

## Original Article

Health and Safety at Work: Analysis from the Brazilian Documentary Film *Flesh and Bone*Luciano Mendes<sup>1,\*</sup>, Heliani Berlatto dos Santos<sup>1</sup>, Elisa Yoshie Ichikawa<sup>2</sup><sup>1</sup> School of Agriculture “Luiz de Queiroz” (ESALQ), University of São Paulo (Brazil), Piracicaba, São Paulo, Brazil<sup>2</sup> 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. Materials and 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 *symbolleîn*, 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,”

which was evident in Eichmann's confession, who considered his role as just one of several actions related to the execution of Jews.

Organizations often drive to a fragmented vision, producing the banality of evil between organizational agents. By marginalizing the negative aspects generated in organizations, we end up producing a series of "ordinary bureaucrats," which eventually causes irreparable problems in society (diseases, deaths, and mutilations) [28]. According to Artaud [26], life is subject to immediacy and utilitarianism because it was "captured" by the power relations.

Foucault's criticism holds the idea that the last human instance, life, went through politicization [24]. Apart from the biological manifestations, Foucault considers that life became part of the discussions and political actions in modern society, which produced a series of actions designed to control life [15]. However, this is not a careful control, but a control of use, production, disposal, and death [29].

Foucault emphasizes the moment before modernity, when power of the principalities was managed from death because the prince had the right to kill his vassals (in case of blasphemy or aggression). These actions generated, according to Foucault, the maximum of the prince's law "to make die and let live." In modernity, this right is changed [30]. With the downfall of the principalities, there was the need for a new organization and management of public property (*res-publica*).

Foucault notes the emergence of theoretical trends, which points out the need for improvement of life quality, urban cleaning, sanitation, and public health [31]. These theoretical perspectives emphasize the proper functioning of society through interventions to increase the population's life. Thus, there is a reversal of the prince's right, because modern duty will be "to make live and let die" [32].

The inversion discussed by Foucault regarding the right to live and die would be no problem if all of these modern actions were not also racist actions [30,33]. Foucault uses the term "racism" very broadly in the sense of segregation or exclusion of a part of the population [31]. The development of the capitalist system has put life in a crucial place for the proper functioning of the system, because a healthy population means increased production, disciplined bodies, and strength in the production process [34]. However, health should only be addressed to the portion of the economically active population [35].

Therefore, it is necessary to remove, control, service, and manage all the problems related to human health of this portion of the active population [36]. Disease is a major malfunction of the capitalist system [37]. Foucault explains that health-related problems generate economic costs for the state and for companies because they limit the exercise of work, causing problems for production and absorbing the financial resources of the state [15].

The integral elements to human health will be effective for this select group of the population, where the strength of the system is most evident and where it is necessary "to make live" [38]. Thus, health initiatives for other groups of this same population will be less intense, marginalized, and less careful, highlighting the "let die" thought [39]. This perverse act underlies the discourse (speech acts and social practice) in modernity. "Biopolitics" and "biopower" create these actions in the context of society [40].

Agamben [41] emphasizes that in modern biopolitics, it is not the sovereign's function to decide who dies without committing suicide, but the sovereign decides on value and disvalue of life. Agamben [41] presents life as a "bare life" in modernity because it holds an emptying of life and an external power over the body.

It is the emptying of life, this valued or devalued life, and power over the bodies that produce the system contradiction [42]. On the one hand, there is the institutionalization of "general code of protecting life in the workplace," synthesized in the form of Regulatory

Standards and, on the other hand, a number of pernicious actions that marginalize these standards in work practices [43]. Life—because it became an element of political aspects—transcended the legal connotations, because it has become a produced, managed, exploited, and discarded life. The ins and outs of this discussion will be explored in their own subtopics.

#### 4. Results

- Documentary film: *Flesh and Bone*
- Duration: 65 minutes
- Director: Caio Cavechini and Carlos Juliano Barros
- Execution: Reporter Brazil
- Production year: 2011

*Flesh and Bone* presents the 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 their work area. Also, given the need to increase production, employees are constantly under psychological pressure for production, repetitive movements, exhausting working hours, and the "extremely cold" environment.

In the first 5 minutes of the documentary, there is an introduction of the main issues, putting into evidence the following conditions: the frantic pace of work, problems with justice, and physical and psychological damage generated from the performance of tasks in slaughterhouses. Thus, this introduction was necessary to conduct a "textual analysis." Table 1 shows what Metz [22] calls dramatic units, which include time division, verbal text, and imaginary texts. The use of image frames is important in the documentary to show the work repetition. This way, the position of the camera shows, over a long period, this frantic repetition of work. The image frames, for example, might show an employee boning a chicken or a group of employees performing the same function around a production conveyor.







This introduction shows the climax of *Flesh and Bone*, a succession of images of still cameras and speeches, connecting employees and former employees "of Brazilian slaughterhouses." The excerpts highlight in sequence: the issue of repetitive movements during the workday routine of work, the amount of products transiting the treadmill (per hour or per minute), the psychological pressure for the production, and the level of attention required.

Still, it is interesting to highlight the second part of the documentary, which deals with the pace and specialization of labor. This second part is composed by the testimony of a tax auditor and a prosecutor's job. The images contained in Table 2 show the moments of gymnastics, attesting to the fact that the exercise session occurs in the same place where these individuals work. Just as in the case of the tax auditor and the boning of a chicken thigh performed by an employee, 18 movements are shown, performed in 15 seconds.

This documentary emphasizes the pace of work, and the first evidence focuses on gymnastics. The first report highlights the issue of having a short time for this activity, and the second report (despite the divergence between the two reports in terms of the time devoted to this exercise) highlights the issue of fatigue created by the intensity of the work involved, where gymnastics do not reflect as a positive practice when it comes to the job. Right after that, there is a testimony of a former employee who speaks about work specialization caused by the pressure to increase productivity. This former employee comments that she joined the company boning three chicken thighs per minute and left the company, after 11 years of work, boning seven thighs per minute. The tax auditor explains how this analysis of time was quickly applied to production in slaughterhouses, in an exaggerated control of the various






**Table 1**

Description of verbal texts and presentation of image frames on the introduction of the documentary

| Time                     | Verbal text: transcript of speeches  | Image frames  |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| Documentary introduction |  |   |
| 0:00–1:00                | (Jingle)   |    |
| 1:00–1:19                | (The jingle sound is reduced, and the voice of a woman is heard saying)<br>Int. 1: "Imagine eight hours at a desk just doing that movement there, moving with arms..."                                 |    |
| 1:20–1:36                | (Soon after, an excerpt of a man speaking)<br>Int. 2: "Every day I came, took the knife, and went to debone. It was pretty much the same thing all day. From the morning until late afternoon..."      |   |
| 1:37–1:50                | (Again, a woman is heard saying)<br>Int. 3: "I had to take cartilage, take the bones of the chest. Sometimes I had to open the chicken in the middle, when it was for export was the entire breast..." |  |
| 1:51–2:04                | (Another woman is heard speaking)<br>Int. 4: "We had to keep the treadmill full and well organized so that the chicken could come out of the oven and go to the packaging..."                          |  |
| 2:05–2:18                | (Another woman reports)<br>Int. 5: "There were some tables with numbers. Each worker had its own number."  |  |





**Table 1** (continued)

| Time      | Verbal text: transcript of speeches   | Image frames  |
|-----------|---|---|
| 2:19–2:26 | (After that, a man is heard saying)<br>Int. 6: "Cut chicken, cut chicken thigh, cut wing, take chicken carcass out"   |    |
| 2:27:2:58 | (Next, an excerpt of a woman saying)<br>Int. 7: "We had to examine all the carcasses. I had to examine something around 3,700 carcasses per hour. So it had to be a precise cut. I had to take bone and meat, could not leave meat on the bone. Had to take the cartilage, could not leave cartilage. Had to take care not to tear the skin." |    |
| 2:59–3:13 | (Another woman is heard saying)<br>Int. 8: "It was per second. It was a lot of chicken! It was a lot of meat. I do not know how to explain to you. I had to fill of those holes 375,000 with meat."   |   |
| 3:14–3:25 | (A man is heard saying)<br>Int. 9: "It was all about production, production, production. You have no idea. Some days they do up to 6 tons of stuffed breast and the managers were not satisfied."   |  |
| 3:26–3:48 | (Another woman speaking)<br>Int. 10: "If you do not pay attention, or if you pay attention on something else, you could not keep up with the job anymore. It was very calculated and you could not finish. I had to lower my head and get the job done."  |  |

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

| Time      | Verbal text: transcript of speeches  | Image frames  |
|-----------|--|---|
| 3:49–4:05 | (Another woman reports)<br>Int. 11: “Look, if a fly landed on our face we could not move our hands. You have to fulfill what they put on the treadmill, and I believe it was about 6/2 to bone a piece.”                         |  |
| 4:06–4:23 | (A man is heard saying)<br>Int. 12: “Because the pace is very fast. Sometimes it is not, but sometimes they sign export contracts of lots of tons and they have to do it! Increases the pace of the treadmill and have to work!” |  |

movements that must be carried out, for example, in the boning of a chicken leg. To complete this part, a work attorney emphasizes that in slaughterhouses, three times more movements happen in a single second than the limit considered safe, established in the Regulatory Standards. So what allows this transgression of the rule? The explanation is in the documentary context itself. The tax auditor speaks about the lack of auditors to carry out the various inspections, which impacts on time (1 or 2 years) in which another inspection will happen. The same auditor notes that the law allows a “gap” in which the payment of 50% of the total value of the fines can take place. Thus, the payment becomes negligible, considering the need for the change in the production process. On the other side of the situation, a former employee comments that when auditors come to the refrigerator to conduct their inspection, they take a long time to reach the production area. Because it is a food industry, these auditors are required to wear special clothing to have access to this area. During this time, there is the possibility of adding people to a specific production process, increasing the temperature in a sector, slowing the treadmill, among many other actions that aim to make up reality.

After 20 minutes of the documentary, the focus shifts to testimonies from several former employees and officials related to labor courts. As the image exposure of these people happens during their statements, working with image frames became somewhat peripheral during the development of this article. However, the statements from the interviewed former employees are the most important, because they evidence the problems generated in the production and management of slaughterhouses. From this point on, the discourse analysis comes into play, in order to understand these statements, and the way they influence the logic of biopolitics and biopower. For this reason, the description of some statements will be complete, just like in the documentary. This part of the discussion brings less concern when it comes to time issues, but the temporal logic of the testimony in the development of the

documentary will remain, which means that these testimonies appear in the context of this article following the chronology (first–last) of the documentary, as shown in Table 3.

After presenting the results, the next topic highlights the discussions on the problems of health and safety at work in *Flesh and Bone*.

## 5. Discussion






Many problems related to carrying out the work in slaughterhouses are centered in the pattern of work. As shown in the documentary, the increase in exports and the expansion of the consumer market began to demand more from employees in terms of productivity. Even with the existence of this higher pressure, the situation in slaughterhouses, as shown in the documentary, is not much different from what happened 10 or 15 years ago. This is because most reports are from employees who are retired owing to disability or have problems related to work accidents and repetitive movements.

One employee noted that the problems caused by the hard work and repetitive movements have affected her post-work hours life [44]. Still, these workers continued to work, driven by fear of unemployment and the need to keep their bodies in good working condition [45]. As Foucault states, body discipline is a discipline for the proper functioning of the system, even if it causes deterioration of the body or affects the ability to produce [46].

Some comments in Tables 1–3 show the harsh reality of the human disposal process that occurs in the context of the production system. The body, according to Foucault, has its useful life and organizations discard it from the time its performance is no longer satisfactory [46]. To avoid this disposal, disciplined individuals resort to adaptations, modifications, and denials of problems, which allow them to increase their utility [1].

**Table 2**

Description of verbal texts and presentation of image frames in the second part of the documentary

| Time              | Verbal texts: transcription of speeches   | Image frames  |
|-------------------|---|---|
| Frantic work pace |   |   |
| 10:20–10:34       | (A former employee comments on the labor gymnastics in a slaughterhouse in the midwest)<br>Int. 13: “We had gym twice a day, but I think it was a couple minutes. You had no time there, you did right there, where you were working.”  |    |
| 10:35–10:49       | (A former employee talks about the time dedicated to physical exercise during working hours)<br>Int. 14: “So we had instructor, right? We did stretching. For 5 or 10 minutes. We stretched, arms, legs, back. We had to stretch before starting the job, but there were days we got there tired. You do not always come to work recovered from the previous day.”  |    |
| 10:50–11:02       | (A retired employee because of disability comments on the pace of work in a slaughterhouse in the southern region)<br>Int. 15 “We started boning three and a half thighs, but after 11 years I was there, every time they demanded more. The more you did, the more they wanted. I've boned 7 thighs per minute.”   |   |
| 11:03–11:35       | (Immediately after, a tax auditor comments on the pace of work in refrigerators)<br>Int. 16: “A simple analysis of time led to the conclusion that if you complete this task in 15 seconds, you do this 4 times in 1 minute. So they've designed for 1 hour to 1 working day. From the point of view of the production, it was not questioned the cost of maintaining the system. For example, the boning of a chicken leg takes 12 cuts in 15 seconds, and 6 other movements. So a total of 18 movements in 15 seconds.” |  |
| 11:36–12:04       | (Then, a work attorney also commented on the impact of the pace of work)<br>Int. 17: “It is extremely common to find workers in the refrigerator sector, doing 80–120 movements in a single minute. Medical studies point out that 35 movements per minute are within a safety standard for workers' health. So we're talking about 3 times more movements in one second than the limit considered safe.”   |  |

**Table 3**Description of the problems of health and safety at work in the Brazilian documentary film *Flesh and Bone*

| Time                               | Verbal texts: transcription of speeches  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Health and safety problems at work |  |
| 22:03–24:31                        | (The statement is from a former employee who suffered from severe pain in the joints)<br>Int. 18: “I was even afraid of getting fired. Because I knew that when people began to take time off work because of health problems, especially for problems related to arms, joints, or spine, they were fired. I was alone and had to work to sustain the children, I did not want a medical certificate. I used to tell the doctor that I had not gone because I wanted the certificate. I wanted to treat myself to ease my pain. Because there was no point in taking time off, but staying in pain. Because at the same time I felt the pain, I knew I had to work as well. I used to get up at 3 A.M. without even have slept. In fact, I lied down and wasn't able to sleep.”  |
| 27:28–29:10                        | (The testimony of a former employee who was retired because of serious problems in the column)<br>Int. 19: “During the time you are there, you serve for them. When you begin to have health problems, you become a hindrance to the company. They find a way to get you out of the group.”  |
| 32:58–37:43                        | (The statement is from a former employee who seriously injured his arm when working)<br>Int. 20: “I had to learn to work again, hold it in a different way to be able to work in order to make a normal day. It is the only profession I learned. I almost had to leave it because of this accident. I do not have much study so I don't have any graduation. I had to support my family, so I had to work with that again. The guy has no choice. When you have no choice, you have to stay on what you know. There's no way. A guy who learned there, it's going to get hurt, all right, but it's his job. It is scary to work again like I did, but so what? It was bad. I got an ugly cut. Then I lost the movement of the fourth and fifth fingers, and even today, I do not have 100% of the movement. There were 120 stitches inside and outside.”  |
| 37:29–41:04                        | (The testimony of a former employee retired because of problems in the column)<br>Int. 21: “The situation is very difficult. The person who grew up working—now I am 48, I would have had much time to work—feel powerless, it is not easy. Look, at times I was not able to move a pan (compulsive crying). Look, to tell you, when I left there, my supervisor threatened me that if I put the company in court, and I had the right, my children would be fired. My oldest son had been working there for 6 months. [...] I often complain about not being able to work, the oldest one says ‘Oh! My mother has to stop thinking about work. She has worked what she had to work. My mother has raised her children, has already done everything for us. Now let us work.’ But I feel bad to stay home. I do not go out in the neighborhood, walk, and drink ‘chimarrão.’ I feel ashamed of not working. I feel pretty bad even being unable to work.”  |
| 46:51–50:25                        | (The statement is from a former employee who had a mangled arm)<br>Int. 22: “The day of the week I do not remember, but the day of the accident, I remember. It was February 18, 1997. Around 7:30 or 8:00 in the morning. [...] I did not go out of the house. I just stood there in the little tent or inside the yard. I put my head out of the gate and was embarrassed for people to see me like that. [...] When this accident happened, I was 26 or 27 years old. All my life I worked in the fields, I was used to develop activity with both arms. [...] The way I walked into the cold room, it had a lot of ice, and the ice went inside my boot. I turned on the machine, went up the ladder to work on the machine, and when I got to the last step I slipped and fell into the machine. I was falling with both arms, but there was an iron on the side, so I held it with one arm. I held with this arm, and the machine took me and pulled me by this arm (silence). The company gave me support during the first few days, and then they left me there. Health plans that we had there, they cut everything. Finally, they abandoned me.” |

In statements shown in Tables 1–3, two issues are clear. The first allows us to understand the discussion that Foucault presented on the theory of human capital [15]. As this employee did not study, he believed he is unable to perform another function, except the one that he had learned. This situation makes it clear that the capitalist system has banned this group of workers from survival, and they live on the “crumbs” of a system that almost generates a situation of benevolence.

The second, which is related to the previous analysis, highlights the biopower system. As Foucault states, this biopower has a cynical practice and is performed by the discourse of the functioning of the system [24]. This practice, evident in the previous testimony, shows that even when the employee is afraid and aware of the possibility of new accidents, this person believes it to be necessary to keep on working despite being exposed to the same risks [13]. This is the perversity of the capitalist system, as contributions to the improvement of the situation are minimal. This lack of humanism in management and organization of production systems also impacts the situation of the people who were retired because of disability.

In addition to the discussions about the centrality at work, the testimony in the documentary attests to the “discard” situation.

This situation, as exposed by Agamben [41], illustrates the value or worthlessness of a lifetime [41]. The employment shows not necessarily the centrality of work, but a level of social utility. In the opposite case, this inutility creates problems of social interaction, bonds of friendship, and leisure. This biopolitics also breaks down this life out of the system [15]. When Agamben [41] takes the considerations of the Greeks on the difference between *zōē* and *bíos*, somehow this is evident in the previous statement. This is because Agamben [47] states that *zōē* is the act of living and *bíos* is the specific way of living. In modern society, this *zōē* was overcome and now integrates the *bíos*. The simple act of living that is not subject to a specific way of living no longer exists in modern society.

This discard situation highlights the idea of “ordinary bureaucrat” discussed by Arendt [47], where responsibilities cease the disruption of the employment relationship. These everyday and demonized situations, as exposed by Sievers [25], are beyond the evidence of tragedies. Therefore, they go unnoticed to the eyes of the society in general. Still, there are problems exposed by Agamben [47] concerning the value and worthlessness of a life, and by Foucault [15] about the existence of distinctions between human groups within the capitalist system, which portrays this group of slaughterhouse workers as human beings deprived of respect and dignity.



The aim of this paper was to carry out an analysis about the process of work and accidents that occur in slaughterhouses, presented in the documentary film *Flesh and Bone*. The construction of the theoretical part of this article occurred from discussions about life and death in organizations, as well as the politicization of life (biopolitics) described by Michel Foucault. The purpose was to make use of concepts capable of encapsulating the problems related to health and safety at work, without restricting these discussions to the legal aspects and the organization of work and production environment. This level of analysis on life and its politicization enabled us to understand that, despite the extensive existing legal apparatus, the actions of prevention and care for life are restricted only to the use of labor and workers. In the analysis of *Flesh and Bone*, the level of utility is evident when people who were injured due to various problems caused in the development of a function, were no longer able to perform their tasks. At this time, there was a real process of workforce disposal, as there was no longer a value to the system. In this situation, the reported problems are as diverse as possible, ranging from self-exclusion from society, a belief held by these injured individuals, to difficult awareness about their uselessness in the economic context—a real-life mortifying realization.

Organizations often allow health damage, mutilation, and workforce disposal, in favor of increased production, sales, and quality control. *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. The “make live and let die” concept will continue to work in maintaining these work processes, despite the need for palliative actions. While these lines of evidence lead to pessimism about the lack of change, they also heighten public awareness, prompt denunciations, and reveal the sad reality behind this system, thereby advocating that the human aspect should be in some way reconsidered in the organization’s management processes.

### Conflicts of interest

No conflicts of interest.

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