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OVERT AND COVERT VIOLENCE AGAINST KINDERGARTEN GIRLS: MANIFESTATION AND APPARENT INURNMENT

Abstract

We have systematically recorded and evaluated the findings of the International Carrier (OECD) and Greek Research Centers (EKKE) due the mounting evidence of violence in Elementary Education reported by them. We ascertained the availability of limited research data zeroing into the visible and invisible manifestations of violence on Kindergarten girls, i.e. those not discerned by the educators trainees who do their practice in the Kindergarten environment. The team work used Kindergarten as a research field where children's spontaneous language and behavior codes conveyed penchants to violence corresponding to established gender stereotypes. We used a 109 senior level academy student sample in repetitive semi-shaped interviews. We tried to ascertain how these future educators perceive violence and at the same time overlook it. More specifically, our questions gradually progressed from an overall definition of violence to a closer analysis of violence against girls with points of reference to gender stereotypes. Our research was two-fold, examining the "visible" and "invisible" manifestations on the one hand, and studying an inurnment like acceptance or tolerance and underestimation of the consequences of violence on the part of future educators on the other hand, the later fitting into a broader theoretical model of gender inequality. Without overlooking the significance of particularities the research conclusively resolves that the future educators' sociological observations of "hybrid collectivity", as well as their inconclusive interpretation-free overview of the daily routine of early childhood, do not particularly borrow from studies done on gender which seemingly operate at a mere theoretical level.

Keywords: kindergarten, overt violence, covert violence, gender

Introduction

Violent behavior is an innate behaviorⁱ that is taught and which is either rejected or accepted according to the social environment. A violence differentiation per culture is observed and a violent behavior repertoire according to the era,

i. An issue incorporated in Bandura's theory (Bandura, 1973) as well as in social learning theories.

ideology and social status is formulated (Sommie, 2008); an issue related to the definition of violenceⁱⁱ itself. The more democratic the societies are, that is, the more a privilege policy for lower social strata and genders equality towards a direction of social inequalities bluntness is developed, the more violent behaviors are more analytically defined, meaning that they should be addressed as delinquent actions.

Olweus' definition on school violence is one of the most detailed ones, "a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students. Negative actions can be carried out by physical contact, by words, or in other ways, such as making faces or vulgar gestures, and intentional exclusion from a group. In order to use the term bullying, there should also be an imbalance in strength (an asymmetric power relationship). The student who is exposed to the negative actions has difficulty defending himself or herself" (Olweus, 1995). Based on this perspective, violent behaviors such as corporal violence, verbal violence, social violence, blackmailing, electronic violence, sexual violence and racist violence are specialized and conceptualized (Smith & Ananiadou, 2003; Patchin & Hinduja, 2006; Jacobs, 2008). Speaking about types of violence manifested at school, we mainly distinguish two ones. Spontaneous violent reaction is usually irregularly organized. Repeating violent behaviors and forms of violence in which more individuals are involved and we eventually talk about a delinquent group with particular action, e.g. thefts among students or intimidations.

Our research on school violence was initiated on the basis of the increased violence in all domains related to social co-existence. The issue of violence may not be interpreted or categorized under the common approach variables such as social class, age, nationality and sex. The issue of violence is conceptualized within different contexts imposing a new reflection on violent actions (Ostrov, 2008) as preceding incidents and events, as part of a preliminary stage, as well as consequences for the victimizer, the victim and the broader social groups. Our approach addresses violent phenomena not as individual clinical cases separated from the social, political and cultural context but incorporated into the environment defined by the social integrations.

Based on this speculation, our interested was focused on school environment. The press has made public the current incidents among school premises or other premises where children or adolescents are in the limelight of the events. At this

ii. Violence is defined as a behavior aiming at individual's harming or goods destruction (Gurr, 1989).

point, our interest is focused on genders dimension by conceptualizing a girl category so that emphasis is placed on gender, too. After a close study of previous researches, mainly conducted by sociologists and psychologists, having victimizer and victim reactions, attitudes and behaviorsⁱⁱⁱ as the focal point, as well as carriers' standpoints, such as those of the teaching community, we considered carrying out a research with Kindergarten teachers comprising the sample of it. The interest is focused on a group of future teachers, which is our sample and helps pin-point the definition of violence and to what extent violence is overt based on gender as well as the possible ways for its confrontation. As it is obvious, our research is initiated by the observation that violence phenomena are regenerated within the educational environment and are legalized under some sort of procedure as accepted behaviors resulting to their non- negative evaluation and their not being addressed as delinquent behavior. At this point, we notice the limits formed between an accepted behavior and a delinquent behavior which should be reprimanded or penalized within the school environment. What is of significant interest to us is the future teacher interpretations on violence phenomena and whether they perceive the violence – gender relation. At the same time, we study the educational phenomenon effectiveness provided in the Kindergarten Teacher Academies about issues of violence that is if the curricula and pedagogical methods in general correspond to the modern considerations on social issues as they are expressed in the school environment and, in particular, the gender studies effectiveness over a victims examination in relation to violence.

The declaration of the individual rights is related to the individual satisfaction within a secure social environment so that the individual, irrelevant from gender, is able to express preferences, desires and to satisfy his / her needs^{iv} . Any obstruction against the realization of objectives set by the individual, whether regarding a woman or a man, and the social whole generates annulments and capsizings leading to setbacks and annulment of the individual progress perspectives and individual and social prosperity (Dworkin, 1977). A violent manifestation could be characterized the one under the form of delinquent behavior by the victimizer against the victim or victims, which under social terms is defined as the obstruction to the individual personality development and the fulfillment of his broader social objectives (Savidan, 2007). It is not accidental that

iii. We indicatively refer to researches conducted by the Child and Adolescent Psychosociological Health Society (C.A.P.H.S.) – DAPHNE II (2006-2008) and DAPHNE III (2008-2010) – and the Social Research National Centre (SRNC).

iv. Unicef refers to the Children's Rights in the Agreement adopted in consensus by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989 and was ratified by Greece in 1992. http://www.unicef.org/magic/media/documents/CRC_greek_language_version.pdf.

organizations^v which are involved in issues of individual rights as well as gender equality issues are also engaged with the bullying phenomenon. Therefore, the issue of policy with emphasis on educational rights and on value patterns is an issue of the international organizations, of the theoretical study on the individual protection within a network of interdependent relationships. The violence phenomenon in modern western societies seems to be even more acute than what is assessed by the international organization and eventually it is necessary to redefine the manifestations of violence. We observe in bibliography that everyday social life domains in which violent behaviors are defined and interpreted are extended.

If one dimension on the issue of manifesting violent behavior in the school environment emphasizes the psychological factor focusing on the victim's family environment, the true childhood experiences and in general on factors related to the individual psychology, the other dimension, which is more of our interest, is the construction of a social self relevant to the social roles based on the gender dimension within the social environment. At this level, the moral principles and value pattern which regulates, formally or informally, the individual relationships and shapes the levels of collaboration and solidarity or controversial fields of contradiction, hostility, disapproval and racism are of special interest. In the social domain there are broader frameworks in which the violent behavior functions which is detected, interpreted and addressed differently according to every society's value system. It is well understood that the definition of violent behavior contains a remarkable standpoint about an action which is separated by the common everyday actions and is scaled as a negative or delinquent behavior. At this point, the gender dimension is very serious regarding when an act is characterized as delinquent and what the consequences are for the victimizer, especially when the victim is a woman.

The Greek educational system, after its transition to a democratic procedure model, created the prerequisites of teacher and students contact within the school environment and the individual everyday contact by refuting the classic form of teacher authority (Renaut, 2004). Special emphasis was simultaneously placed on childhood and adolescence in which even the student delinquent manifestations were assessed, taking under consideration the criteria of

v. The international organization of UNESCO is indicatively referred to with special sensitivities on actions against school violence, having established the Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Center for further information and interference towards a more peaceful education.

immaturity or testing or game without an in-depth conceptualization of the action and its consequences specifically in relation to dominant stereotypes regarding the gender in every society.

Even though a democratic school environment in which students have more rights, receive less penalties or reprimands about their actions is observed, self-assertive behavior phenomena are constantly increasing among students. The image of the teacher as a leader with superpowers or authority of the past has fallen back and new leadership and control groups within the school environment seem to be formulated (Carlgren, Handal, & Vaage, 1994).

The social and political model of our era (Sennett, 2006) regenerates and legalizes self-assertive structures and relationships within the school on the level of educational leadership, both of teachers and students. Within a period of economic recession a tendency towards racism related to violent manifestations is accentuated with intensified violence phenomena, in particular, against girls. Thus, bullying phenomena such as small thefts, verbal violence or intimidation, within the student population mainly outside school are manifested, all aiming at the expression of power and control of a person over another or of a group of people over another one. The more general anomic climate or the questioning of the political and social model (Bauman, 2000) seems to legalize corresponding manifestations and, in general, to enhance delinquent behavior (Durkheim, 1973).

The Greek educational system, especially in the Secondary education, has been involved more in the university entrance examination issues that is, a tool-like use of knowledge in which the individuals are mostly prepared for their professional roles rather than their incorporation in the society. Their cognitive units related to the value pattern formulation have been confined or even, if they are maintained by the curricula, their study does not focus on the moral principles. The formulation of the individual personality is not the objective of the educational system (Salvadori, 2006). The violent manifestations and their consequences are eventually the outcome of a combination of a reduced individual involvement in the school humanistic issues, of the insufficient family involvement in moral principles and of the general insecurity model stemming from the economic and social recession. It is well-understood that the educational system is not concentrated on gender equalities policies.

Methodology

The subject of our research is the interpretation of violence phenomena and their confrontation by the students in the Kindergarten teacher academy. The Pedagogical academy of Kindergarten teachers in Florina was the case study.

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The sample comprised of 109 male and female students. The research was carried out during 2009-2011. Weighted questionnaires with open questions, through which the students potentially and extensively illustrated their standpoints, were utilized for the research. Before the questionnaires were given, the students were prepared about their contribution to a research in which all information would be anonymously provided and they should be sensitized, so that their remarks contribute to the study of a phenomenon. That is, the confinement of possibilities – the weakness of open questionnaires – and not the extensive response to the questions was pursued (Patton, 2002). The questionnaires were given during an undergraduate class, so that the people involved could be in a controlled working environment with adequate time to fully express themselves. As it is known, in such researches, only a small group of the sample expresses their thoughts and considerations, either because time is limited or because the research entities react against a procedure of viewpoints illustration estimating that they are probably assessed, too. Based on this consideration, we organized a research in order to have a broad variety of remarks for an in-depth study of their content (Pawluch, 2005) and to create the conditions of describing and evaluating the violence phenomenon.

By using the open questionnaire, we combined a qualitative and quantitative method (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007), because one part of the questions was formulated in such a way that results could be categorized and give a statistic representation for understanding the tendencies formed in the study of the phenomenon. Since emphasis is placed on the issue of future teacher behaviors, tendencies or perceptions, special concentration was given on the qualitative data represented in the student notional speech (Fairclough, 2003).

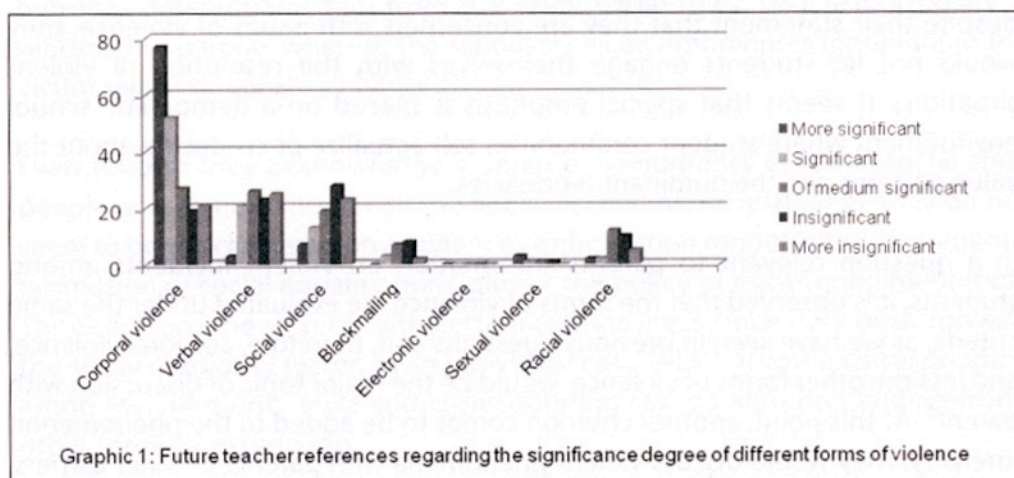
The questions containing forms of violence were categorized in terms of quantitative analysis. There was also a first-level categorization of the overall response content in terms of qualitative approach. That is, the response of the person being questioned was the general analysis theme, having in this case the individual utilization of this person's standpoint, by providing data for each question; at the same time the connection among his / her responses was examined in total. On a second level, we compared the responses of the people being questioned among each other, using as an evaluation measure the general text of each response and afterwards we carried out a comparative analysis based on the special vocabulary formed. Thus, ten categories tied to the issue of violence were defined and the presence of special words created a sense of frequency in every questionnaire and comparatively in all the questionnaires among each other. The ten categories were:

- Violent behavior
- Disapproval
- Penalty – consequence
- Child act
- Victimizer
- Victim
- Justice
- Sex
- Nation
- Social class

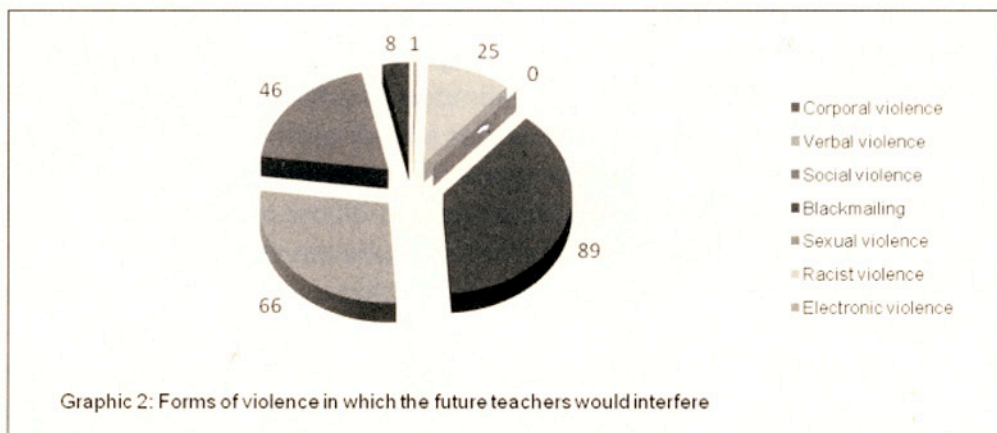
Research results analysis

It is observed that the sample individuals concentrate their evaluation, in terms of violence, on corporal violence, meaning that they emphasize on body maltreatment and on whatever causes corporal pain, while it seems that other forms of violence relevant to individual personality, his social presence and gender identity are downgraded. It is characteristic that the corporal violence is evaluated as violence with consequences whereas psychological violence is not taken under consideration. Therefore, the sample individuals consider corporal violence to be the only form of violence regarding any other form of violence as insignificant. If we consider that the sample comprises of future teachers we understand that they do not interpret violence under the modern definitions, as it is referred to in bibliography. Thus, they cannot effectively prevent or confront violence phenomena.

It is remarkable that when the sample was asked to describe violent scenes, all of the scenes concentrated on the practice of corporal violence and, in particular, an



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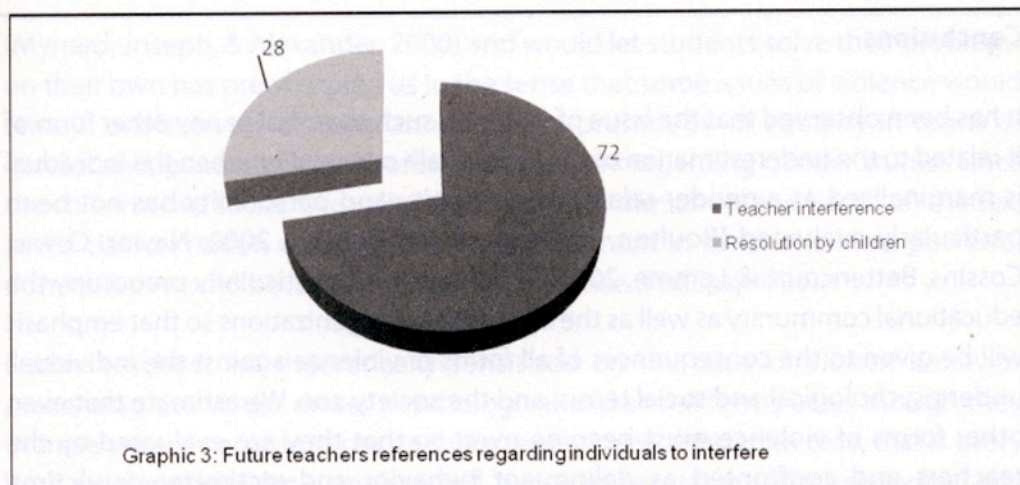


extensive body maltreatment description. Emphasis was given on the intensity of pain and on scenes related to genitals maltreatment. It was also reported that verbal violence was not individually evaluated as a form of violence but only in combination with corporal violence. Emphasis was given on boys having been maltreated whereas regarding girls, it was deemed that they over-reacted, in some cases. Only in cases of intense phenomena, reference was made to maltreatment.

In a question about ways to confront violent phenomena, we observe that, even though the sample seems ready to confront manifestations of violence, it eventually concentrates, either by ignorance or by other interpretations, on the corporal violence. It is characteristic that in any manifestation of corporal violence they would interfere whereas in other forms of violence they would interfere in severe situations only. In all these cases and based on these evaluations, girls seem to be unprotected in the school environment.

We were particularly preoccupied with the issue of non-confronting violent behaviors, especially regarding girls, by a large percentage of future teachers who, despite their statement that they are concerned with issues of violence, they would not let students engage themselves with the resolution of violent situations. It seems that special emphasis is placed on a democratic school environment where student communities self-actualize or co-decide about the value patterns and the dominant tendencies.

In a question relevant to parents' information on violent incidents among students, it is observed that the forms of violence are evaluated under the same criteria, as we have seen in previous questions and, therefore, corporal violence, and less the other forms of violence, would be the major topic of discussion with parents. At this point, another criterion comes to be added to the phenomenon intensity. They would discuss violent phenomena with parents or other carriers,



even special authorities or associations confronting violence or supporting victims only in extreme situations. It is interesting that they concentrate on the victimizer while the victim, girls in particular, is ignored in most cases.

Psychological and social pattern traits are concentrated on the victimizer and victim profile. Thus, the victim is portrayed as the weak and socially inferior; the sex, social class and nation issues are also under consideration. Even though they conceptualize the meaning of victim, they do not connect it to the consequences existing every time a violent behavior is ignored.

In a question relevant to the victim's description, it is mentioned that the victim has a particular behavior, so that victimization is referred to as a choice conducive to the handling of a situation either for benefit, by attracting other people's attention, or because s/he feels "good", though marginalized. It is about a model related to stereotypes on girls' reactions. It should be evaluated that future teachers seem to render responsibility to the victim, who forms a situation around him that differentiates him from the usual social roles. Less responsibility is rendered to parents whereas the school social environment is ignored and the victim seems to "construct himself".

Even though they acknowledge women or immigrants or lower social class people or a combination of all the above as victims, nevertheless, they do not seem to be concentrated on a violence confrontation model with simultaneous promotion of social equality principles or the policy of rights implementation. They confront the victims with certain cautiousness since they push forward the social inferiority factor, as an individual case, which forms a corresponding emotional inferiority style and corresponding compassion-demanding-from-other forms of expression.

Conclusions

It has been observed that the issue of violence, such as verbal or any other form of it related to the underestimation of the individual's personality, when the individual is marginalized as a gender-related social entity and personality has not been particularly evaluated (Boulton, Trueman, & Flemington, 2002; Naylor, Cowie, Cossins, Bettencourt, & Lemme, 2006). This issue must particularly preoccupy the educational community as well as the international organizations so that emphasis will be given to the consequences of all forms of violence against the individual, under psychological and social terms, and the society, too. We estimate that even other forms of violence must become overt so that they are evaluated by the teachers and confronted as delinquent behavior and victimizer or victims' restoration methods implemented in time and when necessary and penalties are imposed to victimizers. It is important, even from preschool age (Niles, Reynolds, & Nagasawa, 2006) that the individuals are socialized in a value system of respect towards the other and develop behaviors and tendencies which enhance gender equality as well as solidarity and altruism sentiments development.

It is obvious that the future teachers will engage themselves in other forms of violence, apart from corporal, only if something is rather irritating for the victim or is repeated (Yoon & Kerber, 2003). If we take under consideration that the consequences of other forms of violence do not easily become overt since their manifestations and intensity are different (Yoon & Barton, 2008), we understand that there is difficulty in evaluating and confronting issues containing the violence – gender relation. At this point, we realize that teachers use theoretical patterns for childhood, gender-related social stereotypes and immaturity which, perhaps in the case of violence, provide an "alibi" for non-overt forms of violence.

The fact that violence is evaluated as corporal violence and, moreover, that the future teachers will address parents or specialized scientists or carriers to confront violence, only in extreme situations (Ellis & Shute, 2007; Meyer, 2009) seems that future teachers have not systematically involved themselves in the issue of violence and, perhaps, they interfere during the final stages of violent behavior manifestation; that is when the intensity and repetition of the phenomenon have formed a total of victimizer and victims' behaviors and perceptions, which make the change of attitude or the implementation of any psychological or social methods particularly difficult.

A point to be especially underlined is the issue of defining the notion of democracy at school or the implementation of democratic institutions. The large percentage of future teachers that would not interfere in violent situations

(Mynard, Joseph, & Alexander, 2000) and would let students solve their problems on their own has preoccupied us in the sense that some issues of violence would remain unobserved, actually annulling the promotion of equality in terms of gender and, generally, the theoretical framework regarding gender studies since the constructive social inequality regenerated in the school and based on the sex, social class or nation would create an environment in which the most powerful domination would be legalized through violence (Phillips, 1999).

Future teachers are theoretically sensitized on the issue of violent behavior presenting the victim under psychological and social terms even though they themselves are not able to realize that a repeating victimization case, that is every time a violent behavior is unobserved, becomes permanent (Kochenderfer-Ladd & Wardrop, 2001) and social inequalities regarding power and authority, especially the male stereotypical roles of power and authority, are regenerated (Solberg & Olweus, 2003).

If, up until now, we have focused on the issue of defining violent behavior and if this behavior is apparent and assessable in the school classroom, we gradually observe that the victim, as defined by some future teachers, is an "example" of individual self-creation accepting victimization and promoting himself as a victim and is provided benefits in many cases (Horne, Orpinas, Newman-Carlson, & Bartolomucci, 2004). The victim finally gains sympathy more as a self-formed pathological situation and less as a social construction being the outcome of the value pattern of social inequality or the interaction within a social environment of power.

It is apparent that the interdisciplinary and cross curricular approach on educational issues regarding sex and intercultural education has not functioned in the training of future teachers who do not correlate violence with victim rights annulment or the annulment of an intercultural education or sex education, since social inequality is enhanced by the legalization of violence through its ignorance.

Future teachers report that violence at schools has increased and they are affected by recent research publications documented even in daily press, but a large percentage of them seem to question the seriousness of the issue with a particular perseverance that in the Kindergarten the "violent behavior" is connected to the egocentric stage, the impulsive behavior, and if they still characterize it as violence they refer to the permanency of the phenomenon meaning that the individual will modify his behavior and will be in harmony with other principles. There are researches showing that in the Greek educational system the issue of social inequality in terms of gender is not evaluated by the Greek teachers (Kalerante & Karafoti, 2008).

As a conclusion, we observe that apart from corporal violence which in some cases is assessed, the other forms of violence are "obscure" (Archer & Coyne, 2005; Yoon & Kerber, 2003). Teachers do not seem ready to collaborate with parents and other carriers to confront violence and even when they mention some cases to experts – due to lack of detailed case observation at school, in the family and the broader out-of-school environment- they cannot be sufficiently confronted. It is obvious that the cases of special confrontation are those of the victims and rarely of the victimizers who seem to be documented as intense personalities moving within the social space "successfully" and, therefore, are not confronted as a "pathogeny" of the social environment.

The victimizer's attitude is not interpreted and his expectations are not taken under consideration regarding the subjective level in relation to their objective satisfaction in the school and broader social environment. That is the issue related to a utilitarian dimension about individuals exercising violence (Collins, 2009), in the sense that they are given positive sentiments by imposing power or authority or by the content acquisition e.g. items stolen etc. as an outcome of their act.

It does not become perceivable by the future teachers that factors favorable to violence (Brophy, 1996) even within the school environment may be eliminated or blunted by an in-time evaluation and the exercise of legalized reprimand or punishment (Mbanzoulou, 2007) and an equality policy in terms of gender to be enhanced since girls are the victims in most cases. What we are interested in, regarding violence, is the type of action that generates violence and the results of violence as an individual or collective action.

To sum up, we would like to underline issues that can be incorporated in a future research. We estimate that not only the form of violence is of special interest or issues related to the victimizer and the victim but even the social environment itself in which school as a generator of violence is incorporated and the social inequality regarding gender is broadened as well as its outcome as individual or collective action for the social whole. Another issue that should be studied and evaluated is the more general political framework, that is the political environment of anomy and corruption legalizes violent behaviors in other social environments (Dobry, 1986). In such an anomic situation, therefore, all forms of inequality are broadened, an issue related to the inequality maximization based on gender.

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