

The boundaries of the cultural violence: the tolerable stigma to the intolerable stigma

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Resumen: El presente documento tiene por objetivo, con base en un estudio de caso en escuelas de educación básica, mostrar cómo se cristaliza la violencia cultural hacia niños invidentes. Dicha cristalización pasa por dos referentes de interacción y relación social al interior del espacio escolar. El primero está constituido por parámetros de normalidad y anormalidad a partir de la localización de estigmas. El segundo se encuentra, a contrapelo de la tendencia anterior, tratando de diluir los efectos de los estigmas al señalarlos como una práctica de tipificación social intolerable o inaceptable.

Palabras clave: estigma, intolerable, violencia cultural, infancia.

Abstract: The main objective of this paper (based on a case of study developed in basic education schools), is to show how cultural violence is crystallized towards blind children. This problem crosses by two referents of interaction and social relationships into the education space. The first one is conformed by normality and abnormality parameters from the stigmas' location; and the second one is opposed to the previous tendency in order to minimize the effects of the stigmas, showing them as an unacceptable kind of social segmentation.

Keywords: stigma, intolerable, cultural violence, childhood.



Introduction

Blind people face a series of problems to integrate to the daily life in the extent that the organization of the most common activities are structured in terms of the displacement capability that non-blind people do. Along these physical barriers, or better as a correlation, there is another kind of practices that generate the exclusion of the blind people's social life: discrimination. This, most commonly, is set in the lack of knowledge of the implications of a people suffering from blindness or any other kind of incapability.¹ Schools is one of the spaces where there are some discrimination barriers, not only for the blind children, but also for other types of incapacibilities, although it is true, it acquires variable degrees and depths, depending on the kind of incapability.

It is important to highlight that if we stick to the fact that it is common to mention that the education alleviates the burden of different forms of social disadvantages and opens the way to better life condition. So that if discrimination and exclusion are present at school, this does not facilitates vary much the integration of people with any sort of disability to the society. And it is not that the schools forbid the access to children with these characteristics, the problems comes when they are in it is possible to observe in the scholar daily life the exercise of certain cultural violence, which is

¹ Impairment and different capabilities have introduced a debate which turns out to be interesting and very fruitful; however, in many occasions it has come into a privileged field of the political correctness. This has sometime lead to sterile discussions where the language seems the secret key that opens the possibility that a term suppresses discrimination and exclusion. In this way to debate between using the impairment term or the different capabilities does not conduct eventually to end with the unfavorable conditions which these social groups have to face. To discuss these terms is not this document's purpose, so in this text the impairment term is used, in its connotation of impairment of something (vision, mobility or speech) and does not try to consider those people with such characteristics as "without capabilities" or "few capabilities" individuals.

expressed through the construction of prejudices, phobias and discriminations (Galtung, 1995)².

However, these expressions of cultural violence are not present permanently against blind children, but those who produce it at a time can, later, be acting in the opposite way, defending and demanding the respect for such children. The objective of this document is to show how this complex tolerance process is built —and the exercise— as well as the intolerance of the cultural violence against blind children. The argument of this work considers that such process passes by two social interaction and relation referents. The former is constituted by normality and abnormality parameters from the localization of stigmas, this is, of attributes that turn a person different from the rest, denuding him from his character as individual, reducing him to the category of an infected and underestimated being (Goffman, 1970). The second referent is, paradoxically, trying to dilute the effect the stigmatization generates when recognizing it as intolerable or unacceptable to the extent that it generates negative effects to that person attached to it (Fassin y Bourdelais, 2005). These two social interaction and relation referents show a way of understanding the cultural violence processes, which —differently from what it is commonly believed— is not a process that is crystallized once and for ever; on the contrary, it is subject

² In 1993 a reform to the Constitution third article is made. That reform permits the establishment of the Education General Law that, in its article 41, establishes the obligatoriness of the impaired children insertion into the regular schools of primary basic education. Certainly the attention to people with some kind of impairment in Mexico goes back to the year 1870, with the foundation of two schools. The Escuela Nacional para Sordos (*National School for the Deaf*) and the Escuela Nacional para Ciegos (*National School for the Blind*). In 1932 the Escuela para Niños Anormales (*School for the Abnormal Children*) and in 1935 the Instituto Médico Pedagógico (*Pedagogical Medical Institution*); in that same year, the Secretary of Public Education created a division for the special education. In 1936 a clinic of the behavior is created. In 1952 the Instituto Nacional de Audición y Foniatría (*Audition and Phoniatrics National Institution*) is founded to look after hearing impairments; the Instituto Nacional de Comunicación Humana (Human Communication National Institution) is established, with the aim to serve people with learning, hearing and language problems. The Escuelas de Educación Especial (*Special Education Schools*) were also formed to attend children with special education needs, with mental deficiency, hearing and language disorders, physical and visual problems (Kilinger, 2000)

to a production and deconstruction dynamic of those elements that constitute it.

In order to observe this process the result of an exploration work product of a research done in three regular elementary schools from the municipalities of Toluca and Metepec, State of Mexico, between June 2003 and April 2004, is taken as a referent. The schools that were chosen have variable experience in the attention to blind children. One of those schools has been receiving children with these characteristics for eight years, although it also receives children with hearing and speech problems; the other two schools, on the contrary, have at most two years experience receiving blind children.³ The analysis of these different spaces allows appreciating the presence of similar principles and production differentials and reconstruction

³ To realize the case study the first step was to identify a families group whose children were coursing the basic level in public schools. For that, it was necessary to go to the Centro de Atención Múltiple (*Multiple Attention Center*) dependency from the Secretary of Public Education, located in the facilities of the Centro de Rehabilitación y Educación Especial (*Rehabilitation and Special Education Center*) in Toluca, whose personnel very kindly facilitated us the contact with the five families who collaborated with the necessary information to perform this study. From the families, three of them live, according to CONAPO (2002) above urban marginalization, in high marginalization zones; the rest in medium and low marginalization zones. Three families can be categorized as compounded; one as nuclear and the other as single-parent. Most of the families perceive between 3,000.00 MXP and 4,500.00 MXP a month with the exception of one family whose income is of 8,000.00 MXP. In the first place we worked the Lara family, conformed 10 years ago and formed by the two progenitors and three daughters aged nine and six years and 4 months; Mariana is the oldest and has visual weakness since she was three due to an accident. Later we worked with the Pérez family, integrated 12 years ago; apart from the two parents it has four minors (two men and two women), aged between six and twelve; Alejandra the youngest is blind from birth. In the third place we contacted the Cruz family, conformed nine years ago; it is only formed by three members: father, mother and Miguel, blind from birth, due to a congenital problem. We also worked with the Gómez family, with the head of the family is the mother from on who depend her two daughters, one is nine and the other is eight; the older, Verónica, has visual weakness problems from birth. Finally, we have the Díaz family, who did not want to participate in the study so there are not data included on this family. The information on their son, Carlos, comes from the interviews to his teachers and the direct observation realized at his school. Carlos is eleven years old and is the oldest of three brothers; he is blind since he was born.

of the cultural violence in the school space.⁴ Although here the common characteristics shall be emphasised.

This document is divided in four parts. In the first one the basic concepts that guide this work are exposed, which try to understand the cultural violence from exploring the social construction of the stigmas as well as the intolerable and unacceptable of these practices. In the second part it is analyzed how the cultural violence is exercised, based on the blind children's stigmatization, in the particular case of the schools where the research took place. In the third part it is examined the way the maps of the unacceptable of the stigma towards blind children are built in such schools. Finally, in the last part some conclusions are suggested, which come from the research, proposing certain reflections on the articulation of the two processes that have been considered as central in the construction and deconstruction of the cultural violence.

Some concepts for the analysis⁵

It can be said that the studied on violence in general, and on cultural violence in particular, have been based on the paradigm that privileges the description of the conditions of the social, political and symbolic systems (Wieviorka, 2004); perspectives that in the last instance leave aside the study of the very actors involved in the production and reproduction of the violence. These studies part from the analysis and knowledge of the conditions the actors are in order to predict their eventual fall in the violence, as victims or

⁴ The research's investigation was obtained from interviews to blind children as well as their relatives, teachers, and schoolmates. Such interviews were accompanied with the direct observation of the behaviors and these actors' attitudes in different scenarios (home, schoolroom and classroom).

⁵ It is worthy to mention that his study does not try to inscribe itself in the line of works linked to the examination of the schools' role and their relation with the behavior towards the blind children, carried by, among other, Ulster and Antle (2005), Neibaur and Kleinschmidt (2005), Rosenblum and Corn (2003), Crocker and Orr (1996), so for the comparative Vaughan's comparative work (1998) on the insertion mechanisms of the blind children in the schools in different countries; but it is centered in the more general discussion on the holistic interpretation limits that regularly point towards considering that the values and norms turn out to be a "closed structure" where the individual has very little action capacity.

attacker. In these interpretation models there is the idea that there is the possibility of finding an elemental mechanism that produces it, for example frustration —where sometimes certain complementation between the analysis of the social conditions and the mobilization of certain resources from the actors are suggested. Even if these perspectives allow understanding some aspects of the reality around the violence, are not enough at a point since:

Most of the classic approximations of the violence have in common not intervening, but in the margin, the subjectivization and dis-subjectivization that necessarily [...] characterize their main characters. This indication that derives from a general character proposition, constitute, indeed, an invitation to theorize the violence placing the subject in the middle of the analysis (Wieviorka, 2004: 220).

How could cultural violence approached from this introduced twist? It would be recommendable to start in a first place from the cultural violence proposed by Galtung (1990), where it is considered that this is the conjunction of aspects from the symbolic sphere of our existence that can be used to justify or legitimate another kind of violence, as the structural and direct.⁶ Wieviorka (2004) highlights the fact that this definition allows accentuating the cultural fundamentals of every kind of violence but, at the same time, it works to understand the very legitimization of its exercise. Nonetheless, staying in this level of analysis can only reproduce the idea of the structural determination. In order to overcome this it is necessary to place in the centre of the analysis the role of the subject, exploring the processes and mechanisms by which the latter, individually or collectively, reaches the

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production of prejudices, phobias and discriminations as a work that does in his interior, on himself, depending of the concrete cases, situations and contexts (Dubet, 1994; Wieviorka, 2004).

The fact of considering the cultural violence as a process the subject elaborates through a work on himself, it is relevant to the extent the cultural violence is not considered as a mere structural print in the individual, but as a variable impression, unstable, with different shades that suggest their emergency and apparent dissolution. In other words, the cultural violence the subject practices is not a punishment the subject is condemned irremediably, but one on which he can reflect moving from its most cruel practice and its most severe critic. This circulation is regularly subject to very specific situation. The range between each of the two extremes of this circulation—the point where the cultural violence is accepted or rejected—is subject to conditions that can only be observed in particular situations.

If it is parted from the analysis of the expressions of cultural violence, in particular against blind people and other types of incapacabilities, Goffman's work (1970) regarding the stigma is a necessary reference. In general terms it allows appreciating the way in which the subjects, individual and collective, construct situational guides and categories of what it is acceptable, normal and what is pathological.⁷ The interactionist character of this perspective allows understanding the social world not as the result of the contraposition of the normal sphere on one side and the stigmatized on the other, since the conjunction of the individuals that conform it is subject to being stigmatized at any time. Goffman even states that the normal and the stigmatized are not people, but perspectives generated in the interactions. The stigmatizing attributes are not the ones that determine the normality and abnormality, but the frequency with any of them is performed. With all, the relation between normal and stigmatized is certainly tense. In fact, the normal people, by definition, think that a person with some sort of stigma is a "non-human" and, based on this reasoning, adopt different discrimination attitudes depending of the particular situation they are in.

⁷ Goffman's inputs to the contemporaneous sociology ensemble, mostly from the end of the 1980's decade and the middle of the 1990's, can be revised in Chriss' text (1995).

Not only this, the stigmatization also makes possible the construction of narratives on the supposed “nature” of the inferiority and incapability of the stigmatized to develop in the social life.

Nonetheless, the stigmatized not always lives under the harassment of the rejection or discrimination attitudes, there are sensible people that recognize a human in him or her, who is essentially normal. In this case, two groups of people are considered: the first one corresponds to those people who are equal for sharing the same stigma and know what it is like to have one; the second is called by Goffman the group of the intellectuals. This is formed by normal people who due to their special situation know the life of the stigmatized people and sympathize with their circumstances. In fact, it is possible to say that the space of the intellectuals is widening as the normal and stigmatized people reinforce their contacts in the everyday life; but, Goffman (1970) mentions that the familiarity does not guarantee the discrimination, phobias and rejection to decrease: certain particular kind of situation can facilitate the stigma to reappear. In this sense, it is not strange that on the one hand the subject, individual or collective, signs the stigmatized as another member of the group and on the other makes him object of cultural violence.⁸

This contradictory situation can be explained by a social construction process of the intolerable and the unacceptable. As Fassin and Bourdelais (2005) mention, certain daily practices linked to the exercise of a violence, being this direct or cultural, can be constantly found faced to their rejection not only by those people who are shocked by their practice, but also by those who exercise it. The torture to prisoners, children mistreatment and forced prostitution have become in this century, some of the figures of what it is intolerable. Indeed, not all of them are in the same level, which would be an absolute and with no history intolerable; on the contrary, their different manifestations allow observing the formation of certain moral hierarchy to its interior. The definition of the intolerable has to do in this

⁸ Some text elaborated from Goffman analysis on stigma, for instance the one carried by Yearley and Brewer (1989), Hinnenkamp (1989), Cottle (1994) and Traver (1994), have projected this contradiction that results fundamental to understand the duality where the relation between the so called “normal” and the stigmatized is sustained.

sense more with a refining of the ethic and moral values, with a work of creation of its sense every minute and in every place, in function of the values and sensibilities that the actors set to play.

In the particular case of the mistreated child—to set an example close to the subject of the work—, Vigarello (2005) indicates that in order for that violence was considered as intolerable, there is missing the conjugation of an evolution of sensibilities—that make the child an innocent victim—and a transformation of the values that raise this small child into a person subject to his rights. However, if the intolerable is historically constructed and also culturally constructed, it means that there can be moments, spaces and places where it dilutes, to the extent the other practical modalities predominate. This way, the stigma and its rejection as something intolerable create the space where the cultural violence is structured and dis-structured. In the particular case we are studying here, in the context of the daily life of a group of blind children in elementary schools, is interested mainly in highlighting the social interaction and relation these actors with some stigma establish with the “normal” people—among which are the teachers and other children. It is then parted from distinguishing the stigmatization processes the teachers create once they face the possibility of having to establish a relation with a blind child in the classroom to, then, examine how a more direct relation with the child presents an oscillation between the reproduction of the stigma and its rejection for considering it intolerable. Similarly, it shall be analyzed how in the classroom the same process that tilts between the rejection and the acceptance of the child, and the role the parents of “normal” and stigmatized children have in this dynamic.

To the extent the situations and interaction and relation contexts are relevant for the crystallization of the culture of violence it shall be important to mention some experiences of some actors: the blind children, their parents, classmates, teachers, as well as the parents of “normal” children, all of them contribute, to a different extent and force, to give the culture of violence the foundations that guarantee its production as well as its reproduction, and also the bases for its questioning.

The presence of the stigma

Despite the fact that the schools where the research took place presented different years of experience in the attention to blind children, the truth is that it can be observed a similar exercise of stigma production to these children. In each institution a protocol for the admission is established, presenting once in a while a series of obstacles that, from the perspective of the parents, suggest a subtle dissuasion so that they look for other schools for their children. This happens even when it is clearly stated in the current normativity, the steps to follow to accept blind children in the education centre. In all the cases the entrance is conditioned —despite it is forbidden by the law— to the signing of a document by which the school is not responsible in the case something happens to the children.⁹

With all these, once each of the obstacles has been overcome, it is necessary to immediately face the fact that the children reject the idea of having a blind child in their classrooms. This is, commonly, a process that is far from the sight of the parents, since it would not be correct to express openly deep stigmatizing opinions of their children before them. This stigmatization acquires reification connotations and therefore leads to consider the stigmatized child as a “non-human”. This is possible to appreciate in expressions such as:

The first thing I felt was rejection, because I wasn't sure, I mean, how was I supposed to act... we are four third-grade teachers, and the four of us rejected him; then we had a raffle and I got it, and then I say: oh God!, what am I going to do now!

Arguments that can be found in the different schools, where the raffle becomes the way of cataloguing the blind child as unwanted and when having the bad luck of “winning” the child as a pupil always leaves a halo of resignation; as having a burden to carry for the whole year:

⁹ Schools, as common rule, are not implicated in asking the government for the books in Braille, leaving this task to the parents of the blind children.

Well, I felt really bad because I said: what am I gonna do with this kind of child? None of us teachers wanted him. We had agreed on having a raffle among the five of us for this kind of children so that it was fair, and in fact, I got him!

In other cases this bad luck is seeing with horror: “oh, no, no, no! what I first felt was horror, I was afraid. I had never worked with these people. I was really scared”. These kind of expressions show the supposed burden that for a teacher represents having as a pupil a blind child, to the extent that it is considered a kind of working disgrace. They make possible to see the deep fear the teachers have to face the quotidian work with blind children. For others is not fear, but the supposed useless expense a child with these characteristics in the classroom, since it would seem that they are, from the start, condemned to the social failure due to certain natural condition. In this sense, a teacher mentions: “the good thing is that I did not have a child like this, because it is a waste of time”. Even for some teachers there is a right that helps them to not accepting blind children: “they better not send her with me [a blind girl], because I won’t have her in my classroom, I have the right of not accepting her”.

This rejection is reinforced with that the very parents of the children whose classmate is the blind child. Indeed, the interviewed parents did not admitted openly the rejection to the blind children, they manifested that it was their right to attend to the regular school because that would allow them inculcating values of respect towards the others. However, through the testimonies of the teachers it can be seen that some do not agree with the fact that blind children are in the same classroom as their children, objecting that the teachers pay more attention to them in comparison to the rest of the class, impeding in some cases the supposed “normal” development of the activities (for example, in the recess, where certain rules of the games or activities would have to be changed in order to involve the blind children). Some children when they hear at their homes the rejection comments of their parents, come to reproduce them in the quotidian relations and interactions, as it can be appreciated in the following comment done to a little girl: “My momma says you should not be coming to this school, you should be attending to a special school, where there are other

blind children; because here only we come”.

But, not only the verbal expressions stigmatize. The look the parents of blind children feel is probably the main example that there is a stigma, the fundamental evidence that one is set in a perspective. A mother of a blind girl says:

I was ashamed mainly because people stared at her and because they said nothing but: there goes the blind girl. On the way to the school and at the school I was very ashamed, sometimes to the extent of saying: I won't take her anymore, because people stared, they talked. Even when I picked her up I was one of the last moms to be there, just because I felt embarrassed. My blood boils when I heard people talking about her, I didn't know what to say, how to react.

In that way, the marks that denote or make evident the stigma were charged with a narrative on the apparently natural connotations attributed to it. A mother comments that a boy look in surprise the walking stick of a blind boy on the first day of classes and then he asked his mother, “Mom, why is he using the walking stick?”, and the mother responds: “ah, because he's blind, he cannot see, he's useless”. A point of view that is not different from the one mentioned before, from a teacher, in the sense that attending a blind child was a waste of time because such children have no future regarding their insertion to the social life. In fact, this is something so common that some parents question the academic development of certain blind children who have good grades at school. From their stigmatizing perspective, the idea of children, catalogued as “normal”, having lower grades than the blind ones cannot fit. A mother angrily talked to the teacher at the end of the day: “how is it possible that my son, who hears and sees well, gets C's and D's? And how is it possible that her, who cannot see, gets A's and B's? Mothers cannot explain this situation and accuse the teacher of giving grades away to this kind of children. The idea results, in the extreme of the stigmatization, an expression of despise and rejection, as whom is before a contagious disease. Example of this are expressions such as “oh, look at him, poor boy!” stop staring and come here!” or, “these children can affect our children”.

What is paradoxical is that in the classrooms where the research took place, the teachers barely have time to dedicate to the blind children. The teachers, although it is not a general rule, they do not take into consideration the special needs of this kind of children either, there are more worried for explaining the topics to the whole class and not slowing down a bit so that the blind children are able to do the tasks; some teachers do not even know how to use Braille, and are not interested in learning because they believe it is too complicated. Once a teacher said: "I prefer 50 noisy children than one handicapped"

Moreover, children generate their own stigmas, which many times are not far from what their teachers establish. In the first place, the managing of the Braille reading, with its different instruments, sets a first difference between the blind child and the rest of the group; in the second place is the walking stick. Those two, as Goffman suggests, form the symbols of the stigma. Such objects not only identify the different person, but they provoke curiosity and at certain times some kind of morbid fascination in the children. Although the verbal aggressions are, without a doubt, more explicit: "don't you see she's blind?" It is also possible to observe some pranks directly related to their incapability of seeing, such as hiding their things or making them fall are the most common. These facts are more common when the blind child enters to the school for the first time or when there are newcomers to the term. These practices, indeed, within time are less frequent but they never disappear.

The stigmatization exercised against the blind child is not only limited to them, it also affects their closets family, in particular their siblings, if they have any, who attend the same school. When that is the case, there can be situations when the blind children tend to close their connivance circle with their siblings, usually at the recess time. Sometimes, when the blind children's siblings interact with other children in presence of the blind brother or sister, are disqualified for the recreation activities: "No, we should not play because...well, you know, your brother!" This sometimes leads to a great angst. The sister of a blind girl we worked with was very quite and shy. Her mother said that she sometimes she has felt some sense of oppression in her daughter for the comments her classmates do referring to

her sister, “the blind”. This situation makes her very sad to the extent that she does not have many friends; in fact, when she was asked if she had any she answered: “no, well, in that case, I [she cannot speak, tears fall from their eyes] I haven’t been with my friends”. Even though the mother had tried to explain the problem and the possible solutions, the truth is that both sisters are already objects of stigmas: one for the physical attributes; the other for the blood relationship to the former one.

In general terms, it is possible to detect that something that constitutes the culture of violence against blind children —as prejudices, phobias and discrimination— are transversally crossing the different actors of the education institutions analysed. Seemingly, nobody wants to create co-presence links in spaces that are considered not proper for this kind of children. The setting up of the stigmas to the blind children compels a collective practice that is constructed from the establishment of a difference, but also the granting of a moral label. Now, it is true that teachers, students and parents of “normal” children coincide in many points in their idea of blindness, it is necessary to acknowledge that they do it in different levels and from different perspectives. The cultural violence acquires very variable shades. Even, as we shall see next, it is sometimes questioned by those who moments before based their vision of blind children in stereotypes clearly defined by prejudice, phobia and discrimination.

The intolerable of the stigma

Cultural violence cannot be seen from the perspective of the actors as a unanimous process. The same people who by means of a raffle who will be having blind children in their classroom, also present attitudes that tend to consider as intolerable other practices based in the stigmatization. From there that it can be observed in the teachers from the analysed schools an attitude that can seem ambivalent or contradictory: in the one hand, these children are stigmatized whereas, on the other, it has been tried to have a connivance and tolerance space —trying to affirm the unacceptability of the stigmatization. In their vision there is a belief that the time is the base that guarantees the dissolution of the practices based on phobias and prejudices. A teacher mentions: “I don’t know how long it will be for the

teachers to accept a child with different capabilities in their classrooms without complaining”. Another teacher adds:

The experience to understand them is acquired through time, work and everyday contact with the children, because when we’re studying, the subject is not seen profoundly. When one leaves school the reality is very different to what is thought, and we don’t know what to do.

In this sense, most of the interviewed teachers comment that: “there is a huge gap between what it is said and what it is really done”. Although certainly the every day experience would regularly oblige to propose solutions that allow reducing the rejection towards blind children. For example, in one occasion, certain parents asked for their children to be transferred to a different group than they were first assigned; the reason was that these parents did not want their children to be a blind child as a classmate. The teacher, whom due to a raffle was the one who got the blind child, had, however, to talk to the parents and make them understand the conditions in which the class work was to be done. After the talk, the parents who were asking the transference desisted. With the everyday relation these parents are more receptive, although the teachers believe that it is necessary to insist in the sensitization, of both their co-workers as well as of the parents, mainly of those who take their children for the first time to school and are not familiarized with the connivance with blind children. This implies an acknowledgement that even if time is an ally when trying to overcome the stigma that surrounds the children’s blindness, the truth is that when new children come to the school, with their parents, the task becomes permanent.

Some teachers have even acknowledged that accepting blind children have represented a change in the traditional perception of them. It is the case of a teacher that was faced to this situation when, through a raffle, she was in charge of a blind child. Her assignation was a disgrace at that time because it meant more activity for the same salary. Seeing this she demanded that no more than 30 children were enrolled in her classroom. When she started working with Miguel, the blind child, she realized that he was really capable; he was already able to read and write in Braille, he could do sums

and subtractions mentally, besides she noticed that he was really “friendly” and “likeable”; she started to accepting him little by little, acknowledging that it was not as hard work —as she had imagined— being a teacher of a child in these conditions. She now admits that to this contributed that a girl, friends with Miguel, supported her, probably because she had a deaf brother; unfortunately the girl withdraw from school and this represented a new effort to come closer to Miguel. To begin with she started to get help from all the children in the group, having them spending some time helping Miguel in some activities. In the second place, she coordinated a visit from the people from CREE to the school so they give some talks. Finally, she started to learn how to use Braille. She says that her relation as a teacher made her being too much involved with Miguel, to being obsessive. Miguel’s mother mentioned that the teacher phoned them everyday to tell them the steps necessary for the accomplishment of the homework tasks. The teacher, indeed, was very affectionate of Miguel; the family considers that it was with her help that Miguel become more confident in the school.

However, Miguel’s teacher believes that her case is not repeated among other colleagues and the institution is not interested —either— in changing some stigmatizing attitudes towards the blind children. This is confirmed with the fact that the other teachers of the institution are not trained, so if Miguel teacher was transferred it would mean that it was necessary to start working on the sensitization and training of the other teachers. She considers:

That every educative institutions should train the teachers so that they can receive children with different capabilities, because it is important that these children are integrated to a society, and that the society accepts them and not rejects them. Because in many occasions it is the society that rejects them, I shall not go farther, I was one of them, and I rejected him [a Miguel] because I did not know how to teach someone like him, because I did not know how to treat him, juts because I did not know many of the things they are used to.

During the research it was possible to observe that also the teachers tend to support one another —when possible— in the experience of the Unidades de Servicio de Atención a la Educación Regular (USAER) (*Regular*

Education Attention Service Units).¹⁰ This kind of help has been important mainly when there has been some kind of aggression to the blind children from their classmates. In other cases its intervention has been required when the parents of blind children are too over-protective of their children or when the parents of the children considered as “normal” express their concern because their children attend the same school as the blind.

It is necessary to highlight that probably one of the most involved actors in defining as intolerable the stigmatization of the blind children are the very parents of these children.

Being aware, as it was seen in the previous part, of their condition, they believe in the need of working in the front row with the teachers. A mother mentions:

The problem with the teachers is their lack of sensibility, since it not only depends of the knowledge or experience, it is also necessary a positive attitude and the willingness to work with this kind of children.

Some of the mothers had to be involved directly with the teachers in order to open more appropriate connivance spaces between them and the blind children, and in general with the series of their children’s friends at the classroom. The mothers are the ones that show the teachers how to approach the child and work with him or her, and trying to dilute the stigma above them. Sometimes they make them intellectuals, in Goffman’s terms, although this certainly does not happen in all the cases. In the research done in the schools a more or less coordinated work between mothers of blind children, teachers, and people from the USAER can be seen. Even in

¹⁰ Such units attend the difficulties presented in the school learning of some students of the primary schools and the adaptation of children who have speech, hearing and vision (blind and visually weak) problems. These units are also in charge of detecting and orienting the children who due to their characteristics show outstanding abilities to study. In the particular case of the blind children, teachers from USAER have as function to reinforce the integration of minors to the classroom and to orient the teachers in the special attention they require. In some occasions they are a bridge between the CAM and the regular school. Only In two Schools considered in this work there were USAER teachers at the moment of performing the research.

some cases also the blind children's classmates are involved in this dynamic, particularly those who share the bench, those sitting close to them and the ones who had been in those places in previous years. From there, maybe, that many parents of blind children refer to the need of working in what some call the "respect culture".

In the school it should be inculcated the culture of respect, the valued of life, because in the school, definitively, there are none. Much preparation is needed, much culture for the people.

Another mother also comments:

There is still much need of education and it should be taught respect for the people with different capabilities since the childhood. Because that is the reason why stereotypes are formed, as well as prejudices, and the children grow up with these ideas.

These affirmations are linked to the need of their children acquiring certain corporeity apart from the stigma they suffer from. As a father states: "the society is not yet prepared for this kind of children". This to the extent that the stigma affects the family as a whole: "the society —says the blind child's father— is wrong because they do not know how much work it is to have a family like this". About this perspective the families establish regarding their situation, it is clear the difficulty they have to spot themselves a place where they feel accepted, since the mobility of the stigma over their children —the limits from which, as Goffman would say, are considered as "non-human" or human— they are very unstable in the school ambience. The result is only one: on one hand they are told that they are equal to everyone, and on the other such equality is questioned in the scholar community. To sum up, everything is conditioned to the limits the community at the school imposes, in a very variable way.

With all this, it can also be observed that the very consideration of the stigma as something intolerable. Its sustenance is in the delimitation of certain moral hierarchy that makes some prejudices and phobias to disappear in function of the particular interaction contexts: the teacher who rejected a child in her classroom has to show another attitude —which considers intolerable to the stigma— when she faces the mother or the father who does not want their child to spend time with the blind child. This shows,

without a doubt, the conformation of certain moral hierarchy to the interior of the teacher who also talks about a work on him or herself. The definition of the intolerable has to do, therefore, with a work of creation of sense in which, as it has been seen in this part, other actors participate, specially the parents of the blind children.

Final considerations

The culture of the violence as a process that acquires sense in particular times and situations allows revaluating the role of the subjects, as these, in function of their experience, provide it with a special accent: they reflect from their symbolic components to which can be added more or less entirely, but from which it can also be taken some distance. This reflection is done by the subject, as Dubet (1994) suggests, through the combination of different logics. This allows a perspective that decentralizes the idea of the social constructed based on the classic idea of the roles, the action and the subjectivity, rather underlining the experience as a combination of action logics; logics that link the actor to different dimensions of the social life. The oscillation between the stigma and its rejection is visualized as an articulation of different action logics, and it is the dynamic created by this activity that constitutes the actor's subjectivity and its reflectivity (Dubet, 1994).

From this point of view, the acceptance of the stigma and its intolerance would be supported not by the general social conditions —where the very subject's reflectivity would be as a mere effect of the description of the social system— but rather the subject is the centre of the circulation that leads the stigma to its rejection as long this reflects from solicitations of interpretation in particular situations and contexts. In this way, it is understood how the teachers can reject a blind child, stigmatize him and reify him before their colleagues, and move to arguments that tend to reject the stigma of the parents who do not want this child to share the educational life of their own children. The latter, along with their parents, can move from more clear forms of discrimination to solidarity expressions, once they have build stronger connivance nets with the blind children.

For this perspective, the circulation that leads to the tolerated stigma to

its rejection as something intolerable inverts certain sociologic visions of Weberian inspiration —although not exclusively— that, as Tellier (2003) mentions, confuse the action in process of being done, with the performed action, denying the possible modifications of the action in the process of intersubjective relations. Talking in terms of the culture of violence, this means that it is necessary to take distance from the affirmations that establish that the expression such as phobias, prejudices and discriminations set by the symbolic sphere imply a determination of the action: the interaction's social experience in different situation obliges the individual to question his own values and norms of performance. Nonetheless, it is worth to make an important clarification. This circulation does not have a normative character, and it cannot be expected to always fulfil its cycle: from the phobias and discriminations to their questioning or apparent denial. As it has been seen in this work, there are people who cannot escape from the reproduction of the culture of violence, where each situation and context gives account of the need of establishing a social distance in respect to those who are considered as “non-human”.

This establishes that the contexts, even if they are relevant, they are not determinant to produce a change of perspective, as it is the subjects and their experiences, this is, their reflection of what they have lived, the permanence of the subject in the expressions of the culture of violence, or the its transcendence are supported on. From this panorama the violence resends, for a person, as well as for a group, either the capability, reduced, improbable of constituting in a subject, or to subjectivization mechanisms. The violence is linked, therefore, to the way how the subject is constructed or not, which cannot be only the reflection of a situation (Wieviorka, 2004).

This leads to a final consideration that can be significant, at least in the sphere of the development of the undertaken research, and the thing is that the expressions of culture of violence that is possible to locate in the treatment of the blind children cannot be overcome only from the diffusion of the information related to the need of accepting this kind of people, rather it requires a step towards the construction of different subjectivities, which sometimes overcome —this does not mean that this is irrelevant— to the mere diffusion of a culture of tolerance and respect to the difference.

It requires a capability from the subject, individual or collective, to think about the appreciation of the other differently in the context of his experience.

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