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## Enforced disappearance and cultural trauma in Mexico: the Ayotzinapa movement

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**Abstract:** The disappearance of 43 students from Ayotzinapa in 2014 breathed life into a broad social movement. What occurred this time to generate a broad mobilization of citizens? To answer this question, I believe we need to understand why and how Mexican society has framed the Ayotzinapa events. My starting hypothesis is that the Ayotzinapa events have produced a social process of collective trauma, and I will support this with Jeffrey Alexander's proposal of cultural trauma, rarely used when analyzing collective action. The analysis is based on ethnographic work carried out over one year (September 2014-2015) during the different demonstrations to show solidarity with the parents of the disappeared students, which were held in Mexico City, and 70 interviews held at the national demonstration on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2015 to commemorate a year since the 43 rural teachers' college students went missing.

**Keywords:** victim movements, cultural trauma, enforced disappearance, emotions, violence.

**Resumen:** La desaparición de los 43 estudiantes de Ayotzinapa en 2014 dio vida a una amplia e inusual respuesta por parte de la sociedad civil mexicana. La pregunta que responde la investigación es: ¿qué sucedió en esta ocasión para generar una amplia movilización ciudadana? Con base en la propuesta de Jeffrey Alexander de trauma cultural, raramente utilizada en el análisis de la acción colectiva, analizaré el porqué y de qué forma la sociedad mexicana ha enmarcado los hechos de Ayotzinapa. El análisis se fundamenta en el trabajo etnográfico efectuado a lo largo de un año (septiembre 2014-2015) durante las distintas manifestaciones en solidaridad con los padres de los estudiantes desaparecidos emprendidas en la Ciudad de México y de 70 entrevistas realizadas en la manifestación nacional del 26 de septiembre de 2015, que conmemoraba un año de la desaparición de los 43 estudiantes normalistas.

**Palabras clave:** movimientos de víctimas, trauma cultural, desaparición forzada, emociones, violencia.

## Introduction and problem<sup>1</sup>

In Latin America enforced disappearance has been a strategy employed by various military dictatorships to frighten citizens and to weed out those individuals considered as dangerous. Although Mexico has never witnessed a military coup since the student repression of 1968 and the so-called dirty war against guerrillas, felonies such as enforced disappearance, torture, and other severe inhuman or degrading treatments have become a *modus operandi* which have not been restricted to the isolated conduct of civil servants but rather to a general phenomenon carried out by law enforcement agencies, paramilitary groups and criminal organizations (Open Society Foundations, 2016; Belisario Domínguez Institute, 2016; CNDH, 2016; GTDFI, 2015). The reports of the Mexican State Secretary and international independent organizations record more than 20 thousand cases of enforced disappearance in the country (Segob, 2016; Open Society Foundations, 2016; IACHR, 2015).

Despite the fact that enforced disappearance in Mexico records similar levels to countries who have faced civil war and political violence such as Syria and Pakistan (GTDFI, 2015), the response of Mexican society in the last decade, in contrast with Guatemala, Argentina and Chile, has been weak and intermittent. This tendency is prominent in the recent National Survey on Organized Violence (ENVO)<sup>2</sup> (Schedler, 2014), which shows that in 2013 89.4% of the respondents have refrained themselves from taking part in any form of collective action, and 75% have declared being unaware of demonstrations in favor of disappeared victims.

On September 26th, 2014, a wide movement to show solidarity with the families of victims emerged in Mexico due to the murder of 6 people and the enforced disappearance of 43 male students of the rural teacher's college in Ayotzinapa in the State of Guerrero, this movement's crucial petition was to present the young students alive.

The response of Mexican society to the disappearance of the students broke the tendency toward inactivity and led to an unprecedented movement in the country (Alonso-Sánchez and Alonso-Reynoso, 2015). Such

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1 This research won the Seventh Worldwide Competition for Junior Sociologists chosen by the Gran Juria de la Asociación Internacional de Sociología.

2 The ENVO research, which rebuilds the perceptions and attitudes of citizens and elites, was one of national type. In October and November 2013 these surveys were conducted house by house, with 2,400 cases as a sample; and between November 2013 and February 2014 by telephone, with 629 cases from the elites as a sample.

movement is characterized by the high participation of citizens who do not belong to any permanent organized sector of social movements or formal organizations. Data from the Laboratory of Analysis of Organizations and Social Movements (LAOMS, 2015a and 2015b) of CEIICH-UNAM, which makes use of the Analysis of Collective Action Events methodology, underline that after the occurrences of September 2014, collective action events increased, from that month to December they consisted of 47% from the total of that same year, in which the increment of protests was 120% in the annual measure of central tendency.

All of the above leads to ask one question: What occurred this time to generate a broad mobilization throughout the country? Such question is relevant as we comprehend why Mexican society did not regard the disappearance of the 43 students as another isolated case.

To give an answer, I believe we need to understand how Mexican society has framed the enforced disappearance of those young students. My starting hypothesis is that the Ayotzinapa events produced a social process of collective trauma, I will support this on Jeffrey Alexander's proposal (2002, 2004 and 2016), rarely used when analyzing collective action.

The paper is written as follows: I will examine firstly, the analysis of how certain emotions frame the students enforced disappearance as a collective cultural trauma. Secondly, on the basis of the literature on emotions and protest, I will examine the process of politicization of collective trauma, which modifies the relationship between citizens and public institutions. Finally, I will summarize underlining how the cluster of such meanings due to the events in Ayotzinapa triggers the collective cultural trauma that gives rise to a new social narrative.

The analysis is based on a research whose design comprises two stages: 1) the ethnographic work carried out throughout a year (September 2014-2015) of demonstrations in Mexico City, which enables us to understand what the role of participants, organizations and groups was; how diverse actors were structured; and what patterns of meaning were repeated (Andretta and Della Porta, 2008; Andretta, *et al.*, 2002; van Stekelenburg *et al.*, 2012); and 2) the 70 interviews held at the national demonstration of September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2015, which commemorated the disappearance of the 43 college students. 46 women and 24 men were interviewed from which 16% was 20 years of age or younger; 28% was in their twenties; 23% was in their thirties; 15% was in their forties; 10% was in their fifties; and 8% was older than 60. 64 out of the 70 respondents declared not taking part into any organization or contingent attending the event. In the analysis the 70 interviews are considered indifferently.

## **From Tlatelolco to the cruelty in Ayotzinapa: a long period of protest**

In Mexico, October 2nd is a date of social mobilization, a march is made to commemorate the massacre of students in Plaza de las Tres Culturas in Tlatelolco, which took place the same day but in 1968. Each year, thousands of young people, organizations for the defense of human rights, population groups and other civil society organizations prepare for it in Mexico City.

On September 26th, 2014, a group of students from the rural teacher's college Raúl Isidro Burgos of Ayotzinapa in the State of Guerrero, took in a non-violent manner some buses of the public transport service of Iguala —municipality of the same state— to go to Mexico City and attend the social mobilization of October 2nd. That night, the buses were intercepted by the local police and attacked with firearms. As a result, 7 people died, from whom one was skinned and his eyes were gouged out, and the sons of poor local farmers, between the ages of 18 and 23, who were studying to become teachers of any of the rural public elementary schools were detained by police officers and then kidnapped.<sup>3</sup>

As we previously noted, insecurity and violence in Mexico did not begin with the brutal events of Ayotzinapa. Before and after the events of Ayotzinapa serious violations to human rights have occurred in the country. Beginning with the massacre of Tlatelolco, committed 10 days before the inauguration of the 1968 Olympics in Mexico City. Additionally, in Mexico disappearance of people is frequent. According to the National Registry of Disappeared and Missing People (Registro Nacional de Personas desaparecidas o extraviadas) of the Ministry of the Interior (Segob, 2016), between 2006 and 2014 the disappearance of 22,610 people was reported.

However, the enforced disappearance of the 43 students on September 2014, because of its numbers and extension, triggered the most important wave of protest that the recent history of the country has witnessed. There were also protests in different cities abroad for the same case. During the search of the teacher trainees clandestine graves were discovered in Guerrero and other states of Mexico.

So, if enforced disappearance and violations to human rights are frequent and oftentimes are unperceived or quickly forgotten, why the cruel acts by police and the enforced disappearance of the 43 students provoked protests in such an unprecedented scale? These were the main questions that gave rise to this research, whose results I will present in the following pages.

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3 On which, see further the wide critical bibliography of Krotz and Llanes (2015).

## **Enforced disappearance as a collective cultural trauma**

### *Social representation in the traumatic status*

Alexander underscores (2002, 2004, 2016) that cultural trauma is not something that exists naturally, but rather is a sociocultural process built by society. In the present work as well as in Alexander's proposal (2004), a traumatic event is used as a frame for interpretation, that is to say, the main characters are whom describe themselves as traumatized. This takes place when the personal and/or collective environment suddenly and unpleasantly changes (Alexander, 2004: 2). Nevertheless, the result of the event itself is not the construction of meaning of trauma –like the disappearance of the 43 students–, but rather the result of a more complex process: while experiencing pain and mourning is a personal fact, sharing trauma depends on the cultural interpretation which lies beneath collective processes.

As Alexander underscores, the same traumatic event such as mass genocide, may be interpreted in different ways according to social and historical contexts, and solely in certain occasions gives rise to the social process of cultural trauma (Alexander, 2004 and 2016). For instance, years before the Holocaust of Jewish people, during the invasion of China in 1938, the Japanese army slaughtered more than 300 thousands civilians in Nanking. The trauma caused by this never spread out beyond Chinese territory which did not allow the social process of cultural trauma to develop in Japan regarding the victims of Nanking.

Conversely, the public exposition of the Holocaust, for instance, made it possible for the Germans to develop, after three generations, a cultural trauma based on a sense of guilt and responsibility, regardless of the fact that many German citizens had no connection with the Nazi regime. Therefore, the process of cultural trauma and the construction of the meaning of trauma are dynamic processes that vary according to culture as well as to social and historical context.

Additionally, the construction of meaning that surrounds cultural trauma is also linked to the emotional dimension of people, particularly to feelings such as threat, fear and insecurity. The way in which individuals interpret their emotions regarding the traumatic event is what Alexander (2004: 10) calls *traumatic status*. In the case of Ayotzinapa, the traumatic status that emerges from the students disappearance is determined by the feeling citizens have about being directly threatened, and not only them but their loved ones as well, as shown in these statements: 'Lamentably,

this time were them, but tomorrow who will be?’ (I.45). and ‘Tomorrow it might be my son’ (I.43).

Therefore, in the case of the enforced disappearances of Ayotzinapa, as Alexander underlines (2004) the event itself is not what characterizes the creation of the traumatic status, but rather the individuals’ interpretation because the traumatic status can be ascribed to a real or imaginary phenomenon. Different from Caruth’s psychoanalytic approach (1996), which emphasizes the unconscious dimension of emotions during trauma, I consider, it is the ability of people to create, control and transform their emotions (Hochschild, 1975 and 1979) which determines the symbolic construction of the traumatic event.

In Ayotzinapa, the traumatic status is the result of the symbolic and cultural meaning that is ascribed to shock and fear produced by the disappearance of the students as this testimony proves: ‘what happened to the students can happen to anyone’s children, though I understand that here, in Mexico City it is a bit more unlikely for that to happen’ (I27). Besides emotions such as fear and threatening which people directly link to the traumatic event –enforced disappearance–, there are other emotions which play a role in the construction of the collective trauma and link victims with others.

The trauma that emerges at a collective scale is also the result of empathy and solidarity shown by the unaffected towards the disappeared students and the parents of the victims, and also the result of the deep disconformity of society who feels its identity is in danger (Alexander, 2004). Just as in the case of the Holocaust (Alexander, 2016), trauma is the result of reconstructing a shared pain in the community (victims and unaffected), which becomes a threat to ‘the sense they make of themselves, from where they come and where they want to go’ (Alexander, 2004:10). To sum up, the traumatic event as enforced disappearance is interpreted in such a manner that it leaves indelible impressions on the affected community, redesigning its memories and changing its future identity in an irrevocable way (Alexander, 2004).

Emotions which bind others with victims are essential in the process of cultural trauma construction. Absence of empathy, for instance, might lead to what Alexander (2004) calls the rejection of trauma existence, as currently observed in a fraction of Japanese society which still rejects or downplays the massacre of Nanking in China.



*Humanization of victims and the circle of the we*

People's interpretation of the emotions, which emerge from the traumatic event, transforms the image of victims as well. As analyzed in Alexander's (2016) research about the Jewish Holocaust, a component which establishes the traumatic status is the process of humanizing victims. Instead of seeing the Jewish victims of Nazis as a depersonalized and chaotic mass, Western culture began to personalize and differentiate them. Identify them plainly as human beings allowed the Western non-Jewish, for the first time, to experience an intense emotional identification with the 6 million Jewish victims of Nazism (Alexander, 2016: 5-6).

In the case of the disappeared students from Ayotzinapa, the new meaning ascribed to the victims as human beings allows others to experience an emotional identification with them, as shown in the following statements: 'we are students, what would have happened if it had been us?' (I.66), 'I think about parents suffering' (I.14) or 'As a mother I feel the pain parents are having, and it is very hard' (I.53).

In addition, in this case there clearly is an interruption in how victims stop being anonymous rates in order to become human beings, which transforms the disappearance of students in a social crisis, for instance, the pictures of one of the young men assassinated the night of September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2014 with the skinned face. Seeing those pictures and link his death to his biography as a student, father to a baby girl, broke the anonymity characteristic of the numerous victims of disappearance in Mexico.

This process led people to reflect upon what happened and consequently to do something, as an interviewee declares: 'It was not this world, it was another one, then when this happens, when I see the picture that starts to be spread on social media I thought they were talking about another Mexico. [...] It was this what hurt me most and made me cry' (I.64). In order to fight the violence of dehumanization exerted over the students –which is reflected in the words of one interviewee: 'They preyed on them like animals, followed the 43 students like animals' (I. 58)–, emerges the need to humanize and personalize the victims. This makes possible for the disappeared students to become 43 faces and 43 names with personal stories. This process of humanization creates a sense of identification and leads citizens to 'not forget them and demand justice' (I.16).

The process of humanizing victims, besides contributing to the emergency of the traumatic status, allows widening what Alexander (2004) calls *the circle of the we*. To recognize a victim as a human being, to identify

oneself with the disappeared students or with their parents is what expands, strengthens and sustains the sense of collective identity of a community.

The widening of the circle of the we allows a part of the Mexican civil society, as a first result, to overcome the differences between protesters, the majority of them of middle class living in the capital, and the teacher trainees and their families, coming from a rural and indigenous place, which is still being stigmatized in Mexican culture. This result coincides with other cases of study, such as the Woman in Black Movement in Israel and Palestine, which when humanizing the victims of others and sharing the same pain and mourning, achieved to overcome the national differences (Benski 2005 and 2011).

The circle of the we, which is widen thanks to the process of humanizing victims, is strengthen also with the perception of living in a community under threat or under attack, just as what happened with the Jewish community after the Holocaust (Alexander, 2002 and 2016) or with the LGBT community in the United States during the AIDS crisis in the 90's (Gould, 2009).

The fear and anxiety that 'this is happening everywhere, they are our children and tomorrow it may happen to mine' (I.43), make possible the remaking of the events in Ayotzinapa building a sense of "we"; that is to say, a collective identity based on threat, as the following interviewee highlights: 'Now we live here with fear because if it is not the government is the police; unfortunately many times the police is corrupt. People live with fear. Here we say: "we are free, but until when?"'

The humanization of victims and the widening of the circle of the we causes the community to identify the moral cause of trauma. The community members who feel under threat define their relationships of solidarity in order to share the suffering of others and increase the possibility that the same trauma may not be repeated again. Thus, the event produced by the trauma suffers a process of political and symbolical deconstruction (Alexander, 2016: 8).

In this process, the event created by trauma is made widespread and it becomes the symbol of violence against the members of any stigmatized community, as it happened with the Holocaust (Alexander, 2016). In Mexico the enforced disappearance of students, that is, 'everything that the 43 students represent' (I. 31) became a frame of political significance, comprised with different moral emotions which sprout in the interviews such as: dignity, resistance, hope, but at the same time: impunity, helplessness, injustice and insecurity. Such process is analyzed in the following section.



### *The process of politicization of the cultural trauma*

The construction of cultural trauma around a traumatic event such as enforced disappearance triggers what Alexander (2004: 11) calls a cluster of meanings, which involves a collective change in consciousness, memories and identity. This change is manifested with the development of relations among previous events, apparently unrelated to the traumatic event, social structures, individual perceptions and collective actions (Alexander, 2004: 1).

In the Mexican case, framing the enforced disappearance of students as a cultural trauma causes a relationship of meanings between the events in Ayotzinapa and other events, apparently disassociated, because they took place in another historical context of Mexican society, for instance, the demonstrations of 1968, as the testimony of a 30-year-old, who did not witness those events says: 'It recalled me the 1968 events, a huge disgrace for all the people of Mexico' (I.45). In practice, a symbolical continuity emerges between past events and the ones in Ayotzinapa strengthening the symbolical value of the traumatic event, here is what an interviewee said: 'not only are 43, but thousands of people who disappear violently' (I58).

Another relationship which emerges from this cluster of meanings, as Alexander (2004) suggests, is that between the traumatic event and the structural components, seemingly external to the event, for instance, the presence of the army on the streets or the economic crisis the country is undergoing, both are added to the displeasure caused by the mobilization: 'we are here because of all the unemployment' (I.5). In addition, there is the relationship between the traumatic event and individual perceptions, such as the perception of living in an insecure place: 'Mexico has become a country of too much crime' (I.45), or the notion of impunity: 'because there is a lot of impunity in Mexico' (I.1). Finally, the relationship between the traumatic event and collective action stands out such as the participation in demonstrations and the notion of 'keep fighting for all the other cases' (I.35).

As we have shown the cluster of meanings, which is developed from the cultural trauma, does not isolate the disappearance of the Ayotzinapa students, but rather presents this case as the result of a series of external circumstances to the trauma, circumstances perceived by people as unjust. This cluster of meanings feeds the process leading to social mobilization with the desire of not having the trauma of enforced disappearance repeated and also with the desire to obtain justice for the other cases and, generally, to put an end to the feeling of insecurity and threat.

The components mentioned above contribute to what we suggest should be called process of politicization of cultural trauma, which means that the symbolical dimension of cultural trauma and the emotions linked to it allow building a political discourse around trauma and frame in a political way the experience of the violence suffered, as what happened in the Holocaust (Alexander, 2016), or in another case, with the victims of incest in the United States (Champagne, 1996).

This is possible not only because the cluster of meanings allows the development of a series of unexpected relationships, but also because the process of trauma politicization is determined according to two typologies of emotions: the ones linked to trauma –*emotions of trauma*–, such as pain, fear, shame and helplessness; and the ones produced from the experience of resisting trauma –*emotions of resistance*–, such as pride, happiness, trust, security or righteous anger (Whittier, 2001).

On the one hand, the latter are the ones which build a political discourse of trauma from the suffered violence, focusing on the importance of recovery and the individual and collective resistance (Champagne, 1996). On the other hand, emotions of resistance allow bearing the former and make possible the generation of emotional energy (Collins, 2001 and 2012; Jasper, 2011). That energy, which emerges during collective events and rituals, contributes to social change encouraging the subjects as a fuel for collective action since ‘each victory, though small, produces trust, attention and emotional energy, components that will benefit future actions’ (Jasper, 2011: 296).

In this way, the demonstration of September 2015 also becomes an emotional device capable to feed, mainly, hope with regards to the fact that ‘we are taking a step forward. We are more in the people than in the government. If we stand together, we can make it!’ (I. 47); and also joy ‘because, even though, they do not hear us, we are many from different states and countries, and if we all stand together we can bring justice’ (I. 51); such emotions turn out to be essential in order to avoid the weakening of a movement (Poma and Gravante, 2016).

The public manifestation of emotions of resistance is important for it shows that victims can recover, for instance, from violence or mourning and it encourages those who are fearful to mobilize and live the same experience –as it is the case of the following interviewees: ‘The fact that there are many disappeared people in Mexico creates an unbearable situation, so I am here to manifest that we do not want more disappeared people, we want education’ (I.31).

In the movements of victims analyzed by Champagne (1996) and Whittier (2001), emotions of resistance emerged from a repertoire of emotions (Jasper, 1998) belonging to the women's movement in the 60's in the United States, that is to say, from political experiences that publicly reclaim the right to express what Whittier (2001) defines as oppositional emotions, such as pain, fear, anger and resistance.

In Mexico, during the march of Ayotzinapa, the process of politicization of trauma is built thanks to a repertoire of emotions of other protests –such as the movements of disappeared relatives during the dirty war in the 70's, students movements as the one of 1968, and of course, the experience of insurgent Zapatistas communities since 1994– all of which have publicly manifested certain oppositional emotions such as mistrust of the State, pain, mourning, and the “worthy anger.”

The process of politicization of cultural trauma leads also to another aspect, which is the need to identify the performers of the traumatic event –or according to Alexander (2016) the *perpetrators*– and the social group who should be hold morally responsible for the events. In the Mexican case, regarding enforced disappearance the government is directly held responsible (in fact, the movement's main slogan is “It was the State”), and the Mexican army is considered to be the performer, as the following statement shows: “unfortunately, now as in 1968, the army took part but not protect the people only to assassinate them.” (I.44).

The need to identify the responsible implies weakening the *cementing emotions*, which consolidate the relationship between political institutions and citizenry, needed to maintain and strengthen the “social contract” between a State and its fellow country citizens. Such emotions are gratitude, loyalty, esteem, admiration, fear of authority or shame to be against it.

The process of separating cementing emotions connects itself with a process in which other emotions emerge, according to Flam (2005) these are *subversive counter-emotions*: hatred towards government, disdain for politicians, anger due to impunity, all of which cause a rift between citizenry and the political system, as shown in the following statement: “however, rulers are the thieves, the murderers and the ones who always want to trample on the people. Enough with impunity! Enough with barbarism! (I. 45).

To conclude, the process of politicization of cultural trauma leads, among other things, to strengthen the circle of the we mentioned above. If the emotions of trauma such as pain and mourning, widen and strengthen the collective identity as it is demonstrated in other researches on movements of war victims (Bayard de Volo, 2006; Schirmer, 1993), then emotions of

resistance are essential in determining antagonism with other actors, the “circle of they”, that is, the responsible ones for the traumatic event.

### **Conclusions: the construction of a new social narrative**

In order to comprehend why the enforced disappearance of students from Ayotzinapa has produced such an unexpected response in Mexican society, I suggested to analyze the response to these events as a collective cultural trauma. The process of construction of cultural trauma, as has been already explained, is not characterized by the tragedy alone of the event itself, but by the meanings society has attributed to this event and the interpretation of the emotions linked to it.

In the case of the movement of solidarity with Ayotzinapa, the collective cultural trauma has been built through a series of processes of new significance ascribed to both the victims and to those who have experienced trauma. On the one hand, the emotions linked to the latter have formed a collectively shared sense of a community (under threat). On the other hand, emotions of resistance have determined the identification of responsible people and have provoked demands for justice and truth about the event.

I agree with Alexander's proposal (2004) that the collective symbolical representation of cultural trauma linked to the enforced disappearance event creates another frame for the interpretation of reality, that is, a new social narrative characterized by four critical dimensions placed on a sequential analysis, though not to a temporal level.

In other words, the new social narrative which emerges from the process analyzed above, is built through the analysis of four symbolical dimensions of enforced disappearance linked among themselves, even though they take place in different chronological order. In each dimension the traumatized community clarifies a series of questions which emerge from the traumatic event and lead the construction of the new narrative:

*The nature of pain.* In the first dimension, the traumatized community analyzes what has occurred, which social groups have been affected and how this trauma is connected to the rest of society. During this process, the community establishes, for instance, whether the students were attacked because they were associated with organized crime or if it was a strategy of the “dirty war”, promoted by the Mexican State to frighten people. In this dimension the pain of the event is connected with the everyday life of the external subjects to the trauma, producing feelings of insecurity, threat and fear.

*The nature of the victim.* In this dimension of representation, the community who perceives itself as traumatized identifies which groups of people have been affected by that traumatizing pain. It is determined whether it is just one group or if other social groups can be related. In the case of Ayotzinapa, for instance, it is determined whether the main victims are the rural students or the whole student community in Mexico, and if there exists other victims which suffered at the hands of the same responsible and what meanings are attributed to them.

*The relationship between trauma of victims and other people.* Once the nature of pain is clearly crystallized and the identity of victims established, a series of questions regarding the symbolical relationship between victims and other people follows. In this stage, society will be capable to participate symbolically in the experience of the event produced by the trauma, but this only if the victims are represented in terms of common values to the wide Mexican collective identity. For instance, the students are represented as people who demand a better future for themselves and for the country. Parents, represent the right to truth and justice, etc.

*The attribution of responsibility.* This is a crucial stage as the community determines the identity of the responsible people and distributes the moral and material consequences of the traumatic event.

In conclusion, interpreting the traumatic event of the enforced disappearance of the 43 students from Ayotzinapa as a cultural trauma allows to comprehend why thousands of Mexicans have put an end to social inactivity and have begun to demand a social change. As we have seen, in Mexico the events of Ayotzinapa have created a new social narrative that leads, on the one hand, the symbolic and social construction of the present reality and of future expectations, characterized by a search of security through solidarity and the sense of community; on the other hand, the redesigning of relationships with institutions, characterized by a sense of distrust and injustice.

The new narrative which emerges from the traumatic event of Ayotzinapa is important to Mexican society because it has allowed to create a bridge among the forgotten events (the student repression of 1968), unperceived violent events (the thousands of disappeared people today in the country) and the need to create a better future.

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