Violence in social networks: an exploration of the online expressions of teens from marginalized areas of Greater Buenos Aires

Violencia en la red social: una indagación de expresiones online en adolescentes de sectores populares marginalizados del Área Metropolitana de Buenos Aires

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ABSTRACT This paper explores the online expressions of violence perpetrated or experienced by adolescents from marginalized areas of Greater Buenos Aires, Argentina. Using a qualitative methodology, four specific events were examined: threats, "*bondis*" [fights], cyberbullying and displays of mourning. To do so, 20 in-depth interviews and 3,000 virtual observations of profiles in the social network Facebook were carried out. Among the main results, it was seen that most expressions of violence are part of an offline-online dynamic. Empirical evidence is also offered based upon which it can be affirmed that the expressions of violence of these teenagers are developed around the culture of "*aguante*" [fierce loyalty]. The article ponders the extent to which, in the iconic platform of the option "like," these expressions are implicitly functional to the social network or, to the contrary, or whether they allow displacements and significant reappropriations on the part of users. New questions arise about the use of these tools by adolescents from marginalized areas and the need for more complex approaches to examine these phenomena.
KEY WORDS Adolescents; Social Networking; Violence; Suburban Population; Argentina.

RESUMEN Este trabajo explora las expresiones *online* de violencia ejercida o padecida por las y los adolescentes de sectores populares marginalizados del Área Metropolitana de Buenos Aires. Desde una metodología cualitativa, se indagan cuatro fenómenos específicos: las amenazas, los "bondis", el cyberbullying y los duelos, para lo cual se realizaron veinte entrevistas en profundidad y 3.000 observaciones virtuales de perfiles de la red social Facebook entre 2013 y 2014. Entre los principales resultados, se observa que la mayoría de las expresiones de violencia se enmarcan en una dinámica offline-online. Asimismo, se ofrece evidencia empírica a partir de la cual es posible afirmar que las expresiones de violencia de estos adolescentes se despliegan en torno a la cultura del "aguante". El artículo se pregunta si en la plataforma icónica del "me gusta" estas expresiones resultan implícitamente funcionales a la red social o si, por el contrario, permiten desplazamientos y reapropiaciones significativas de los usuarios. En definitiva, se abren nuevos interrogantes acerca de la utilización de estas herramientas por parte de adolescentes de sectores populares marginalizados y se propone complejizar los enfoques en torno a estos fenómenos.
PALABRAS CLAVES Adolescentes; Redes Sociales; Violencia; Población Suburbana; Argentina.

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

By revising the literature available on the matter, it is observed that violence does not allow for a univocal definition. Indeed, socio-historical changes show disputes within societies regarding the definition of violence-related phenomena, including material conditions, symbolical practices, and the use of physical force, among others. Without disregarding the magnitude of these debates, violence may be defined here from a biopolitical perspective as a *productive* practice – in the sense of generating practices – and not merely as a *restrictive* practice. Foucault[1,2] maintains that, in modern societies, negative and traditionally coercive strategies are integrated into a more complex technology of what he calls "biopolitics" to produce "docile bodies." "Biopower" is no longer centered only on the severity of "punishment," and instead it implies diverse "surveillance" systems to control bodies. In his analysis on power and violence, this author states that this is a power that operates through production, intensification, and administration: "It is no longer a matter of bringing death into play in the field of sovereignty, but of distributing the living in the domain of value and utility."[2 p.136]

From its own genealogy, modernity has been marked by different forms of violence. The complex relationships amongst the State, law, and violence constitute a series of modulations that enable the resignification of modernity's self-perception within the context of the bourgeois revolutions. In that regard, the fact that one of the founding milestones of the Contemporary age is the French Revolution is symptomatic, considering that its motto called for the literality of "beheading the monarchy." From an innovative perspective, Benjamin[3] proposed to revise the conflictive connection between violence and democratic order. Moreover, as mentioned above, Foucault[1] studied the links between violence and power, and showed that these relationships cannot be conceptualized in a dual and hierarchical manner only, but rather as multifaceted, central nodes within what is called "micropolitics."

In the 20th century, limit-experiences such as World Wars I and II and the ensuing armed conflicts arouse new deliberations on violence. Authors such as Sloterdijk[4] and Rancière[5] highlight this "crisis of Humanism" and its effects regarding global violence issues such as terrorism, urban poverty, the refugee crisis, and gender-based violence. Furthermore, Isla and Míguez[6] along with Spinelli et al.[7] and Tonkonoff[8] agree that violence is a social and historical construct, the practices of which change in accordance with the negotiations and consensuses established within each society. This overview, though far from exhaustive, let us indicate, at least, that every observation concerning violence, in order to avoid a stigmatizing interpretation of a social group, must be necessarily analyzed within the broader field of democratic, institutional, and legal life.

One of the contemporary phenomena that most affects the global population is urban violence, defined here as the specific set of violent actions that take place in cities and that alter its social framework.[9] Some typical examples of violence in megalopolises, capital cities, and metropolises are theft and murder, as well as street fights, criminal offenses, tax evasion, traffic accidents, and disturbances in soccer stadiums.

In particular, socially vulnerable groups[10] are affected by the type of violence connected with socio-economic difficulties, such as lack of stable employment or access to basic social services. In Argentina, neighborhoods with such characteristics are usually called "*villas de emergencia,*" "*villas miseria,*" or "*asentamientos urbanos precarios*" [slums, shantytowns, or ramshackle settlements]. These neighborhoods are also referred to as "urban margins,"[10,11] in the sense that they are territories segregated from the more developed areas. Ultimately, these are areas which are usually isolated and with less access to social, health, and transportation services[12]. Wacquant,[13] who researches the social stratification phenomenon affecting these groups, defines as "urban ghettofication processes"

the progressive social isolation experienced by the different neighborhoods inhabited by these populations.

In Argentina, Auyero, Burbano de Lara and Berti,[14] Di Leo,[15] Isla and Míguez,[6] Kessler and Dimarco,[11] Spinelli et al.[7] and Tonkonoff[8] analyze the different types of violence displayed in recent years in the urban margins of the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires (AMBA) [Área *Metropolitana de Buenos Aires*][a]: first, there is an interpersonal type of violence arising from confrontations amongst neighbors, family members, or peers; second, there is violence related to criminal activities, social issues, and the punitive action of the State. These authors assert that violence is usually one of the main concerns of the socially vulnerable inhabitants of AMBA.

Even when face-to-face violence among socially vulnerable groups has been studied, the incidence of the massification of information and communications technologies (ICT) amongst youth in the AMBA requires an opening of this analysis to include emerging phenomena, which are those investigated in this paper. Morduchowicz[16] contends that the socialization of adolescents takes place in an offline-online *continuum*. Similarly, it can be concluded that the violence they experience occurs in an analogous context. In this way, fights, thefts, social stigmatization, scholar segregation, and gender-based violence are interconnected with phenomena arising from the massification of ICTs.

There has been significant recent research study on violence in Latin America[9,17,18] and in Argentina.[6,7,8,10,11,14,15,19] In particular, the literature that deals with expressions of violence in "social networking websites" was reviewed; results show that there is a scarce number of studies on adolescents from working-class areas, given that most studies are limited to middle class youth.[20,21,22,23,24] On the same note, in order to contribute to the understanding of this complex contemporary topic, this article focuses on the online expressions of violence displayed on Facebook by the working-class youth in the AMBA.

Adolescence is a central stage for identity configuration during which exploratory practices[25,26] are essential. As a consequence of the massification of ICTs and their integration into the daily lives of most adolescents, a significant portion of this identity configuration and exploratory practices usually takes place in connection with the profiles created by these youths on Facebook.[27] This is then the platform chosen for this analysis, as it has become the biggest social network at a global level and, for many adolescents, it is synonymous with the internet, given the fact that this is where they carry out most of their communication or leisure activities online.[28] Therefore, this platform is a privileged setting for looking into this population's practices.

On the basis of the conducted fieldwork, two lines of exploratory research studies were developed concerning the expressions of violence that these adolescents display on Facebook: the first dimension refers to the violent practices that users perform in an offline-online circuit; the second one refers to the practices that enable users to express and resignify the violence they suffer within the stated circuit. The former encompasses threats, "*bondis*" [confrontations involving online and offline practices, also spelled "*bondys*"] and cyberbullying. The latter explores elaborations of grief. Both dimensions give rise to questions as to whether Facebook is merely a device that reproduces these phenomena or if it empowers these populations against the violence they suffer.

METHODOLOGY

This research study, which emerged from a more extensive one,[27] is exploratory and qualitative. It is based on a non-probability sample of adolescents living in the AMBA, recruited through snowballing. Twenty in-depth interviews were carried out in classrooms in schools or centers for digital inclusion,[b] which lasted approximately one hour, and face-to-face observations that were conducted in schools, public internet booths, on the streets, and centers for digital inclusion.

The subject of study was constructed at the intersection of two variables: age and social class. Some methodological precautions were taken in order to avoid the homogenization of the subject of study from an "androcentric"[29] perspective, thus capturing the different modulations observed in men and women. Regarding the first variable, within the category of youth, which has been defined by different authors as a social construct,[26,30] this research study focuses on adolescent boys and girls aged 13 to 18. Regarding the second variable, this article is concerned with the study of adolescents from socially vulnerable areas.

Several research studies[6,10,12,30] agree, albeit with some nuances, on defining these groups as those populations that live in unstable socio-economic conditions and reside in neighborhoods that lack basic social services, which has a social isolation effect with respect to the metropolis where they belong or which can be found in closest proximity. On the basis of the analytical productivity of these studies and the data collected by the Argentine Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) [*Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos*],[12] the proposal of this research study is to define these social groups as working-class groups and to subclassify them as integrated or marginalized. On the one hand, it is necessary to make distinctions within this group. On the other hand, this subcategorization is also related to the search for a greater sociological precision to describe these social groups and increase possibilities of transference. Far from intending to increase the stigmatization suffered by these adolescents, this article seeks to contribute to the state of the art and propose new and useful research tools for the optimization of the public policies directed towards this population.

In contrast with the past three decades, although there is a greater presence of the state in connection with socioeconomic assistance and transference of technological resources to this socially vulnerable groups through social programs such as *Asignación Universal por Hijo* [Universal Allowance Per Child], *Programa Conectar Igualdad* [Connect Equality], *Programa Jóvenes con Más y Mejor Trabajo* [Program For Youths With More And Better Work] and *Plan Fines* [Plan Goals],[c] there still are numerous adolescents from these areas that suffer life conditions for which the State needs to provide further solutions. The integrated working-class areas from the AMBA, due to their greater level of involvement in the education system, the formal work market, and the health care system, usually benefit the most from these public policies. On the contrary, the marginalized working-class areas have a less stable contact with these institutions and, therefore, although they are the ones who most need the direct participation of the State, in many cases they are affected by these public policies in a more ambiguous way. In effect, the populations defined here as marginalized working-class areas suffer from the most extreme and conflictive living conditions: their parents are unemployed or underemployed and poorly qualified; they live in precarious homes and neighborhoods; they attend school on an irregular basis and running into many difficulties, or they drop out for a number of reasons.

One of the greatest challenges for research in social sciences is how to approach these vulnerable populations, whose relationship with the governmental institutions is intermittent. In that regard, choosing the Facebook social platform contributes to finding a methodological strategy that represents a possible access line to fieldwork with these adolescents. One of the tools developed to carry out the study was the creation and management of an *ad hoc* profile on Facebook. This observation method was created to study adolescents online, based on recommendations by several research studies that use digital ethnography to understand a population that consider these devices essential.[23,24,33,34] While working as a voluntary teacher in a center for social inclusion located in the southern area of the AMBA, a colleague and neighborhood leader commented that he used Facebook to "monitor" adolescents in the area. This proved to be a valuable resource to move this study forward; therefore, a profile was created with analytical

purposes, and working-class adolescents who were mutual contacts were added. The *ad hoc* profile was only used to observe, write comments, and "like" some posts.

Through the creation of this Facebook account, which had 3,000 contacts at the time of the study, it was possible to explore the ways in which adolescents self-portray and interact, as well as the strategies and resources they use for designing and updating their profiles on this social network. This experimental stage, developed between 2013 and 2014, proved to be one of the most important aspects of the fieldwork, considering the profuse archival material that was collected, catalogued, and analyzed. In order to organize the images and personal texts so gathered, folders were created with different names, which made the analytic proposition of violence-related phenomena possible. Although several of the classic stages of investigation were actively followed as well, these ethnographic-digital aspects of the research work provided elements of analysis about significant activities of adolescents that were not always easy to find *in situ*. This cataloguing made it possible to detect, throughout three years of online observation, the recurring appearance of certain expressions such as "*aguante*" [fierce loyalty or endurance], "*bardeos*" [generation of conflicts and harassing others], or "*pararse de manos*" [defending themselves or show no fear against an ensuing fight].[d]

For ethical reasons, the interviewees were asked for their authorization and no record of their personal data was kept. It should be mentioned that Facebook is a social networking website that operates under terms and policies similar to most sites of the kind: it does not restrict its use to anyone over 13 years old, as any person of this age or older is entitled to use this platform, and all users enter into an agreement with Facebook whereby they agree that their posts will be available online. To protect these adolescents' identities, generic labels were used for each quoted interview extract. In the interview fragments and Facebook screenshots transcriptions, only the user's sex and age are specified.

RESULTS

Threats

Through fieldwork, it was found that one of the most recurring types of online violence expressions amongst the sampled adolescents are those that involve the suggestion, possibility, or warning about future acts of violence. These types of expressions are here referred to as "threats." In many cases, the purpose of these practices is to instill fear in the recipient or even dissuade him or her, whether directly or indirectly, from carrying out certain actions. Although these threats are typically aimed at violently warning an individual to do or refrain from doing something, after observing the practices it is clear that these threats are not always directed towards a specified group, and the actual intention is for the profile of the author of the threats to arouse respect amongst his or her peers.

At this point, it is necessary to reconsider the concept of the so-called "*aguante*"[35] culture, which is central to the universes of meaning of these adolescents from socially vulnerable areas in the AMBA. This native term originally evokes certain practices and meaning associations in connection with the ability to undergo rough times in the life of a soccer club such as, for example, relegations and confrontations against other "*barras*" [hooligan gangs], or fights within the neighborhood or other institutions.[36] This "*aguante*" culture later acquired different modulations in connection with the "*reviente*" culture [social acceptance of harmful habits such as alcoholism or drug use] and with different ways of exteriorizing one's masculinity and legitimate being. As the cited studies show, for marginalized working-class youth from the AMBA, "*aguante* implies fidelity, support, endurance."[37 p.283] In that regard, as in certain cases, the threat, rather than being directed to another social network user in particular, is diffused to anonymity and its effect can be thought in terms of "*aguante*," as the user shows his or her capacity to resist, to face adversity, to not run away ["*arrugar*"[e]], and "to be up in arms

against anyone" ["*pararse de manos ante cualquiera*"].

You just type, you silly pillock, but I don't crap my pants whenever you want we can fight, haha but we both've already fought once and you called up all your gang you act as if you're cool 'cause you know people from celinna 'pompeya haha I don't give a damn about that my problem's with you I know you're afraid of me [emoticons] *so whenever you want we can fight face to face you rat, keep your drama for someone else no one dares to provoke me even less you so think about that* [emoticon]
I'll feel [P]
(Facebook post, user from AMBA)

The above transcription is a post by an adolescent girl (16 years old) who threatens another girl and clearly asserts that she is not afraid of a physical confrontation. On the basis of a series of references found in this post, different intersections between the offline and online contexts stand out. First, the author of the threat refers to a shared history between her and the recipient: "*we both 've already fought once.*" Second, the mention of "*celinna 'pompeya*" [neighborhoods of the AMBA] represents a territorial reference related to the neighborhoods they feel identified with, which also implies a form of "*aguante.*" Finally, by using the expression "*face to face*" the author states that she is ready for physical confrontation. The threat, by implying an eventual application of violence in the future in a face-to-face context, shows that these expressions are frequently part of an offline-online *continuum*. The threat is made online, but the key for reading it is the reference to an offline context.

Another common practice among the adolescents being studied consists of posting on their Facebook profile or status fragments of lyrics from songs that, according to them, thematize their living conditions and, at the same time, may serve as threats. This is shown by the fact that many of these bands' names[f] and lyrics refer to police persecution,

prison confinement, and drug trafficking and abuse.

*.-
La mafia [a cumbia villera group] *keeps playing, bitch & I'll put it shortly, Don't mess with us girls or your life will get shorter* ♪ [emoticon]
(Facebook post, user from AMBA)

This sample was written by an adolescent girl (16 years old). Míguez,[38] Semán and Vila,[39] and Silba[40] agree that the lyrics of *cumbia villera* songs [a popular music genre originated in ramshackle settlements] produce a sense of identification among these groups because they present daily life narrations in connection with unsafe neighborhood conditions and certain activities such as drug use, violent episodes, and confrontations with the police, which range from arbitrary inspections and interrogations to repression and "trigger-happy" shootings. It can be noticed in this particular sample how the adolescent girl uses the fragment of a song to self-legitimize and to emphasize that she has enough "*aguante*" to resist fights and adversity.

The sampling of the examples where women participate was deliberate. An emerging phenomenon, from a gender perspective,[g] consists in women who display "*aguante*"-related performances which, under a sex/gender and heteronormative system,[42] are traditionally associated with masculinity. The consideration of this dynamic occurring in working-class groups from a gender perspective evidences a non-hegemonic femininity in connection with "*aguante*" in bodily and territorial terms, and this shows another possible modulation for a new "girls' era."[29]

However, as shown by other articles[43] as well, these emerging modulations coexist in tension with traditionally masculine practices. One of the analyzed cover photos that was selected by an adolescent boy (17 years old) to present himself before others showed two guns and the words "I LOVE YOU" written with bullets, with the following phrase below: "But if you betray me, all these will be

yours." The apparent love declaration works as a threat for his partner: love will only be possible if she accepts the proposed power and violence dynamics. The threat effect is complete because it nullifies any chance of negotiation and establishes that only the man is entitled to define betrayal. The threat is also directed to his male peers, because it works as a way of "*aguante*" legitimization, as understood from a traditional sex/gender perspective, in connection with the asymmetric relationships that men establish with women.

> *Many choose these cover photos because they think it sells to show yourself jealous and guarding. They go too far, though some girls are really into that. Many of us want a caring, faithful, super-loyal boyfriend, but boys cross the line and sometimes they get high or drink too much and get violent, and that's not cool.* (Interview, female, 18 years old)

The three selected fragments are, as a whole, paradigmatic for the analysis of threatening expressions and the production of subjectivity among marginalized working-class adolescents in the AMBA. In this way, emerging and traditional gender norms coexist. The last fragment shows the persistence, and even the dangers, of a traditional gender system that links threats and "*aguante*" to a hegemonic masculinity that prioritizes the actual or potential use of physical force, control, and power abuse. Nevertheless, the first two samples show the possibility of an emerging gender system that extends the value of "*aguante*" to women, which enables them to explore non-hegemonic practices of femininity.

"Bondis"

The native term used by adolescents of the marginalized working-class groups from the AMBA to refer to a fight is "*bondi.*" This is not merely a synonym for "fight," as it presents a displacement from and a construction around this signifier. What is at stake in a "*bondi*"?

Which are the strategies deployed by those who take part in one? Unlike threats, "*bondis*" usually take place between some users in particular.

By definition, a "*bondi*" also encompasses offline and online practices. Sometimes, a "*bondi*" starts online, it goes viral among the small community of peers, and then extends to face-to-face contexts such as the neighborhood, the school, or the night club. Other times, a "*bondi*" starts in offline spaces and continues online, amplifying the initial conflict and involving new users who feel touched and get involved in the dispute.

> *This is for all the silly pillocks! I won't be kind to you or eat crow, why don't you stop fooling around and in any case if you're so great you stand up by yourselves? Why are you getting relatives involved? When it's you who're looking for a fight! You're grownups, man! You already got kids and still act like brats! If all of a sudden Papu knows who he loves and who he doesn't love! That's it. You shouldn't be boasting around & let's get clear about something if you have to do something just do it and that's it! Stop boasting on facebook, I'm so pissed off and if you keep talking nonsense I'm gonna get you one by one! Now I'm not in the mood for dealing with any of you idiots! And of course I cried for him because I know he loved me! And I loved him too. See ya! No reason why I should be talking about this on facebook SYL.* (Facebook post, female user from AMBA)

The above transcription was posted by an adolescent girl (17 years old) that accounts for a "*bondi*" that arose out of a conflict surrounding the end of a romantic relationship and the gossiping amongst close women.

> *Sometimes 'bondis' start on Facebook. Maybe they start at school, then continue on Facebook, and end up on the streets. Many women get into fights when they get out from school over things that happen on Facebook. Rumors about one*

of them messing around with another girl's boyfriend, for example. (Interview, female, 16 years old)

Facebook is full of boys and girls passing rumors and insults around. They start 'bondis' for whatever reason: if someone was with another, or if they said such thing or another, if someone looked at another, or went out, or fought. (Interview, male, 17 years old)

In these interview fragments, adolescents mention the problems arising from "*chismes*" [gossip] and "*bardeos*" [aggressions]. These conflicts are associated to the monitoring enabled, and in some ways stimulated, by the Facebook social platform, which proposes a constant following of your contacts' activities. Furthermore, the frequent "*bondis*" may also function as a means to dispute the degree of "*aguante*" since, in these conflicts, the honor and prestige of each party are tested in relation to their performances on resistance and boldness.

- There was a HUGE 'bondy' with the guys from my neighborhood a while ago xD (people from iNTA against the 20) [neighborhoods from AMBA]

They're such thick-heads, man -.- THEY'RE GONNA GET IT TOMORROW & THE BITCH THAT SHOWS UP IS GONNA GET IT TOO, ha . IN ONE GO, TOMORROW WITH THE GiRLS, FULL ON, WE'RE STANDING UP AGAINST AnYONE and EvERYONE WHO GETS INVOLVED in the 'bondy', [emoticon] *;)) ¬*

And above everything else, I'm super pissed off with some bitches who were acting as if they were cool, HAHAHAHAHAHA XD they fled off to their neighborhood, PUSSIES, they're so chicken-shit, they always run away [emoticon] (Facebook post, female user from AMBA)

In this transcription, an adolescent (16 years old) mentions that there was a huge "*bondy*" amongst kids from two neighborhoods ("*people from Inta against the 20*"). She also states that "*they´re gonna get it tomorrow & the bitch that shows up is gonna get it too.*" Finally, she insinuates that she and the people from her neighborhood are the ones that have the most "*aguante*" and the others "*can't take it*" and always "*run away.*" These types of posts suggest an emerging gender order in which women from working-class marginalized areas also have the possibility to fight and show "*aguante.*" Considering the meaning they give to those words, this implicates the subjective legitimization of using their bodies to protect their honor and territory. This post received 30 "likes" and tens of comments.

Cyberbullying

Bullying, an English loan word used in Argentina, refers to the harassment inflicted by classmates or peers on a single person. The term became widespread in the media agenda and is especially associated with adolescence and the school settings. The term encompasses any hostile action or communication that a group of adolescents directs at another adolescent, from hitting someone to threatening them, stealing their belongings, writing aggressive message,s or refraining from speaking to them.[44] In the age of social networking websites, the term cyberbullying (also known as "cyber-harassment" or "online harassment"), meaning bullying carried out through digital means, has become increasingly common. According to Willard,[44] cyberbullying may be simply defined as the act of sending or posting via Internet or mobile phone contents (text or images) intending to harm someone else. Mason[45] adds that cyberbullying may be carried out by an individual or a group and, in either case, in a deliberate and repetitive fashion. That is to say, cyberbullying involves sending aggressive messages, posting messages that spread rumors or a group's decision of not interacting with

a certain profile. On many occasions, bullying and cyberbullying must be construed as two manifestations of the same conflict that mutually back feed each other. While the definitions of these phenomena offered by literature are different, there is consensus that it involves aggression, repetition, and power inequality.[44] The ubiquity and capability of the ICTs to reach significantly larger audiences is a specific feature of cyberbullying in comparison to other types of harassment.[20] Similarly, Kowalski, Limber, and Agatston[46] maintain that, according to the adolescents consulted, anonymity tends to make cyberbullying easier, because the stalker has bigger possibilities of remaining unpunished.

In this sense, the proposal of this article is that all the expressions of violence that a group of users make towards a single user from the web should be encompassed under the previously explained concept of cyberbullying. It is worth mentioning that, in this case, unlike the native word "*bondi,*" an English term popularized by the mass media in Argentina is used, which represents a difference from the previous notion. Furthermore, it should be clarified that this problem does not only affect adolescents or marginalized working-class areas, because it is also observed in other social areas and age groups, although it is still more usual to find cases of cyberbullying worldwide amongst adolescents.[21,46,48]

NO WAY I'M WUSSING OUT ABOUT THE STUFF THEY PUT ON THE WALLS OF MY SCHOOL, BUT IF YOU ARE SO COOL —'CAUSE I KNOW IT WAS A JELALOUS FUCKER THE ONE WHO DID IT— WHY DON'T YOU SIGN YOUR NAMES? 'CAUSE YOU'RE SCARED BECAUSE YOU KNOW I'LL BE UP IN ARMS, I AIN'T CRAPPING MY PANTS AGAINST ANYONE NO MATTER IF I WIN OR LOSE YOU CAN SUCK MY CUNT I FIGHT & THAT'S IT! IDIOTS SIGN YOUR NAMES (; YOU THINK YOU'RE COOL? HAAHAHAHHAHAHAHAHA HAIRY BIRDIES TAKE A SHOWER &

THEN WE'LL TALK YOU CAN'T EVEN TIE YOUR SHOELACES.YOU DO THAT ´CAUSE YOU ARE A JEALOUS BITCH [emoticon] *EASY BABE* [emoticon] (Facebook post, female user from AMBA)

In this transcription, an adolescent girl (16 years old) claims to be a victim of bullying through graffiti that appeared with her name in the school she attends. Like many posts found on Facebook walls, these graffiti are an update of traditional gender roles in sexual-affective practices: males are socially legitimized if they have and accumulate several experiences whereas, for women, in many occasions, the same dynamic is questioned, even by fellow females. Furthermore, other possible modulation of the expressions surrounding violence can be observed: an adolescent is a victim of face-to-face bullying and in the Facebook platform, that is to say, online, she finds the possibility of exposing the violence she suffered.

Another practice associated to cyberbullying and observed quite recurrently amongst adolescents included in the sample is the one known as "e*scrache*" [public accusation intending to shame and expose someone]. Originally, this term was used by human rights associations such as Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice Against Oblivion and Silence (HIJOS) [*Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio*] that "escrachaban" (pointed, marked) repressors from the last military dictatorship who had not been given a definitive sentence. Once this method started to be used by the masses, the word was adopted by many adolescents from the AMBA with different meanings. One of the meanings that is frequently used is that of an "*escrache* photo," that is to say, a selfie or personal picture taken by someone else which harms the reputation of the user appearing in the picture. Apart from this meaning, there is another one related to aggression or denouncing through Facebook.

In this context, "*escrache*" is a resource used to alert a peer group about certain violent behaviors of a user. Thus, it also works

as a means of empowerment used by some adolescents girls of marginalized working-class areas. These types of warnings are found on social networks: "*Beware of* [X] *who cheats on you and cares about nothing except seducing whoever on chatrooms*" (female, 17 years old). "*I fell in love, but I was foolish.* [X] *lied to me and I believed him. It's all pick-up lines*" (female, 16 years old). As can be observed in several examples, denouncing through an "*escrache*" against a male usually has a component of sexual-affective grief, but it is also about raising awareness in the female group on their contact network about the sexual-gender behavior of males.

As previously stated, this "*escrache*" practice has also an esthetical component when a picture is taken by someone without the permission of the person pictured. This expression seeks to discredit or embarrass the person in the picture and at the same time to increase the popularity of the author of the post. Since its conception, the methods of the "*escrache*" practice have changed: from being a group practice, with a strong foundation in sociopolitical denunciation of crimes against humanity, to become a practice with identity, esthetical, and "*aguante*" components deeply-rooted in neighborhoods, and which are quickly socialized through social networking platforms.

Grief

Adolescents from marginalized working-class areas often experience the death of friends, peers, or acquaintances, sometimes as a consequence of violent episodes.[9,10] At the same time, societies have experienced a transformation in the ways in which grief is elaborated. Funerary rites have changed in the last few decades and the impact of the ICTs has enabled the appearance of numerous practices that include the remembrance of the deceased in social networking websites. Adolescents included in the sample reappropriate these practices and resignify them in a specific context intended to preserve the memory of a deceased contact, although some components

can be observed that are common to online actions displayed by some adults.[49]

In some of the cases being studied, the profile of the deceased adolescent is managed by close acquaintances or family members. Furthermore, these practices unite the group against the otherness: other peer groups, local criminal gangs, or the police. These types of posts usually show sadness and a desire for justice upon the violent episode that caused the death of a beloved one.

> *A former schoolmate was killed in a gang confrontation. I would've liked to be his friend. I sometimes miss him. It's strange that he's no longer with us. Recently I posted something on Facebook to remember him and support his family and friends, who are suffering a lot. We live things like this all the time.* (Interview, female, 15 years old)

In one of the images studied, an adolescent (14 years old) publishes a photomontage in which his brother's face is superimposed in transparency over the sky, which reads "*Today My Heart Thinkz Of You, Today It's 1 Year Since You´re no Longer HERe And You've No idea Of How Much I MISs you Little BroTher.*" In a similar post, an adolescent (15 years old) tells that he used to sit beside his late classmate in primary school, that he would have liked to develop a friendship, and that he cannot believe what happened to him. The posts received 65 and 92 "likes" respectively, showing the high level of acceptance that these types of commemorations have within the contact network.

These traumatic events are usually incorporated to the settings of the profiles of adolescents from marginalized working-class areas. This is something they take into account even when looking for new sexual-affective bonds, because they perceive the abandonment of the mourning and the failure to mention them periodically on their biography as treason or lack of "*aguante.*" Occasionally, a commemoration is added to the cover photo or the name of the profile ("*Forever Maxi;*"

"I miss you Ranchi"). Contacts who are not so close to the deceased usually leave "likes" and comments as support gestures for the deceased's acquaintances. Furthermore, it is common to find demands and requests for justice for the death of adolescents in unclear circumstances (criminal acts, "settling a score," "trigger-happy shootings").

> *A few years ago one of my best friends died. The neighborhood is not safe, but we all watch out for each other. Every now and then the police search us and sometimes beat on us because they think we did something wrong just because we are from the neighborhood, or just out of spite, I don't know.* […] *Sometimes we share things on Facebook about him just to remember him and support his family and friends, who are having a rough time.* (Interview, female, 16 years old)

In these practices, posts marked by friendship, affection, and mourning converge as a new way of overcoming the death of beloved ones. Facebook provides a space where they can express themselves and receive feedback from other peers, generating an interaction and, sometimes, creating a new bond or reinforcing a previous one, which may change in different ways. In this sense, it is relevant to make further research on these types of phenomena in order to understand how these adolescents resignify their subjectivities and the effect of the violence they endure.

DISCUSSION

Among the research studies that focus on these populations – defined here as adolescents from marginalized working-class areas – articles that analyze urban violence were revisited. Moreover, the specific contribution intended by this article is to relate these findings to the impact of the ICTs and, especially, to the surge in popularity of the social networking websites. Among the multiple expressions of violence obtained

through the chosen methodological strategy, this article limits itself to those that took place on the social network Facebook: threats, "*bondis,*" cyberbullying, and grief.

The review of the relevant literature carried out by Valdivia and González[18] provides evidence that threats amongst youth are frequent on a global scale and aggressions related to sexual-affective relationships occur in up to two thirds of the sample of youths in different latitudes. As stated by these researchers, most of the studies that deal with these problems do so by studying young undergraduates, who are more accessible because they usually attend the same institutions as the research professors. Moreover, the contribution to the field intended by this article is the exploration of modulations found among the online relational aggressions amongst adolescents from marginalized areas.

Buelga and Pons[22] argue that the frequency of cyberbullying-related events among youth varies, according to different global studies, between 5% and 34% and, as these authors suggest, the statistical variation among the different research studies makes comparing results difficult. This is due, in part, to the lack of consensus about a definition of cyberbullying and the variables to be measured.[20,48] Ultimately, even with these limitations, it is imperative to continue researching the issue of Facebook cyberbullying because, according to different studies,[24,34] it is the most popular platform used by adolescents for cyberbullying and other expressions of online violence.

The pioneer studies about online expressions of violence amongst adolescents were carried out mostly in Western Europe, the US, and Australia.[20,45,46,48,50] These studies were the first to tackle these phenomena – cyberbullying in particular – due to the ICTs spreading faster in these countries than in others. However, recent literature argues that although digital violence among adolescents is still frequent in these geographical areas,[22,47,48] it has progressively developed in Latin America.[23,24] Additionally, due to the lack of empirical studies carried out in Latin America[23,25] and among working-class

adolescents, it is necessary to delve into these investigations, in light of the specific features of Latin-American societies and economies.

Why does Facebook, the iconic "liking" social platform, also give room to violent expressions? In what ways do marginalized working-class adolescents produce these expressions or resignify them in their specific contexts? What are the different modulations that violence expressions acquire for males and females?

> Fraternity, leadership, protection, group cohesion, and their own legality encompass, in that way, features of a "young we" that occasionally involves violent acts, and its meaning should fall within the context of the available social conditions. From this perspective several options arise: to ignore certain ways of presentation of the condition of youths; to expel them; to perceive them as a fatality; or to wonder what lies behind the violence.[19 p.354] [own translation]

The research question of this article is built on the intersection of several contemporary discussions in the field of social sciences. The works of Auyero et al[14] were especially taken into consideration, as they describe the multiple forms of face-to-face violence experienced by adolescents from socially vulnerable locations within the AMBA. These expressions can be observed, according to these authors, on the walls daubed with graffiti around the neighborhoods. Similarly, on Facebook walls, posts with visual reminders of the consequences of violence are frequent. In the same vein as Duschastky,[19] what this article proposes is not simply to catalogue disruptive behaviors, but to explore the different ways in which these adolescents try to assign meaning to their daily practices. The goal of future research work should be to further question up to what extent technological tools serve to project violent practices – included in the broadest field of urban violence-related phenomena – or increase the "available social conditions"[19] and contribute to empower the adolescents from marginalized working-class areas to contextualize, resignify, or remove the hegemonic social meanings attributed to violence.

CONCLUSIONS

This article explored, through a mixed method that involved digital ethnography, the expressions of violence on Facebook walls posted by adolescents from marginalized working-class locations within the Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires. In this way, evidence indicates that online networks are inserted within their social framework, and that, when carrying out this type of ethnographic research study, they are an appropriate tool for exploring practices. Most violent interactions take place in an offline-online way, because many conflicts start in an offline setting (for example, in a school or a square) and continue on an online platform, or vice versa.

Along these lines, four types of violence found on the social network Facebook have been analyzed: threats, "*bondis,*" cyberbullying, and grief. Firstly, the threatening expressions, described as warnings about future violent acts, show certain tension regarding territory, good name and reputation, respect, and sexual-affective bonds. Secondly, the "*bondis,*" a native term alluding to fights, provide evidence not only of a *continuum* of offline-online relationships, but also the central position acquired by the online context as a new conflict arena. Thirdly, cyberbullying, meaning aggressive online actions against a single user, emphasizes the fact that harassment or stalking find in Facebook a specific channel to unfold. Lastly, the mourning or grief expressions that these adolescents share on Facebook describe phenomena which are typically found in this social group and make it possible to explore how they resignify the violence dimensions experienced by them.

These four aspects are associated with "*aguante,*" a sociocultural phenomenon that involves meanings such as "*bancar*" [to support fiercely and with loyalty], defend,

and resist. One of the exploratory dynamics noticed – which deserves to be the subject of future investigations – is the emergence of "*aguante*" practices performed by women. These expressions imply new gender norms, even though these still coexist with the persistent traditionally masculine and feminine roles, which have also been taken into account. This specific phenomenon in working-class areas shows the complexity of the "*aguante*" culture in the intersection between the production of contemporary masculine and feminine subjectivity.

Finally, this article poses a question about how much the researched expressions are implicitly functional to the social network or, on the contrary, enable a significant reappropriation by the user. If "likes" are considered to be the intrinsic currency of the social network that strengthens the sense of belonging to the peer group, these expressions reveal practices of group ritualization which, apart from being interpreted as violence, should be examined in a contextualized way. According to the Royal Academy of Spanish (RAE) [*Real Academia Española*], the adjective "violent" may be applied to someone who "is outside their natural state, situation, or way" or to something that is "executed against the normal forms or without reason and justice." It is valid to wonder whether the expressions of violence used by these adolescents are "outside" their "condition, reason and justice", or outside other type of "condition, reason and justice" which fails to fully integrate them but, on several occasions, only makes them visible under the "violent" stigma.

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FINAL NOTES

a. The Metropolitan Area of Buenos Aires (AMBA) includes the City of Buenos Aires and the so-called Greater Buenos Aires, encompassing the municipalities of Almirante Brown, Avellaneda, Berisso, Berazategui, Cañuelas, Ensenada, Escobar, Esteban Echeverría, Ezeiza, Florencio Varela, General Rodríguez, General San Martín, Hurlingham, Ituzaingó, José C. Paz, La Matanza, La Plata, Lanús, Lomas de Zamora, Malvinas Argentinas, Marcos Paz, Merlo and Moreno. According to the Argentine Institute of Statistics and Censuses (INDEC) [*Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas y Censos*], a third of Argentina's population lives in the AMBA.

b. The program "*Conectar Igualdad*" [Connect Equality] was a project by the Argentine Federal Government that began in 2010 and involved giving a netbook in *commodatum* to each student and teacher of State-run secondary schools in Argentina. Within this policy's framework, some municipalities of the AMBA established centers for digital inclusion at which youths could use, at no cost, computers with Internet access with the guidance of technicians and teacher facilitators.

c. "*Plan Fines*" [Plan Goals] was an initiative by the federal government implemented since 2008 which gave adults who had been unable to finish secondary school education the chance to complete their studies by offering them a more flexible scheduled course.(31,32)

d. The populations included in the sample understand "*bardeos*" as "the generation of conflicts" and "harassing others," and for "*pararse de manos*" they understand "to defend themselves or show no fear against an ensuing fight."

e. For "*arrugar*," the population being studied understands "lacking fierce loyalty."

f. Some of the cumbia bands mentioned by the adolescents in the posts on Facebook are: *Alto faso, Corre guachín, El borracho, El punga, Entre rejas, Flashito Tumbero, Flor de Piedra, Jala jala, La mafia, La rama, La tiza, La yerba del mono, Mala fama, Pala ancha, Pibes Chorros, Prende la*

vela, Sobredosis, Supermerka2, Tinta roja, Una de kal, Vagancia and *Yerba Brava*.

g. It should be clarified that the gender perspective used here was mostly taken from the concept of "sex/gender system,"[41] which refers to the set of dispositions by which a society transforms biological sexuality in a product of human activity, and the concept of "performativity,"[39] which proposes that sex is a construction as culturally-based as that of gender and that the gender performances are marked by a heteronormative matrix.