
POLICE VIOLENCE: SENSES AND MEANINGS ATTRIBUTED BY YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF GOIÂNIA, BRAZIL¹

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ABSTRACT. This work investigated the senses and meanings of young victims of police violence in the Brazilian municipality of Goiânia, Goiás State, from 2011 to 2013. The survey was based upon Vigotski's Social Development theory and on dialectical and historical materialism. Data was collected by means of non-structured interviews, systematized and analyzed through meaning nuclei. The reports analysis concerned the young people's senses and meanings of such violence, and has shown to be a fertile field for knowledge production, enabling the search for the constituent elements of police violence, according to the young victims' perceptions. The results show that the arbitrary use of police's coercive force made the young victims insecure, hostages of fear. It has also revealed that police violence is a reality within the State and Brazilian society, occurring arbitrarily under the State protection.

Keywords: Social psychology; violence; young people.

VIOLÊNCIA POLICIAL: SENTIDOS E SIGNIFICADOS ATRIBUÍDOS POR JOVENS DA CIDADE DE GOIÂNIA

RESUMO. Este trabalho investigou os sentidos e significados atribuídos por jovens que foram vítimas da violência policial na cidade de Goiânia-Goiás, no período de 2011 a 2013. A pesquisa foi fundamentada nos pressupostos teóricos da Psicologia Sócio-Histórica de Vigotski e no método do materialismo histórico dialético. A coleta de informações se deu por meio da entrevista não estruturada, que foram sistematizadas e analisadas por meio dos núcleos de significação. A análise dos relatos sobre os sentidos e significados desta violência para os jovens constituiu-se em um campo fecundo de produção do conhecimento e possibilitou apreender os elementos constitutivos da violência policial na significação dos jovens que foram suas vítimas. Os resultados revelam que o uso arbitrário da força coercitiva da polícia militar tornaram os jovens inseguros, reféns do medo. Revelaram, também, que a violência policial é uma realidade na sociedade goiana e brasileira, que ocorre arbitrariamente sob a proteção e tutela do Estado.

Palavras-chave: Psicologia social; violência; jovens.

VIOLENCIA POLICIAL: SENTIDOS Y SIGNIFICADOS ATRIBUIDOS POR JÓVENES DE LA CIUDAD DE GOIÂNIA

RESUMEN. En este estudio se ha investigado los sentidos y significados atribuidos por jóvenes que han sido víctimas de la violencia policial en la ciudad de Goiânia-Goiás, del año 2011 al año de 2013. Se fundamentó la investigación en los presupuestos teóricos de la Psicología Socio-Histórica de Vygotsky y en el método del materialismo histórico dialético. La recolecta de informaciones se dio por intermedio de la entrevista no estructurada, que se sistematizaron y se analizaron por intermedio de los núcleos de significación. El análisis de los relatos sobre los sentidos y significados de esta violencia se constituyó para los jóvenes, en un campo

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fecundo de producción del conocimiento y permitió aprehender los elementos constitutivos de la violencia policial en la significación de los jóvenes que han sido sus víctimas. Los resultados revelan que el uso arbitrario de la fuerza coercitiva de la Policía Militar deja los jóvenes inseguros, rehenes del miedo. Han revelado, también, que la violencia policial es una realidad en la sociedad goiana y brasileña, que ocurre arbitrariamente bajo la protección y tutela del Estado.

Palabras-clave: Psicología social; violencia; jóvenes.

Introduction

Public security is a State duty, a right and a responsibility of every person, as the article 144 of Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988 (Brasil, 2016) regulates. And, among the Brazilian public security agencies, under the State protection, in Brazilian Portuguese called *polícia militar*, in this study referred to as *police*, is one of the state agencies responsible for ostentatious policing and preservation of the public order in the country.

However, constantly, the media, the human rights agencies and other institutions of organized civil society denounce the police's use of excessive, coercive force, power abuse, among other arbitrariness and barbarisms, against citizens in various Brazilian cities. Manifestations of police violence are historic in Brazilian police, like Alves and Evanson, (2013), among others, show. Those studies unveil that police violence has been a common practice of the corporations in Brazil, since its origin until the present days. That practice is a serious violation of human rights.

In this sense, it is important to highlight that, according Bittner (2003), to control the arbitrariness carried out by the police, there is not an only and universal criterion that standardizes the activities and the behaviors of those police officers. There are, though, international and national documents that point out the control of police force conduct.

Among the international advising documents, constituted under the light of Resolution nº 217 (1948), which refers to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, dating from December 10, 1948, the following resolutions, approved by the United Nations General Assembly, should be mentioned: Resolution nº 3452 (1975), concerning the "Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Being Subjected to Torture and Other Punishments and Cruel Treatment", dating from December 9, 1975; Resolution nº 34/169 (1979), regarding the "Code of Conduct for Enforcement Officials", dating from December 17, 1979 and the Resolution nº 39/46 (1984), a "Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment", dating from December 10, 1984.

It must be noticed that those resolutions, constituted along the years, are advising documents, with norms and standards of conduct for public servants and workers responsible for law enforcement; they undoubtedly explicit parameters for a public policing that respects the citizens at the execution of their actions. However, their application take place by means of the adhesion to the parameters established by the nations that committed to those standards. Brazil is one of those countries, but, systematically, it has prevented itself to comply with the commitments established.

Within Brazilian territory, among the documents that control the conduct of the police force actions, aiming at the assurance of human rights, there are, contradictorily, decree-laws, constituted during exception regimes of Brazilian political history, which are: Decree-Law nº 2.848 (1940), dating from December 7, 1940, specifically the article 146, about the illegal constraint and the article 350, about the arbitrary practices or power abuse, and the Decree-Law nº 1.001 (1969), dating from October 21, 1969, articles from 215 to 217, prescribing on defamation, injury and actual injury. Moreover, on Chapter VI of that Decree-Law, the articles 222 and 223 rule in favor of crime against individual freedom.

Still among the documents, we can highlight the Constitution of 1988, which, according to title II, on the fundamental rights and assurances, deals, on the 5th article, from I to LXXVIII, with the individual rights and obligations, and from the articles 6th through 11th with the collective rights. They are constituted as legal standards that assure the human rights, accentuating the action conduct of police when they are performing their functions. In this sense, due to the assurance of human rights, which also rule the police activities in Brazil, the Law nº 9.455 (1997), dating from April 7, 1997, was created by the *Conselho de Defesa dos Direitos da Pessoa Humana* (Brazilian council for the defending the

rights of the human person), a presidential agency. This law refers to the removal of the terms of Brazilian portuguese *autos de resistência* ("resistance reports"), and *resistência seguida de morte* ("resistance followed by death") from police registers, such as reports, inquiry and crime news.

Despite of the existence of such documents, national and internationally, it can be noticed that their real effectuation does not perform an effective control on the police violence, neither are they protection mechanisms for every person in society. Even though those declarations, conventions, codes, decree-laws, laws and resolutions have a universal character, they benefit primarily the minority of population, who has access to them, while most people remain without that legal assurance. According to Carneiro (2012): "cases of innocent citizens shot by the police are growing from the outskirts of the cities, where the resistance followed by death is something commo." (p.86, free translation). Nevertheless, those documents are instruments to aid the organized civil society, defending human rights and the citizens who have been victims of police violence.

Considering the comprehensiveness and the effectuation of the laws towards the arbitrary conduct of officers, it is known that the police represents the State repressive apparatus. This way, the constitutional discourse of keeping the public order legitimizes various arbitrary actions, legally and politically supported. Within that discourse of preserving the order, the police uses many methods considered illegal, characterized by power abuse, under the State protection for the control of the poor population, mainly the young people, who, daily, are the biggest victims of police violence in Brazil, like studies of *Anistia Internacional* (International Amnesty) (2015) show.

The interest of this research is constituted within this context of police violence. The study aimed at understanding the senses and meanings of police violence, from the point of view of six poor young people, male, aging from 18 and 29 years old, dwellers of Goiânia, a Brazilian municipality in Goiás State. Specifically, we present the senses and meanings that those young people attribute to the police violence that they have suffered. This research hopes, this way, to contribute to the debate on the structures and the organization of Brazilian police, considering, necessarily, the discussion on the model of public policing in the country. It also hopes to contribute to the discussions about police violence against the population, especially against the poor young people, the biggest victims, and, consequently, to enlarge the debate and the understanding regarding the phenomenon of police violence in the country, helping mainly the social actors involved with the youth cause and the fight for their rights.

Method

This study was subjected and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Pontifícia Universidade Católica de Goiás, under Opinion Document nº 267.879, CAEE: 10284413.8.0000.0037. It is a qualitative research, based upon theoretical presuppositions of Vigotski's Social-Historical Psychology and by the method of Dialectical Historical Materialism.

Regarding the bases upon the Social-Historical Psychology, for Vigotski (2009), the senses and meanings are used for the human person to express, historically, the experiences of their consciousness. In accordance with this author, "the word is for the consciousness what the small world is for the big word, what the living cell is for the organism, what the atom is for the cosmos... The conscious word is the microcosms of the human consciousness" (p. 486, free translation).

This way, from Vigotski's point of view, when we study the sense and the meaning of the words, which express the human consciousness, it is necessary to understand the process of connection between the thought and the language. For Vigotski (2009), "for its structure, language is not a mere specular reflex of the thought's structure; because of that, the thought cannot be expected to be like finished clothes"(p.412, free translation). For the author, "language does not work as the expression of a finished thought. When the thought turns into language it re-structures and modifies itself" (p.412, free translation). Therefore, for Vigotski (2009), "the thought does not express itself, but it is realized in the word. Because of that, the processes of the development of the language sound and semantic aspects,

of opposite senses, constitute the authentic unity exactly for the force of its opposite meaning” (p.412, free translation).

In addition, according to Vigotski (2009), “we find, in the *meaning* of the word, this unity that reflects the simplest way the unity of the thought and of the language” (p. 398, free translation). Therefore, his investigations point out that “the word without meaning is not a word, but an empty sound. Therefore, the meaning is an indispensable constitutive aspect of a word. It is the word itself seen in its interior aspect” (p.398, free translation). The meaning is a substantial aspect of the word, and, this way, according to the author, “it seems that we have all the fundament to consider it a discourse phenomenon... from the psychological point of view, the word is nothing but a generalization or concept. Generalization and meaning of the word are synonymous terms” (p.398, free translation). And, the author completes, “every generalization, every formation of concepts is the most specific, most authentic and most unquestionable thought action. Consequently, we are authorized to consider the meaning of the word as a thought phenomenon.” (p.398, free translation).

From these investigations on the word meanings, the concept of sense was developed as a key element for the apprehension of subjects’ language particularities. Thus, for Vigotski (2009), the sense of a word is “the sum of all the psychological facts that it activates in our consciousness... The real meaning of a word is inconstant. During one operation, it has a meaning, and, in another, it acquires a different one” (p.465, free translation). The meanings, on the other hand, according to Vigotski (2009), are “an immutable and changeless point that remains stable in all the changes of meaning of the word in different contexts. This change of meaning can be established as a key fact at the semantic analysis of the language” (p.465, free translation).

Vigotski’s (2009) studies on meanings and senses of the word point out that there is “predominance of the word’s sense over its meaning..., the sense is always a dynamic, fluid, complex formation, which has various zones of varied stability” (p.465, free translation). This way, the author completes the idea, saying that “the meaning is only one of the zones of the sense that a word acquires in the context of some discourse, and, moreover, a more stable, uniform and exact zone” (p.465, free translation).

From those presuppositions from Vigotski’s Social-Historical Psychology, it can be understood that, in the senses and in the meanings of the words expressed by the young people participating of this research, there is the implicit or the explicit production and reproduction of cultural, political, social and economic aspects established by that society.

In relation to the contribution of Dialectical-Historical Materialism, the adoption of this method implied that the investigation analysis, in this study, occurred from the dialectical connection among the universality, the particularity and the singularity of the phenomenon researched. It allowed understanding the young’s speech beyond the immediate appearance, seeking the essence of the implied processes, becoming a critical analysis of the investigation constitutive process (Marx, 2013). Therefore, the dialectical view supports the analysis of the subjects’ language on the senses and meanings attributed to the police violence that the young men have suffered.

Methodological Procedure

Six young people participated of the study, from the following inclusion criteria: being a victim of police violence within the period from 2011 to 2013; being from 18 to 29 years old; having a monthly family income up to two minimum wages; dwelling in the municipality of Goiânia and agreeing in taking part of the research, by signing the Consent Form (TCLE). The exclusion criteria were: being included in the *Programa de Proteção às Vítimas de Violência do Governo Federal* (Brazilian Federal Program for Protection of Violence Victims), being a member of *Comitê Contra a Violência Policial* (Commeette Against Police Violence), and, at any time of the research process, desiring to quit it.

The information collection was carried out by means of non-structured interviews; one of the advantages of this type of interview is the freedom to go beyond previously elaborated questions, allowing the generation of other points of view, providing new directions for the research probing. The interviews occurred within the premises of two institutions, in the municipality of Goiânia, Goiás state, Brazil, which develop actions for young people from poorer social classes.

Three encounters were carried out, according to the availability of the participants and previous scheduling at the secretariat of the institutions, according to the standards of Resolution 466/12. At the first encounter with the young men, the research was explained and the TCLE was read and signed. Those interviews were recorded, lasting 40 minutes each; they were carried out within appropriate rooms, assuring, thus, the privacy and the secrecy of the dialogue with the interviewer.

The first encounter produced data on the subjects' and their families, including education, living place and socioeconomic situation. In the second one, the participants reported their lives' histories. In the third one, they described the police violence that they had suffered.

The data collected in the interviews were systemized and analyzed with a qualitative instrument, namely nuclei of meanings of speech (Aguiar & Ozella, 2013). This way, the empirical information collected were analyzed. Within this process, some care has been taken, so that the speeches were not analyzed spontaneously, for the familiarity with the data along the research, which could lead us to misunderstandings. That precaution allowed the theory and the practice to work together, once one completes the other, in a way that they connect dialectally, unveiling productions, reproductions and the ideologies of the research subjects' cultural and social contexts, expressed in the senses and meanings of their speech.

Research subjects

This section provides a brief presentation of the research participants, with some relevant information. It must be highlighted that their names are fictional, due to ethical criteria pertinent to the research, according to the standards of Resolution 466/12 (2012), of *Conselho Nacional de Saúde* (Brazilian National Health Council – CNS).

Pedro, 18 years old, single, black-skinned, incomplete secondary education, does not know his father, has two sisters and a brother, each of them from a different father. He has been definitively living with his grandmother (63 years old) since he was 13 years old, after discovering that his mother works as a prostitute. He lives in a rented shed in the suburbs of the eastern part of Goiânia. He is now working at a grocery store, without having a formal work contract. The police violence suffered by him happened during a routine approach in his neighborhood. He was hit and verbally attacked.

Wagner, 18 years old, single, black-skinned, is about to finish secondary school; he does not know his father. He lives with his mother (35 years old), also in a rented shed in the suburbs of the eastern part of Goiânia. He is looking for a job. The police violence happened at dusk, in a routine approach that usually is carried out in his neighborhood. He was taken to an unknown place, and then was verbally attacked, hit and tortured.

Fábio, 25 years old, married, brown-skinned, incomplete primary education; he has a one-year-old son and his wife (20 years old) is pregnant. He is temporarily living in his mother's house, while he builds a shed in the northwest part of Goiânia. He is looking for a job, and, to keep himself and his family, he has been selling crafts made by himself. The police violence that he suffered was at night, in an approach that usually happens in the neighborhood where he is building his shed. Besides being hit and verbally attacked, he was threatened with death.

Rodrigo, 19 years old, white-skinned, is finishing secondary education; he lives with his mother and his brother (16 years old), in a rented house in the northwest part of Goiânia. He is looking for a job. The police violence suffered occurred in the afternoon, in a routine approach in his neighborhood. He was hit, verbally attacked and arrested for disrespecting an officer.

Marcelo, 18 years old, brown-skinned, is finishing primary education; he lives with his mother (42 years old), his father (45 years old) and a brother (14 years old). They live in their own house, located in the outskirts of the northwest part of Goiânia. He is looking for a job. The police violence suffered occurred in the afternoon, in an approach in a snack bar in the neighborhood where he lives. He was publically humiliated, hit and verbally attacked.

Luiz, 18 years old, single, black, is finishing secondary education; he lives with his mother (45 years old), father (52 years old) and a sister (15 years old). They live in their own house, located in the

northwest part of Goiânia. The police violence suffered occurred at night, in a routine approach that happens in his neighborhood. He was hit and verbally attacked.

Results and discussion

From the reports collected, it was possible to structure two nuclei of meaning, so-called: "Insecurity Regarding the Public Policing"; "Fear of Police".

Insecurity regarding the public policing

This nucleus systematized the senses and meanings that the young people attributed to the violence produced by the state officers responsible for public security. The speeches evidence that the arbitrary actions of those public officers produce insecurity, instead of security, according to what the young people report.

For Pedro, the police officers, instead of protecting against any kind of violence, produce insecurity and more violence, as he highlights:

the police officers, that should protect us against any kind of violence, are the ones who attack us, repress us, make us insecure, for, when they arrive, they arrive suddenly and act with a lot of violence. They only act violently, especially ROTAM officers [Rondas Ostensivas Táticas Motorizadas - Tactic Motorized Ostensive Policing], those are the rudest and the most violent, they think everybody is a criminal.

Wagner pointed out that the violence from the police officers in their actions also cause him to be insecure, and that the police could even not exist, for it does not assure the population security, but does the opposite, acts with violence, as he reported:

the ones who should protect us and make us feel secure is the police, but we don't feel like this. What the officers do is too bad, especially the ROTAM ones, they hit people a lot and don't leave physical signs. They represent more insecurity than security to me. Oh! I believe that it's not worth to have police in the society; to assure security? Like, what they produce is insecurity, we are paying their salaries for them to hit us, like they did to me.

Fábio highlighted, in addition, that the presence of police officers in the place where he lives causes people to be insecure. He also pointed out that the police should protect the population, and not act with violence, referring to the police violence that he suffered, as he reported:

For me, the police had to protect the population, not hit people like they did to me. A police officer can't do that, they have to protect us, not just go and hit everyone they see on the street, asking who has drugs, guns, this can't exist. The ones who cause more violence are the officers, and they are the ones who should protect us. In this neighborhood, the police cause insecurity, because of their violence. They cause horror, they come too close to us in an aggressive way, the guy doesn't have anything, everything is alright, then the officer hits and says he'll kill the guy.

Still in the same direction, regarding the insecurity in relation to the actions of the police, Rodrigo highlighted that, like him, many neighborhood dwellers do not trust the police; they feel insecure by the way that the police officers act, as he says:

for me, the ones who should protect us, like, are the ones who bring more violence. The neighborhood cops themselves are insecure, because of the way that the police officers act, they are too violent, everyone they meet, if they don't like their face, they simply start the aggression. If the person is wearing bermuda shorts, they start attacking. This approach is wrong, they start by asking the person to put the hands on the head, pointing a gun to your face, and saying that you, already oppressed, want to steal things.

Marcelo also mentioned that the police officers, who should protect, are the most violent, and that the dwellers of his neighborhood feel insecure due to the presence of police, like he reported:

violence is brought by the ones who should protect us. Goodness! There in my neighborhood, everybody feels insecure. The way the police acts is totally wrong, really, they never do the right thing, because many officers hit and blame you and then let you go, after you've been so humiliated.

For Luís, the police is supposed to protect all the population, without discrimination; however, he said that they do the opposite, causing insecurity, acting with violence, mainly in the suburbs. He reports:

for me, they had to protect all the population, without discrimination. In my neighborhood, in the suburbs, the officers arrive and curse us, they don't even ask your name, they just shout: "put your hands on the head, you potheads, wastrels, dealers". They just arrive and blame us, kick us, punch us, they do this entire humiliation scene and only then they take your documents, check you're alright and let you go.

By what those young men say, it can be noticed that, in a very emphatic way, all of them assume that the police should "protect every person". This is an ideological expectation, an idea unceasingly within our society. Nevertheless, most people do not have this protection, according to Carvalho (2001):

in one side is the field of the ones who control the access of the public discourse and who are protected by the State and its circle; in the other side, there are the ones who do not have it, i.e., they are the ones who do not have possessions and are excluded from the decisive instances and from the richness that they produce. In the first side, are the ones who demand police violence; in the other one, are the ones who suffer it (p.85, free translation).

In this direction, Luiz, explained:

but what we see is that the security exists only to the person who has money and can give something to them. In the suburbs, like in our neighborhood, they produce insecurity, they just come here to repress us, and then the media says that people in the suburbs don't like the police because they are criminals. But they don't mention the violence they use. Some officers, just because they wear a uniform, think they can kill you, hit you, attack you.

What the two young men say about the police violence reveal a larger context of violence, once, according to Minayo (1994), the space for the constitution and development of this phenomenon "is the life within society...", and, at the violence setting, problems concerning political, economic, moral, law, psychological, human, institutional and individual relations spheres come across each other" (p.7, free translation). For Arendt (2015), violence: "is instrumental by nature; like all the other ways, it always depends on the guiding and on the justification by the end that it aims. And what needs to be justified by another thing cannot be the essence of nothing" (p.68, free translation). Also for that author: "Power and violence, despite of being distinct phenomena, usually appear together. Wherever they are combined, the power is, like we have found, a primary and predominant factor". (p.69, free translation). In the same direction, Chauí (1999) argues that violence is: "a brutal act, ill-treatment, physical or psychological abuse against someone, and is characterized in intersubjective and social relationships defined by oppression and intimidation, by fear and terror" (p.3, free translation).

Based upon those presuppositions, which demystify the violence as a natural phenomenon of human species, it can be understood that the violence is produced and reproduced in the society, by means of the connection of social, political, economic and cultural contexts where the subjects are. Therefore, it is not a phenomenon originating from poverty, as usually spread by society. However, the poor are, doubtless, the biggest victims of the multiple types of violence of society, including police violence.

What the young men say reveal that the police officers' arbitrary actions stems from the context of the various types of violence existing socially, which, historically, discriminate and stereotype poor young people in Brazil. This way, the arbitrary actions, such as hitting, spanking, threatening, among other atrocities, carried out by police officers in their approaches, are common actions, taken as if they were an inextricable part of police's activities.

This arbitrariness reveals a show of horror, humiliation, intimidation and other violations of human rights, marked by physical and psychological violence. Due to their social class condition, poor young people who live in the suburbs turn into a potential violence victim, as a consequence of, objectively, not having possibilities to fend themselves, as Fábio points out: “*Well, just because you’re poor, the officer knows that he can hit you and nothing will happen to him*”. This is a reality in society; and, according to *Anistia Internacional* (International Amnesty) (2015): “The culprits will hardly ever be taken for a trial and most part of victims does not receive any kind of reparation. This impunity feeds the violence circle that characterizes the police operations in Brazil” (p.8, free translation).

Before this scenario shown by *Anistia Internacional* (2015), it is known that, without a deep transformation within society’s political, social and economic organization, the efficacy of public security policies in Brazil are and will be palliative, for, without those changes, “Brazilian society will remain separated into the citizens to whom the democratic state benefits are assured and the ‘non-citizens’, surrendered to the police despotism, which takes away the legitimacy of police institutions and spreads barbarism” (Soares, 2001, p.15, free translation). And the poor population, the non-citizens, is seen, according to Sawaia (2014): “as inferior, subordinate, worthless, useless part of society... revealing the ethic tonality of the daily living of social inequality, the denial socially imposed to the possibilities for the majority to take part of the material, cultural and social production.” (p. 105/106, free translation). This reality is lived by the young men Pedro, Luiz and Marcelo, respectively, as follows:

Like, I see that the police are a structure that defends the interests of high-society people, those are protected; it had to be different, a person should be treated normally. Treating suburban dwellers the same way they treat a person from a rich neighborhood, like, in rich neighborhoods, when people are approached by the police, it’s not the same way they approach a person in the suburbs. I’ve never heard of a rich person who was hit by a police officer, never heard, but poor people are hit by the police in my neighborhood every day.

In addition to this sense and meaning of insecurity that the young men attributed to the police violence, for the arbitrary actions carried out by officers, we present the other nucleus, which highlights the sense and the meaning of fear of police, which the young men also attributed to the police violence.

Fear of Police

This nucleus presents the fear of the police and the impacts caused by police violence on the young men’s lives, as they report.

Pedro highlighted that, after he suffered the police violence, he is afraid of going through that again:

I can’t see a police car again and feel calm, I always think that they can attack me again ... before that, I believed that if something happened, the police could protect me, but after the violence I’ve been through, everything’s changed.

Wagner also reported that, after the violence suffered, he is afraid of the police, saying:

I’m afraid of the police. After that happened to me, I don’t feel safe at all, if I see a police officer, I run away, because I fear they’ll approach me, hit me, do something to me. When a police officer is close, like, I feel scared out. I’m so scared that I haven’t been going out, but, when I do, is, like, with my friends, but I don’t like to go out at night because I’m afraid that something happens.

He also mentions that he fears that the police violence reaches his family and friends: “*I’m so afraid that everything happens again, like, they take someone of my family, or even a friend of mine. I fear that what happened to me also happens to them*”.

Fábio said that, after the police violence act, he started to be more fearful of the police, changing his life completely, as he narrated:

When I go out on the street, I just can’t see a black car, for I think it will be the officers that hit me, I keep brooding, feel scared. I think they are following me, spying on me, think they’ll kill me, they are dangerous, they are police officers, they can carry guns wherever they want to... I can’t sleep, every

noise I hear from the street, motorbike, car, I think it's them, that they are trying to kill me, goodness! I'm so afraid!

Rodrigo also said that, after suffering the violence, started being afraid of the police, as he highlighted: *"I'm really afraid that they do what they did to me again"*. He said that, when he sees a car, he turns alert, as he claimed: *"whenever I see a police officer, I keep thinking, will he approach me, every time I see a police car I get alert"*

Marcelo said that he was afraid of the police before, and, after the violence that he suffered, this fear is even stronger: *"I was already afraid of the police, now I'm more scared, like, being hit on the face is the worst thing, it disturbs us."*

In the same direction, Luiz affirmed that he got afraid of the police: *"I'm very afraid of the police, it's not cool, it's so bad."* He also explains: *"you're hit on the face, then you get even angrier, because the violence from the police just does that, just makes our anger worse."*

The reports from the young men echo the studies carried out by Vigotski (2010) on the emotion, in which the fear is presented as a "solidified form that appeared from the self-preservation instinct in its defensive form" (p.133, free translation). Also for this author, fear may be an instrument for control, as long as the adequate conditions are offered for this end, as he claims:

It is possible that, say, there is a link between the feeling of fear and a stimulus dissociated from the unconditioned stimulus of fear in the experience more than in the child's experience, it is connected to a feeling of pain, displeasure, etc. This is enough to create the so-called preventive reaction... If one wants a child to nourish fear of something, link the manifestation of that to pain or suffering to their body and the proper pain will appear by itself. (Vigotski, 2010, p. 142-143, free translation).

By means of the young men's speeches, it was possible to notice that, in an emphatic way, they evidence fear, such as feelings attributed to the police violence of which they were victims. This scenario of fear of the police, expressed by the young men, caused many objective/subjective implications to their lives.

Pedro said that, after suffering the police violence, he quit going to the discussion meetings at a college and going to dance class. According to him: *"because I got afraid of going out at night, now I only go out with another person, I go to work and, at night, I just stay home."*

Wagner said that the police violence: *"changed my routine, I just go to school, to church, stay more at home, I'm afraid of that happening again."*

Fábio described the impact of police violence in his life in the following way:

My life was getting organized, I would live where I'm building my house, I was looking for a job, to build my house, but now what am I gonna do? Here, locked in my mother's house, afraid of going out and of something worse happen to me, knowing that I could be there, working on my house building, little by little I would finish it, and now I can't even go back there, I'm afraid of walking anywhere, but what am I gonna do with all that? What can I do? They're gonna kill me.

It can be noticed that the fear of the police changed Pedro's, Wagner's and Fábio's lives of. This way, the fear, that imprisons these young men, turns into an instrument of social control, disciplining their lives, as Batista (2003) claims: *"it has always worked to spread strategies of... planned disciplining of the poor masses,... necessary for the establishment of law and order policies."* (p.21, free translation). For the author, this disciplining process reflects the "conservative hegemony of our social formation, deals with the diffusion of fear as an induction and justification mechanism to social control authority policies. The fear turns into a factor of strategic position taking within the economic, political or social field" (p.23, free translation).

But this social control by means of fear is not absolute, as Rodrigo and Luiz, respectively, mention, highlighting that there have been impacts on their lives, as a consequence of police violence, causing fear of the police. However, they say that they intend resume their projects, as follows:

I can't see a police car, for I feel afraid, but I want to finish school, get a job and help my mother, like, I want to organize my life"; "of course, like, I'm afraid of the police, but I want to finish college, become a teacher and help people see that crime is not worth, crime has only disadvantages, this is my project".

Final considerations

The senses and meanings attributed to the police violence by the young men revealed that such violence, marked by power abuse and arbitrary conducts, left scars, causing insecurity and fear of the police, even changing the life projects that many of those young men have.

It could also be noticed, that, in spite of the fact that national and international documents refer to the conduct of police force in their performance, the police institutions in Brazil, as Minayo and Adorno (2013) also claim, “remain too closed, even though they have been pressed to open by the organized civil society and by the human rights policy. There is much tension, mainly at the employment of coercive force” (p.591, free translation).

The results also show that the arbitrary actions in the police conducts, specially towards the city's poor population, reflect ideologies that are product of the alignment of the State with the capitalist aegis, which is based upon a centralizing and unequal economic development model, causing a deep social inequality that causes social injustice, exclusion, and poverty marginalization, which needs to be limited and controlled. Once that, historically, the State blamed the poor population for “the social conflicts and the frontier established in society between the most privileged ones and the really poor ones” (Dornelles, 2008, p.14, free translation).

The reports of the young men on the arbitrary use of coercive force by the police demonstrate that the police violence is a reality in our society, occurring daily. It shows the failure of Brazilian public security policies, which, by the way, for Saporì (2007): “is summarized into a series of spasmodic governmental interventions, merely reactive, towards an immediate solution for the crises that devastate the public order.” (p.109, free translation).

The State fallacy concerning the public security policies keep the police structures the way they used to be during the various periods of exception state of Brazilian history, mainly during the military dictatorial regime in 1964. It reveals, according to Soares (2014), that: “dictatorship inheritance is related to the untouchability of police, to the torture as a current method, the extra-official executions and to the biased treatment of citizens, depending on their skin color or their socioeconomic situation” (p.12, free translation).

This way, for the real establishment of a Democratic State, it is necessary to redefine the country's current public security policies, from the perspective of security public policies so that every person has access to them and is treated as subjects with rights, once, as Lima and Bueno (2013) claim, “in Brazil, the police officers are killing and dying in a very higher proportion than any international metric or standard” (p.7, free translation).

Therefore, the same way that the death of civilians is not acceptable, the death of officers is not acceptable either. It is necessary and urgent to reflect on the life and working conditions of police officers, and on the police organization in Brazil, for, as Minayo and Adorno (2013) point out, the probability for officers to “suffer serious injuries, traumas and death is supported by the high death rates for the violence of which they are victims, in and out their working environment, and on the post-traumatic effects on the ones who remain alive.” (p.588, free translation). Those authors claim that the longer the officers stay at work, the more issues related to illnesses accumulate in the officers' daily living (Minayo e Adorno, 2013).

In this direction, Lima and Bueno (2013) affirm: “As if this were not enough, the data also indicate that our security system is inefficient, pays too low salaries to the officers and has unacceptable operational standards of police lethality and victimization, with low rates of crime solving.” (p.6, free translation). Minayo and Adorno (2013) complete: “it is necessary to reformulate the range of risk and security concepts. We highlight the importance for the corporations to elaborate a deeper discussion on the terms that they are based upon, historically, the police institutionalization” (p.591, free translation).

Finally, it is also relevant to emphasize that this study reaffirms its commitment with Social Psychology with a critical understanding of society and its engagement with the challenges that the contemporary reality presents, especially concerning the police violence issue. From this presupposition, this work on the senses and meanings of police violence against young people from Goiânia intends to contribute with the commitment of Social Psychology to get involved with social,

cultural and political reality issues, aiming at overcoming the social inequality and oppression, before the assurance of keeping Brazilian citizens' human and social rights, mainly for the ones who are excluded from such rights.

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