The Social Construction of Violence Among Adolescents and Young People in the Family, School and Community Environment and its Repercusions on Their Life Projects in The Area Known as Pedregales

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Social reality is complex and reflects the dynamics of the social interrelations of its subjects starting with the social processes which they exercise. In this sense, in order to carry out the present analysis we take as a starting point the supposition that social processes which are created as a product of a change in social interrelations produce breaks in these ties, generating a situation in which recognizing the other one has no meaning

Absract

In everyday life, the social processes people undergo are continuously changing. In this regard, the processes involving the dynamics of social interrelations are changing every day until they become normal. Violence is one of these social practices since it is the dominance in participation of several actors, taking on different meanings, and these are taken up by subjects in daily life, perhaps because they have become imperceptible and are therefore confused with " a means of accepting" of one subject to another. Violence is a growing, latent problem. Not that it did not exist before; many

events in history make reference to the use of violence as a means of imposing power. However, the intention of the following reflection is to show how interaction based particularly on violence: harassment, illegality, stigmatization, among other factors, influences the inclusion of violence as a way of life and of socialization. It is not only a matter of adolescents and young people, but rather includes other actors and various environs. The social construction of violence involves the assimilation of behavior not just from the desk, classroom or schoolyard, but also from the heard of the family responsible not only for providing food, clothing and shelter, but also ethical and civic values and the concept of solidarity.

Key words: violence, adolescents and youth, social construction, family, school

INTRODUCTION

The scenes where social subjects perform are many and varied with regard to the roles and activities these play, their interests and meanings, emotions and learning. The situations whicha develop as part of the daily life of the subjects are answers which show the holes in the social fabric such as: violence, lack of security, absence of tolerance, marginalization, among others which define comings and goings of the daily life of the subjects.

The object of this paper is to present the methodological research work from the Social Work point of view, in relation to the social construction of violence among adolescents and young people in the area known as Pedregales, the influence of the family and school spheres as well as the possible repercussions on the lack of life projects. This analysis has been carried out over the last three years in search of categories which allow for determining the scope of the situation within the social dynamics.

It should be pointed out that the present paper centers on a qualitative methodological process. The theoretical foundation on which it is based is on the one hand the symbolic interactionism of Herbert Blumer and on the other Goffman and his stigma or spoiled identity, which are social theories which focus on getting to know social interactions by way of the experience of the subjects in their everyday life and the construction of meanings.

The methodology build for this project focuses on socially salvaging breaking points which allow the intervention of the social worker through a strategy of intervention. To this purpose the process began by working with certain actors (secondary school students, mother and/or father outside the school, police, secondary school teachers, neighbors of the area, young people who neither study nor work as

well as the relatives of the latter) using qualitative techniques such as non-participant observation, in depth informal interviews and polls.

The general objective of this research focuses on learning the characteristics of the social environment which influence the normalization of teenage violence in the area of Pedregales. Likewise, the specific objectives that directed the methodological process are: identifying the social factors which have bearing on the practice of school violence among secondary school students; learning the perception of the family, school authorities, police and community on the adolescents in the area of Pedregales; analyzing the normalization of violence among adolescents in secondary school; identifying the social factors which bear on the lack of expectations for their lives of the adolescents in the area of Pedregales; analyzing the deinstitutionalization of the family, school and community of the adolescents; elaborating a social diagnosis which reflects the problematic situation of the adolescents of this area.

The questions this process hoped to answer with this diagnosis are: What are the social characteristics of the adolescents living in the area of Pedregales? What is the perception that these young people have of practicing violence in their day-to-day living? What is the social significance which is constructed on violence including illegality, lack of confidence and the stigma in the day-to-day life of these young people? and What social factors influence the construction of a life project for these adolescents and young people?

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Social reality is complex and reflects the dynamics of the social interrelations of its subjects starting with the social processes which they exercise. In this sense, in order to carry out the present analysis we part from the supposition that social processes which are created as a product of a change in social interrelations produce breaks in these ties, generating a situation in which recognizing the other one has no meaning.

The theoretical foundation on which this proposal is based, is outlined in two theories. On the one hand is Herbert Blumer's symbolic interactionism. Blumer parting from his suppositions tries to explain that social interrelation is generated taking as a starting point the perception which the subjects give to specific objects on which they build a meaning. The subject's experience is modified as he or she has more and more contact with other objects and subjects.

Based on three principles proposed by Blumer, he analyzes how individuals acquire social experience and meaning of actions: 1. Humans act towards things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things. 2. The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society. 3. These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters.

On the other hand, Irving Goffman and his spoiled identity explains that the individual who might have been easily accepted in a social exchange poses a risk which may be imposed by force and which leads us to distance ourselves from this individual when we meet him, thus annulling the call made to us by his other attributes.

Once we have established the theoretical foundations for this analysis, it is necessary to begin asking what the social meaning constructed from violence, including illegality, lack of confidence, and the stigma on the day-to-day lives of these young people is, as well as what is the cause of young people dropping out of school and taking to the streets and perhaps beginning a life of delinquency.

Until a few decades ago, it was thought that the younger generation would be responsible for raising the standard of living of the country. It was believed this generation would give educational and economic impetus to the country, however today 33,774,976[1] Mexicans are between 12 and 19 years old and eight million of these do not attend school and do not have jobs. (Loza, 2012)

The authorities do not trust the young people and young people do not trust the authorities. The justice system disapproves of the behavior of the young people, but it makes them a part of the dynamics of illegality.

When speaking of violence, we cannot forget to mention the nuclear family, since this is the first group that a subject socializes with and from which he or she learns various social skills about how to relate to other subjects.

In the area of Pedregales in the Delegacion Coyoacan, Mexico City, we find that some of the adolescents come from broken families and/or families in which there is little or no communication. Likewise, the police of the area of Pedregales refer family violence being one of the most common crimes in the area. However, statistical data on the perception of violence, coming from questionnaires given in secondary schools in the area of Pedregales, shows that that is not reality. 59% of the adolescents deny there being any acts of violence within the sphere of the family. Of the others, 19% say that their parents yell at them, 9% say they have fist fights with their siblings, 8% say they insult their siblings, 3% say their siblings hit and insult them and only 1% say their parents beat or insult them.

Broken families may be those in which adolescents live only with their mother or only with their father, 14% and 4% of the adolescents questioned respectively. When there are no parents, they live with some other relative who in some cases may be grandmothers, aunts or uncles who play the role of a guardian since they are in charge of the adolescent. Cases such as these represent only 10% of the families and may be due to the fact that the father or mother has died, are divorced or abandoned their sons or daughters. However it is not possible to see whether the majority of adolescents come from broken homes because research shows that more than half (76%) of the families are "integrated", that is to say made up of a mother, father and a child or children, and of these 12% have only one child.

Along these lines, it must be said that in the area of the Pedregales in Coyoacan, where our fieldwork was carried out, young people have conduct connected with violence and illegality. They are part of extended families who are characterized by having strong ties to grandparents and aunts and uncles, due to the fact that the

1 XII General Census of Population and Housing and the II count of Population and Housing 2005.

Symbolic interaction in a school in Los Pedregales.

mother is a single mother, or the children were abandoned by the father or mother when they were little, or because both the father and mother work long hours, leaving the children in the care of the grandparents or other relatives most of the day.

Sometimes the absence of the mother or father is due to their deciding to form a new family outside the nucleus of the previous family as is the case with some of the adolescents interviewed, "when I was 7 years old my mother, well that lady, went off with someone else whose baby she was carrying and she left us with my father in my grandmother's house, but later on he hooked up with another lady and left us alone with my grandmother." Couples do not always separate in order to start an-

other family outside the nuclear family; some separate because of weak and dysfunctional communication ties, which lead to a tense and sometimes hostile relationship between the mother and the father.

It is possible that the new organization which resulted from the breaking up of the original family may normalize, so it is now common to talk about separated parents or about the mother or father having to work and leaving the children alone, a social practice which has come to form part of normal family life nowadays. Thus it is no longer controversial to talk about these new family relationships. As Nelia Tello says "the archetypal nuclear family, made up of a father, a mother and their children as a predominate model of Western families today has been constant-

ly evolving, in keeping with socio-cultural conditions and specifically depending on the predominate gender relations in each society. [Tello, La estructura social de las familias en las zonas populares (The social structure of families in popular areas), 2000]

On one hand the family plays an essential role in a person's development, from conception to death, because it is the nucleus in which one's personality is formed, in all aspects, including physical and spiritual, beginning with the complex concept given by the home and the family; and by other parents and children or other relatives who make up the domestic unit giving the system a reciprocity to the system within concrete time-space, a constructive social fact, as a primary association which gives juvenilization values to give way to alternate subsystems of survival. (Tello, 2000)

However, the family environment in the area of the Pedregales, without intentionally trying to stigmatize or encase it here, has elements which clearly distinguish it. With the multiple social changes which have taken place, the family has been affected, being of special interest the transformation it has undergone and the ability of the family to settle its basic needs, not only food and clothing, but now ethics and values. (Zigmund, 2006)

The home of the young people in our study not only represents the place where "what ought to be" and being young is instilled in them. School is also seen as a scene for the construction of violence, illegality, and disinterest and abandon when continuing their studies at the university does not form part of the young peoples' expectations and to the contrary they drop out of school and start working.[2]

2 Poll taken of more than 300 secondary school students in the area of the Pedregales, of whom, 4% see themselves married with children, another 4% have plans to work only.

Besides all this, an elaborate diagnosis made by the authorities of the Secretaria de Seguridad Pública del Distrito Federal (Ministry of Public Safety of the Federal District) shows that within the schoolroom all of the following take place: petting, mini cartels selling drugs, gangs of juvenile delinquents, behavioral problems, physical and psychological violence. (Loza, 2012) And I will add that school authorities and parents carry on a continuous power struggle about who should educate the young, school or family.

Some parents feel that when they leave their children off at school, the institution becomes solely responsible for them, shirking their own responsibility. There is a perception that the school is the educator and former of values and in effect it is; but it is the educator in the sense that it transmits knowledge and reinforces values, both of these aspects should be developed within the family. "At home I care for my daughters but from the minute they are at school it is no longer my responsibility, but rather the teachers'." (Carrillo, 2012)

Coexistence in the classroom is described as all of the young people away from their desks, hitting or making fun of each other, others in the hall, leaning over the balcony waiting to change classrooms or being scolded by the discipline teacher, and all of this accompanied by noise which is a mixture of voices and insults with it at times impossible to know who has said what to whom. In this same way, the professors do not fix the situation or mediate it, quite the contrary, the professor appears as the vertical and total authority who shouting and threatening tries to calm things down. In the end this only makes things worse because the students answer the teacher with insults and vulgarities.

Even some of the people who are a part of the educational institution them-

selves have a perception of the verticality of the rules...

well, see I don't agree with all of them. There are some which I differ with because I feel they are unnecessary. I agree with those which are meant to mediate coexistence and relations among the kids and the personnel who work here, that there should be reciprocal respect. The ones I differ with are the ones who steal the adolescents' identity, the haircuts, uniforms, that teachers have students buy a certain brand of notebooks, the cover; these completely rob them of their right to free expression. (Zuñiga Ugalde, 2012)

With respect to the in-depth interviews and questionnaires, it was found that 90% of those interviewed thought that tweaks and blows were considered violence and 84% thought that insults and curse words were violence but considered them normal among the young people who study at the secondary school in the area of the Pedregales. They used the same expressions to socialize and get along with their peers. In these interviews and questionnaires it was found that these young people live in very violent environments, in the community, with friends and sometimes with family members. They generate violent behavior such as street fights or fights among neighbors which they do no perceive as serious and which seem to be normal. When they turn more serious, they look for excuses to justify them. "Almost never, only when they make me mad." (Rodríguez Olvera, 2012)

The concept of exclusion for them is not considered a form of violence; they do not perceive this situation as violent. To them violence has another meaning: blows and cuss words and shoves on a day-to-day basis of normal life do not allow them to separate themselves from these forms of behavior. 6 out of 18 students (52%) answered that exclusion was not an action they thought of as violence. Searching for an identity or wanting to belong to a group of friends has resulted in their exclusion in this search at times, and while this is violence, it is not marked as such in the thought of these adolescents.

The school, the family environs and the young people form part of the complexity of the area of Pedregales, however it is true that the young people in this area as well as those in other parts of Mexico City have no opportunities.

This is not only true at the economic level, but also at the family level. By not counting on the construction of values and social skills in the heart of the family, these skills are reduced on all scenes. The school, as a formative environ has put aside its responsibilities with the young. It is ever more common to see students dropping out of school, standing around the neighborhood or near the small business where video games and slot machines have become their pastime.

This seems to be the generation of "Jairo" from Luis Buñuel's movie, "Los Olvidados". They have the same domineering, rebellious character, without a cause, with no conscience. If these young people cannot be integrated into socially productive cultural activities, or activities of work or educational formation, or civic activities, their expectations for life will be complicated. Violence, illegality, lack of solidarity will be a life style ever more in demand, ever more used.

Young people should build a plan for life, think about what they want to do. In this way they will build goals which they will somehow try to fulfill. However in the interviews carried out with young people between 14 and 17 years of age who neither study nor work, it can be seen that

they have no clear idea of what they really want from life and the actions they take are only to fulfill their immediate needs, taking part time informal work for which they are not well paid since their low level of schooling does not permit them to find better paying jobs. Age contributes to determining the kind of an individual in the division of labor of the community, tribe or even the family. (Heller, 1977) That is why it seems young people do not have good jobs because they are not prepared to enter into the work force and because they are still minors.

Upon analyzing the in-depth interviews carried out with adolescents who neither work nor study we were able to see that the projects these "boys and girls" have is limited by the schooling they have and not by expectations they have for their lives. Some of their answers were, "I stopped studying in secondary school, well really in primary because I never got my secondary certificate because I failed one subject (Spanish) and well I haven't been able to pass it and that's why I didn't take the entrance exam for high school since if I don't have the certificate I won't be accepted (Serralde Barcía and Hernández Espinoza, 2012). In this case the young woman resigned herself to only go this far and not continue. Another young man answered, "since I didn't get into the school I wanted, that's why I think I'll take the exam again." (Hernández García and Olivares Becerra, 2012) In this respect we could also note that the answers of the young people in this secondary school show that they want to continue studying only so they will not be bored or not be at home and not as a way to get ahead in life. When asked in the questionnaire whether they plan on continuing their studies we see that 82% answered that they have plans to continue studying and only 7% answered that they are not interested in continuing their studies. This 7% are the young people who are likely to become what we call "Ninis", young people who neither study nor work. Thus we can conclude that while young people are integrated into an educational institution, they want to continue belonging to an institution. To the contrary, we can see in the interviews that those students who neither work nor study and therefore are not involved in any educational institution answer that they have no interest in continuing their studies. And those who would like to continue studying and get a college degree or a better job cannot do so for economic reasons; their parents cannot back them up economically. When asked in the questionnaire if they would like to keep up their studies, these "boys and girls" answered that, "well yes, because I get bored at home, but I think that I'm not going to continue studying because my father isn't going to want to pay anymore." Another responded, "well my mother is sick and my father also, his heart, and he doesn't work anymore." Her father worked in construction. The girls who carried out the interview said that after insisting the young lady answered that she would like to be a lawyer. Another answer we found was, "Yes I would like to be a technician in computing, well I'd like to take come courses and then study in an open high school (studies without attending classes), so that I can find a part time job." In the case of quantitative analysis, while the percentage is small (11%), these are young people who are apt to end up on the street since even though they might want to continue studying, lack of support prevents them from doing so.

Single mothers, a constant in the surrounding area of schools here.

CONCLUSIONS

Violence takes on different meanings which affect the everyday life of the subjects, perhaps because violence has become imperceptible and is confused with "a means of acceptation " of one with another.

Violence is a growing latent problem. It is not that it did not exist before. Many historical moments make reference to violence as a means for imposing power. However, its presence extends from worldwide to local, even more so in community spaces which are clear examples of what is going on in other places. In Social Work we are interested in studying it in order to discover its repercussions at the social level. We want to find out they way it is reproduced, the cycle it creates, the processes which trigger it because as a problem it brings with it prec-

edents which produce it in various spheres and reproduce it within these spheres.

Society is immersed in a complex scene in which all types of social violence have a negative impact. Our areas of coexistence are being fed off exclusion, discrimination, stigmas, lack of confidence, intolerance, and invisibility in collective environments such as schools, the family and the community, local scenes where young people spend most of their time. Violence is linked to other behavioral patters which are in turn tied to it: lack of confidence, illegality and competition among others. This is not only an individual phenomenon but also a collective one. Breaking the fabric triggers conflict in the fight to legitimize spaces of survival using whatever means possible, even violence.

The socialization of violence also includes social behavior in private and public life as Nelia Tello mentions. She adds that these occur in private and public life, turning them into essential referents of social behavior.

In the face of school violence, institutional efforts focus only on immediate temporary actions which are often confused with hard handedness and dealt with vertically without understanding that these methods cannot be understood separately: at home sometimes punishment is not carried out, where permission is not followed.

In this regard, patterns such as lack of confidence in "the other".... Violence as a mechanism of social interaction is not the correct way to make oneself heard nor in which to exert authority. (Tello, Manual recuperando lo nuestro (Manual on Recovering Ourselves), 2011

It is necessary to point out those social relations which are the product of contact, communication and interaction should be based on mutual respect and responsibility In order to resignify social relations and recreate spaces of interaction.

In daily life we learn certain relations with the rules we agree on or which are imposed on us or at times negotiated, which are carried out with the exertion of power or which are reciprocal.

Today's society is played out on a complete scene where social violence has a negative impact. Our environs of coexistence are being fed on exclusion, discrimination, stigma, lack of confidence, intolerance, invisibility, scenes such as the school, family and community. Local sites that are part of the contexts where adolescents are for a great deal of the day are contexts of socialization.

Agnes Heller declared that daily life is the reproduction of the individual man (Heller, 1977), who, from the time he is born has certain predetermined social conditions, systems and he is part of some concrete institutions; however his environment changes, he continually faces new tasks and must learn new systems.

The individual subject generates such meaning from socialization, from what is learned. The same happens with acts of violence, which are "adapted" to daily life since they are a part of his daily practices. Violence ia thus a learn practice, assimilated in various forms. It is said that violence should be used as the last resort, but as a sign of instability in reality the subject tends to never get over it, since the rules of coexistence do not seem to be clear and even if they are, they are not followed, where the ethical and violent repel each other.

In this regard, violence among adolescents in secondary schools is a phenomenon which is present due to the break of meaning towards recognized the other. Socialization among adolescents is carried out through submission, mockery and lack of respect towards classmates, exercising violent practices which include name-calling and blows, which from the perspective of these adolescents would be normal.....That is to say, social information and development of adolescents is seen as if it were a personal problem, even part of a stage ins development. However, the way in which meaning is given to options for relational behavior which young people have, are social processe which make up the characteristics of the social system in which they live.

In this way the students share codes, symbols and meaning in their interaction. It would seem that rules and limits do not form a part of this codification due to the scarce value and understanding of the reasons for obeying rules and doing what is expected when this is not the reality in their immediate environ meter.

School violence is a problematic situation in which the adolescent aggressor or victim are not the only players. Mother and fathers, professors and the community are also immersed in modifying of social processes and the normalization of the same.

Expressions of violence which take place in schools, as well as in families, are not in and of themselves the only environments which generate violence, but rather violence is a social construction which originates in non-linear causes generated in the structure of society and are reproduced in various ambiences with which adolescents, parents, professors, among other players have daily contact, meaning and applied in their environment until they become a normal socializing practice.

In this regard, the diagnostic conclusion leads us to determine the existence of violence, as in other analysis in other research. Violence is more and more pressing, more hurting for the victims as well as the aggressor, minors who may not even have reached adulthood.

On one hand school violence is a structural issue, that is, visible fragmentation which is permeated in various environments but on the other hand it is necessary to understand that these environments which are marked have majority where power, submission and particularities such as exclusion, lack of confidence, invisibility and individuality are carried out in the interaction of minors with others (classmates, parents, siblings, professors, friends, etc.) and vice versa.

The actors we studied acknowledge violence, but, the degree of application in their daily lives differs.

Mottled social scene of school.

Some factors were discovered which are observed closely, influencing everyday dynamics. An example of this is the way in which they perceive, through interaction with peers, the various manifestations of violence.

The normalization of violence begins with subtle situations such as the use of offensive language or nicknames which the insulted minor may use for himself or herself and even accept. They are surrounded by violent games, they go from a nickname to physical aggressions almost imperceptibly, the game is so subtle that it is not recognized to be aggression.

Their social networks are made up of friends, which they define as someone who stands up for them, which whom they have communication, with whom they get along. Their idea of "friendship" within their own affective circle is not clear to them, among "friends" they agree to be violent with each other, but they do not acknowledge as being violence.

In conclusion, we propose for this analysis some breaking points which would need to be worked on later on in order to redefine violence, how it is doled out and changes in social abilities. It will be understood then for example:

- Redefining violence among adolescents in their daily lives.
- Redefining community spaces.
- Strengthening student-teacher-parent ties.
- Involving parents in school dynamics for the construction of life expectations.
- Promote a culture of legality in adolescents.

- Sensitize young people on the consequences of consuming any kind of toxic substances.
- Promote healthy sex lives among adolescents based on redefining the use of contraceptive methods and the responsibilities of becoming parents at an early age.

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