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Memory, Emotion and Trauma: puzzling over narratives of institutionalized childhoods

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Abstract: The paper discusses how memory, emotion, and trauma are intertwined. Departing from classical psychoanalytical approaches, we challenge the classical concept of trauma by considering the phenomenon of understanding. From the perspective of the Sociology of Understanding by A. Glaeser, we bring to the fore the relationship between memory and understanding as phenomena that play out over time depending on the social relations. Because of that, emotions are reframed through emotional regimes playing a central role in self-narratives constructions. This discussion is based on qualitative data (ethnography, netnography, and biographic interviews) collected from former inmates of a correctional institution of children in the countryside of Brazil.

Key words: Sociology of Understanding; Sociology of Emotions; Sociology of Memory; Narratives; Total institutions

Introduction

Psychoanalysis has a lengthy tradition of discussing the (im)possibility to remember these highly emotional events that may become a trauma. Since Freud, the argument that "trauma" is the opposite of "memory" has been kept within traditions that consider psychoanalysis. Some studies based on Neurosciences) that accept psychoanalytical assumptions (Bohleber, 2007) are prone to link emotions, neural discharges, and trauma. Although classical psychoanalytical texts stress the importance of the patient representation of trauma, it lacks in-depth analysis of the relation among the original event, its representation, and its understanding. Somehow, these three factors are essential to understand memory. Although they are tightly entangled, we must differentiate them to understand (as we will observe from our empirical data) how we can "remember" tough emotions that, from a psychoanalytic standpoint, could form traumas instead of memories.

In this paper, we discuss the remembering of though events happened in the childhood of boys who grew up in a correctional institution. We will present a theoretical discussion that departs from classical approaches from Psychoanalysis and ends on a social perspective to understand the relation of memory and though events. The empirical data was crucial to beacon this discussion because we went back and forth between theory and data for building the analysis. As part of a concluded Ph.D. thesis, the

data collection proceeded over five years of qualitative research (biographical interviews[1], ethnography[2], and netnography[3]) in the rural area of São Paulo, Brazil.

As we will observe, memories are processes, and the understanding build on that is possible because of social interaction. The more they remember, the more the puzzle of the past is getting complete. There are layers of what is said which is progressively unveiled, mostly because the impact that emotional events have in their narratives. There are places where some matters are discussed and others where they are silenced. The way they remember harsh or disquiting episodes of their childhood, what they can remember of it, how they make sense of these experiences, and which understandings prevail over others are explored in this paper. In conclusion, we present a social perspective of memory that considers the role of narratives, identity, and emotional regimes.

Social and Historical Background

In works such as "Punishment and Discipline" (1995) and "The Eye of Power" (1990), Michel Foucault presents a new conception of power, which silently ramified in what he calls "disciplinary institutions" in the 1800s. These institutions order the space, the time, the movements of who is subjected to them. Foucault draws some features that encompass these institutions (schools, prisons, asylums, factories, others), such as welcome rituals, sifting movements, divided spaces, controlled schedule, depersonalization, and other mechanisms that deploy discipline.

These institutional and disciplinary realities have been part of many Brazilian young people. "Street kids" meant being institutionalized at an early age at the beginning of the 20th Century. During the Colony Period (1500-1815), wealthy families sheltered abandoned, poor, and bastard children. Under a concealed philanthropic façade, those children were early introduced to domestic labor. Catholic charities also used to receive abandoned newborns by the "wheel of the exposed1." After abolishing

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[1] Biographical interviews have been used in Sociology since Znaniecki and Thomas (2012 [1918]) that shed light on biographies as a rich sociological source in The Polish Peasant. Since then, many traditions have applied this kind of methodology (Schutze, 2008; Bertaux, 1981; Rosenthal, 1993).

[2] The former inmates organize twice a year a Gathering in the city where the institute was placed. Most of them are scattered throughout Brazil. I attended the Gatherings from 2016 to 2020.

[3] Netnography is a term coined by Kozinets (2015) to characterize making ethnography in online environments, such as Facebook. Kozinets argues that reading the posts and interactions. We followed and analyzed (simultaneously to the in-person ethnography) Facebook's interactions over five years (2015-2020).

slavery in 1888, the Proclamation of the Republic in 1889, and the growing urbanization, the number of street kids considerably increased mostly because of the marginalization of black children, who were not integrated into the Brazilian society. In the late 19th and early 20th, the term "minor" emerged, tying "children and adolescents" with the idea of "delinquency." The term "minor" emerged to characterize homeless or wandering individuals under eighteen years old derogatorily.

In 1893, a legal act authorized the foundation of a new configuration of an institution called "correctional colony." At odds with prisons, the correctional colony (built-in an Island) enclosed people deemed "bummers" who wander around the towns. In the first moment, both children, adolescents, and adults led to these institutions where they had moral education and forced labor. In 1902, a new law founded the Disciplinary Institute for Minors. The new model of the institution was focused on sheltering abandoned and wandering children and adolescents. The inmates received formal education and were obligated to partake in agricultural and technical work. The disciplinary purport organized the institution's space and time: collective accommodations, school education inside the institution, and forced labor. The Disciplinary Institute was a total institution, "a place of residence and worked where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period, together with lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life" (Goffman, 1961, p.11). More precisely, the Disciplinary Institute is an example of the first group (five in total) of total institutions depicted by Goffman (1961): "institutions established to care for persons felt to be both incapable and harmless; these are the homes for the blind, the aged, the orphaned, and the indigent" (p. 16). Besides the Disciplinary Institute, a whole organizational architecture was assembled to recruit, screen, and intern these children and adolescents.

During the 1940s, some Agricultural Institutes for Minors were founded throughout São Paulo State in Brazil. This paper explores the "rememberings" and understandings of former inmates who lived together in a specific Institute in the city of Batatais, the rural countryside of São Paulo State. The Institute sheltered circa 440 male children and adolescents ranging from seven and to eighteen years old. These boys could be under state custody due to various reasons kindred to either vulnerable situation, such as parental abandonment, wandering around the streets, family's shortage of material resources and brittle psychological conditions, or the commitment of petty crimes. These Institutes were ruled by the Code of Minors of 1927, which defined that every child or adolescent in a "non-regular situation" must be enclosed in the Disciplinary Institutes. The intra-familial violence was common in environments of poverty in Brazil during the period of the upbringing of these children (from the 1950s to 1990s), as told by Uta in a conversation in April 2017, "at that time, my father trashed us three times a day, in the morning, in the

afternoon, and the evening." In a conversation in December 2016, the former inmate Deu[4] also narrates a similar familiar context, "I was raised in an environment of prostitution and crime."

These boys were born in unprotected, vulnerable, and violent familiar contexts. They joined a governmental Disciplinary Institute after parental alienation and had to compulsorily depart when reaching eighteen years old without any economic and emotional support. Lacking familiar ties, many adolescents sought jobs related to the abilities they acquired in the agricultural or technical labor within the Institute.

Some of them tried to find their relatives and/or to build their own families throughout their lives. Years later, facing the absence of any trace (picture, institutional records, affective objects) and any relationship related to their youth, they sought to reconstruct their past. Around 2012, some former inmates of this Institute set up a network on Facebook. The lack of information about their past and the willingness to reconstruct the connection with the past stimulated them to create Facebook pages and groups related to the Institute. Through the pages and groups, other inmates quickly located this network. Twice a year, they gather in Batatais to strengthen their ties, show pictures of their past, and share remembrances and narratives about their upbringing. These gatherings in Batatais are surrounded by the landscape where they grew up, which affords interactions differently from the virtual world.

The first former inmates who find each other belonged to the first generation to dwell at the Institute in the 1950s. They remained living in Batatais and surroundings. Thus, they could connect through a former employee they mutually know. Swiftly, they were also connected to the daughter of the former Institute's Principal. She left the town in the 1970s, his father died, and after years, she was interested in recovering the "history and memory" of the Institute for unknown reasons. The first gathering in 2012 was small; no more than seven people joined it. After creating pages and groups on Facebook in 2014, other generations of former inmates joined the community, and across the years, the annual gathering has gotten bigger. Through Facebook and face-to-face gatherings, they slowly started telling stories about their past, conveying some pictures and other records of that epoch, and discussing happenings.

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[4] We used code name for all the quoted former inmates. Their narratives were collected during their annual Gathering in Batatais, during interviews with me and in their Facebook posts.

Remembering and representation

Since its foundation, the Sociology of Memory (Halbwachs, 1994 [1925]) has been struggling with the Freudian statements on memory. The Freudian psychoanalysis argues that highly emotional events are stored as isolated elements in the unconscious. He has a simple model for memory in which, on the one hand, the consciousness integrates and stores "copies" of the past; on the other hand, happenings that overcome the psyche's threshold are repressed (*Verdrangung*) to the unconscious. This displacement to the unconsciousness forms a trauma. In this regard, trauma is an anti-memory because the unconsciousness stores images' representations, which can not have a discursive representation. The past images stuck in the unconscious work as strange elements that keep repeating (*Sachvorstellunge*n) in the hope of tying themselves to the Ego (Freud, 1990 [1920]). The consequences of this repression, the compulsion of repetition, updates the traumatic experience, which remains not understandable across time because they do not achieve the possibility of linguistic representation. Linguistic representation is the exclusive realm of consciousness. Repetition is the opposite of re-elaboration, and memory relies upon re-elaboration. The traumatic happenings entail successive repetitions, which may appear as lapses, slips (*Verpresrechen*), and screening memories (*Über Deckerinnerugen*).

What we have permissibly called the conscious presentation of the object can now be split up into the presentation of the *word,* and the presentation of the *thing*; [...] the latter consists in the cathexis, if not of the direct memory-images of the thing, at least of remoter memory- traces derived from these. We now seem to know all at once what the difference is between a conscious and an unconscious presentation. [...] the conscious presentation comprises the presentation of the thing plus the presentation of the word belonging to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone. [...] A presentation that is not put into words, or a psychical act which is not hypercathected, remains after that in the *Ucs.* in a state of repression (Freud, 1914, p. 3022).

In this sense, there is an unconscious system that mimetically absorbs scenes, images, and impressions. By repeating the past impressions, these mimetic elements are not organized by the ordinary common language, but by a kind of private language that enables a representation that is inconceivable to convey through language. Although it is a representation, it is a non-linguistic and repetitive representation, hence inelaborate. The re-elaboration itself relies on social and shared language (Wittgenstein, 2001 [1953]). Some modern neuroscientific theories would translate Freud's memory theory in terms of declarative memory and non-declarative (or procedural) memory. In this sense, a

traumatic episode would be converted into a nervous tic, body reactions, or simply disconnected flash images.

However, observing the former inmates' narratives, it is evident that they can remember and express stressful, highly emotional, or shocking events that caused suffering. They can clearly remember and narrate psychological, physical, and moral violence and other events related to abandonment and fear. In a conversation, Uta remembers and narrates a shocking event.

> It is a remembrance that hit me. I can not forget. A steel wire beat me, and it broke in against my feet. It goes without saying the name of the guy who did this. If I met him nowadays, I would say it! It was Mr. Naza! Done! I said it! I can not forget. Simply because I peed in my bed, he beat me with a steel wire. I can not forget because the pain I felt after that hindered me from walking (Uta, conversation, April 2017).

Therefore, in which sense Freud's arguments are not accurate or not broad enough to explain these phenomena? Firstly, there would not be anything like unconscious processes within the brain. According to the neuroscientist, Michael Gazzaniga's observations about patients with the split-brain condition, wherein the communication between the right and left hemispheres of the brain are lost, both hemispheres of the brain are conscious, but the only one can work with language. In this sense, the so-called unconscious processes we do have in our brains are "co-conscious but non-verbal" (Gazzaniga, 1985, p.117). In normal brains, the information is communicated from one hemisphere to another and consequently put into words. It explains why former interns, regardless of the stressfulness of the events which caused suffering, could express them.

The idea that the unconscious has a private language turns into a paradox when faced with Wittgenstein's argument against private language. Given that the unconscious mimetically absorbs the situation which broke the psychological threshold to form a trauma, it means that the trauma cannot change by itself. In other words, the private mimetic image cannot change without an external factor. However, if we can express anything about this so-called traumatic experience, for instance, during a psychoanalysis session, it means that the trauma is not private but public. Otherwise, anyone cannot understands one's inner experience. If it is public, it means that there was no mimetic absorption by the unconscious, but the experience was translated into language. Conversely, let us assume the mimetic assimilation indeed occur; there is no way to bring it to the public and one's consciousness; following Wittgenstein, if we can think about it, we can talk about it[5].

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[5] The problem of thinking that a private language is really a language, i.e., that can be understood by others, the private language could be translated to a public language "we might then find a way of translating this symbolism into the language of ordinary speech, ordinary thoughts." If that is possible, as Wittgenstein concludes, "the

Secondly, besides the empirical data, some recent works show that shocking events that cause further suffering become memories with the same ontological status as regular memories. Shocking events' memories "do not differ from others remembering processes in substance," instead these memories are "codify with priority and, in general, they are kept in greater detail, with higher accuracy, for a longer period" (Bohleber, 2007, p. 163).

If we accept that, we must seek another explanation for the formation and consequences of trauma, which is not merely an overly intense experience that surpasses one's psychological threshold and cannot be re-elaborated as "regular" remembrances. In this sense, trauma seems not to be an issue of memory and linguistic non-representability.

Trauma and understanding

Sandor Ferenczi, a Freud's colleague, has a broader approach to trauma than conceiving it as instantaneous repression to the unconscious due to its emotional overload. Instead, for him, a shocking experience[6] that causes suffering just turns into trauma when it is not understood. In this manner, the formation of trauma is pretty contextual depending on the background of the "traumatized individual" and the event. Ferenczi works with the case of a child that after suffering, aggression cannot understand what happened. Since the event is shocking, unexpected, beyond the infant's everyday experience of the world, he/she cannot discursively understand it - although we may suppose that the child could have an emotive understanding of it (Glaeser, 2011). The relation of discursive understanding and the universe of possibility's of someone is well expressed in Wittgenstein's first book, the Tractatus, "the world is my world: this is manifest in the fact that the limits of language (of that language which alone I understand) mean the limits of my world" (Wittgenstein, 1922, 5.62). In other words, the limits of the conscious experience rely on language and discourse. By definition, it relies on the social environment linked to one's language.

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translation ought to be possible both ways" (Wittgenstein 1982, p. 6). We know that it is not always the case. Dreams are a sort of language for Freud. In this sense, according to Wittgenstein, "It ought to be possible by employing the same technique to translate ordinary thoughts into dream language. As Freud recognizes, this never is done and cannot be done. So we might question whether dreaming is a way of thinking something, whether it is a language at all" (1982, p. 6).

[6] According to Ferenczi (1929), there are three potentially traumatic situations: terrorism of suffering, incestuous seductions, and passionate punishment.

Seeking to make sense of the experience, a child would call upon someone he/she recognizes as an authority to help him/her to understand discursively and validate/ acknowledge what happened. By ascribing social credibility to the infant's experience, the authority certifies the experience was not a hallucination or a fantasy (Ferenczi, 1931). If the authority does not acknowledge what the child report, the event lacks sense; thus, it causes suffering. This is a common situation, especially regarding unexpected situations that happen with children. During an interview in September 2017, Tom pictures the relationship between an authority and a possible discredit. Telling about the sexual abuse of a caretaker against a very young inmate, Tom states:

> I can imagine how painful for a child to be forcibly riped. Can you imagine that a child is raped by a motherfucker, and the child can not say anything? Because the employee or the principal wouldn't believe in the child, they would not trust or do anything for the child.

As we saw above, the formation of the trauma and its psychic suffering happens whenever the authority does not validate the event, denying that the event took place or the infant did not understand or misunderstood what happened; the infant is then discredited. The trauma would be the suffering of this incomprehensible and invalidated event. Trauma is not formed in the realm of remembering but in the realm of understanding. Ferenczi affords the interpretation that trauma is not an anti-memory but suffering which comes from meaningless. By this token, such an event could be represented and thus re-elaborated in the future, even though it lacks a proper understanding of the present.

Consequently, when the traumatic episode is remembered in the future, it will tend to be disconnected from further explanations, judgments, or evaluations. Studies show that these remembrances are expressed without any discursive sophistication, such as metaphors, allegories, exaggerations, and all the figures of speech. When we are under an intensely emotional situation, we have a better remembering performance, especially regarding the core features of the case because of the activation of the amygdala. According to Bohleber (2007), the higher the event's details, the fewer explanations external to the event are required.

The lack of understanding detaches these remembrances from the intricate narrative arches. We can observe, for instance, that these tough remembrances are not integrated into the oral life stories. They come to the fore when asked; they emerge without any precedent explanation; they appear when asked for it. This means that the former inmate remembers what happened; however, they still could not account for it; they could understand how these events can become part of their life stories. At the end of the in-depth interviews, when asked, the tough remembrances emerged abruptly:

Researcher: *What is the worse and best remembrance?*

> *Luca: {silence}. I think that the worse remembrance is when... I ... I got beaten... without knowing why. If somebody asked me 'why did you get beat?' I would answer, "I do not know'.*
> *Luca's wife: Have you ever told me that? Is this the episode of the telephone?*
> *Luca: No, the telephone's case is another case. That wasn't nice at all too. But at least at that time, I knew why I got beaten. I was in the kitchen helping the cooker, and it was pretty noisy. The stove asked me to take the tomato sauce. I could not hear him. I said, "whaaat?". "Come here," he said. "I asked for the tomato sauce, but never mind, I can get it. I am not your brother; you must respect me". And then he beat both my ears* (Luca, in-depth interview, June 2017).

The idea brought by Ferenczi is that the un-understood event would entail post-traumatic disorders. Nonetheless, both events could cause suffering. Both afford to remember, and the traumatic one is always opened to be understood over time. In this manner, the so-called traumatic event that causes suffering is remembered, but it remains not fully understood, and this is one of the mains sources of the suffering. In the following excerpt, we can notice that along with other elements, there is a literality of reproduction of the speech:

> There are things you can not forget. My mother accused me of raping my sister without any proof or evidence. I was just one year older than my sister. I read that in my institutional records. Based on what did she say that? This hurt me because I clearly remember that she grounded me. She took my clothes and left me naked in front of everybody passing by the tenement house where we lived. I was nine years old, naked, in front of everybody. It is unforgettable. It shocked me. Until today I haven't understood yet (Tom, in-depth interview, May 2017).

Rembembering and Understanding

We can remember different sorts of things, for instance, where our house is located, the name of a historical personality, our fifth birthday party, the day of a medical appointment, or the afternoon we were robbed. Some of these things pop up in mind without leading us to a laborious work of making sense of them; others keep drawing our attention for years-long leading us to constant understanding processes. We would probably revisit these five things and try to carefully understand the robbery's episode that likely linked to a peculiar and relevant emotion to us. More than that, this sort of episode tells something about who we are, what we know, and how we perceive the world. Aside from that, the name of a historical personality does not afford multiple understandings, such as the robbery episode. Thus, remembering biographical episodes does not draw a representation of the past but puzzles over the episode to understand it.

Remembering and understanding are intertwined in many ways. Firstly, both are processes actualized in and by the present moment. They are conscious processes and discursively expressed that though they process crossed and constituted by emotions and perceptions. Nevertheless, they are entirely

independent, once there are remembrances disconnected from understandings, and there are understandings without remembrances. When it comes to life stories, both appear in an unremitting interplay. Whenever we say "I understand something," I mean I can ascribe "meaning to an event, a person, an object, or a representation of the past."

Schütz widely explored the relationship between remembering and understanding. For him, the memory is a succession of retained presents, and we can only make past experiences meaningful by an act of re-experiencing them in the stream of consciousness. According to him, "meaning is nothing else but the attitude of the experiencing mind towards its past experiences" (Schütz, 1976, pp. 61-2). Thus, for him, we would understand only what has already happened. It entails that there is no mediated relationship between what we lived and what we remember. In this scenario, the explanation leaves no room for a collaborative or supported process of remembering, as we have been arguing for here. The role of others' remembrances is only an external knowledge that has its correspondence in one's subjectivity. Otherwise, such external knowledge would not trigger or support anything in us at all. If other's remembrances play merely the role of triggers, Schütz theory faces a significant difficulty. Anything external that has any correspondence to what we have in our retention's horizon would trigger such retention to the present.

Consequently, any experience could be brought to the fore since there are no social criteria that organize the remembering process in a sociological phenomenology. The subjective life would be a feedback loop of turning "pasts" into "presents."; thus, experiencing is re-experiencing.

Besides these questionable theoretical assumptions, there is no methodological way of analyzing remembering processes because memory becomes enmeshed with our present experience of the world. Schütz ends up having a non-analytical approach to memory. Also, in order to overcome the solipsist tendency of his subjectivist theory, Schütz has to rely on the concept of Lebenswelt, which is a storage of meanings socially shared. Lebenswelt. It is hypostasized storage of meaningful contents related to shared experiences sedimented (Schutz, 2011). This idea has been widely problematized because it supports a fallacy of misplaced concreteness (Whitehead, 1929). More than a conceptual issue regarding the lifeworld, this is a social ontology issue in which the social experience creates a world secluded of the directly experienced social reality and social reality, which is on the horizon of direct experience. The former is the Umwelt, the world of our actual circumstances, whereas the latter is composed of the social world is divided into the world of the predecessors (Vorwelt), the successors (Folgewelt), and the contemporaries (Midwest). Schütz conceives the social ontology hierarchically as a layered structure in which the understanding merely draws from the storage of meaning contained within the lifeworld. If the

remembering dynamics entails a complex interplay between social relationships, mind, and artifacts, should not the understanding process be much more complicated than stated by Schutz?   Besides that assuming a Schützian approach, two issues come to the fore. Firstly it becomes impossible to explain how intersubjective meanings are deposited in the Lebenswelt and how they may change. Secondly, the memory becomes utterly undistinguished from experience. Because of that, Schütz approach to remembering and understanding cannot be taken as historical-sociological, instead only as "phenomenological- constitutive" (Muzzetto, 2006, p. 7). In other words, Schütz's theory can only be descriptive.

Alternatively, the sociology of understandings provides a much more refined and sophisticated approach. It enables the independence between the remembering and understanding processes; it presupposes a processual ontology and an interplay between individuals themselves, media, and objects.

Glaeser (2011) proposes that how we perceive the world are the same modes that frame our interpretation: the linguistic mode, the emotive mode, and the synaesthetic mode. Language, as we have said, is the most primary means by which we understand the world. Symbolic systems are the complete ways of framing our multiple and rich experience of the world. On the other hand, emotion filters the world basically in terms of rejection and attraction from a repertoire of feelings. The synaesthetic mode filters the world through the senses, the way we move, we smell, we perceive the colors. From these three modes, we filter the world, and from them, we build our understanding of the world.

Glaeser calls this understanding of the world that guides our actions and is realized in it. This process is always a result of our constant interaction with the environment, and therefore it is situational and procedural; that is, it transforms itself over time. We convey the assigned meaning that can be shaped, negotiated, affirmed, or weakened. These "degrees of certainty" that an interpretation about something can acquire are called "modes of validation" (Glaser, 2011, 2014). The modes of validation of understandings are mechanisms that lead to the adjustment (or not) of certain understandings about knowledge of the world, including past knowledge. Therefore, we have validations by resonance, corroboration, and recognition. Resonance occurs when an understanding of something is "consistent with our other knowledge of the world, our desires, and our values" (Glaeser, 2011, 25). This resonance or coherence between senses can also happen by comparing the senses themselves attributed over time. Unlike the memory in which the course of changes of a rememoration cannot be verified, only with the necessary materialization of the same. It is possible to recall different understandings about the same object, but it is impossible to produce and recognize different memories of the same object.

The inmate was spanked, and they were called as "shit communists" or "terrorists." I could not understand anything. At that epoch, I associated the word "communist" with "holy communion" preached by the priest of the mass I used to attend.
(Sese, testimonio at São Paulos's Congress, ALESP, 2013)

Sese manages to retain memories of distinct understandings, in which he did not understand what the "communist" swearing he received during the beating meant, and later, he came to understand what the term communist meant. In their speech, the closest association was communion, an everyday experience since the former inmates were obligatorily attending the church every weekend.

In this way, when it comes to the recollection of the past as the source of the maintenance of the identity (maintenance of the self over time), a resonance of meanings over time would lead to identity coherence. On the other hand, fragmentation of the self can happen when we attribute very different meanings to the same event passed over time. The corroboration of an understanding occurs when tested (put in place in the world) and is successful; that is when "understandings become validated because they are seen repetitively useful guides to achieve what we wanted to accomplish." The traditional empirical test of a scientist, for example, is a validation mode by corroboration, since the empirical reality will show if that is correct or not; "understanding and world seem to melt into each other" (Glaeser, 2011, p. 25). Talk about the photo paper.

Moreover, recognition by recognition happens when an individual who has some authority (which is always contextual, since a person can play a role of authority over one subject and not over another) agrees with him. Thus, there is a legitimation, a recognition of it. Authority may be, for example, someone who has a certain reputation with a particular audience, who has a symbolic, financial, or prior status in a particular social space - the whole idea of the E*stablished and the Outsiders* (Elias, 1994) relies on an authority (or a balance of power) based on an anteriority in a social space. We do not care about or take all the approvals/disapprovals and beliefs of others seriously, but only from a few people. So there are people who exercise authority over others in specific circumstances, so we are always embedded in authorities' networks. Within this network, we check our understandings "to give us confidence in our ways of ordering the world" (Glaeser, 2011, p. 25) in order to internalize or transform them, depending on the positive or negative external validation.

The strengthening or weakening of an understanding transforms our interpretation of the world since it gives more or less importance to certain aspects of it and creating new interpretations. Consequently, an understanding will guide our actions in the world, to what we react to and what we engage. One has understandings of different aspects of life. In the case studied, the understandings refer to tough experiences lived during infancy. Thus, understanding what has gone is mostly a self-

understanding that plays a central role in the constitution of one's own identity. "The understandings are not necessarily separated from self-making" (Glaeser, 2011, 221).

The network of inmates as a space of weaving understandings on the past

The formation of this "network" of former inmates started in April of 2012 when the former Institute Principalr's daughter and a former inmate managed to gather some former inmates and one former employee back in Batatais. At that time, Chacha was looking for his childhood's colleagues while the Principal's daughter was trying to recover the "history and memory" of the Institute. As a Psychologist and academic, she has started research about the model of care and assistance employed by the Institute. Chacha and the Principal's daughter are about the same age, their purposes converged, but their motivations were not the same. She wanted to bring back the memory of the Institute formally, whereas Chacha (and the other inmates) sought for a "family reunion." The gatherings kept happening year after yearly in Batatais.

From 2013 up to this year, the gathering became a big reunion of everybody who had some relationship with the Institute. Most of the employees have already died, so just very few of them attend the meetings. The former inmates (with their wives and children) represents the majority of the participants. The Principal's daughter, however, kept attending and organizing the gatherings, bringing other members of her family, especially her mother who is a former teacher of the Institute. Every year, she organizes a formalized presentation/exhibition during the gathering which ranges from academic speeches of people invited by her to amateur documentaries produced by herself. Despite the supposed academic neutrality (almost impossible due to her emotional bond with the Institute), she was motivated to show how the educational and institutional model of the Institute differs significantly from any other institution for abandoned children in the past and the present.

The gatherings (which lasts one whole weekend) ended up split into two moments, a "formal" and an "informal" one. The precise moments were mostly organized by the Principal's daughter who always draws a virtual invitation for the event. For instance, in 2014, a documentary produced by herself along with some former inmates about their institutional records was shown in the main movie theater of the city. The photograph exhibition was named "Agricultural Institute for Minors of Batatais: memory in progress." In 2015, she created an exhibition of old pictures of the Institute saved by her mother; in 2016 she invited some scholars to talk about the I Symposium on Chilhood, which was organized by the Institute in the 1960s; in 2017 she assembled the photographic exhibition again to commemorate her

father's centennial, while Papa was releasing and autographing his book; in 2018 she invited another psychologist to lecture about abandonment.

The interaction among the former inmates in the Gatherings and Facebook enables them to ascribe meanings to their memories. In the next section, we take into consideration the approach designed by Glaeser. By using an allegory[7], we observe, through the interaction of other former inmates and the Principal's daughter, how (i) the remembering process plays out, (ii) the possibility of expressing negative emotional events and the understandings of what happened change over time depending on the validation they receive in the social realm. Unlike a thesis, a paper must be synthetic; thus, the allegory is an interpretative toll that enables the reconstruction of the process.

Chasing the transformation of understangings: Tom as an alegory

Tom's understandings' path is an excellent allegory to observe how he remembers suffering experiences after getting in touch with his old colleagues and how the meaning he attributed to these remembrances change across time. It turns out to be clearer when we contras his understanding with another inmate understanding who has not joined the network. Completely detached from this group of former inmates, Asdrubal could find other spaces of validation and other critical resources that enabled him to ascribe different meanings to similar episodes narrated by Tom.

Glaeser (2011) claims that changes in our understandings about the world make ourselves change. If our understandings are always changing, so we must be continually changing. In this regard, Tom must have changed too. It follows from these assumptions that we, as humans, both keep changing our psychological dispositions, and we integrate the changes in a more or less coherent representation of ourselves.

How Tom changed his understanding of the Institute and his childhood has a lot to do with how the Principalr's daughter conveyed this understanding along these years and approached him directly to convince him. The denouement is that he changes his understanding. Since this collaborative process of a change of an understanding and the integration of the new understanding is related to autobiographical

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[7] Allegory has been used since Antiquity. In modern times, it appears in philosophical (Benjamin, 1966) and sociological writings (Glaeser, 2011) as a methodological resource that reveals the subjectivity as the fundamental principle of the meaning constitution. In the face of fragmented and transitory social or historical contexts, the allegory is capable of tracing the meaning construction, which, over time, may lose its original roots. In a way, allegory is a path to rebuild the past.

experiences Tom lived, this collaborative process was based on the collaborative remembering process the former inmates put forth. Tom started to remember more often his past in the Institute as soon as he joined the network of former inmates,

> I don't always remember my past. I just remember when I am in Batatais at the Gathering with my friends" (Tom, in-depth interview, May 2017).
> Telling the stories of the past collaboratively is easier to tease out the remembrances. I think that this collective thing is excellent, one starts to talk, and the other also talks, and then talks and talks. I do not know if it works individually (Tom, in-depth interview, May 2017).

His remembering is triggered not only by ecological artifacts (e.g., the city where the Institue was located) that work here as a backdrop of his remembrances and semantic artifacts, which are usually semantic representations conveyed by his peers during the gatherings. The sharing of their remembrances mediated by semantic artifacts set in motion a collaborative process of remembering. Consequently, the collaborative remembering stresses many aspects of their remembrances and allows them to retrieve some innermost remembrances. In the view that autobiographical memories are nothing but experiences chronologically connected through a narrative arch, the narrative does not come spontaneously to the surface from the experiences themselves, but it is a making sense of how they are connected. Therefore, whenever Tom participated in the collaborative process of remembering, he was also exposed to the understandings, which wove the autobiographical memories. It is worthy of recalling that the central understanding about the Institute was the Institute as a savior and the model of the Institute was well-succeed in hammering out the inmates' character with the strikes of discipline.

We had mentioned before that the former inmates did not talk about the suffering experienced in the first interaction. Tom did the same. After a long period of collaborating with the inmate's remembering and being exposed to an understanding that mismatched his own, he brought to the surface a set of experiences of suffering during the conversation, a particular moment during the VI gathering.

> Cici: I remember a very special employee. He narrated all of our soccer games Luma: I remember singing at a festival in São Paulo, the capital. We won the festival. It was fascinating! Tom: I oppose myself to what you are saying. I remember pedophilia. Authority's abuse. It was under the table. I think that it happened everywhere. It wasn't only there. It existed there. The employees weren't prepared to deal with us, with children who came from vulnerable families. Sorry about saying that, but employees did not fuck with their wives and took out on us. It is true, it happened a lot of authority abuse, much pedophilia, but it was always under the table. Did we have good things? Yes, but it happened a lot of authority's abuse, a lot of incapable employees. Drunk people... Employees that worked drunk. Without conditions to work. I don't have good remembrances (Conversation during the VI Gathering, April 2017).

Tom's abrupt declaration shocked the others because it hit hard on the validation of the established understanding. More precisely, it set against the established understanding of contradictory shreds of evidence, which underscores this understanding's lack of cohesion. Consequently, it became harder to corroborate the understanding that the model of the Institue was perfect since who were at the heart of this model, i.e., the employees, performed terrible deeds. It is worthy of mentioning some aspects of Tom's performance because it illustrates the relationship between the suffering remembrances and their means of representation, which was language in this situation. Before that, we stated that when suffering experiences are remembered, their representations lack more sophisticated language use, such as figures of language in general, indirect speech, and understatements. These remembrances are more direct because they convey the message without a proper adjustment to the audience. Aside from the representation in language, the emotional reaction is also less controlled. For example, during this manifestation, he talked with a louder volume than usual and performed it in an indignation tone.

At whatever time different or contradictory understandings hit people, they can consider such understandings as a form of negative resonance to the very understanding they maintain about themselves; hence they are considered the performance as strife or a slur. As we have demonstrated, whenever understandings negatively resonate, their credibility is in danger. It happens because understanding suffers a loss of coherence. The same applies to the understanding of one's self. In the same way, Tom's publicization of evil deeds that took place at the Institute was seen as a strike from others, especially the Principal's daughter who had to make much effort to manage the aftermath of that situation, and he might have considered the established understanding as an attack against himself. A short period after that moment, we can see that Tom has mulled over what happened, and as a consequence, he formed a defense.

> I do not praise anyone for what I am today. Everything that I psychologically achieve is just because of my effort (Tom, in-depth interview, May 2017).

He probably used to understand his own life story as a self made-man. In this regard, his understanding mismatched with the established understanding of the network of former interns praising everything good they had and achieved as a consequence of their upbringing. Contrariwise, since he is arguably wealthier than the others, Tom could not understand his successful trajectory as another example proofing the Institute's model. As he demonstrated during the conversation, he questions the legitimacy of some employees who were in charge of putting forth the Institue model. At some moments, he tries to point out positive aspects of his experience there and how he tried his best to seize them.

However, he does not understand discipline as the source of his success, and it may be understood as a source of his suffering.

We know that the more an understanding is validated within a network, the higher is its chance of institutionalization. As a political, epistemological intent, the authorities will not allow Tom's opposite understanding to find any resonance and recognition among the former inmates. It could not be otherwise. These authorities were trying their best to maintain an understanding of the past, which the Institute was seen as a unique model and as a savior for the boys who lived there. As we will see below, other former inmates hold an understanding instead of the fairytale-like depiction in the words of Luma and others, but they are not in the group directionally disputing as a heterodoxy against the orthodoxy (Weber, 2001). Tom's manifestation of the remembrance of suffering is also associated with the model of the formation of suffering we explored before. According to his version, Tom was not the boy who suffered sexual violence from an employee. However, he knew that it happened, maybe to a colleague or a friend, and could do anything about it. He could not tell any authority because the understanding of his experience would not be validated. We do not know if he tried to tell anyone about that, but the point is that he knew that the Principal and other employees covered up disturbing acts like sexual violence,

> In the last gathering, I brought the issue of the harassment against the boys, and a former inmate said, "Both of the employees have already died, thank God ." Some people did not know that his employee had abused this boy. I know that there were two gay boys, but the employee abused the ones who were not gays. When I brought this topic to the Gathering discussion, the Principal's daughter said, "yada, yada...". I said to her: "I think that we must talk about these topics too. I have enjoined the Institute. I have tried to benefit from all the opportunities; there was its positive side. However, there were negative points. I don't know if she is afraid of everybody thinking that his father, the Principal, was condoned with that. I don't know if he was noticed about it. However, I think that it is excruciating for a child been raped and could not say anything. The employee wouldn't believe and trust in you. I insist on this topic because I think that the Principal knew. If he knew, why did he not fire the employee? He had the authority for it. This guy has raped many boys for many years. Many years of abuse and threats. That is why I put my finger on this topic, and then the other started also to talk about it (Tom, in-depth interview, May 2017).

If the Principal was condoned to his employees' misbehavior, the Institute has no way to prevent the formation of the experiences of suffering, mainly when they arose from the relationship between employees and inmates. Moreover, the idea that the Principal was "condoned" also suggests he knew that it happened. Maybe he did not know how often it happened, who was the victim, but he knew these took place in the Institute. It goes without saying that any attack that suggests the employees' misbehavior was not so rare; it reflects a problem with the direction of the Institute. The former inmates and employees consider the Principal the source of the good in the Institute. The following statement depicts

a general opinion about the Principal , "to our unforgettable Principal , a man who has guided that Institute wholehearted, with expertise and perfection. We miss you" (Papa, Facebook's post public page, April 2016). No one wanted to keep talking both about the Principal or the sexual abuses. Since there, Tom could not find anyone who was willing or capable to validate his understanding; it had no resonance. Contrariwise, the reaction for the lack of a legit authority who could be a safeguard of the inmates did not exist. As a consequence, there was room for the recognition of the suffering experiences within the Institute. This was performed by the authorities, especially the Principal 's daughter. For example, she posted on Facebook, "we can not escape from suffering because it is part of our destiny. By accepting it, there is the possibility to transformation" (Principal 's daughter, Facebook post, April 2018). She sought to naturalize suffering as something that everybody undergoes. The activity of maintaining this coherent understanding of the past represented any violent deed by an employee as a legit deed since there was no law regulating it until the Children and Adolescents Statute of 1990. Besides, violent acts were understood as a default parent's behavior towards the children at that time. As a consequence, violence would be then naturalized.

Tom's understandings had no resonance within the network. The vigor of any understanding relies on others' validation, and resonance was crucial to validate his position. A non-valid understanding is similar to a non-shared memory, they weaken. Since his abrupt manifestation, the Principal 's daughter tried to keep Tom's closer. Tom had a desire to become a psychologist. Taking that as a piece of evidence, we can infer that the Principal 's daughter is also authority for him in a dyadic relationship, at least, since she was a Ph.D. Psychologist, which is also the most prestigious university in Brazil. The shared interests became a pathway to the Principal 's daughter ground on more convincing terms her understanding about the Institute, the role of the Institute in the former inmates' lives. She introduced him to psychological circles, where he could deliver a presentation about his life story effective point; one can ask if she was Machiavellian regarding an institutionalized politics of memory because she was doing politics, even without knowing. She actively sought to maintain how the understanding of the past of this Institution should be and act to change those understandings that mismatched with the standard institutionalized understanding of the past. Her performance was sufficient, she exerted the perlocutionary act she wanted in her speech, and she also could sustain that through her actions by guiding Tom to Psychology, where he would "really understand" what happened.

The denouement happened on Facebook, where she and Tom had the following public exchange of messages on the post about the for the VII Gathering:

Every year, in April, the "boys of my father" (that's is the way my bloody sibling used to call the former inmates) and I come back to Batatais to the Gathering of former inmates. We all perpetuate an honoring to my father, who did not have any honoring when he abruptly left the Institute in September 1983. (Principal 's daughter, Facebook public page post, March 2018).

I hope that everybody comes. We are all equal; we only have different ages. We had the same life lessons of overcoming. Thank you, my brothers, for a big kiss for you, my sister [he tags the Principal 's daughter]. (Tom, Facebook public page post replying to the post above, March 2018).

It is very good when we are positively surprised by people. You are one of those people that makes me believe in the human transformation ability. (Principal 's Daughter, Facebook's public page post replying to the post above, March 2018).

The politics of memory was sufficient to manage and change to its favor a dissonant position. It is worthy to stress; the authorities did not shun the opposition but persuaded them. Tom changed his understanding and started to share the orthodoxy formed among the group of former inmates. Whatever he may be thought to be an arbitrary act of employees in the past, now he sees a resulting from fondness, care, and discipline. The extreme situations such as sexual violence were considered as an exception, an employee that act by himself, entirely detached from the Institute. Afterward, he sent me a message in February 2019,

I began to understand the meaning of life. I am learning how to overcome the obstacles of life and how to live together with respect. I need to thank the Principal 's daughter. Now I know what I am doing in life. I will never be the product of the environment; I will never be drifting within circumstances. (Tom, message, February 2019).

Such acknowledgment wraps up his change and stresses the Principal 's daughter's authority, who is in the right place, maybe even playing with her father. The psychological is something the former inmates desperately needed. As a psychologist, she did her role, even though not as a therapist but as someone who could understand better what happened in the big picture. Tom's confession that "now he knows what he is doing in life" shows what we stated at the beginning of this allegory, when we change our understandings, we change ourselves. The change, however, because we integrated the new understanding into an overarching understanding about ourselves. Tom's past was a source of suffering. He did not understand that before. Afterward, regardless of the understanding, he assumed entirely to cope with reality, it serves the purpose of making sense of his life. Tom's process is, in a way, the former inmates as boys without families, parents, abandoned and rejected, whose upbringing happens within a total institution, they must integrate such events in the autobiographical narrative.

Tom could change his mind because he was within a network of former inmates and employees who validate the clear overcoming understanding. As Tom was in this place, he joined the collaborative process of remembering and a collaborative way of making sense of the past. In a nutshell, he was affected by the distributive remembrance process and the epistemic politics of making sense of the past. Nevertheless, other former inmates had contrary understandings as Tom did initially, but who never joined the network of former inmates. We can see that outside the network, there is an independent way of developing this understanding of the past. That is the case of a former inmate, Asdrubal Serrano, who became a dramaturgist who made three crucial public appearances, one at a prestigious talk-show at Rede Globo, the most important Brazilian television sender, another one in a program for intellectuals in a public sender, and a testimony for the Truth Commission (Comissão da Verdade) at Legislative Assembly of the São Paulo's State.

Asdrubal later became a dramaturgist, intellectualized, critical, follower of the Theater of the Oppressed; He understood all the disciple's mechanism as torture devices. He always makes the explicit both in his book and on television about the military regime's connection and torture. He stresses that it was not different at the Institute, a disciplinary organization in São Paulo's countryside. On the Rede Globo appearance, he presented the understanding that solitary confinement, which genuinely existed, as a mechanism of torture in order to achieve discipline. He also calls the Institute's houses not as all the former interns we have seen here called, as "home I, home II, home III," but as a pavilion, which is the official nomenclature employed for the blocks in the prison system in Brazil. In his testimony for the Truth Commission, he says that the studies were jeopardized in favor of labor. He said that "if we did not go farming, we would have food in exchange." (Asdrubal Serrano, ALESP, 2013).

During the other talk show, he mentions that the job instruction they had in the Institute has as its goal to serve the Institute. They were officially instructed in woodworking, but according to his explanation, it was used to produce more hoe's handles for the children's different sizes. He also mentions that many children did not show up for school; they did not get enough incentives for that. In sum, even though some remembrances he portrays throughout the interviews sound similar to what inmates have lived, the way he understood his experience was reasonably different. Much of his understanding drew from similarities between the total institution and the military regime. In this way, for the broader audience, what he conveyed was understandable and expected.

Comparing Tom and Asdrubal's understandings, we observe that the social network played a central role in ascribing and validating different meanings to similar episodes they experienced in their childhood. Be in a critical environment such as the dramaturgy shaped Asdrubal's worldview so he could

face and express his memories and emotions in narratives of testimonios. In other words, he is able to express his contradictions in a first-person narrative of injustice that intend to represent a larger class/group, claiming for a more just present and future. In Tom's (and most of the others that joined this network of former inmates), the consequences of the process of remembering and understanding within a "political" dynamic have more complex effects that will be explored next.

Emotional regimes and self-coherence

The institutionalization of understandings on suffering as a token of resilience and the booster of overcoming weaved a specific emotional regime among the former inmates. An emotional regime is an intentional shaping of emotions, which are nothing but cognitive habits. This cognitive effort of understanding emotions in a particular manner is usually driven by the attempt to fulfill specific goals that are collaboratively built among individuals (Reedy, 2004). The former inmates tried to adequately their suffering into a narrative of overcoming in which taking part in an exceptional and unique Institute played the role of redemption. By doing so, they could present themselves to society (and even more narrowly to their wives and children) as people with unique trajectories. The act of publicly speaking of their understanding of suffering on Facebook, books, gathering, and others' community has an inner transformative consequence. According to Reedy (2004), when they publicly speak of their sufferings, and they shape a common validated understanding of them, they directly alter what (the emotional suffering) they refer to. In analogy to the "performative utterances" (Austin, 1975), Reedy states that emotives change, build, intensify or hide emotions; that is, "an emotion claim is self- altering" (Reedy, 2004, p. 103). In doing so, the emotives (the act of understanding emotion in a specific way shaped by a community to pursue specific goals) have the capacity of building a new emotional experience. They have the power of shaping how we think, write, and speak of our emotions. In sum, the way we understand our emotions.

For the former inmates, understanding suffering as a path for overcoming and coercion and violence as a token of care was a set emotional prescription that helped them provide coherence to the self and the unity of a community that feels together. This labor of understanding suffering within a particular common perception helped make sense of what happened and diluted traumatic consequences. The emotives worked as a dynamic tool seized in the service of self-maintenance. The ways they made sense of their suffering serve to present themselves the unity of this image and others.

The institutionalization of certain understandings and self-maintenance dynamics brings with them some remembrances that cease to be socially shared. It is not necessarily a mental forgetting

because the representation of what was meaningfully perceived by someone can be further mentally drawn. However, it is a social forgetting because "forgetting is not always a memory fragility, a failure in the reconstitution of the past.

Forgetting can be a success of an indispensable sensor to maintain the stability and coherence elaborated by an individual or a group (Candau, 2001, p. 127). When the non validated understanding is not transformed. The remembrance silenced, the person itself is drifting away of the network of authority or has its understandings not take into account, "there are inmates who learned to love and respect, and others don't. That's life, isn't it?" (Som, written tales, March 2018).

Conclusion

The way we understand ourselves is the primary process that frames how we understand the world. It is a complex process that entangles how we perceive, feel, and think. It weaves how we remember what happened to us in the past and how we project ourselves in the future. In what follows, "processes of remembering" (rather than "memory" as a thing) are crucial to understanding how we ascribe meaning to the world, especially to things and events related to our own stories. Since social life relies upon the flow of time, remembering and understanding are continuous temporal processes.

Although memory regards the past and drives the future, it can only be experimented with, understood, and pictured because any reality that transcends the present moment must turn out to be in the present. It is not to say that the memory represented at the present moment is necessarily crystallized in a medium. Contrariwise, we must map out the processes of remembering weaved relationally, which entangle minds, social relations, and artifacts. As a representational mental process, remembering must be intersubjectively mediated by primordial media, such as language, or by more complex ones, such as movies or social media. This social dynamic engulfs psychological, psychoanalytical, and emotional traits linked to our past and reframe them. The social realm may put forth the dynamics of validation that will accept and value (or not) some understandings over others. In the empirical data analyzed, we observed that political work had been employed by the former Principal's daughter inside this network of former inmates. Over time, only positive understandings about past episodes at the Institute were accommodated in coherent narratives. In this sense, past events linked to three sources of suffering for ex-inmates (namely, abandonment, institutional coercion, and stigma) have been reframed as key events for their "successful" trajectories. Abandonment came to be seen as something that enabled them to have opportunities in life as they were institutionalized early and "saved" from their families. Institutional

coercion (present in events of physical, sexual, and psychological violence and, in circumstances of forced labor) came to be understood as an expression of discipline and, in a way, parental "care." And they dissolve the stigma stemmed from their institutionalized when presenting themselves as "successful and family men." In this sense, all the suffering is converted into emotional regimes that ascribed positive meaning to these though feelings. Emotional regimes provided prescriptions on how to feel regarding violent episodes.

The emotional regimes also served to create coherence to their narratives. The adjustment of their understandings led them to build narratives that converted suffering into positive elements to their lives. In doing so, we can see that they will begin to employ a self-building policy that deliberately seeks to set aside dissonant narratives. The presentation of Asdrúbal Serrano's case comes as this dissonant counterpoint. He appears as an individual who detached from this network.

Three central aspects stood out throughout this work. The first is the centrality of the remembrance process for binding the self over time. The identity construction goes through a self-narrative and, consequently, an active process of reframing the past. It is particularly evident in the narrative of former inmates who had their childhoods lived apart from society and subsequently lost any social relations that linked them to their past. The second regards the tone of their narratives. By sharing past scenes with their colleagues, they build their understanding of what happened in the past (especially moments involving any violence and suffering). These memories appear in search of meaning that could not be built. These "open-senses memories" ended up creating multiple possibilities of interpretation in the social realm. Finally, the validation of positive understandings is the consequence of strong moral entrepreneurship kept by the former principal's daughter. They mischaracterize any versions in which the Institute appeared as a source of authoritarianism and suffering. Instead, they reframe such events as a token of care and responsibility. This moral entrepreneurship was, on the one hand, used by some and, on the other, accepted by others as a conservative way of interpreting what happened, as well as a conservative way of constructing their stories by linking the "discipline" experienced in childhood with the actual success they obtained.

In contrast, Asdrubal assembles his story with elements of transgression and disruption as a way to denounce what he lived. Outside the dynamics of validations of the former inmates' network, Asdrubal found other social spaces to disclose his story without validating it with his former colleagues. More than that, without expecting to maintain links with them.

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