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METHODOLOGICAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF VISUAL SOCIOLOGY IN THE REPRESENTATIONAL UNDERSTANDING OF IDENTITY IN CHILDHOOD

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Abstract: The following document presents the results of a methodological exploration on visual sociology that support the representational understanding of the identity of girls and boys from the observation of their visual narrative creations. In which, the findings found in the review of the scientific literature published in academic journals from 2009 to 2022 regarding the contributions of visual sociology from a representational understanding of identity in childhood in school contexts are described. Consequently, the methodological contributions of visual sociology are exposed in three fundamental aspects: 1) identity in childhood; 2) visual sociology and visual storytelling in childhood; and 3) The significant condition of representation in visual narration and the world of images. Being visual sociology a relevant and significant qualitative inquiry tool for the understanding of social phenomena typical of childhood through the approach of visual narratives projected by girls and boys in school contexts.

Keywords: Sociology, Visual Sociology, Visual Storytelling, Representation, Identity, Childhood.

INTRODUCTION

Identity formation is a complex process in which people recognize themselves as unique and unrepeatable individuals, possessing particular characteristics appropriated from interaction with society. According to Goffman (1981) identity is constituted from different traits attributed by others, in a negotiation between the place where one interacts and the people participating in said action. Identity is subjective, symbolic and is framed by a question of personal image, organized from the experiences of the self around daily social relationships. Reason why, it can be affirmed that in this process, boys and girls develop their identity in a certain relationship with the world through interactions with those around them, and this way, they begin to generate an image of the world. particular in which they live. In short, childhood identity is projected in a complex process, initiated in the relationship with the other, culture, and the environment.

At the same time that individual identities are developed, girls and boys build their collective identities, characterized by the influence of their social and cultural contexts, where the practices and knowledge of their families and local communities; neighborhood and school, become crucial referents and the way in which they relate to others allows them to create belonging to a social group. Thus, girls and boys are seen as part of a community, as active subjects and, in turn, as unique beings with particular characteristics. For this reason, the development of identity in childhood becomes more important, and it is there where a question arises: how do girls and boys represent their identity through their autobiographical visual narratives?

Since visual documents are part of the life and communication of minors from their early years. Where girls and boys represent their realities, tastes, preferences, among others, through drawings. In which each stroke represents a particular world for infants, it is necessary to recognize which elements of their visual narratives represent their identity.

This way, this text exposes the methodological components of visual sociology that are considered significant for the understanding of the visual narratives of girls and boys in school contexts. Being, Visual sociology a subdiscipline of sociology that allows the study of social phenomena through images. Its importance lies in the content's ability to convey meaning and contribute to the construction of social reality. In this particular case, the visual narratives that infants build are understood as documents,

which have great symbolic power and can be used to understand social realities, observe how children see and understand the world around them, how they relate to others and how they represent themselves.

This way, visual sociology as a method to cover autobiographical visual narratives will allow us to understand the representations of identity in childhood and other particular social phenomena of the child context expressed through visual and audiovisual content.

IDENTITY IN CHILDHOOD

To start, it is important to highlight the changes in the perception of childhood and the role of girls and boys in social and cultural spaces. Infants today are seen as subjects of rights, belonging to specific contexts, with behaviors, needs and ways of interacting in the world, different from childhood in other times. But it is also relevant to establish that the characteristics of their social development and interaction with others can not only be understood from theoretical contributions, but must establish a joint vision with what they think about themselves.

According to Goetschel (2009), childhood is the stage in which, in addition to developing the basic biological and cognitive structure for life, basic cultural abilities, skills and knowledge are acquired to live in society. Likewise, Alzate and Gómez (2014) state that childhood is a pure, transcendental experience, freed from the subject. There is no boy, there is no girl: there is "infancy." (p.81), and although this stage is permeated by the interests of adults, girls and boys maintain their free and innocent nature. On the other hand, Rincón and León (2015) affirm that childhood is currently structured as the discursive result between the world, the needs and the experiences based on the child.

In this sense, the current concept of childhood is given from the evolutionary, biological, psychological and social aspects of the initial development of the human being. As cited by Segalen (2001) and De Singly (2009), (cited by Alzate and Gómez, 2014) the concept of childhood has evolved from the social transformation of the vision of girls and boys. In other words, the transition from adult centrism to paidocentrism, a deep trend in contemporary society completely focused on the protection and affirmation of the rights of children, based on the polarization between liberationists and protectionists. This permanent tension between "protection" and "liberation" characterizes the specificity of the individualization of the girl or boy in contemporary individualistic societies. What allows infants to characterize their own personality from an early age.

In the same way, Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (2005) highlight the new role of girls and boys in the configuration of themselves and the other as co-constructors of culture, knowledge and their own identity. So, childhood must be understood as the particular configuration of each subject, complex and individual, which is increasingly moving away from the reproduction processes typical of pedagogy and the classical family. In this sense, the position of infants is highlighted as protagonists of their own lives, as unique and unrepeatable beings, with characteristics typical of a society permeated by interaction with those around them. In other words, girls and boys begin to show traits of their identity from the first years of life. Understanding identity as a vision of oneself built by various factors, given in interaction with other people and appropriating a role in a social group. As Dunham (2018, taken from Stets and Burke, 2005) cites, identity is the organization of the self into multiple parts related to the different roles and positions held within society.

For his part, Goffman (1963, cited by

Noriega and Medina, 2012) defines identity as the traits attributed by society to people who are classified into broad categories. Identity is consolidated in the constitution of oneself, in interaction with society, distinguishing personal identity from social identity; the first, understood as the idea of uniqueness, that is, the possibility of being unique and different from others; and the second, as a member of a group with certain categories and attributes that allow them to acquire a social role.

From another aspect, Erikson (1992, cited by Chamseddine, 2015) adds that "identity represents the perception of the sameness and continuity of one's own existence in time and space, and the perception of the fact that others recognize that sameness" (p. 70). Identity, then, is a representation of each person, in a construction where their experiences, experiences, emotions, feelings and perceptions are implicit, in relation to themselves and society. In this sense, Goffman (2001, cited by Forero, 2012) can be cited again, who affirms that identity is an entity that assumes attitudes, something that is situated in an approximate position between identification with a social identity and its opposition. to her.

VISUAL SOCIOLOGY AND VISUAL STORYTELLING IN CHILDHOOD

Now, it is important to highlight the methodological contributions of visual sociology for the understanding of social phenomena. In this case, through visual sociology, the symbols and subjectivities that constitute the visual narratives that girls and boys create to represent their identity in the school context are observed. Therefore, visual sociology, as stated by Mannay (2017) is "essential to highlight the importance of images today and in the social interaction of the subjects. (Q.2)

Today, the visual phenomenon influences the ways in which people structure and categorize the world, images are present in all contexts where subjects are related. Therefore, visual sociology proposes reading and understanding relationships and social processes from a visual language. According to Echavarren (2010), visual sociology analyzes the social implications of the visual phenomenon, focusing on how the image influences the way that subjects categorize reality and also how society is reflected in images. Visual sociology as a social research technique has been used mainly as a method to understand the world from the subjectivity of each subject. Therefore, the image as a social research technique must be understood as a way of interpreting the social world.

To complement the above, it is important to point out from Ortega (2009) that visual sociology uses images as a research instrument for social relations, that is, they are used as a source of data for the interpretation and analysis of the world and the social interactions. In the same sense, it is worth highlighting the interpretation of Peñalva (2011) who affirms that visual sociology is a new disciplinary, theoretical and methodological approach, which studies visual documents through an analysis of visual discourse in relation to the representation of processes. cultural, said visual discourse allows us to focus on the idea of otherness and on the construction of the identity of the other. Therefore, visual sociology plays an essential role in the educational context, since the school is the space where children and adolescents live their daily lives.

According to Mannay (2017) there are various visual document analysis tools that can be used to understand social phenomena, which include: 1) Content analysis: a technique that allows analyzing the subject of a visual document in terms of themes,

messages and representations; 2) Analysis of the composition: it focuses on how the visual elements are organized and presented in a document; 3) Analysis of the iconography: it is directed towards the study of the symbols and images used in a visual document; 4) Analysis of visual rhetoric: it is based on how rhetorical techniques, such as persuasion, are used in a visual document; and 5) Representation Analysis: addresses how people and groups are represented in a visual document and how these representations can reflect or perpetuate social relationships.

In the same way, visual sociology proposes to observe visual documents from the typology of their production, whether they are primary or secondary: the primary visual content refers to any pre-existing record. That is, they were produced prior to an investigation and are used to understand a reality or social phenomenon, these can be photographs, videos, collages, posters, paintings, postcards, among others. Material that can also be analyzed in relation to everyday objects and artifacts; On the other hand, secondary visual content has a specific purpose in social research and is motivated and initiated by a researcher in order to identify a particular reality through the development of specific visual material.

In general, these tools are useful for analyzing and understanding how society represents itself through visual media and how these representations can influence the understanding of the world. Visual content analysis according to Mannay (2017) consists of a technique that allows analyzing a visual document in terms of themes, messages, and representations. This implies a careful evaluation of the images and elements present in a visual document, with the aim of identifying the underlying issues and messages that are being conveyed.

This analysis considers the structure and organization of the visual elements, and seeks to understand how the components that make it up contribute to the construction of a story or narrative. It also considers how the social and cultural context in which the visual document was produced can influence the way in which different social realities are presented.

THE SIGNIFICANT CONDITION OF REPRESENTATION IN VISUAL STORYTELLING AND THE WORLD OF IMAGES

In this sense, visual narration can be understood as the act of narrating through images, however, beyond this concept, the act of narrating carries within itself a relationship between those contents that are to be narrated and human life. (Córdoba, 2007). Regarding the concept of narrative, he states:

> ""A narrative deals not just with facts, ideas, or theories, or even with dreams, fears, and hopes, but with facts, theories, and dreams from the perspective of someone's life and within the context of someone's emotions. It is worth remembering that all the knowledge we have has been obtained in the context of someone's life, as a product of someone's hopes, fears, and dreams. The narrative is one of the fundamental operations of construction of meaning that the mind possesses; and it seems to be peculiar both to individuals and to humanity as a whole. (p. 226)

Thus, the representation is focused on the images that are created to give meaning to an element in the mind and is approached through language as a mediator and constructor of reality, which is why it could be said that the images and the communicative fact are linked to the interpretation of reality. In this sense, social representations are organized under two elements that constitute the field of representation, which allows recreating an element through the figurative and symbolic.

This is generated from the image that is given to an element to specify an organized structure that facilitates its understanding, as an act of thought and knowledge that supports behavior.

According to Jodelet (2008, 2011) social representations refer to a symbolic phenomenon of substitution of an element represented by an individual; So when talking about social representation, according to the authors, they create a formula that explains how thoughts are recreated in the mind According to Moscovici (1976 cited by Banchs, 2000).

Figure that represents the socialization of what exists with the imaginary. In this sense, the figurative field refers to elements that recreate something concrete from the real life of a subject, it is a translation between the real and the imaginary, in detail, it is the information that the mind uses to specify, structure and organize a idea through mental images. Ovalle (2020), states that children's productions reveal data related to the understanding of figurative systems, in which ways of relating to others, life dynamics, cognitive and creative development, among others, can be identified.

And the symbolic, refers to the value that the person has said representation. Therefore, the representations that boys and girls make are determined by prior knowledge and its meaning. Along the same lines, narrative visual productions recreate the construction of a thought through what they have in mind, their tastes, knowledge, expectations, among other elements that they have acquired in their daily lives.

Ovalle also proposes two ways of analyzing the productions of infants:

> … *The first, as a resource to expand memory, the drawings or images are easily remembered representations and more so if they are related to specific emotions, a strong image that generates fear or disgust can be remembered,*

> *or an image that generates feelings such as love. unlike an image that does not influence emotionality and on the other hand, the second function performed by figurative systems is communication; Images are often used to convey some information in a global or general way, symbols are a clear example of this.* (Ovalle, 2020. p. 50)

Reason why, the interpretation of images and narratives created by children can be understood from their context, cognition, experiences and, above all, from their realities.

CONCLUSIONS

It can be affirmed that visual sociology, being a methodology of the social sciences that studies images as a visual phenomenon to interpret the world, is relevant for qualitative inquiry that allows reflecting the social realities of girls and boys in school contexts. Where the researcher must work on alterity to understand the visual resources from the perspective of the participants, their contexts, stories, emotions, among other elements that make it possible to understand the representation of realities.

Then, the images can be established as a document of representation and discursive analysis that allow building knowledge through the interpretation of the subject, its relationship with the world and its realities. Finally, it is worth highlighting the use of the creation of visual narratives as a personal document that allows understanding the representations of identity in childhood. Where the images are established as a document of representation and discursive analysis for the construction of knowledge through the interpretation of the subject, its relationship with the world and its realities.

Images have positioned themselves in today's world, they have acquired a leading role due to their influence in society, visual and audiovisual resources are capable of influencing thoughts, decisions, tastes, and the

ways in which individuals relate. Therefore, currently the world of images provides a special message that is not said with words or texts, that is, it is complemented by traditional language. Therefore, the studies of visual phenomena from the social sciences allow social research to delve into the interpretation of the world, the perceptions of the subjects and their realities. In this sense, the skills of the observer in social and educational research must be understood as implying seeing beyond the simple image, which requires an effort to interpret the realities and relationships of the subjects in social interaction.

Based on the above, it is important to highlight the function of visual narration as it allows creating communication without the mediation of words and telling stories with visual details that can be analyzed from history, context and emotions, generating a interpretation of reality individually or in groups to identify the perceptions of the subjects from visual phenomena.

The representations imply interaction with the community and are framed in the social and historical evolution, in the particular case of boys and girls the representation is influenced by imagination and fantasy, which allows them to know and understand the world and its realities..

Next, it is important to understand identity as the concept that each person has about themselves in relation to others, they are characteristic, individual and collective traits that have been produced from their own experiences and in interaction with society. The configuration of identity occurs in an evolutionary and changing process that lasts a lifetime and is permeated by the subject's relationship with others and with their environment from the influence of internal factors (psychological, physical and emotional) and factors external (social, cultural, beliefs...), recreated individually

and collectively, individual identity is the result of the construct of lived experiences and collective identity is the construction of specific characteristics or traits of a social group to which one belongs.

Each actor has its own identity and at the same time shares collective traits with a community. Given that identity is built through the experiences of each person and from their interaction with the other, and that the school is understood as the first social institution after the family. It can be affirmed that children and adolescents live their daily lives and carry out their socialization at school, a space that favors the development of personal and social skills that contribute to the construction of individual and collective identity. Reason why, it becomes important to include the development of the being in the study plan or curriculum, in order to promote in students the constitution of their personality and identity in a natural way in contrast to the others, and at the same time favor experiences and learning from participation. Education needs to focus not only on the results, but also on the processes that contribute to the formation of the subject and the development of social skills, especially in childhood.

And finally, it can be affirmed that the school, understood as a social institution, allows students to relate to each other, to recognize themselves as unique beings with cultural differences and similarities to strengthen the development processes of their personality and identity. Therefore, being a space for the configuration of character and personality, where each subject develops their own identity and a collective identity is generated, it is recommended to promote not only academic and cognitive development, but also contribute to personal and social development., guiding the processes to the formation of being.

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