

(Re)Productive Discourses: Media Coverage of Children Born of War in Colombia

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Children born as a result of wartime sexual violence have not gained a place in the stories covered by the Colombian media. Based on an extensive content analysis (using the software MAXQDA 12) of newspaper articles published between 1990 and 2015, ethnographic content analysis, and drawing upon feminist critical discourse analysis, this paper explores how information about these children is presented as part of storylines that use the explanatory framework of sexual violence as a weapon of war. In those storylines, children emerge not as independent subjects but as part of social representations of female victims of wartime sexual violence and male perpetrators.

Keywords: Children Born of War, Colombia, content analysis.

Throughout more than half a century of armed conflict in Colombia sexual violence has been used by paramilitaries, guerrillas, and government forces to control and subjugate the population. As of 23 August 2018 there have been 25,845 people included in the Colombian national record of victims in relation to ‘harms against liberty and sexual integrity’ (Unidad para las Víctimas, 2018). Other estimates show that between 2001 and 2009, 94,565 women were raped by members of armed groups, 7774 were victims of forced prostitution, and 26,353 women and girls were victims of forced pregnancies in the context of the armed conflict (Oxfam, 2010). These figures allow us a glance at the magnitude of wartime sexual violence committed in the country. Considering that one of the possible outcomes of sexual violence is pregnancy, one might suggest that in Colombia there are generations of children born as a result of wartime sexual violence. Mentions of those children appear in the testimonies of sexual violence survivors and human rights defenders who have heard stories of those children and how, in some communities, people have used naming practices to single them out, labelling them as *paraquitos* (little paramilitaries). Although the 2011 Victim’s and Land Restitution Law recognises this category of children as victims of the Colombian armed conflict, there is no information available about their plight. Unlike other categories of war-affected children such as child combatants, children born as a result of wartime sexual violence

have not emerged on the institutional agendas that seek to address the consequences of war in the country. The socio-legal category was created and yet it remains unintelligible for the transitional justice and human rights discourse (Sanchez Parra, 2018).

Although the concept of 'children born of war' has been used in the literature to refer to children born as a result of consensual and non-consensual relationships (Mochmann and Lee, 2010), for the purpose of this paper we adhere to Charli Carpenter's definition of children born of war as 'persons of any age conceived as a result of violent, coercive, or exploitive sexual relations in conflict zones' (Carpenter, 2007: 3). Studies from contexts such as Bosnia (Carpenter, 2010), Rwanda (Mukangendo, 2007) and Northern Uganda (Denov and Lakor, 2017) show that due to the circumstances of their conception, these children tend to be ostracised and discriminated against throughout their lives; They represent a social tension (Carpenter, 2007). On the one hand, they symbolise the terror inflicted upon their mothers and communities and, from the moment of their birth, these children are highly stigmatised and excluded, and their human rights are compromised in a number of ways. On the other hand, they also symbolise the future and endurance of the community.

At the international level, the emergence of categories such as child combatant has been perceived by human rights advocates as a success in the struggle to protect children from the impact of violent conflict and oppression (Grieg, 2001). Despite the development of the growing field of studies on children born of war (Theidon, 2015; Mochmann, 2017; Lee, 2017), among the categories of war-affected children that of children born of war remains largely unattended in human rights agendas (Mochmann and Lee, 2010; Seto, 2016; Neenan, 2018). In fact, when the subject appears in the public realm it usually does so in the language of gender-based violence, specifically in relation to sexual violence and women's rights (Carpenter, 2010). In this sense, the lack of visibility of children born of war – as a category within the human rights agenda – is by no means unique to Colombia.

The global media, however, has not been completely blind to the situation of children born of war. Among different war zones, the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina has received significant coverage worldwide focusing on mass rapes, the pregnancies that resulted from the rape camps, and the babies who were killed or abandoned by their mothers (Carpenter, 2010). Carpenter (2010) recalls that she first encountered mentions of children born of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina around 1996 when she read a news article that was part of media coverage of the war in Former Yugoslavia. Carpenter highlights that with this coverage the media played an important role in positioning gender-based violence during the war on to the human rights agenda. In the case of children born of war, Carpenter nevertheless questions the role of the media in raising awareness of their distressing situation, noting that despite the considerable attention the global media gave to this issue, narratives behind the stories were not framed by a children's rights approach, but instead they were presented through the frames of nationalism, feminism, and humanitarian interventions.

What drew our attention – and therefore what triggered this research – to narratives about children born of war in the Colombian media, particularly those appearing in newspapers, was not what we saw in the media coverage of wartime sexual violence and the children born of those gender-based practices, but what we did *not* see. As a result of the struggle and pressure from local leaders, feminist activists, scholars, and policymakers, since the 1990s the Colombian press has been more open to spreading news and increasing coverage of the effects of the armed conflict on women and their situation living in war-affected regions, with a particular emphasis on sexual violence

(Grupo de Memoria Histórica, 2011). However, the attention granted to wartime sexual violence in the online and printed media seemed to be accompanied by an almost absolute silence around the human beings born as a result of that violence. It was, then, the absence of information available, and our perception of it, that made us dig deeper into the storylines of war, sexual violence, and reproduction in Colombia.

The aim of this paper is to explore the emergence of information about children born of war in the Colombian media, particularly online and printed newspaper articles, and to analyse the narratives through which such information circulates. Within the frame of feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) (Lazar, 2014) we used quantitative content analysis (Riff et al., 2014) and ethnographic content analysis (Altheide, 1996) to review newspaper articles from *El Tiempo* –one of the two national newspapers in Colombia – published between 1990 and 2015. This revision allowed us to establish that although the coverage of wartime sexual violence has increased, the presence and situation of children born of war has remained almost completely ignored. The few mentions of those children appear immersed in storylines framed by the dominant discourse of sexual violence as a weapon of war. We argue that such information has not contributed to the configuration of a representation of the category of children born of war as an independent subject of concern and redress within institutional discourses in Colombia. Instead, in the production of those discursive realities, children born of war have emerged as secondary characters in the framings for thinking and writing about war-related sexual violence. Information about these children has produced a subject that is only intelligible in relation to representations of the two primary characters of the storylines: female victims of wartime sexual violence and, to a lesser extent, representations of male perpetrators.

In the first part of the paper, we offer a review of the conceptual developments of the category of children born of war and of the discourse of sexual violence as a weapon of war. We frame those discussions within FCDA and the production of discursive social realities. The next section presents the development of the methodological design. In the following sections we introduce the findings coming out of our mixed-methods approach. We argue that throughout the storylines that the newspaper offers in covering wartime sexual violence, children born of war appear as secondary characters of their biological parents' plot. In the findings we first present the main narratives through which women are depicted, and the role that children born of war play in the production of each of those narratives. In the last section of the findings we offer the analysis of the role that children born of war play in relation to the representation of the biological father/perpetrator of wartime sexual violence.

The Production of Discursive Realities: Children Born of War and Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War

Decades of struggles by feminist organisations, together with international recognition of the mass rapes in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1992–1995) and the genocide in Rwanda (1993), have shifted the way in which sexual violence during armed conflicts or oppressive regimes is understood and addressed (Buss, 2009). It went from being invisible to the international community and human rights actors to being perceived as a regrettable but inherent aspect of warring, to a strategy and tactic of war that is preventable. In her review of the conceptualisation of this paradigm, Inger Skjelsbaek (2001) notes that sexual violence as a weapon of war is understood as a strategy used by armed

groups to achieve their military and political objectives. This discourse, explains Skjelsbaek (2001), has at its core a gendered approach to sexual violence that challenges the assumption that rape responds to the biological – heterosexual – urges of male bodies. In this perspective, the focus is not on female and male bodies but on notions of femininity and masculinity, and it is the social production of violent militarised masculinities that enables the emergence of subjects who – in the circumstances of warring – commit sexual violence. Within this discourse, wartime sexual violence is avoidable, as those practices are not assumed to be the natural consequence of someone's biological needs but of specific militarised gendering processes (Skjelsbaek, 2001).

Following Butler's (2004) argument that experiences of violence come together with the emergence of framings for understanding and apprehending such violence, Baaz and Stern (2013) revisit the discourse of sexual violence as a weapon of war and claim that we need to be attentive to how it has produced specific subjects, silenced others, and dictated moral, political, and cultural responses towards them. Through this framing of explanation, Baaz and Stern argue, men have been depicted as 'heterosexual masculine citizen-soldiers [and] women (and the "feminine") are stereotypically associated with a need for protection, with peacefulness and life-giving' (Baaz and Stern, 2013: 20). Criticisms of this conceptualisation highlight how, by producing these subjects, the same framework that has sought to tackle violence against women and girls during war can reproduce gender power relations that impose on women and men restricted and static roles (Baaz and Stern, 2013). At the same time, it essentialises the war-related experiences of women to sexual violence and naturalises sexual violence that occurs outside the context of war (Theidon, 2015).

The concept of 'war children' was first used to refer to 'a child that has one parent that was part of an army or peace keeping force and the other parent a local citizen where the weight is on the stigma these children can be subject to as a result of their background' (Grieg, 2001: 6). This conceptualisation was part of the 'War and Children Identity Project' and represented the first attempt to define this particular group of war-affected children, to present an overview based on different contexts, and to provide an estimate of the number of children born in different conflicts (Mochmann, 2017). The report shows that the presence of these children is not restricted to one specific time, place, or type of armed conflict. It notes that the experiences of these children cannot be understood as homogenous and that they have been born of consensual and non-consensual relationships (Grieg, 2001). Building on Grieg's report, between 2004 and 2005 Charli Carpenter led a project that sought to assess the state of knowledge and practices of protection of these children in war-affected areas (Carpenter et al., 2005). Here, the term 'children born of war' was used for the first time. This report states that due to the context and circumstances of their conception, children born as a result of war-related rape and sexual exploitation tended to be stigmatised as being both illegitimate and children of the enemy (Carpenter et al., 2005). Following the conceptual framework proposed by Grieg's and Carpenter's reports, in 2006 the term 'children born of war' was proposed to be assumed for 'all children of foreign soldiers and local mothers' (Mochmann, 2017: 323), regardless of whether the sexual relation was consensual or not. In that meeting four categories were then defined by Ingvill Mochmann and later developed by Mochmann and Larsen (2008) and Mochmann and Lee (2010) as follows: children of enemy soldiers, children of soldiers from occupational forces that can be seen as enemies or allies, children of child soldiers, and children of peacekeeping forces.

The initial conceptual framework, that was largely based on cases related to War World II and the war in Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, has been enriched with case

studies that include different cultural contexts and warfare dynamics (Carpenter, 2007). Current debates in the growing field of cross-disciplinary studies of children born of war acknowledge that socio-cultural, political and economic backgrounds influence the levels of integration, violence, and discrimination that children born as a result of consensual and non-consensual relationships may experience. In the context of war or authoritarian regimes where sexual violence is used against the population, however, there can be a blurred line between consensual and non-consensual sexual relations, as sex can also be, for example, traded for goods and safety as a survival strategy (Mochmann, 2017).

In media coverage of children born of war, Patricia Weitsman (2007) argues, we can find the logics behind wartime sexual violence and the legitimisation of practices relating to children born of war. Weitsman (2007) notes that institutional structures such as human rights and transitional justice actors, the academy, and the media play a part in producing and disseminating discourses around notions of gender, identity, and sexual reproduction. Thinking of children born of war and the institutionalisation of their identity through language, claims Weitsman (2007), requires exploring those discursive constructions; they provide insights on both the narratives that underpin policies of war-related sexual violence and the narratives that grant children born of war with positionality within their social groups. As the current dominant framing of explanation to address wartime sexual violence, the discourse of sexual violence as a weapon of war has gained a privileged place in the way that media reporting of those gender-based forms of violence are understood, thought, and written (Baaz and Stern, 2013).

Working upon this discursive constitution of social realities, we approach our analysis of the body of newspaper articles through FCDA (Lazar, 2014). It allows us to address the emergence of the category of children born of war in institutional discourses, while acknowledging that their experiences, which are closely connected to those of their mothers, are shaped by structural gendered power relations of inequality that silence subjects (along with their experiences) by restricting their possibilities as human beings. FCDA calls for a praxis-oriented research that recognises the way in which academic reflections like the one we seek to pursue are in constant dialogue with feminist strategies to resist and subvert established gender social arrangements (Lazar, 2014). In conversation with FCDA, our approach acknowledges that hegemonic gender discourses that naturalise specific roles for men and women – for instance, motherhood even if it has been imposed – appear to be consensual and acceptable. It is precisely through the normalisation of discursive means that power inequalities and gender relations of dominance are obscured (Lazar, 2007).

Following this principle, we focus our main analysis on storylines that include mentions of children *born* of wartime sexual violence, and deliberately leave aside storylines that just include information on the conception or on abortions, irrespective of whether such abortions were forced or voluntary. Although the realities of wartime sexual violence in Colombia involve practices of forced abortion, the focus of our research is not on gender-based violence, or sexual violence in particular, but on the human beings that emerge as a result of those practices of gender-based violence. With the intention of granting the subject of children born of war an independent role in the narrative of our research, we differentiate between the conceived foetus and the born child, and focus on the latter and on his or her representation as a war-affected child. By focusing on the narratives around the born children we seek to contribute to the understanding of the experience of war-affected children that, although in this case is connected with women's sexual and reproductive rights, it is not restricted by it.

Methodology

To overcome the almost absolute lack of available information about children born of war in Colombia, we followed a mixed methods approach to conduct our exploratory research. With the intention of assessing whether there is an effective shortage of coverage in the media of stories on children born as a result of wartime sexual violence, we ran a quantitative content analysis (Riff et al., 2014) (using MAXQDA 12) of articles published in the newspaper *El Tiempo* between 1990 and 2014. Subsequently, we conducted ethnographic content analysis (Altheide, 1996) of the body of newspaper articles to identify and analyse the narratives through which information about children born of war circulates.

Colombia has two newspapers with national coverage: *El Tiempo* and *El Espectador*. We selected newspaper articles only from *El Tiempo* for a number of reasons. First, of the two, *El Tiempo* has the larger circulation in the country, with 1,137,483 daily readers in 2012, as against 250,254 readers of *El Espectador* in the same year (Asociación Colombiana de Medios, 2012). Second, *El Tiempo* has not stopped daily publication since the moment it was founded in 1911, whereas in 2011 *El Espectador* went from daily to weekly publication due to a financial crisis; it was not until May 2008 that it became daily again. Third, *El Tiempo* has digitalised its printed publications from 1911, allowing us to be more consistent in our review. In terms of approaches, *El Espectador* and *El Tiempo* share similar perspectives as they have traditionally belonged to families closely related to the political and economic elites of the country (Fondevila and Segura, 2012).

In the preliminary review we found that mentions of children born of war appeared in the 'politics' section of the newspaper's coverage of wartime sexual violence. In that initial review we followed other search paths such as 'children and armed conflict' and the specific category of *paraquito* (little paramilitary). However, those searches offered no relevant results for our research. Thus, we focused our analysis on the subset 'politics' for the definition of our universe of cases. In particular, we selected articles including one of the following combination of words in the title, subheading or main text: women and paramilitary; women and guerrilla; women and military. Several other combinations of words were considered, but since they yielded narrower and/or potentially misleading results we decided to discard them. Applying such guidelines and excluding duplicates, we obtained 1101 articles for our analysis. Note that the search was done in Spanish.

One of the main challenges was to identify in the text a subject with a searchable categorisation. Unlike other categories of war-affected children such as child combatant, the categorisation of children born of war is blurred both for the general public and people working on war-related topics (Sanchez Parra, 2018). To address this, we set up a broad classification scheme to understand whether newspaper articles were referring to these children in a general or loose manner. In that sense, we selected combinations of words that could define scenarios where children born of war were the most likely to be mentioned. The classification scheme was constructed in MAXQDA 12 and it recognised if specific words were employed across all 1101 articles. MAXQDA is a software for mixed methods research supporting content analysis. We selected the following terms to identify: (a) sexual violence: rape, sexual assault, sexual slavery, sexual abuse, sexual violence, and prostitution; (b) involvement of armed groups: guerrilla, military, paramilitary, and soldier; and (c) children: son and pregnant. All the suffixes of these terms were included in the analysis (e.g. sons, daughters).

Combinations of words across different thematic areas identified broader categories. For instance, if a report included the words sexual slavery and paramilitary it was

categorised as an article concerning sexual violence involving armed groups. Similarly, if a report included the words soldier, son, and raped it was categorised as an article mentioning children and wartime sexual violence (more details on the classification scheme are available upon request). While this classification scheme can very plausibly identify whether articles are discussing sexual violence or not, it falls short in two relevant respects: (i) it cannot identify the exact action/role of armed groups; and (ii) it cannot effectively assess if children are the subjects of sexual violence (e.g. children were sexually abused by armed groups) or born as a result of it. Subsequent in-depth reading of these articles showed that the classification scheme works correctly in relation to the first point (armed groups are indeed the perpetrators of sexual violence), but it suffers an upward bias in relation to the second point. Although the classification scheme identifies several articles mentioning children born of war, it tends to overestimate the number of relevant articles, including also reports where children are subjected to sexual abuse. Thus, figures concerning children born of war derived from the quantitative content analysis need to be evaluated conservatively.

To address the structural limitations of the quantitative approach and analyse the narratives presented in the storylines we turned to ethnographic content analysis (Altheide, 1996), focusing on articles that referred to sexual violence while including also the most recent newspaper reports available from 2015 (number of newspaper articles on sexual violence published on *El Tiempo* until 2015 = 147). We found in ethnographic content analysis the systematic reflexivity that allowed us to contextualise fragmented mentions of children born to sexual violence survivors and find meaning in the ‘various modes of information exchange, format, rhythm, and style’ (Altheide, 1996: 16). With this in mind, for the analysis of the news articles we paid attention to the framework for explanation that was used to construct the storylines where children born of war were included, the way the storylines were constructed, the different subjects that were part of the storylines, and the language in which such subjects and their relationships were represented.

Children Born of War within the Body of Newspaper Articles

A quantitative review of *El Tiempo*’s newspaper articles from 1990 to 2014 demonstrates that there is no significant emergence of the topic of children born of war in media discourse in Colombia (Table 1 and Figure 1). Even without correcting for the upward bias present in the computation of articles mentioning children born of war, results indicate that across all articles published on women and armed groups only 30 articles refer loosely to these children. Furthermore, our subsequent qualitative in-depth reading of all articles on sexual violence revealed that merely eleven of them actually mention children born of war, meaning that only 1 percent of all articles and 9 percent of articles on sexual violence across all years include references to the subject. This relevant difference between the quantitative and qualitative parts of our analysis shows how blurred the category of children born of war is in the current media discourse: even though the classification scheme employed in the quantitative content analysis correctly identified articles on sexual violence or the involvement of armed groups in the abuses, it could not properly compute articles on children born of war, overestimating their total number (Table 1).

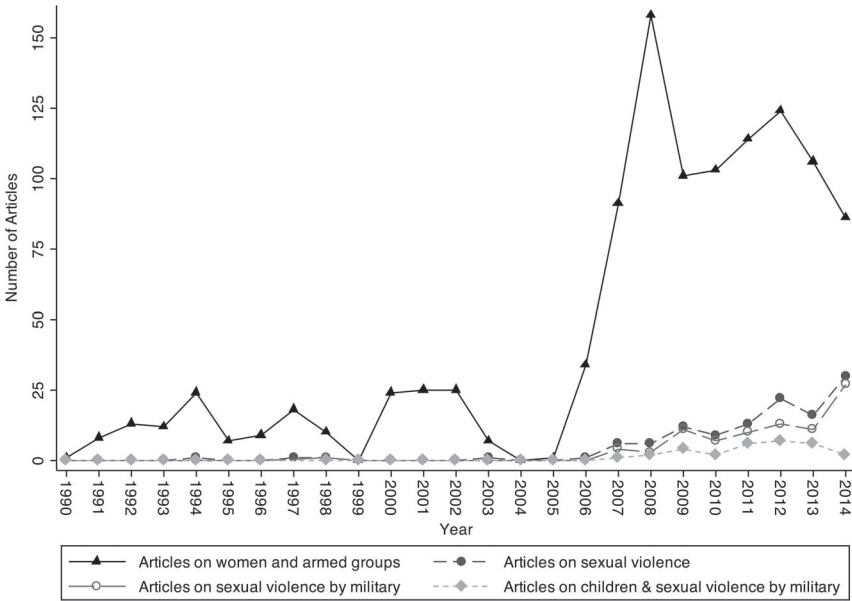
In addition, Figure 1 shows that although references to children born of war occasionally appear after 2005, the issue remained extremely marginal in the media, representing a very small segment of all articles each year. On the other hand, from a quantitative

Table 1. Articles from El Tiempo on Children Born of War (1990–2014)

	N	As a % of the total	As a % of all articles on sexual violence
Articles referring loosely to children born of war (including upward bias)	30	2.7 (30/1101)	25.2 (30/119)
Articles referring loosely to children born of war (excluding upward bias)	11	1 (11/1101)	9.2 (11/119)
Articles mentioning sexual violence	119	11 (119/1101)	/
Total number of articles	1101	/	/

Source: authors' own elaboration of El tiempo webdata.

Figure 1. Number of Articles from El Tiempo on Women and Armed Groups (1990–2014)



Source: authors' own elaboration of El Tiempo webdata.

perspective, sexual violence committed by armed groups seems to have had a more prominent role in the newspaper narrative concerning the atrocities of the armed conflict. In particular, it can be observed that between 2005 and 2008 there is an exponential increase in articles mentioning women and armed groups, and a more intense discussion on war-related sexual violence: articles on this topic increased steadily over the last ten years, reaching a peak in 2014.

Children Born of War as Secondary Characters

Using ethnographic content analysis we proceeded to analyse in detail the newspaper articles. Throughout the storylines produced to cover wartime sexual violence, the main

subjects that emerge in the plot are women as female victims (mainly civilians), men as male combatants and perpetrators of sexual violence, and national and international human rights organisations addressing the effects of war. Children born of war, we argue, appear in the narratives just in relation to, and as part of, the representation of victims and perpetrators of war-related sexual violence. Information about children born of war is used to contribute to the typologies of women as powerless victims or empowered survivors. To a lesser extent, mentions of these children are used as part of the representation of perpetrators of war-related sexual violence as having the power to reproduce their violence beyond their own physicality.

In accordance with the work of Baaz and Stern (2013), we found that the discourse of sexual violence as a weapon of war is the dominant approach used by the newspaper in its coverage of war-time sexual violence. This can be seen in the context in which the newspaper articles are written, the language they use to construct the narratives, and the topics and subjects that are presented throughout the storylines. For instance, independently of the issues, the storylines are presented using the familiar language of the discourse of sexual violence as a weapon of war; the explicit mention of 'sexual violence as a weapon of war' is commonly used, accompanied by others expressions such as 'the use of women's body in war'. As secondary characters in this framework, children born of war are used narratively to shape other subjects and social relations.

To illustrate this, out of the eleven newspaper articles that actually include information about children born of war there are two cases in which a headline – *Los niños nacidos de los abusos de los paramilitares* (The children born of paramilitary abuses) – and a subheading – *Los estragos del abuso sexual en el conflicto – Los hijos de la guerra* (The damage of sexual violence in the context of the conflict – The offspring of war) suggested that the situation of children born of war was going to be addressed. However, in both cases the plot was about wartime sexual violence and used the inclusion of children to contribute to discursive representations of other characters.

Discursive (Re)Production: Women as Victims or Mothers

We identified three typologies through which women are depicted: absent subjects, powerless victims, and empowered survivors. The first type of storyline introduces women through their absence (n = 20). These articles present stories of wartime rape as abstract issues in the context of the armed conflict. Women have no voice in the narrative and although there are mentions of individual cases, they do not provide any context or information about the people they refer to. In these cases, women are represented as generic characters whose role within the narrative of the armed conflict is to be raped by male combatants and, very often, not being willing to speak up. The absent subject that is produced in these storylines can be illustrated through the article 'The Ombudsman's office demands justice for minors abused by US military':

Plazas noted that he asked the regional directors of Cundinamarca and Tolima to 'assign special commissions to set a mechanism that would allow an active search' of these women, so that they can speak up and receive psychological support from the state. (El Tiempo, 2015)

Children born of war did not emerge from these narratives. As the subject of women is constructed as an abstract category, this type of storyline does not include elements that could contribute to representations of women victims of wartime sexual violence.

Another type of storyline depicts women as passive victims of wartime sexual violence (n = 46). In these storylines, women are represented as victimised powerless individuals who, in the context of war, are at risk of being raped as a way of harming their male lovers or relatives. The construction of these narratives often resorts to the use of fragmented testimonies of women describing the violence they have experienced and the devastating consequences it has had in their life. These fragmented voices are often used as a strategy to humanise figures and statements made by national and international human rights organisations. The production of these storylines is tainted with rhetoric to emphasise victimisation and suffering. By 'humanising' through fragmented testimonies, these articles create restricted categories of the experience of women denying different possibilities and debates around issues like their sexual and reproductive rights and their role during the armed conflict. Through the language of vulnerability, protection, and situating women's bodies as assets in men's wars, this type of storyline reproduces the same logics that underpin the occurrence of gender-based violence during and outside of the context of war. An example of the rhetoric that characterises this type of storyline can be found in the news article 'When paramilitaries tore off my innocence':

Jennifer Velasquez, a 15-year-old virgin, to whom love had not yet bristled her skin, nor stirred her stomach, was forced to take a drink of the monstrous perversion of a war between schizophrenics in which victory belongs to whoever is the cruellest. The paramilitary leader dragged the girl to a room. He pulled down his trousers and was the first to abuse her. After beating her, he told the others to do whatever they wanted with her. The second in line was the one with the red tennis shoes. The young woman fumbled for his balaclava, but the bestiality of four was stronger. (Escobar, 2014).

Information about children born of war is used in these narratives to emphasise ongoing suffering; it is included in the plot as a symbolic adjective to stress the victimisation of women. Through this, this type of storyline draws attention to the powerless plight of women while never questioning or commenting further on the situation of children themselves. The newspaper article 'Sexual violence made 2 out of 10 displaced women to flee, the Ombudsman's Office reveals' illustrates this:

She became pregnant. And in September, when she was in her seventh month, paramilitaries returned. Her mother-in-law begged them not to do anything to her because she was expecting a child, but it was for nothing. She was raped a second time. Today, while the woman begs on the streets of Pasto holding her son by the hand, sexual violence against women as an instrument of war still remains a nightmare for hundreds of uprooted families. (El Tiempo, 2008)

Another example can be found in the article 'The damage of sexual violence in the context of the conflict':

Mariana, a young woman marked by sadness and the knives of her victimisers, is part of the 94,565 women who were abused between 2001 and 2009 as a consequence of the armed conflict. And worse still, she is at the top of the list of the 26,353 victims who became pregnant and, despite the circumstances, had their children. In the case of Mariana, she still has not found

the right words to tell her little child why the AUC acronym is marked on her forehead. (Bedoya, 2010)

In the third typology women are depicted as empowered sexual violence survivors (n=48). They are represented as dynamic subjects who are not defined by the sexual abuses they have experienced and who have found coping strategies that allowed them to regain control over their lives. In these cases, the newspaper articles present information that goes beyond the sexual abuse and place women in different economic, social, cultural, and political roles. This type of storyline does not focus solely on the suffering women that endure, and includes in the narrative a temporality that embraces the possibility of different futures. Unlike the anonymised construction of the absent victim of sexual violence, these subjects are often presented under their own names as emblematic cases in the struggle against violence against women and impunity. Among those cases, the one that has received the most coverage is the story of Jineth Bedoya (n=25). Bedoya is a Colombian journalist who was abducted twice by armed groups as retaliation for her journalistic research, first by paramilitaries and later by members of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). During her first abduction in 2000 Bedoya was tortured and was subjected to sexual violence. After years of impunity and advocacy, she has become a national and international figure in her role to tackle sexual violence against women and girls. The subject that is produced as part of this type of storyline is illustrated in the article 'NGO Oxfam celebrates Decree establishing the National Day for victims of sexual violence':

Her personal struggle was transformed into activism in favour of the rights of all women victims of sexual violence in the country. Jineth, as a spokesperson for the campaign 'Take my Body out of War' and through her campaign 'It's not Time to Remain Silent', has courageously contributed to opening a space for debate in the national agenda, in which the voices of women victims are heard. (El Tiempo, 2014)

In this type of storyline we found one newspaper article that included information about a child born of war. Although this is one of the articles mentioned above whose headline suggests that the story is going to be about children born of war, the article develops two stories of women who experienced different forms of sexual abuse and, as a result, gave birth to children. In the two stories women are presented as having been targeted due to their relationships with men – the second story is even told from the perspective of the father of two young women who were forced to live with paramilitaries and it is presented as 'his drama'. However, the first story develops the case of a young woman who was raped and displaced, had a child as a result of the rape, was abandoned by her husband, but who is not defined by her experiences of violence. She is presented as involved in economic and social activities, and there is emphasis on her engagement with psychosocial therapy to overcome what she has been through, and with the legal system in relation to redress and her struggle against impunity. Information about the child, though, is presented as part of her representation as a survivor of sexual violence and to reinforce the other dimension granted to the feminine subject: motherhood. The article finishes by saying:

When people ask her about her child Rosa smiles. 'He's a joker, but he has a very strong character. He has straight black hair and he is chubby, that's

why I do not feed him so much at night’, she says while laughing. ‘Every night, when I see him sleep, I thank God for having sent him to me. No matter how it happened. Truly, I am grateful’. (Sarralde, 2014)

Discursive (Re)Production: Perpetrators as Absent Fathers

In the production of the discursive reality that emerges from the narratives spread through the corpus of articles, we identified the constant association of the child with the biological father. An example of this can be seen in the article ‘Paras of Catatumbo (North of Santander) had sexual slaves’:

The tragedy for another of them started when she was a child. One of the ‘paras’ of the Catatumbo Bloc started threatening to mutilate her if she tried to escape. ‘It was as if he had bought me’, she told the prosecutors. Now she has a *son of her victimiser* and lives in a different region of the country for fear to meet his nightmare. (El Tiempo, 2011b, emphasis added)

Or in the article introduced above, ‘The children born of paramilitary abuses’:

When Marcelino [the husband] finished speaking, Rosa announced: ‘I am pregnant and it happened that night’, she said. Marcelino froze. “That was ... terrible. That man couldn’t understand it. He told me I was crazy, that *he could not have a son of those men*, that I had to take him out of me’. (Sarralde, 2014, emphasis added)

Although the newspaper articles very often use fragments of testimonies of women and those references are found in them, in the language used in the storylines there is the reproduction of the idea that the children belong to the biological father, although they are also genetically their mothers and often raised by them. That creates a social tension that denies women’s cultural and biological input in the construction of their children’s identity. At the same time, it creates a social tension between the children – depicted as symbolic extension of the suffering caused by the biological fathers – and their mothers and communities. By reinforcing – or not challenging – the idea that children born of war are extensions of their biological fathers, we found that the association between the child and the biological father is not given in terms of the sexual violence against the woman who conceived the child, but in terms of fatherhood. In this sense, in all the storylines there is a common reference to not knowing who the father of the child is and to the absent father. This can be illustrated by the article mentioned above ‘The damage of sexual violence in the context of the conflict’:

Only when the sun begins to hide and the streets are empty, Mariana takes her 8-year-old son’s hand and goes out with him to the small park that is in the upper part of one of the neighbourhoods of Medellín. It is the same place where one morning of August 2001 she conceived the child. The father can be any of the eleven men who raped her in the middle of the most savage and brutal act. (Bedoya, 2010)

Or in the article ‘Launch of guidelines to protect women in the conflict’:

Alejandro Matos, director of Oxfam in Colombia, said that this new protocol was urgent and necessary, and suggested that it has to be implemented

strictly and closely monitored. According to him, in the Colombian armed conflict, women always run a high risk on behalf of the combatants: because of their condition as males and the power given to them by weapons. 'It cannot keep happening that when the troops leave they leave behind 15 or 20 pregnant teenagers, and the troops do not respond for the pregnant teenagers or for the children', said Matos. (El Tiempo, 2012)

In relation to this representation of perpetrators of sexual violence as fathers, the case that has received the most coverage in the newspaper articles is that of the paramilitary commander Hernan Giraldo. Giraldo operated in La Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta where he systematically committed sexual violence against girls and women, and where he recognised paternity of twenty-four children born as a result of those abuses. In some newspaper articles he is referred to as 'the father of the Sierra' (El Tiempo, 2011a, 2013) and the children are depicted as *his*, and in many cases, as a perpetuation of his violence:

Before the prosecutor Zeneida López, Hernan Giraldo accepted nine cases of sexual violence. He has also recognised the paternity of twenty-four children. According to *Memoria Histórica*, the difficulty of reconstructing Giraldo's case lies in the fact that his children, who joined criminal gangs, continue to fight to maintain control of the region. (El Tiempo, 2011c)

These storylines reproduce the moral values of the patriarchal system that places more weight on the idea of family and paternity, than on the everyday, structural, and wartime gender-based violence against women and girls.

Conclusion

The emergence of children born of war – as a subject – in the storylines of the discourse of sexual violence as a weapon of war reproduces gendered power relations in patriarchal moral orders. Although there is an increase in the newspaper's coverage of women's experiences of the armed conflict, in particular war-related sexual violence, we found in the narratives that are produced and disseminated in the articles the reproduction of normative assumptions about women, and their roles in both the context of war and in the absence of it. Through the language used in the narratives, there is the perpetuation of the logics and patriarchal moral values that underpin policies of war-related sexual violence by understanding women and their bodies as subordinated.

There are few mentions of children born of war in the newspaper articles and they appear only as secondary characters in the grid of intelligibility that the dominant framing for understanding wartime sexual violence provides. Children born of war emerge only in relation to the representations of women as victims and mothers, and of perpetrators, with their symbolic and cultural power to reproduce violence beyond their own physicality. In the discursive production and reproduction of social reality we have found the institutionalisation of subordinated identities with the logics that legitimise violence against them. Subverting those narratives requires unpacking the violence entrenched in the language that naturalises gendered politics of identity and reproduction. In the case of children born of war, this involves the development of discursive framings for thinking and writing about their experience as independent subjects who are intelligible beyond the representation of their biological parents.

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