the causality of accidents are modified based on the experience with accidents and concrete changes in the work environments.

Thus, consciousness fulfills its function, which, according to Clot (2014) is to emancipate, through action, the subject of submission to reality. The feeling of revolt described by João demonstrates his understanding that the relations should be reciprocal – the company should take responsibility for the workers, just as it requires them to act the same. It also demonstrates the expansion of his knowledge about the elements that determine work relationships and, when he understands, opens up the possibility of resisting – albeit apparently alone, as he highlighted.

Regarding the relationship between the movements of conscience and the concrete experiences, there was a moment in the interview in which João spoke enthusiastically about a colleague from another company who went through an illegal dismissal and was reinstated after a labor claim. João's decision to sue his company may have been motivated by this experience of success, especially by the feeling of justice achieved that the colleague's report awoke in the interviewee. According to Martín-Baró (2017), in order to eliminate fatalism, it is necessary to live concrete situations in which the action produces changes in the reality experienced and in the future possibilities, which seem to have been witnessed by João.

There are also other elements of his previous professional history that may have contributed to attributing to the social structure the suffering he experienced after the accident: his work as a *guarda mirim* (young officers) at the age of 14, which demanded a better understanding of how the local political structure worked; the activity as a tourist guide, which provided contacts with different social classes and experiences. In addition, he became a friend of the owner of the first company in which he worked, who encouraged him to study accounting and practice his knowledge in the company. Such a situation may have made it easier to understand the employer's duties, workers' rights, as well as the financial functioning of a company, which includes how the profit is produced. Still, the courses attended by João made him aware of the experiences of workers from different origins and companies, which allowed him to expand his knowledge about the reality faced by the working class.

João's movement also seems to have timidly affected other co-workers, who offered to testify in his favor. In this sense, there is another dimension of challenging situations considered unfair, which can cause workers to rally around a cause and are no longer alone in their struggle. However, according to Martín-Baró (2017), for the elimination of the fatalistic attitude, it is necessary to produce fundamental changes related to the historical understanding of the processes of oppression to which people are subjected, to the organization of people's majorities in order to overcome individualism and the construction of class identity. In this sense, João's actions were taken in isolation, involving his colleagues only to serve as witnesses in the labor suit. Thus, his attitude refers more specifically to the change of his own destiny, and cannot be considered an action aimed at changing the fatalistic attitude of the people's majorities.

Final Consideration

Through the analysis of the stories of Maria, Antônio, and João, the minutiae and tensions in different life situations were revealed, expressing fatalism and its contradictions.

Low schooling, ignorance of labor rights, fear of sanctions and unemployment appeared as situations that potentially maintain fatalism. In the same sense, the story revealed by João shows that his life experiences, with regard to education, social and professional contacts, placed him in conditions to perceive, even if partially, the reality of exploitation to which he was subjected.

Another element present in the story of the three participants was the distance maintained in relation to the organizations which function is the struggle for the guarantee of labor rights. Maria and Antônio do not describe the labor Union as a possibility of support for the situations faced after the accident. João, in turn, acted individually to bring the claim against the company. Antônio also reported experiences of repression concerning strike movements, as well as showing suspicion with regard to the employer and Union relationship, a distrust also manifested by João.

This article, besides representing the effort to apply Martín-Baró's reflections on fatalism to the specific case of occupational accidents, offered elements for discussion on these subjects by drawing attention to the fact that the ways of understanding accidents and the actions they trigger are affected by the material living conditions to which workers are subjected. This has implications for accident prevention practices and for the training of managers and union members, who must consider the interference of fatalism in their daily practices and implement, for example, educational measures that allow workers to become aware of the social determination of occupational accidents.

The limits of the investigation described above refer, although it was not its objective, to its circumscription to factory workers and to the fact that it did not address the presence of fatalism in other dimensions of the interviewees' lives beyond the sphere of work. This points to the need of further research in this direction.

It is noteworthy that, in Brazil, in view of the deception measures adopted by companies to weaken collective actions, as can be seen through the approval of the Labor Reform, the possibilities for workers to unite to face the conditions of exploitation are increasingly restricted.

Contributors

J. L. SILVA was ahead of the research design, data collection, data analysis and the manuscript writing. F. OLIVEIRA contributed on the data analysis and the manuscript writing. M. H. BERNARDO was the project supervisor and contributed on the data analysis and the manuscript.

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