Not a true copy. Processes of stigmatization in the photographic narrative of media coverage[1]

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Abstract

In this article, the main findings of a study are presented which reveals and interprets the discourses and images about violence in school ambience in the newspapers of the city of La Plata in Argentina. We focus on the photographic narratives in the news coverage by *El Día, Hoy, Extra,* and *Diagonales f*rom the city of La Plata, between 1993 and 2011. The objective was to address the effects of the images disseminated by the printed media chosen, taking the material thickness of the photographs as documents. Continuities were searched in the series of images selected, with the purpose of finding forces in tension. The methodological approach is qualitative and the interpretation of the data was conducted by the socio-educative analysis of the discourse. The results obtained highlight the images which stress the dualist opposition between the victim and the perpetrator as this depicts each pole of the pair in a different manner. In addition, youths from socially deprived sectors are presented as the very face of insecurity and violence in school ambience. This investigation broadens the empirical basis to review and discuss the representations in the media, and how the cores of common-sense are retained through the photographs.

Keywords

Communication media – Photographs – Young people – School - Violence.

Introduction

There are specific groups, such as journalism, with a privileged access to the public discourse since they have a symbolic power recognized to construct the representation of the social (VAN DIJK, 2008). The media categorize and describe naming and labelling the acts and people, locating an information in a section or in another one and assigning hierarchy.

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Thus, the media achieve a relevant role in the settlement of the public agenda about violence and the policies of social control. In the argentine context from 2008, according the analysis of the Observatory of Young, Communication and Media of the National University of La Plata (2011), confirms an increase in statements which link young with violence acts, either they are treated as victims or aggressors. Considering the school space as stage, the study *Atmosphere, Conflict and violence in schools,* carried out by UNICEF and FLACSO in secondary schools of the metropolitan areas of Buenos Aires, describes:

[...] there is a perception of a high potential of conflict linked to schools in general, but with respect to the self-educative experience, this perception decreases considerably. Why does this happen? A possible hypothesis is that other discourses, mainly the mass media, could contribute to magnifying the phenomenon of violence in schools and this would have a considerable incidence in the perception of the actors with respect to the gravity. (UNICEF; FLACSO, 2011, p. 9).

As the media produce series which include more episodes of violence occurred in school stage, the feeling of a school associated to violence prevails with increasing certainty in the public opinion.

Although, the study of UNICEF and FLACSO (2011) grounds that this *feeling* of violence in school space is not corresponded to the empirical evidences of the real facts. The perception of a school crossed by violence is grounded in a series of *cases* presented by the mass media. Along these lines, associate the social construction of violences in school with the actions of journalism.

We affirm in the assumption that the journalism forms a privileged documental source in the contemporary Social Sciences exhibited (ATORRESI, 1995; VEIGA, 2003; DA ORDEN; MELÓN PIRRO, 2007).

In this article, the images used in the coverages about violences in school space are an important aspect to consider since they are cultural documents and evidences of how a time is conceived (ENTEL, 2008). The photographs produce a textuality that generates senses about who takes the photographs and who are the photographed (VILCHES, 2002; CHAME, 2013).

In *Photography: a middle- brow art* Pierre Bourdieu expresses "[...] nothing can be photographed outside of what should be." (1979, p. 44). There is no casual photograph, it responds to a social interpretation, a particular way to read the social. Therefore, a field of what can be photographed that cannot be boundless, it is clearly defined by the photographer. Even though the actors define what can be photographed, this act is the product of schemes of perception. Pierre Bourdieu, who considers the photography as a social fact, states that should not be seen "in itself and by itself" (1979, p. 42), but because of the place that the class has in the social structure. The photography is the result of a decision that involves esthetic and ethical values, and constitutes *one* decision among the ones possible. The images are useful tools for social scientists, since they are visual sources that provide with information of the message given. The author states:

Even when the image is fully allocated to the automatism of the machine, the shot still an election that involves esthetical and ethical values: yet, in an abstract form, the nature and the

progresses of the photographic technique makes every thing objectively "shotable", in fact, in the theoretical infinity of the photographs technically possible, each group elects a finite and definite range of subjects, genders and compositions. (BOURDIEU, 1979, p. 22).

From the huge number of shots, it is the photographer who selects and cuts the reality, chooses something, constructs a relation among objects and social events and expresses them in the photographic image:

The photography cannot be born of chance of the individual fantasy and, by mediation of the ethos -interiorization of objective and ordinary regularities-, the group subordinates this practice to the collective rule, in such a way the most insignificant photograph expresses, as well as the explicit intentions of whom has taken it, the system of schemes of perception of thoughts and the common appreciation to a whole group. (BOURDIEU, 1979, p. 67).

Therefore, the photograph should be studied since the photographer shot, the groups the actor belongs to and the functions assigned. There is a tight relation between the photographic image and the class ethos, considering this last one as the "[...] combination of values that, without reaching the systematic specification, tends to organize the 'behavior of life' of a social." (BOURDIEU, 1979, p. 148).

Now then, focusing on the photographic images published in the written press we observe that they express a social intention, more or less explicit, more or less dormant. The photographic image showed in the newspapers reveals something more than a cold copy or a *fair copy* of reality otherwise it is full of social meanings.

Likewise, the photographs are useful to establish an approach over the social order that could be more effective than the discursive written practices (GILLIAM; IVENGAR, 2003; MUÑIZ; IGARTUA; OTERO, 2006).

Even in the origins of the photojournalism, when photographers haven't yet reached an absolute use of the visual rhetoric, they knew the power of images and the need of dramatize of certain actions in front of the camera. (DE LAS HERAS HERRERO, 2012, p. 33).

The images develop an important role within the news media contents, being able to produce cognitive and affective (COLEMAN, 2002). Along with the informative virtue, photographies could produce other effects, altering the perception of the information narrated. An image Will have power and impact due to what it shows and to the way it is showed, context and aims (ARFUCH, 2002). The purpose is to approach to the effects that the graphic media generate through the images that go with the mediatic coverages.

Methodological aspects

The analysis presented is part of a much-extended study which had the general objective of characterize and analyze the discursive practices (textual and iconic) of the

phenomenon of the violences in schools in the newspapers *El Día, Hoy, Extra y Diagonales* from the city of La Plata within the period of 1993-2011.

Due to the characteristics of the object of study the methodological approach was qualitative, assuming the inquiry an exploratory nature. It didn't consider contrasting and validate the hypothesis presented, but carry out an analysis based on the empirical data (SIRVENT, 2003). The qualitative methodology is consistent with the interest of our work to Access to a comprehension of the phenomenon studied that enables come to interpretative knowledge and elaborate substantial hypothesis.

The study was synchronic since a transversal cut in time was done, studying which situations are typified as violences in school, and the treatment of taxonomies in the different selected newspapers, with intention of study the media coverages.

The photographies from the coverages on violences in school spaces in digital and printed versions from *El Día, Hoy, Extra y Diagonales* from the city of La Plata within the period of 1993-2011 were delimited as units of analysis.

The corpus is shaped by 3581 articles: 2080 from the newspaper El Día, 1063 from Diario Hoy, 336 from Diario Extra and 102 from Diario Diagonales. Due to the volumen of the corpus, it is appropriated to clarify that in the analysis it is not made an allusion to all of the sources. The selection criteria for the presentation of the data consisted in choosing those which express continuities in the meaning, in the attempt of observing forces in tension which result would be the change or the continuity of a form (of a system, may be a world view). As a kind of summary of the discoveries we can mention that in the corpus there is the presence of the photographic images relative to two meanings: collaborate in the construction of the pair victim- aggressor and show the security forces as the solution to the school problems. In this paper we will only approach the meaning of the pair victim-aggressor, forming a total of 1567 photographic images, from which 1376 are portraits.

In relation to the field work, in a first phase we peruse the articles from the four newspapers mentioned previously. The search was based on the headlines, epigraphs and the corpus of the newspapers articles. The words used as search engine were: s*chool violence, Young violence, aggression, Young violence ad school, violence, school vandalism, violence towards the school building,* among others.

The phase of processing the information was made within the frame of the socio-educative analysis of the discourse (MARTÍN CRIADO, 2014). In the first moment we examined the morphological level and the main part of the photographies without limiting to an immanent interpretation, but we analyze the socio educative idea which expresses through these levels, configuring a *global study*. As Amalia Barbosa Martínez states, "[...] the documental method not only supposes the improvement of a formal and immanent analysis, but also the improvement of an autonomous analysis." (2006, p. 400).

Thus, the photographer is the author of the record, the responsible of the labelled *decisive moment* (CARTIER-BRESSON, 2003), in a double sense: as long as the photographer reveals a moment, and only a moment, a reality captured in the photographic format; to the extent that the photographer is the only one who perceives and organizes a scene in a particular way, therefore two photographers in the same situation will photograph two different scenes, since their look on reality is not the same.

The responsible person to select a part of this reality to show it unfolds a "communicative strategy" (RIEGO, 1990, p. 174), since photography is a "discursive form of showing the world" (p. 59). In this process, the denounce (whether it is imposed or chosen through the auto denounce), the alteration or the omissions intentioned of a reality are practices attached to the regular work of the photographer and the newspapers publishers which select the visual material.

Therefore, regarding to the photographic pace, we will consider the space captured, represented in the image, and the space excluded – that physical space that, is not selected by the photographer to be photographed: it is what is left out of the frame, out of the space of representation-, as long as we consider that what the photography doesn't show is as important as what can be contemplated in it.

Photographies provide information about what is captured and about the photographers, since they capture following the world vision of its creator. As Joan Costa states "[...] the 'characteristics', the 'footprint' or the 'mark' of the author can be distinguished, (which in some cases can be read in a phycological reading)." (1977, p. 123). Thus, the publication of a photography in the press produces under a filter of the media. Although this filter, the reader has an active role facing the photography (VILCHES, 2002), to the extent that, as Lorenzo Vilches states: "the photography is a visible design reproduced by a mechanical and psychochemical process of a preexisting universe, but only acquires significance by the dialectical game between a producer and an observer." (2002, p. 14).

Therefore, photographies went over a triple filter: the photographic shot, the graphic press of La Plata and the one of the investigation introduced here, since a combination of photographs were selected with the intention of interpreting the mediatization of the phenomenon of violences in schools.

In the first moment, we classified the photographic images by similarity on the figured content and two large groups were formed: the ones which represent the victim and the ones which represent the aggressor.

The second moment was the one of photographic analysis. We identified basic elements on visual (DONDIS, 1976) that can divide in two levels[3]: the morphological and the main level. The first one includes the plan (marks the space depth) and the scale (the modification of the size of the elements which permit the manipulation of the space, that is determined by the size of the photographed object, the distance between the object and the camera and the object chosen), while the second one includes the analysis of the distribution of the weights of the photographed elements, the visual path depending on the scene directions and the looking of the characters and the space of representation with the analysis of the field- out of the field (understanding the field as the represented space) and the inner- outer.

A third moment went deep in the meaning of photography through a global study of the nucleus of sense of each group formed. It was necessary the study of the group of photographies related, with the intention of studying a process that allows the image

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3- Based on the proposal of the investigation group ITACA –UJI de la Universitat Jaume I, that suggests some analysis parameters that we will use in our work.

of continuity. This process was achieved with the link with the whole of the journalism coverages published. In this phase, two parts of the Reading of the photography were considered: the denoted and the connoted. The denoted refers to the literal image (BARTHES, 1970), what is shown, visible, explicit. This aspect was revealed with the study of the morphological level and the main level.

The connoted refers to the symbolic image (BARTHES, 1970), what is masked, hidden and that is sensed. As Hernri van Lier (1983) states about the photographic image, these "show also the connotations, that means, the spiritual states, the social and epistemological prejudices of whom has taken the photograph or to whom it is aimed." (VAN LIER, 1983, p. 29). So, in the corpus studied we considered some aspects as the corporal expressions, the outfits and the corporal ornaments of the photographed subjects.

Respect the corpus of photographies, it is necessary to observe that the authors of the photographies are not identified. Only from 2011 in the newspaper *El Día* it is registered a watermark over them.

From a technical parameter, we will say that the photographs compiled are presented in black, white and color. These last ones were published during the whole period perused[4].

In relation to the records of the coordinate of situation[5], the circumstances in which they were conceived is unknown and it removes a valuable information about the reason why of these visual documents.

Likewise, the corpus is formed by paper and digital photographs. The paper photographs were published in the newspaper *El Día* from1993 to 1997 and in the newspaper *Hoy from* 1993 to 1996, while the digital ones appeared in the newspaper *El Día* from 1998 to 2011 and in the newspaper *Hoy from* 1997 to 2011. All of them were considered for the analysis process.

The faces of violence

A recurrent aspect in mediatization of violences in school in the "platense" press was the publication of portraits to visibilize the victims and aggressors. As we mentioned already in the previous section, in the perused corpus 1376 portraits[6] were presented.

The representation of the body is being inscribed for more than a century in policies of control and discipline. From XIX century the images symbolize a power that noses up and classifies the individuals to place them in classificatory systems. Specifically, as Le Breton (2010) and Kaplan (2016) state in modern occidental societies the face is the place and time of a symbolic order, exposes to judgment and the interpretation of the other:

> In the everyday language, the face represents the whole person, for the identity feeling that characterizes it and for the esteem/Prestige that has from others. The face is a measure of social dignity of which an actor is object. (KAPLAN, 2016, p. 213).

4- In the newspaper El Día y Hoy, until 1998 were only color photographs on the cover and the tabloid supplement. In the newspapers Diagonales and Extra al of the publications had color photographs.
5- The coordinate of situation are the context of space and time in which takes place the photographic shot.
6- In this analysis process only the portraits have been taken as sources, we didn't use faces from photographs with larger contexts.

Photographies could be useful to deduce typological characteristics of the victims and aggressors, creating social types for each one under the assumption of a relation among the face features and the violent behaviors.

It seems there is a corresponding with the investigations at the beginning of the XIX[7] century which stated that the physiognomy types with more simian features indicated primitive races, and if a race behaved in a senseless way, that meant that was regressive (FONTCUBERTA, 2010). The face was conceived "[...] as an organic structure that is built by setting elements [...] it is a method for the identification of fugitives and missing people." (p. 60). Thus, the portrait became one of the activities of the time. Through this, the face emerges, more than any other part of the body, as an expressive center (SIMMEL, 2011). An expression of the time was the police and forensic photography of Bertillon[8] who established a massive program of photographic documentation and anthropometric measurement of which numerous exhaustive categorization albums turned out.

The portrait of an aggressor

The attention on the identification of the aggressor by its face is a recurrent aspect, since it represents a 73% of the portraits perused. Some of the coverages mention:

> How will we react? The data we gather from the newspapers articles are alarming: the violence increases, addictions at school and the participation of young more and more prematurely. They are the chaos faces. (EL DÍA, 29-08-1993).

> Portrait of a law-breaker. (EL DÍA, 16-03-1994).

The representation of the aggressor through portraits showed them as threaten and dangerous.

Image 1
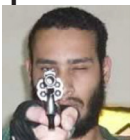
Source: Hoy, 16-04-2011.

This first picture stands out a gun as the starring element. This is achieved due to the centered location of the gun and also the size in the image. The visual path is traced by the human figures that aim the gun towards the outside of the field. A looking game is produced between the photographed subjects and the non-captured space that can lead to fear or concern of being aimed with the gun.

7- Refers to the classic investigation of Cesare Lombroso (doctor and Italian Criminologist).
8- Alphonse Bertillon (Paris, France, 1853 - Münsterlingen, Switzerland, 1914) worked for the Paris police. Investigator and promoter of antropologic individualization methods.

On their behalf, the following group of portraits focus on the corporal ornaments that differentiate the faces: a scarf in the first one and the caps in the following ones:

Image 2

Source: El Día, 28-04-1994.

Image 3

Source: Hoy, 01-04-2011.

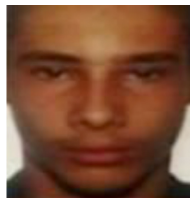**Image 4**

Source: 08-04-2011

Finally, we observe that the graphic media present the faces of Boys and Young men of socially disadvantaged groups associated to violence episodes in schools.

Image 5

Source: Hoy, 23-03-2005

Image 6

Source: El Día, 07-04-2011.

Image 7

Source: Hoy, 01-10-2004.

Image 8

Fonte: Hoy, 01-10-2004.

As Kaplan states "[...] the face, is socially treated through marks, more or less visible, this produces subjectivities." (2016, p. 214) The portraits exhibited have as the center of the field captured faces with caps, scarfs and in one case, a gun. This photographic record is not a neutral either aseptic documentation.

The portraits evidence forms of arrangements, aspects and presentation that indicate a sense of belonging to an age and social group: young of socially disadvantaged groups. As Kaplan studied, when a child or Young is discriminated by "having the wrong face" this evidence "[...] the ways of corporal domination through these type of racism expressions of class." (p. 212). These faces, as the core ideas of identities, can be analyzed from the racism, as they are used as instruments to associate the episodes of violences in school space to this group:

> The face is a privileged place to the arise of 'The Other' (Otto), as a positive angle (the face of the other in love relations, for example) or as negative (by rejecting or animalization of the face in the insult or in the racism, or even in the distortion). (LE BRETON, 2010, p. 142).

The graphic media present the Young of socially disadvantaged groups as the faces of the violence episodes in schools. As symbolic representations, these images are just a little know of a larger skein of conflicts and interests and they are impregnated of intolerance and incomprehension. The reconstruction of the social wave from the media can be powerful. As Bourdieu states, the body is a social product, and "[...] the distances are inscribed on the bodies, precisely, in the relation with the body, the language and the time (other structural aspects of the subjective perspective ignored)." (BOURDIEU, 1988, p. 132).

The faces of pain: the portrait of the victim

Victims as a status covered with significances and visibility (REGUILLO, 2006) are going to dominate the photographies of the coverages. From the total of the corpus of images, 563 refer to victims and their relatives. With the objective of analyzing the senses constructed over the victims, according to the continuities observed, we will present three groups of images which have the following characteristics: prove the condition of the victim, differentiate harmful expressions and represent the family setting as affected and worried.

Next a group of portraits which seem to have the purpose of telling the condition of the victim. In the first one we can observe an injury on the ear, in the second one an injury on the face and the third one on the mouth.
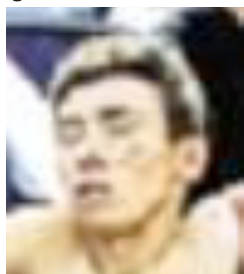
Image 9

SOURCE: El Día, 22-08-1993

Image 10

Source : HOY, 24-01-2011

Image 11

Source: HOY, 04-09-2004

The visual path is traced by the victim as the starring element located in the center of the image.

The representation field captured does not provide with precise contest details. The presence of this group of photographies seems to provide testimony with a particular persuasive force, that is to tell about the danger in episodes of violences at school.

A second group of photographies tries to create a social, moral and affective proximity which favors the identification with the victim role. To this effect, a resource is to present the victim and its relatives in the center of the scene and show them in pain. This seems to be an indicator of its social value and its *representation*.

In this first portrait one of the victim's relative is presented grieving. It seems that out of the image field there isn't any individuals.

Image 12

Source : El Día, 09-04-2011.

The third group of images differentiate people grieving as starring elements. This type of portraits reinforces the construction of the victim as in pain. The following portraits show two people from the victim environment with gambling and complain expressions.

Image 13

Source: Diario Diagonales, 06-07-2011.

Image 14

SOURCE: Diario Hoy, 25-05-2001.

In the victim portraits prevail close shots focused on the faces with expressions of pain, and in some cases wounds can be observed. The emphasis is on the construction of specific subjects as suffering.

Through this classification of the portraits of the pair victim- aggressor is where visual archetype shapes, when the face turns into confession. As Kaplan states, "[...] it mixes together the feeling of defenseless and danger with a particular construction of subjects who activate as agents of that danger." (2011, p. 47). The portraits gather the status and the time of a symbolic system which is used by the members of a social group to translate their emotions and communicate with others.

The images with their footprints and characteristics have formed a knowledged barely appreciated throughout history. The images as a cultural document can provide evidence on how a certain time is conceived and about its crisis. The search on evidence about changes and tensions and about disputes constitutes a valuable aspect for the study of images. It is the possibility to recognise the whole in the particular, process of production in the object, universe of the particle.

> The great contribution of the dialectical materialism in the XIX century has been very important to comprehend that even a small detail is the product of multiple determinations, where there isn't absense of the process of negativity and the contradictions as in the critics to the reification processes. Flatten in its substantial aspects- that is history and dialectics- or suppressed to reification mechanisms, the dialectical method seems to be out of the scope of the social sciences today. (ENTEL, 2008, p. 128-129).

On this stage, the journalism photographs contribute an additional information about the topic, reinforcing also the information already presented; without forgetting that they can be the most visually likeable format and for that more accessible to the audience (GIBSON; ZILLMAN; SARGENT, 1998). Nevertheless, photographs are often used to communicate the readers those ideas difficult to express by writing, and could even harm or damage symbolically certain social groups linked with negative aspects. As a result, along with the informative attribute, the photographs can also produce other effects, altering the perception

of the audience of the narrated information. It is proof that it is easier to think in images than in texts when trying to remember the information communicated by the media (COLEMAN, 2002). The effect on the perception of the issue informed stands nucleus of common sense like the one of collaborating in the construction of the pair victim- aggressor. About the symbolic struggle for the representation of an event Bourdieu will say: "[...] recall the first lesson about the media: the staging can make the images say." (BOURDIEU, 2005, p. 82).

The effects of the photographic images remain for a long time, especially supplying the memory and the restoring of the information to use it for future situations.

Conclusions

In this article we approached an analysis of the photographies used in the coverages of violences in school space. The objective was to approximate to the effects of the images diffused by the graphic media chosen, using as documents the *material thickness*[9] of the photographs used. We searched for continuities in the series of images selected, trying to observe forces in tension which result would be the change or continuity of a form (of a system, maybe a world view).

Specifically, we have observed a continuity in the relation with the doxa construction of the pair victim- aggressor, as a form of presenting the episodes of violence in school space.

According to Bourdieu, it is the photographer the one who selects among the infinity of shots; the one who cuts the reality, chooses something, constructs a relation between objects and social events and captures in the photographic image: "[...] besides the explicit intentions of whom has taken it, the system of schemes perception, thought and the common judging for a whole group." (1979, p. 67). Thus, the use of the photographic images in the media coverage of the phenomenon of violence in school space seems to communicate those ideas that can hardly be expressed by writing. The analyzed photographic images exaggerate the prejudice about school actors.

The photographic images highlight the dualist opposition between the victim and the aggressor and construct each pole of the pair differently. In line with the investigations from the beginning of the XIX century, the photographies presented in the coverages of the violent episodes at school represent physiognomy types associated to specific behaviors. The materiality of the photographs enabled us to analyze the aspects linked with the *corporal hexis,* as the symbolic dimension of the body, the social look is focused on the agents, delegitimating and discrediting those who do not have a legitimate corporal shape in the symbolic trade market.

These senses reinforce the social beliefs that form the practical sense of the *doxa*. Young of social disadvantaged groups are presented as the faces of insecurity and the violence in school space. Thus,

> [...] the media testimonies are windows from which comprehend the practices of the popular groups and the minorities based on disqualification. This way, their testimonies are schemes

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9- The light, the color, the frame, the figure and the background of the images.

to interpret life and the cultures of those groups. (...) turned into the perfect enemy, the ideal scapegoat (OBSERVATORIO..., 2013, p. 21).

The look of suspicion over these Young contributes to the stigmatization instead of giving an educational answer on behalf of inclusion. Mostly if we consider that in inequality social contexts, the typification of the poor is almost mechanically associated to the punishing social belief (the common sense or criminalizing doxa) to the *criminal* (KAPLAN, 2011). Therefore, Le Breton (2010) notices that the photographic spreading of some groups will not take long in turning into a social control tool with judicial and repressive identification purposes.

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