

'A wound that aches yet isn't felt [...] a pain that rages without hurting': Getting to know the identity of outsourced housekeepers through the bond of memory and social class

"É ferida que dói e não se sente, [...] é dor que desatina sem doer":
Conhecendo a identidade de zeladoras terceirizadas por meio do vínculo da memória e da classe social

Viviani Teodoro dos Santos¹
vsantos@utfpr.edu.br

Marivânia Conceição de Araújo²
marivaniaaraujo@yahoo.com.br

Marcio Pascoal Cassandre³
mcassandre@hotmail.com

Abstract

Dealing with identities means facing multiple ways of walking a pathway. Each collective, each paradigm, each historical period, carries its own capacity to bring up new perspectives to the theme of identities. Bearing such assumption as standpoint and keeping interest for a collective or occupational identity, we aimed to know identity elements of an outsourced housekeeper group in a Brazilian federal public institution. In order to do so, we used the perspective of memory as an aid in the process of revelation and constituent element of identities, as well as the context of social class to seek the understanding of the reality learned in the field. As methodological procedures, we used a semi-structured interview with the cleaning team supervisor, two focus groups, individual narrative interviews with the eight housekeepers and a brief period of participant observation. The confirmation was that past memories are an essential part of understanding this collective identity and that the group has in common a profession that does not come from a choice based on skills or vocation, but from conditions of social vulnerability. The identity of the group is marked by: dramatic events, however, surrounded by gestures of solidarity; an intense and heavy daily work, marked by the hierarchy of distinctions; and a trajectory that is based on elements such as faith and daily dedication, so that, when playing a role in the system, they need to use conformism as a survival strategy.

Keywords: *Identity. Memory. Social Class.*

Resumo

Tratar de identidades é estar diante de múltiplas formas de se trilhar um caminho. Cada coletividade, cada paradigma, cada tempo histórico, possui em si a capacidade de trazer sempre novos olhares à temática. Partindo desse pressuposto e mantendo o interesse por uma identidade coletiva profissional ou ocupacional, o objetivo deste estudo foi conhecer os elementos identitários de um grupo de zeladoras terceirizadas de uma instituição pública federal brasileira. Para isto, recorreu-se à perspectiva da memória enquanto

¹ UTFPR - Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná - Câmpus Apucarana

² Programa de Pós-Graduação em Ciências Sociais - UEM - Universidade Estadual de Maringá

³ Programa de Pós-Graduação em Administração - UEM - Universidade Estadual de Maringá

auxiliar no processo de revelação e elemento constituinte das identidades, bem como ao contexto de classe social para buscar compreender a realidade apreendida em campo. Como procedimentos metodológicos foram utilizados uma entrevista semiestruturada com a supervisora da equipe de limpeza, dois grupos focais, entrevistas narrativas individuais com as oito zeladoras e um breve período de observação participante. A constatação foi que as lembranças passadas constituem parte essencial para a compreensão dessa identidade coletiva e que o grupo possui em comum uma profissão não proveniente de uma escolha baseada em aptidões ou vocação, mas sim de condições de vulnerabilidade social. A identidade do grupo é marcada por acontecimentos dramáticos, porém, cercados por gestos de solidariedade; um trabalho cotidiano intenso e pesado, marcado pela hierarquia das distinções; e uma trajetória que se apoia em elementos como a fé e a dedicação diária, de modo que, ao desempenhar um papel no sistema, precisam lançar mão do conformismo como estratégia de sobrevivência.

Palavras-Chave: *Identidade. Memória. Classe Social.*

First Verse: ‘Loneliness in the midst of people’⁴

When the word identity appears in the title of a scientific article, many may be the representations that arise in the mind of the reader. With this in mind, first of all, it is necessary to clarify to which notion of identity we refer to. We do not refer to individual or personal identity, as conceptualized by psychologists and psychoanalysts, as “a personal feeling and the awareness of the possession of a self, an individual reality that each of us makes, before other selves, a single subject.” (Brandão, 1986: 37)

While recognizing the importance and pioneering nature of the discussion about identity as an ‘identity of the ego’ (Erikson, 1972), our interest here is on the collective identity, embedded in a specific social context, in a Latin American country historically marked by exploitation. For this reason, the subjects of the present research are women, outsourced housekeepers of a Brazilian federal higher education institution, considered oppressed and subdued due to the accomplishment of tasks of low prestige.

In a context in which outsourcing rapidly solidifies, generating diametrically opposite consequences between organization and worker, it is necessary to think of ways to evidence the existence of these labor relations that are naturalized, but which in fact accentuate injustice and social inequality. Therefore, giving visibility to a group of women with an occupation reserved for workers with low levels of education, living a working relationship marked by difference, is perhaps a way to draw attention to ‘the tensions lived and experienced by so many Latin Americans’ and ‘in how - Latin Americans - are dealing with these issues’ (Misoczky, 2006: 228).

By considering that identity is not only biological, but socially constructed, and at the same time dynamic, plural,

dialogic and discursive, work or professional activity become an element capable of influencing and being influenced not only by an individual identity, but above all by the collective identity of workers. In this sense it is important to reflect on how much the world of labor can interfere in the identity of groups, whether in a relation of post-modern slavery, colonial or capitalist exploitation.

Thus, we intend to answer the following research question: What are the elements that make up the identity of the group of outsourced housekeepers of a Brazilian public institution of higher education and how these elements help them in coping with their pain and discrimination, fostering the reproduction of an unequal social system? Among the innumerable approaches and ways of explaining the different identities, it is fundamental that their contextual characteristic is not omitted. For this reason, the theoretical approaches selected predominantly deal with the importance of historical memory and the class context to understand the identity of the group.

To Martín-Baró (1989), an important name of the Psychology of Liberation, a branch of Latin American Community Social Psychology, the recovery of historical memory is essential both to know the identity roots of a people and to direct it to the future. In addition, the author argues that the denaturalization of the great social narratives involves reflection on the role that the subject plays in the system.

As methodological procedures, we choose the qualitative approach based on the understanding that social research goes beyond data collection since above all in this area, life histories, behaviors, representations and symbolisms should be considered. Therefore, in order to reach the established objective, a semi-structured interview with the cleaning team supervisor, two focus groups, individual narrative interviews with the eight housekeepers was carried out and, as a complement, a brief period of participant observation was carried out with the group

⁴ Both in the article title and subtitles we used verses from Sonnet 11 by Luís Vaz de Camões translated by Richard Zenith.

of housekeepers, where we also kept in touch with the university campus workers dealing with their relationship with the outsourced workers.

This article is divided into five parts besides this introduction. In the first section we look forward to understanding identity roots and memory. The identity and class context are presented in section two. Section three contextualizes the outsourced cleaning service, while the fourth section informs about the methodological procedures used in the research. In section five we brought an understanding of the identity of the housekeepers as a result of the research. Finally, the sixth section reflects on the final considerations of the work.

Identity and Memory: '(...) is a fire that burns unseen'

The study on identities keep different perspectives by the historical time or by the studied paradigm, by the researched subjects or yet by the function attributed to the study. Different researchers in different researches call attention to different characteristics and elements that comprise a group identity.

When discussing cultural identity in postmodernity, Hall (2005: 8) claims that the concept of identity is 'too complex, too undeveloped, and poorly understood in contemporary social science'. The concept itself moves, modifies, perhaps in the same molds as the own identity. Identity nowadays is no longer understood as something fixed, stable, rather, it has been understood as endowed with a certain plasticity, dynamism and flexibility.

In a comparative analysis between 'remaining indigenous people' and 'remaining quilombos⁵ people', Arruti (2001) deals with the impact of Article 68⁶ of the Transitional Constitutional Provisions of 1988 on the reorganization of indigenous and quilombola identities. Here the study of identities receives the category of plasticity, in the sense of how it can be shaped, transforming itself from interference factors, as in this case, state and supra-state political and legal frameworks. Arruti (2001) also discusses different classifications between black and indigenous people and the ways in which they can be analyzed. This plasticity of ethnic classifications is because these boundaries or lines established between these identification labels are not rigid and deserve attention, since power structures are always classification structures that cannot be solved by means of simple recovery of ancestry.

In spite of this plasticity, the study of identities in many occasions is greatly benefited by the knowledge about the histories experienced by certain groups. Whether written or official history, but mainly oral history, experienced by ordinary people

are sources that allow bonds between past and present to be established, in order to understand a particular structure, or elements of identity. According to Santos (1998: 2), 'the sense of continuity and permanence in an individual or a social group over time depends on what is remembered and what is remembered depends on the identity of the one who remembers'.

However, the concept of memory has long been based on individual memory. It was the French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs who came up with the idea that all memory is collective to the discussion of the formation of social consciousness, in the 1950s. According to Halbwachs (2006), not even individual memory is exclusively individual, since no one lives alone, and for this reason individuals construct their memories and memories are always connected to a social group and therefore uses the references determined by society and the memory of other people to strengthen their own. In the author's view, even memories of events or objects that only an individual have, remain collective because they are remembered by others, because in reality, one is never alone.

According to Pollak (1992: 200), there is 'a very close phenomenological link between memory and the feeling of identity', so that memory must be understood as something that transcends psychological individuality and advances to relationships locked in the collective, becoming an element of paramount importance, both for the construction of individual and collective identity, as well as for the understanding of it. In this sense, listening to the reports of the memories of a group, happens to be, to hear about the identity of this group. More than an exercise of listening, it is also an exercise for the speaker, in order to trigger, reorganize and expose what they think is relevant. Candau (2012: 71) states that 'interpretation and re-interpretation constitute the fabric of this act of memory that is always an excellent illustration of the identity strategies that operate in every narrative'.

Moving a step further, the process of retrieving memories from the past, while revealing the roots identity of a group, is also capable of reflecting on the future reconstruction of that identity. The social psychologist, Ignácio Martín-Baró, the main name of Social Psychology of Freedom, connected to Latin American Community Social Psychology, believed that the recovery of historical memory represents one of the main tasks for the de-ideologization of common sense and everyday experience (Martín-Baró, 1998).

In a more critical view, when speaking of minorities, in popular majorities, an ahistorical analysis of identities does not provide the necessary scope for properly knowing issues that are purposely hidden. There are present elements that only past events, whether political, economic or social, can reveal and thus strengthen the struggle of these groups. For Martín-Baró

⁵ Quilombo is a name given in Brazil to places where slaves escaped from the farms during the colonial and imperial period.

⁶ Text related to article 68 about the Transitional Constitution Disposition: 'The remaining quilombo communities that are occupying their land has it recognized as permanent property, and it is the State duty to give them such titles'.

(1998: 301), it is necessary to rescue the roots of one's identity 'both to interpret the meaning of what it is today and to envision alternative possibilities about what one can be'.

Here it is necessary to historically rescue the gender issue in our society, especially as regards the difficulty of accessing women in better paid and valued jobs, making women resign themselves to household chores and the children:

In our mid-tier research (Lago, Figueiredo, & Serafim, 2000), when we asked a woman if she worked, the answer was common: "No, I do not work. Only at home". While domestic work was disqualified as nonwork, unpaid, functions in the "public world" were overvalued, like "out" work, in return for pay or salary. (Lake: Souza, Kaszubowski & Soares, 2009: 357).

In this sense, it is important to emphasize that individual or collective memory should not be understood only as memories of the past, through which one can have access to people's life histories, but understood as an integral part of identity, whether by events lived or inherited. Hence, historical memory, besides being an access and at the same time an integral part of identity, can also be understood as a key to rethinking one's identity, leading individuals and groups to exercise their capacity for change.

Identity and the class context: 'It's counting your defeat a victory'

A naive conception, such as the one that believes professions are so varied, as gifts people receive or carry themselves, does not seem to explain the social reality of certain groups, especially the most vulnerable ones. Thus, it is important to explain that the understanding of the reality found in this research field will be widely supported by a concept of identity that surpasses the bond of social class, the context of the capitalist system and the role that the subject occupies in this system.

The discussion of identities, in addition to the cultural aspect, addresses the social aspect, the cultural and social aspect are mixed in the process of building identities because they are inserted in the context of a capitalist system. As much as it is criticized for not explaining identities alone, the class context assumes significant importance in different realities.

The Negro issue in Brazil, for example, besides the discussion of racism of origin and racism of 'label'⁷ - term introduced by Oracy Nogueira (1985) - was also thought about through the socioeconomic route by several authors, such as Florestan Fernandes, when stating that 'the interaction of race and class exists objectively and provides a way to transform the world, to engender a raceless and classless libertarian and egalitarian so-

ciety without race and class domination' (Fernandes, 1989: 12). In this sense, a perspective that considers only the racial aspects unrelated to a social class discussion, is incomplete and can contribute to the maintenance of social inequality.

It is worth noting that the effects of the myth of 'racial democracy' (Fernandes, 1965: 304), which, inspired by statements such as those by Renato Ortiz (1994: 41), 'we are a democracy because our mixture has generated a people without barrier, without prejudice', in fact represents a way to cover up racial conflicts and at the same time conceal a reality and prevent changes from occurring and unbalance the system.

For Munanga (2008: 77), the myth of racial democracy exalts the idea of harmonious coexistence among people from all social layers, 'allowing dominant elites to conceal inequalities and prevent members of nonwhite communities from being aware of subtle mechanisms of exclusion in which they are victims in society'.

In this sense, when studying a group of people, who present biological, belief, cultural, gender, political, or occupational factors, the class context in common can help giving meaning to situations lived by the group. Because one must remember the contextual character of the investigation of identities, since 'oppression and prejudice have multiple faces that must be tackled in an articulated way, avoiding reductionist pitfalls' (Misoczky et al., 2012: 261)

Woodward (2008: 9) points that identity is also relational, an identity depends on another identity that it is not to exist, and therefore 'identity is thus marked by difference'. The author believes that identity, is not only relational, but also linked to social and material conditions, in which the social and symbolic are necessary for its construction and maintenance, and its conceptualization requires an examination of its classificatory systems that can show how the relationships are organized and divided between 'we' and 'they'.

Woodward (2008) argues that these classificatory systems are based on the fact that marking the difference happens through symbolic systems of representation and social exclusion - a uniform, a national flag or smoked cigarettes - being able to divide a population into at least two opposing groups. These social and symbolic systems produce classifying structures that end up giving meaning and a 'certain order to social life and the fundamental distinctions - between us and them, between the outside and the inside, between the sacred and the profane, between the masculine and the feminine - that are at the center of the systems of meaning of culture' (*ibid.*: 68).

Therefore, the understanding of identity goes through the social and symbolic context, which makes one think of how much this is connected to the role that this individual or group plays in the system.

⁷ From a sociocultural perspective, Oracy Nogueira distinguishes brand racism and origin racism. Using Brazil as an example, the author understands brand racism as that which is linked to the physical appearance (phenotype) of those who are discriminated and as racism of origin to the one that discriminates according to the group that the individual has ancestry, as is the case of racism in the United States.

However, as a result of the distribution of these roles and their unfair economic determinations, poverty and marginality appear, and a culture of poverty with it, in which 'the poor learns to be poor and thus sets up their personality in a peculiar process of socialization to the interior of the culture of poverty that guarantees its permanent failure before the established system' (Martín-Baró, 1989: 85).

In this sense, through this psychosocial view, it is possible to think how much this structure of power established for the maintenance of this system is capable of interfering in the individual and collective identity. Hardly in dealing with job-related identities and professional 'choices', the class bond could be omitted. There are elements that make up the identities that are linked to this structure of power, as is the case of the attitude of submission or conformism.

According to Martín-Baró (1989), there are several forms of psychosocial explanation of conformism, such as: conformism as a personality trait (authoritarian personality - Freudomarxism); as a product of group pressure; as an assumption of a social role; and as a daily act of obedience. Regardless of the explanation, the vicious circle of conformism generates fatalism, which can be understood as an adaptive mechanism, a strategy of survival, that allows the group to subsist under unfavorable conditions, in an established system of exploitation and social domination, for example, referring to God the determination of one's destiny. Fatalism, therefore, 'it fulfills a primordial function of unquestioned maintenance of this oppressive system' (*ibid.*: 161). In this sense, it is necessary to emphasize how much the conflicting focus of class membership is a determining condition so that identity, when recovered by historical memory, does not assume a fatalistic and conformist condition of reality.

In the midst of this diversity of elements, gender discussion also plays a prominent role. However, it is not productive that these elements are seen in a departmentalized and hierarchical way as if there were one more important than the other. For Hill Collins (1993), when it comes to oppression, it is necessary to think of the categories of analysis - race, class, and gender - as distinct but overlapping structures of oppression, since comparisons and hierarchizations work as a dangerous competition for attention, resources and theoretical supremacy. Therefore, the idea here is to understand the identity of these women as an association of elements, which because they are connected to each other complex combinations are revealed, going beyond the capacity of the particularized analyzes.

Identity in the context: 'It's staying loyal to your killer'

Housekeeper as an occupation, also named as cleaner, or cleaner assistant, has attributions alike maids, however they take place in a commercial environment. Mainly women are in charge of housekeeping. In Brazil, in 2011, from 6.6 million working with housekeeping 6.1 million were women, which rep-

resents 92.6% from the workers (DIEESE, 2013). Both sociological and economical perspectives point that housekeeping has its origins in the colonial slavery.

According to Biavaschi (2014), after the abolition of slavery in 1888, many slaves remained in the farms, other searched for some kind of occupation, always devoted to subaltern activities, consolidating, then, the exploration cheap labour force, remarked by inequality and social exclusion. According to Safioti, 'the end of slavery determined the housekeeping as employment, although the huge number of girls remained working at family homes in charge of housing and food, as they were house chicks' (1978: 36). Therefore, if the abolition supposedly disconnected the work relation between owner-slave, it did not break the ownership feeling, even in the transformation of black into free workforce. So, daughters, granddaughters and great-granddaughters of women slavers searched for a sub existence source for themselves and for their families, soon became in majority, maids (Brites, 2013).

Throughout the 20th century, household work became the largest source of female work, because families could count on a type of 'hired help', in which a helper was sent by its family to other house as in a transition in between their family house and marriage. Historically, paid housekeeping is the entrance to illiterate and professionally inexperienced women in labour market (Melo, 1998). This also represents the entrance to rural-urban women who find housekeeping as 'the way to socializing in the city' (Castro, 1982).

Melo (1998:125) points that 'paid housekeeping is an occupation pocket to female workforce in Brazil because it is culturally *women's place* and accomplishing these tasks does not demand any qualifications. Besides, Melo states that:

Housekeepers work are not only an external buy and sell work-force relation, but it is also a lifestyle. Housekeeping is women's responsibility culturally defined from the social standpoint as housewife, mother and wife. Such work driven too activities of family consume is a personal service in an exercise in which the woman internalizes the ideology of serving others such as husbands and children. (1998: 126)

Giving women an occupation without qualification requirements such as domestic service is quite convenient for the maintenance of a narrative that detracts from the capacity of the woman in relation to the man, whether in the cognitive, physical aspect or availability of time. In this sense, this disqualification of women's work is both the fruit and the seed of a historically unequal power relationship.

It is important to remind that in this study besides housekeepers, these women are also outsourced workers, that is why the importance of contextualizing the group also in this aspect. Not only Brazil, but also other countries in Latin America, have experienced political and economic crisis that serve as rationale to decrease public policies in favor of minorities and to impose measures that transfer the onus to population in general, in or-

der to make the life of the working class more precarious. If these countries have historically lived with social inequality, which carries poverty, violence and exclusion with them, these crises end up potentializing misery and at the same time functioning as a legitimate motive for a conformist attitude among the poorer classes.

Just as the government transmit this loss to the population, which is not only financial, the organizations also transmit the losses suffered as a result of the economic crisis to the worker. In this capitalist logic, the market that functions as an invisible yet powerful hand, together with neoliberal political strategies, articulate and operationalize a setback in the history of achievement of the rights by the working class, as it is the case of Law Number 13.429 (2017), sanctioned by Brazilian President on March 31, 2017, which amends provisions of Law Number 6.019 (1974), which enables temporary work and labor relations in the company to provide services to third parties.

This Law, which now officially allows that in addition to the activities-means, the end-activities of a company can also be performed by an outsourced company, which has been considered by the media as beneficial to the workers and the country, actually contributes so that the condition of the worker is increasingly vulnerable. In short, it is a setback that makes the working class precarious both in terms of materiality and subjectivity.

Antunes and Druck (2013) define the field of outsourcing as first and second workers category, as the door to a form of work similar slavery, where both the contracting company and the workers themselves discriminate, contractors directly and 'third parties', whose name already demonstrates distinction due to its external condition.

With regard to outsourcing in the public sector, discrimination is reinforced by Normative Instruction n. 02 (2008), which deals with the contracting rules for outsourced service by public agencies. In article 10, item I, it prohibits the public servant, classifying as an act of interference, 'to exercise the power of command over the employees of the contractor, and should only refer to the agents or persons responsible for it, except when the object of the contracting to provide direct service, such as reception services and user support'. The main objective of this and other similar rules is to prevent the establishment of a relationship between outsource employees and institution employees that may in some way characterize employment agreement and bring future losses to the institution.

Another aspect that also deserves attention is the fact that in the public administration, the companies that provide services, have their contracting mediated by a bidding process, ruled by Law number 8.666 (1993), which in its section II of art. 57 determines that, if found to be an advantageous condition for the administration, the contract may be renewed for up to sixty months, therefore the contract is initially made for 12 months and each year the possibility of renewal is studied. However, it is not common for companies to remain in these sixty months for various reasons, but mainly because of the contracted value gap. These frequent exchanges of companies generate

a high turnover among employees and also worker's insecurity, since the end of the contract can also happen - bilateral or unilateral - due to the company's failure to pay workers salary or the company loss of fiscal regulation, for example.

Finally, the concern with the consolidation of the outsourcing practice goes beyond subjective aspects such as the difference between effective and outsourced workers, it refers above all to the loss of rights historically won by the working class and that despite every effort of the government to camouflage these losses, they have been quite present in the daily life of these workers.

Identity and research: 'It's being enslaved of your own free will'

The subjects of the research were outsourced caretakers from a public institution of higher education located in the southern region of the country. Qualitative research was composed of different techniques so that they could complement each other and give the research a sensitivity and a honesty, as required by social research.

We selected two focal groups, the first aimed at presenting the research objectives as a way to encourage the participants, one of the researchers shared her own professional history with the housekeepers group. The second focal group was organized after the individual narrative interviews so that some shared aspects could be discussed, as well as issues that were not raised during the interviews.

Besides, a semi-structured interview took place with the housekeepers' team supervisor and eight individual narrative interviews. In order to complement the narrative interviews and the focal groups, a short period of participant observation took place, focusing on the relationship between the housekeepers themselves, with the institution employees, and in the relation to the group with their own professional identity.

There were ten visits to the field, with about thirty hours of contact and 76 pages of transcription, including interviews, focal groups and field notes about the group experience. The housekeeper's names remained in secret and replaced by different combinations for Maria, this is because in the institution where the research took place, this was the most common name, including its combination, in the role of housekeepers in the past five years. It is important to remind that these names can also be understood as a sign of the religious influence in the day to day life of these women, always linked to a sacred reference, showing resignation, dedication and acceptance to God's will.

Just to make the translation process easier, the women speech was carefully corrected, because we wish we could keep them as they were told, as a way to value popular discourse, as we understand it as a communication means as valid as the formal discourse and also we would not like to deprive the group, the language spoken by the group should also be understood as an embedded element of its identity.

I am...very proud of being a housekeeper: 'A passion that gains when lost in thought'

The relation between identity and memory was something that stood out significantly in the research, so that it would be possible to think that even if the perspective of memory had not been planned methodologically it would appear in the same way because, without activating these memories of the past, it would be difficult to know the identity of the group, confirming Pollak's (1992: 200) statement that there is "a very close phenomenological link between memory and the sense of identity."

In this specific group the age average is 45, most of them have at least three children, all of them with incomplete basic education. Most of them are from rural areas, and at early age, in between eleven and fourteen, started working as baby sitters, maids, or taking care of elderly people, sometimes inside the farms where their parents worked. The old recollections reveal that because of unfavourable socioeconomic conditions they started working not only to complement the family income but many times they were responsible for the family main income source. Even when the first job was not related to housekeeping, difficulties in finding jobs in their area, as in the case of Maria de Lourdes, who worked in commerce and industry area, and Maria Aparecida, primary school teacher, which took them to cleaning services in order to overcome financial necessities: 'I took what I found, it was hard, I needed to come back to work and I took what came up' (Maria de Lourdes). 'At that time, I needed a job, things were very tough in my mother in law house, my husband was unemployed, it was the opportunity I had right, so I accepted it' (Maria Aparecida).

The professional histories are remarked by dull work, women face double or even triple working shifts, with chores that demand physical force and disposition. In a specific dynamic, when asked to choose words that best represented the group, the words were faith and dedication. It was not for nothing that 'dedication' was the second word the group selected to represent its own identity.

In the narratives the words caprice, determination, gift and love were often used. From eight housekeepers, four have already worked in two different roles or shifts in the same job - day and night, factory and employer's home - and were still responsible for their own household chores: '*When the boss had a baby, I stayed with her for a year, day and night. In the afternoon I would just go home to make food, to wash the children's clothes and came back. During the day children stayed with my sister-in-law and at night with my husband*' (Maria Auxiliadora).

Cleaning is an important concept for them, inside and outside the workplace: '*Dulce (a leading employee) is Maria da Luz's apple polisher (housekeeper) but take a look at her sector, so grimy*' (Maria das Dores); '*When I went to the municipal pub-*

lic contest, it was at School X, when I got there I already noticed how the floor was, the desks, you have to see how clean it is there, it makes one proud, the tables are very clean, the floor too, everything' (Maria of Fátima).

They are attached to cleaning and are willing to break the rules and afford financially, despite the low salary, so that the service is performed in a better way, as it is the case of often taking cleaning products and work tools of better quality than those provided by the institution, or because they are missing, such as squeegees, cleaning cloths, kerosene, disinfectant, or even taking towels and carpets from the institution to wash in their homes: '*I tap the rugs and carpets with mine*' (Maria do Rosário) referring to carpets of the institution that she takes home to wash as she does not have an adequate place or structure for such service. Love to work? Facilitating one's own work? Small resistances? Maybe all the alternatives? Or any of these?

A common characteristic in the group are the stories loaded with moments of financial difficulties, family problems, cases of violence, illnesses, accidents at work or traffic. Five of the eight housekeepers have already resigned, at some point in their careers, to take care of family members with health problems, in one case, more than once.

However, gestures of solidarity between relatives, neighbors, and also the bosses themselves, who are always remembered with gratitude, are almost as frequent as the tragic moments. Bosses who lend money without interest and without payment deadlines, who lend furniture, who install debts in stores, who advance payments by buying medicines for relatives, who help in health emergencies, among others. These are stories marked by generous friendships and material favors. Such social bond reminds us of Halbwachs (2006), who works with the idea that nobody lives alone and that memories are always linked to a social group: '*When my husband burned his hands and I had to take care of him, we had no income. He was not an official employee, he received nothing. We counted on the support of his family, his friends*' (Maria das Graças).

When Woodward (2008) states that identity is relational, marked by the difference between 'we' and 'them', it is easy to relate it to the outsourced group. The fact that they do not belong to the effective structure of the institution, and are vulnerable to the exchange of companies, besides the fact that they perform a function considered of low complexity and have considerably lower salaries, leave outsourced workers, in what can be called a situation of exclusion. Perhaps not exclusion by the employees, but a social and professional exclusion caused by the public regiment itself and by Western capitalist culture.

Although outsourcers - also men in other activities - are invited to the institution's events, participation is not very significant. According to the supervisor, participation increases when, in addition to the formal invitations, they end up being invited personally by employees, in the corridors of the institution, for example. These social and symbolic systems, which according to Woodward (2008), produce the classificatory structures, can be perceived in the words of the housekeepers - 'the people from

above'; in the issue about uniform, which will be discussed in the sequence, and even in institution spaces where there is silently a kind of marking between employees' space and the outsourced spaces, the same also happens with the use of utensils.

Extending this difference to a broader discussion, one moves into the class context. When analyzing the profession exercised by these women, it would be extremely naive not to link their stories to the role they play in the system, a functionally marginalizing system. When Martín-Baró (1989) states that belonging to a class is what generates the action of the subject and that a system is maintained thanks to the predetermined routines for each role, it is possible to visualize the daily life of these women, and more than that, the professional trajectory of these women, as if they were immersed in a kind of pre-established order so the system can work properly.

Maria das Dores herself can explain it better: *'Each one has a profession, right? If everyone followed one profession, what would it be? Is not there rich and poor people? If only rich people existed, who would wash the dirt of the rich? They do not want to wash their dirt.'* In view of the different justifications used, it is possible to perceive a profession that is not part of a personal choice, the stories point to paths that have been guided by an invisible hand, understood as 'the Life', 'the Will of God', and so on.

When Munanga (2008) argues that the myth of racial democracy ends up dissimulating inequalities and preventing awareness of the mechanisms of exclusion, it may also be possible to relate it to the hierarchy of professions. The repeated speeches, even when witnessed at this institution, about the simple worker, the cleaning worker, or outsourced worker are as important as the other positions of the institution, they can also be considered as subtle mechanisms that help to conceal the reality, since, in terms of importance, the work performed is at the same level, in the salary issue, however, the difference is quite significant. The wage of other positions in the same institution, for example, can be more than twenty times greater than that of a housekeeper. In that case, considering that in the capitalist view it is the money that attributes or does not attribute value to things, it might be more honest, if not so pleasant, to assume that other positions have, as the wage difference shows, much more importance than the work of an outsourced housekeeper. This importance supposedly attributed to all positions can be understood as one more of the narratives, like a myth, that blunts and silence the weaker side.

Although all the interviewed women categorically claim to be proud of the profession and have never been ashamed of it, some signs point out that, publicly, it would be preferable if their profession was not revealed, such as the fact that the option, and sometimes denial, to wear the uniform outside the institution: *'But we get dressed and come all dressed up (laughter), when we come here we put on our uniforms, then we become a housekeeper (laughter)'* (Maria das Graças). *'After you leave here no one says that you cleaned the floor'* (Maria da Conceição). *'Do you think? God frees me of going out with this shirt on the street, or getting a bus with this shirt?!'* (Supervisor, reporting fact). This mixture of

pride statements and hidden attitudes of the profession may perhaps recall some of the plasticity of the classifications, or of those mobile lines established between the identification labels, as Arruti (2001) states that they are not rigid or fixed, mainly because they are linked to structures of power.

Regarding the group's conception of the factors that lead people to practice different professions, they consider that formal schooling is decisive, but that the gift and plans of God also count. At this point it was common to note a feeling of guilt - a feeling that is also present in other points in the narratives - because they were not able to work harder, to study more and thus to get better professions: *'Ah, I think it depends on the person. If someone is inclined to study, if they want to study, to invest, then everything becomes easier, then they get another job, a good job. Now, that neither myself, I do not care much about studying, then they need to stay ...'* (Maria do Rosário).

As for their future plans, when questioned if they wanted to stay in the profession until retirement, six of the eight said yes, always referring to the difficulty of taking another path at that point in life. Despite the harshness of the stories, the attitude was always one of gratitude to God for the profession and opportunity. Faith was a key element for the group, with the word dedication, faith was chosen in the first place to represent the group. During the reports the religious and spiritual experiences that sometimes justified the situation and gave them strength to continue the journey were always present, in summary the will of God is used as justification and strength to proceed. That's what happens to us, wake up early, have the routine, wear the yellow shirt (laughs) and have to give thanks to God. We have to like what we do "(Maria de Lourdes).

These positive and gracious speeches that appear soon after the report of something painful or unjust deserve attention. It is as if the memory first exposed the fact, interpreted or reinterpreted, but as soon as a hard and unjust reality is verified, soon a self-relieve is necessary, by means of phrases that mix gratitude and acceptance. These attitudes perceived in the group can be understood as typical attitudes of conformity and fatalism, which Martín-Baró (1989) treats as an adaptive mechanism, a strategy of survival, that allows the group to subsist under unfavorable conditions in an established system of exploitation and social domination, for example, by referring to God the determination of their destiny.

It is important to emphasize here the exercise of memory that is practiced throughout the report of these women. Reports that are not only oral expression, but also opportunity for reconceptualization, reflection and reconstruction. Recalling that for Candau (2012: 71), "the interpretation and reinterpretation are the plot of this act of memory that is always an excellent illustration of identity strategies that operate throughout the narrative."

These reinterpretations, in addition to revealing identity strategies, can also be part of a historical rewriting for these women since, according to Martín-Baró (1989), revisiting memory serves not only to understand who is, but also who can be.

'But if it's so self-contradictory, How can Love, when Love chooses?': an endless end

It is not a simple task to talk about a group of people who besides the profession have different roles to play in society. Therefore, far from concluding or generalizing, this research presents aids to understand identity that goes beyond internal or psychological lived experiences. It is possible to notice that the discussion about a collective identity, permeates the roles the subjects play socially, as woman, mother, wife, housekeeper, outsourced, householder, catholic, among others. It also goes through the context in which such group is part of.

They are women with low income, low school degree, that started in the labor market too young, not because of choice. They did not choose to be housekeepers because of vocation, gift or parents wish, and even less attracted by the wage.

They started working too early, unanimously moved by the financial need, because of the paid housekeeping, thus as Melo (1998) points out, it is the entrance to the labor market for women with low school degree and without professional experience.

They are women who self-identify as caretakers, because they are those who care, care for, dedicate themselves to something or someone, because that is a virtue they carry in the name. A group in which the gestures of solidarity are recurrent in their narratives. A solidarity that can be understood as giving or domination, because one is the sharing between people of the same social class, and another is the sharing between employer and employee for example. While the former may assume a character of exchange or reciprocity, the latter may reveal an interest in maintaining domination.

If there was a possible perspective in this study to see how women occupy the place reserved to them in the system, in the group's perspective they judge they need to 'thank God' because they are outsourced, that they necessarily need to like what they do, after all they did not make enough effort, they did not dedicate to study and now they need to be grateful because, their work is so important as any other else, and besides all the economic crisis, they are privileged because they still have an official job, being outsourced is just a detail.

These stories are not only personal, they are collective stories, shared by people who play social and economic roles, who carry out their mission protected by divine justifications and by the contentment necessary to maintain one's own mental and physical health. Citizens who conform to the degradation of their own rights once the country is in a "strong economic crisis", who find in the guilty a form of self-responsibility for the vulnerability of the history itself and thus not wage war with anything and no one, because they are focused on living, or rather, surviving.

It is important to highlight that when such conformist and individualized attitude is reproduced in big social narra-

tives and contribute to keep exploration and social injustice so remarked by the historical exploration Latin America has lived. It is necessary to think of ways of showing such types of reality, placing them in a bigger context that is historical, cultural, social and geographically placed, which makes it different from other societies.

To sum up, we found out an identity marked by excluding difference - we and they; rich and poor; employees and outsourced -, not only because of a local attitude, from the institution but a social attitude, at the same time silenced, dissimulated in the day to day symbolism, and revealed by the truth of numbers, in the financial-economic aspect thus a social and cultural attitude. Professionals are grateful to God since the moment they get up, they deny to regret, women that are proud of their profession, but they prefer to deny it in public.

It was exactly because of this mixture of pain and joy that the article presented verses from Sonnet 11 by Luís Vaz de Camões, in order to provoke over this contradictory nature of love, reason blindness, surrender to something stronger. The anger that remains is related to which extent bright and sacred terms are useful to cherish and soften the pain are not useful to silence, resign, blind the reason and make the state of things in these women lives and of many other Latin-American that assume the consequences of social inequality as a lifestyle remain the same, happy and pleased, because this may be a good alternative to face life and make it even more painful: 'A pain that rages without hurting'.

References

- Antunes, R. and Druck, G. (2013). 'A terceirização como Regra?', *Revista TST*, 79 (4).
- Arruti, J. M. A. (2001) 'Agenciamentos Políticos da 'Mistura': identificação Étnica e Segmentação Negro-Índigena entre os Pankararú e os Xocó', *Estudos afro-asiáticos*, 23 (2).
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0101-546X2001000200001>.
- Biavaschi, M. B. (2014) 'Os direitos das trabalhadoras domésticas e as dificuldades de implementação no Brasil: contradições e tensões sociais', *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES)*. São Paulo.
- Brandão, C. R. (1986) *Identidade e Etnia: construção da pessoa e resistência cultural*. São Paulo: Brasiliense.
- Brites, J. (2013) 'Trabalho doméstico no Brasil: questões, leituras e políticas', *Cad. Pesquisas*, 43 (149): 422-451.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0100-15742013000200004>.
- Camões, L. V. (2009) *Sonnets and other poems*. Translated by Richard Zenith. University of Massachusetts: Dartmouth. Adamastor book series, 3.
- Candau, J. (2012) *Memória e identidade*. São Paulo: Contexto.
- Castro, M. G. (1982) 'Qué se compra y qué se paga en el servicio doméstico? El caso de Bogotá', in: Léon, M. (ed.). *La realidad colombiana*, v. 1: *Debate sobre la mujer en América Latina y el Caribe*. Bogotá: Asociación Colombiana para el Estudio de la Población.
- DIEESE (2013). 'O emprego doméstico no Brasil', *Estudos e Pesquisas*, 68 : 1-27.
- Erickson, E. H. (1972) *Juventude, Identidade e Crise*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar.
- Fernandes, F. (1965) *A integração do negro na sociedade de classes*. São

Paulo: Cia Editora Nacional.

Fernandes, F. (1989) *Significado do protesto negro*. São Paulo: Autores Associados.

Halbwachs, M. (2006) *A memória coletiva*. São Paulo: Centauro.

Hall, S. (2005) *Identidade cultural na pós-modernidade*. Rio de Janeiro: Dpfta Editora.

Hill Collins, P. (2015). Rumo a uma nova visão: raça, classe e gênero como Categorias de Análise e Conexão. In: Moreno R. (org.). Reflexões e práticas de transformação feminista. São Paulo: SOF, Sempreviva Organização Feminista. p. 13-42.

Instrução Normativa nº 02. (2008). Ministério do Planejamento, posted 30-04-2008. [http://www.cjf.jus.br/cjf/cjf/controle-interno/fique-por-dentro/InstrNormSLTI_02_2008.PDF/view].

Lago, M. C. S., Serafm, C. N., & Figueiredo, M. G. (2000). Gênero, gerações e subjetividades na Grande Florianópolis. *Paidéia* (Ribeirão Preto), 14, 197-209. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0103-863X2004000200009>

Lago, M. C. S.; Souza, C. D.; Kaszubowski, E. Soares, M. S. (2009). Gênero, gerações e espaço doméstico: trabalho, casa e família. *Paidéia* (Ribeirão Preto) 19 (44), 357-366.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0103-863X2009000300010>.

Lei nº 6.019 (1974). *Presidência da República*, posted 03-01-1974. [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/leis/L6019.htm].

Lei nº 8.666. (1993). *Presidência da República*, posted 21-06-1993. [https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/Leis/L8666cons.htm].

Lei nº 13.429 (2017). *Presidência da República*, posted 31-03-2017. [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2015-2018/2017/lei/L13429.htm].

Martín-Baró, I. (1989) *Sistema, grupo y poder*. Psicología social desde Centroamérica II. San Salvador: UCA Ed.

Martín-Baró, I. (1998) *Psicología de la liberación*. Madrid: Editorial Trotta.

Melo, H. P. (1998) *O serviço doméstico remunerado no Brasil: de criadas a trabalhadoras*. Rio de Janeiro: Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada IPEA.

Misoczky, M. C. (2006) 'Voices of dissent and the organization of struggles and resistances'. *Ephemerá*, 6 (3): 224-239.

Misoczky, M. C., Camara, G. D., Cerqueira, P. R., and Coto, G. C. (2012) 'Orientação sexual, classes sociais e territórios de resistência: os conflitos em torno do Centro Nova Olaria em Porto Alegre'. *Gestão e Sociedade*, 6 : 254-279.

Munanga, K. (2008) *Rediscutindo a mestiçagem no Brasil: identidade nacional versus identidade negra*. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica.

Nogueira, O. (1985) *Tanto preto quanto branco: estudo de relações raciais*. São Paulo: T.A. Queiroz.

Ortiz, R. (1994) *Cultura brasileira e identidade nacional*. São Paulo: Brasiliense.

Pollak, M. (1992) 'Memória e Identidade Social', *Estudos Históricos: teoria e história*, 10 (5).

Saffioti, H. (1978) *Emprego Doméstico e Capitalismo*. Editora Vozes, Petrópolis.

Santos, M. S. (1998) 'Sobre a autonomia das novas identidades: alguns problemas teóricos', *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, 13 (38). <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0102-69091998000300010>.

Woodward, K. (2008) 'Identidade e diferença: uma introdução teórica e conceitual', in: SILVA, T. T. (Org.). *Identidade e Diferença: a perspectiva dos Estudos Culturais*. Rio de Janeiro: Vozes.

Submetido: 20/08/2018

Aceito: 12/09/2019