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Abstract:

The critical discourse analysis is the tool used in this article, to study how audiovisual media have constructed mental representation about the historical facts occurred in Spain between the final stage of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the late 1980s: the theft of newborn babies. The State has failed in an attempt to establish policies that support truth, justice, and reparation as it has been recalled by United Nations experts to the Government of Spain, and the reports and documentaries have become vehicles to capture and recover memories. Our objective is to analyze how this collective awareness has been realized and the contribution of reports and documentaries. Our results show that the Spanish television channels silence the Francoist context to depict the thefts as the product of economical mobs focused on child trafficking. The international channels, however, put the origin of the dictatorship at the center of the discourse.

KEY WORDS: stolen children, story, feature story, documentary, collective memory, construction of reality.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to examine how Spanish and international audiovisual media have constructed the collective memory around a certain episode in the history of Spain which constitutes one of the most serious violations of human rights the country has ever suffered: the theft of newborn babies occurred from the 1940s to the 1990s.

The facts were silenced until the first decade of the 21st century. Previously, some voices were raised at certain moments, speaking of the missing babies, but failed to make the expected impact. The first abductions committed during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and the first years of Franco's dictatorship (1940-1960) were confirmed by women who had been prisoners in francoist jails (Juana Doña, 1978; Carlota O'Neill, 1979; Tomasa Cuevas, 1985-1986). Those abductions committed from the 1960's and later, were denounced by journalists in several newspapers (María Antonia Iglesias and Germán Gallego in *Interviú*, 1982; Salud Tapia and Javier Baranda in *El País*, 1980; Inmaculada Gómez Mardones in *El País*, 1985). Denounces came as well from the former chief of Newborn and premature infants Service at Madrid's public Maternity for 35 years, Doctor in Pediatrics Antonio Garrido-Lestache, in a story published in *Ya* which triggered severe criticism among the medical community "It is easy to take a baby from a single mother who wouldn't be able to take care of her child and give her a stillborn instead" (1988). In the 1990's, RTVE show "¿Quién sabe dónde?" ("Who knows where?") directed by Paco Lobatón, managed to reunite some of the originally abducted children with their biological families¹. However, the show had no intention to dig in the historical origins of the phenomenon. Irregular adoptions and the theft of babies were, therefore, an open secret which occasionally emerged in the public sphere. Those news stories lacked the sought-for impact though until the year 2002, when journalists Montse Armengou and Ricard Belis, advised by historian Ricard

Vinyes, produced the first documentary about stolen babies: “*Els nens perduts del franquisme*” (“Francoism’s lost children”), aired in “30 Minuts” show at Catalonia’s public TV network TV3, framed in a special about “*La Nostra Memoria*” (“Our memory”). The documentary set a milestone in the case’s dissemination, but it was not until the following decade when the news finally made waves both at a national and international scales.

Media have had a leading role in recovering this chapter of our history, while there are no clear politics concerning recovery of the past. Among all media, television has attracted the largest audiences, with an 85% of the Spanish population watching TV on a daily basis (AIMC, 2018). Therefore, audiovisual contents have become a channel for memory transmission, which has proven essential to understand the mental models shared by public opinion regarding the theft of babies. In order to delimit the sample, we have focused on feature stories and documentaries, thus excluding news pieces because, although they are a referential genre seeing to “expose external events, checked informative facts, opinions able to be confirmed by their author...” (Cebrián Herreros, 1992: 39), it barely delve into the facts due to the brevity and immediacy in which information is aired. Moreover, as pointed out by Marta-Lazo (2012: 61) “feature stories and documentaries are the genres most prone to an originality-oriented personal focusing, while keeping ‘objectivity’ requirements well within sight.”

Theoretical considerations

The Spanish context. The theft of babies.

By “stolen babies” we refer to those newborn infants snatched from their biological parents without their consent, usually immediately after the mother gave birth. Such cases began occurring during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), continued throughout the entire period of General Francisco Franco’s dictatorship (1939-1975) and didn’t stop until 1987, already with a democracy reinstated. Since the cases thrived throughout such a long period, and while the social cleansing always remained, they evolved from a first period (1936-1950) supported by merely politic motivations consisting of annihilation of leftist adversaries, towards a second period (1950-1987) with morals as main motivation and when economic reasons showed up as well.

The first thefts begun during the Spanish Civil War, which started as an offensive to overthrow the government legitimately established by elections back in 1931, the Second Republic. It divided the country in two hostile sides: on one hand, the “national” side comprising groups opposing the Republic (Falange’s fascists, monarchy supporters and conservative forces) and, on the other, the “republican” band (supporters of the Second Republic and all leftist parties).

General Francisco Franco won the war in 1939 and installed a Dictatorship (1939-1975), defined by United Nations as follows: “in origin, nature, structure and general conduct, the Franco regime is a fascist regime patterned on, and established largely as a result of aid received from, Hitler’s Nazi Germany and Mussolini’s Fascist Italy” (1946: 63).

The victors continued with their politics of eliminating all Republicans, which they had started during the war. Ideologically, Franco based on the theories of the chief of the Army’s Psychiatric Services, commander Antonio Vallejo Nágera, trained in the Nazi Germany. Vallejo Nágera considered Spain had been decaying since the 18th Century and a regeneration was thus needed, through “positive eugenics” (Vallejo Nágera, 1937). It was necessary to recover the Hispanic race and to eliminate the “red gene” – supposedly present in those following leftist ideas — in order to

rid society of the “Marxist virus” (Vallejo Nágera, 1937)². The conflict permitted him to carry out experiments on human beings in which he tried to find the “relationships between a certain bio-psychological personality and the constitutional predisposition to Marxism; the proportion of Marxist fanaticism among those mentally inferior and the proportion of antisocial psychopaths among the Marxist masses” (Vallejo Nágera, 1938: 189). Basing on his studies, he concluded as follows:

Due to its biological traits, communism can only spread among uneducated, degenerative races, who lack confidence on their destiny, deprived of values of their own, incapable of improving and aspire, through their own work and value, to excel and overcome everyone else in all cultural aspects of civilization. (Vallejo Nágera, 1941, quoted by Rodríguez Puértolas, 1987: 1159)

This way, he tried to scientifically justify the annihilation of every supporter of leftist ideas “the confirmation of our hypotheses has an enormous political and social transcendence because, if antisocial psychopaths are active members in Marxism by preference, as it is our idea, the segregation of those subject from their early age could set society free from that fearsome plague” (Vallejo Nágera, 1939: 52). This way, a systematic plan for child appropriation started in jails, firing squads and when minors previously expatriated by the 2nd Republic returned home. A specific regulation was purposely created³ “the abduction of the republican female prisoners’ children, not only of those who had been executed, became a systematic action” (Preston, 2011: 664).

From the 1950s onwards, a second stage started, and the goals diversified: it was not only the children of Republican females, but also those who could not be economically supported by their families and those born from extra-marital relationships or single mothers. In a country where the dictator granted absolute power to the Church, “Spain was again the people chosen by God to defend the Christian faith in front of the world” (Casanova, 2005: 275). Morals should be safeguarded, and honor included the woman’s body. All those not meeting the standards set by Catholicism were doomed and one of the greatest sins was to become a mother out of wedlock. Many of these women had their babies taken away from them without their consent. Economic motives played a role though this second stage, because transactions involved payments which could reach the value of an apartment at the time.

All this was kept in silence, no one believed them, it was the women’s word against that of the doctors and nuns, the “symbolic elites” Van Dijk (2003), who had the moral power, because there is a whole gender question behind this issue, due to the vulnerable condition they were in.

The 1987 Adoption Act stopped such practices since control was transferred to public institutions instead of charity institutions (as it had been the norm according to 1958’s and 1970’s laws). The law’s preamble contained a denouncing mention referring to the “absence of control” existent in the actions previous to adoption which “occasionally permitted an obnoxious child trafficking, as denounced by media” (BOE, 1987).

Collective and individual memories

The recovery of collective memory concerning the theft of babies which has taken place in the 21st Century is two-fold: not all experts and affected share the same perception of events. Most of them include the facts within Francoist crimes, but some others prefer to distance themselves from such consideration since they understand that, although the thefts occurred during the

Dictatorship, in the decade of 1950s, they did not have a strictly political motivation of annihilating the adversary, but a mainly economical motivation. “The mob became a network with a mere economical objective, setting politics totally aside, which is made obvious in later dates, when the memories of the Civil War and its political implications had been left behind” (Vila, 2011: 280). However, the former considered that, although the main motivation might not be political any longer, the “ideological, moral, social (...) repression did continue on women belonging to the losing side, highly vulnerable” (Luque, 2017). Such repression was part of the ideological and moral apparatus which condemned out-of-wedlock maternity. They claim, therefore, that theirs were not mobsters’ common crimes solely motivated by money, but “crimes committed directly by the State or supported and done with complicity of the State’s structures” (Luque, 2017). Moreover, some state there are no such two stages, but only one including Francoism as a whole.

Too me, the theft of babies from women with political and ideological motivations is Francoism, and to have repression without contraceptive methods or abortion is Francoism too. Women were punished because they had got pregnant and they were punished because some of them intended to have those children on their own. To me, it is still Francoism when, in the 1980’s and 1990’s, we may say there is solely an economical interest, because actors are still the same, there is a political, cultural, religious establishment, it is Francoism (Armengou, 2011: 123).

Similarly, Philosopher González de Tena (2011) states that, throughout his research, he has found no evidence at all justifying a breaking point, neither ideological nor methodologic, concerning the pursued goals by the eugenic-oriented criminal politic and the practice of stealing children with economic objectives. He considers, therefore, that even after the Dictator’s death in 1975, such events were still part of the crimes perpetrated by the Fascist regime.

To make visible one or the other perspective has its consequences, not only concerning the comprehension of the historic past, but also concerning the present stand we take, as a society, about Francoism, because silencing the crimes of the Dictatorship reveals the current trend to avoid rigorously looking at the traumatic experiences of the 20th Century. It is the will to analyze this collective stand what moved us to carry out this research work. Its main goal is to analyze which perspective has been prioritized by audiovisual media due to the major role they have had in the recovery of memory and, therefore, into the construction of social representations shared on the issue. We have hence done so from the perspective of the critical discourse analysis.

The critical discourse analysis perspective

This article is approached from a critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) perspective. Such is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way the abuse of social power and inequality “are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context.” (Van Dijk, 2016: 204). CDA understands social power as control: “groups have (more or less) power as long as they are able to control (more or less) the acts and minds of members in other groups” (Van Dijk, 2016: 207). In this way, by controlling their minds, “they indirectly control their future actions as well” (Van Dijk, 2004: 9).

The so-called “symbolic elites” are those with an access to the public discourse and, therefore, to the public opinion (1999). In order to control the discourse, they must control the context where

communication events take place (who may speak, who shall be listened to, when, where, etc.) as well as discourse strategies, the shapes it adopts to define the situation (global and local meanings, as well as the structures used for the task). As Van Dijk concludes, there is a “global strategy of positive self-representation from the dominant group and one of negative hetero-representation from the dominated groups” in numerous critical studies (1993, 1998, 1999).

To understand this power, however, it must be also analyzed how the discourse affects to people’s minds. Therefore, the ACD approach “is characterized by the Discourse–Cognition–Society triangle” (Van Dijk, 2015: 64). Cognition is “the necessary interface that links discourse as use of language and interaction, with situations and social structures” (Van Dijk, 2008). Understanding discourse is, finally, understanding how people form their mental models about specific events and their social representations (values, beliefs, ideologies). It must be considered that no group or institution controls all the discourses and actions of other groups, so that the latter may:

...resist, dissent and not accept discourse control by power elites (...) However, it must be highlighted that, by controlling at least a part of the public discourse, power elites are able to control at least a part of some people’s minds (Van Dijk, 2004: 10).

Methodology

We consider CDA a critical perspective for analysis, rather than a researching method. T.A. Van Dijk himself states that “there is no such method” since all interdisciplinary methods for discourse studies, as well as those of social science, may be used. Aiming to avoid “this misunderstanding and to emphasize that a large number of methods and approaches may be used” (Van Dijk, 2016: 204).

In our analysis, we have systematically searched for the ways in which ideologies are expressed. This has been carried out by analyzing three aspects: discourse, cognition and society:

- a. Discourse: We have extracted those discourse structures used for the expression and communication of ideological meanings. We have identified those discourse features which express and point out to dominant groups’ opinions, perspectives, positioning and interests. We have firstly analyzed the topics that represent the global meaning and are technically described as “semantic macrostructures” (Van Dijk, 2003). Due to space limitations, we have centered in those topics expressing the audiovisual narrations’ focusing. Secondly, we have analyzed the arguments expressed on each proposition, bearing in mind both explicit and implicit meanings. An implicit information is the one which “can be inferred from a text (that is, from its meaning), without being explicitly expressed in the text.” (Van Dijk, 2003). Finally, we have analyzed the vocabulary.
- b. Cognition. On a second stage, discourse structures are cognitively interpreted. The discursive and semiotic structures mentioned may have an impact on mental models and the socially shared knowledge. This is extremely important in the case of study since, while most citizen already rely on communication media to obtain overall information, in this particular case dependence on media has been utterly notorious, bearing in mind that, que as Gatti remarks “while old in historical time,

stolen babies are very new in sociological time, in which they even lack a name (Gatti, 2016: 2).

- c. Society. After analyzing structures and its cognitive supports, we have examined the social contexts of discourses, bearing in mind who was behind them in order to check as well the social function of those discourses constructed around the stolen babies' cases.

2. Object of study and corpus

Our object of study, therefore, are all the feature stories and documentaries broadcast by Spanish media about the theft of babies, during the period when those events were considered an informative priority (2008-2015). We have then compared them to a selection of audiovisual works produced abroad.

1. <i>Los niños que robó Franco [The children Franco stole]</i>	INFORME SEMANAL	RTVE	SPAIN	EUROPA	
2. <i>Vidas robadas [Stolen lives]</i>	CRONICAS				
3. <i>¿Quiénes son mis padres? [Who are my parents?]</i>	DOCUMENTOS TV				
4. <i>La oscura historia de los niños robados [The obscure story of stolen babies]</i>	INFORME SEMANAL				
5. <i>Recuperar mi historia [Recovering my History]</i>	REPOR				
6. <i>La fábrica de bebés [The Factory of babies]</i>	REPORTAJE ESPECIAL	Antena 3	SPAIN	EUROPA	
7. <i>¿Quién sabe dónde está mi hijo? [Who knows where my]</i>	EQUIPO DE INVESTIGACION				
8. <i>Especial Sor María [Special Sister maria]</i>	EQUIPO DE INVESTIGACION				
9. <i>Especial Espejo Público [Special Public Mirror]</i>	ESPEJO PÚBLICO	Tele5	SPAIN	EUROPA	
10. <i>La noche de los niños robados (parte 1- 8) [The night of stolen children]</i>	“NIÑOS ROBADOS: DÓNDE ESTÁN”				
11. <i>Programa nº5 sobre niños robados [Program nº5 on stolen children]</i>	SE ENCIENDE LA NOCHE	Cuatro	SPAIN	EUROPA	
12. <i>Programa especial [Special program]</i>	QTTF-Mª TERESA CAMPOS				
13. <i>Bebés robados en España [Stolen babies in Spain]</i>	REC	FRANCE	FRANCE	EUROPA	
14. <i>Les fills du diable [The children of the Devil]</i>	SEPT A HUIT				TF1
15. <i>Les enfants volés du Franquisme [The stolen children of Francoism]</i>	20 HEURES				FRANCE 2
16. <i>Adoptions: des échecs qui dérangent [Adoptions: Disturbing failures]</i>	COMPLÉMENT D'ENQUÊTE D'ENQUETE				FRANCE 5
17. <i>Bébés volés: l'incroyable scandal [Stolen babies: the unbelievable scandal]</i>	SPÉCIAL INVESTIGATION				CANAL +
18. <i>Le trafic d'enfants volés en Espagne [Traffic of stolen babies in Spain]</i>	C DANS L'AIR				FRANCE 5
19. <i>Une vie volée [A stolen life]</i>	LE MONDE EN FACE				FRANCE 5
20. <i>Programa especial [Special Program]</i>	FOCUS				FRANCE 24
21. <i>Les enfants volés [The stolen children]</i>	LA CASE DE L'ONCLE DOC				FRANCE 3
22. <i>Spain's stolen babies</i>	BBC TWO- THIS WORLD				BBC
23. <i>Spain, the stolen children</i>	EUROPEAN JOURNAL	DW	GERMANY		
24. <i>Les enfants volés du Franquisme [The stolen children of Francoism]</i>	JOURNAL TÉLÉVISÉ	RTS	SWITZERLAND		
25. <i>Das geraubte Kind - Familie Häftigers Suche nach Ivan [The stolen child: Häftiger family's search for Iván]</i>	REPORTER SF	SFR	NETHERLANDS		
26. <i>Spanje worstelt met verleden [Spain struggles with its]</i>	NOS JOURNAAL	NPO	NETHERLANDS		
27. <i>Stolen babies scandal haunts Spain</i>	WORLD'S UNTOLD STORIES	CNN	EEUU	AMÉRICA	
28. <i>The pain in Spain</i>	FOREING CORRESPONDENT	ABC	AUSTRALIA	OCEANIA	

Table 1 List of analyzed broadcasts

Objectives

General objective:

To study the contribution of audiovisual stories to the construction of a mental representation in society about the theft of babies. E`E

As specific objectives, we intend to study the focusing of each feature story and documentary, bearing in mind the historical perspective and the explanation of the causes leading to the mentioned facts.

Specific Objective 1.

To study the historical perspective present on each of the studied audiovisual discourses, observing whether it includes or not, the entire evolution of the theft of babies.

Specific Objective 2:

To analyze the explanation of economic, historic and moral causes considered on each audiovisual story.

Specific Objective 3:

To analyze who is considered responsible for the events: the State, or child trafficking plots comprised by doctors and nuns.

Hypotheses

Our main research hypothesis is formulated as following:

Spanish audiovisual media have constructed a certain discourse which considers the theft of babies as the product of economic plots, overlooking its Francoist origin and its connection with Franco's Dictatorship.

For research purposes, the main hypothesis has been divided into two specific ones.

Hypothesis 1. Regarding the historical perspective:

Most Spanish audiovisual works analyzed ignore the first misappropriations, those carried out strictly as a political cleansing operation (1936-1950) and focus instead on those taking place from the 1960s until the final 1980s.

Hypothesis 2. Regarding the causes:

Most Spanish audiovisual productions studied do not explain the historical and political causes and focus instead on moral and economical grounds of the reported facts, which results in a biased vision of the analyzed reality.

Hypothesis 3. Regarding the responsibilities

Most Spanish audiovisual productions studied consider the thefts as committed by child trafficking mobs, mainly comprising medical doctors and nuns, while ignoring the public forces' responsibility.

Analysis results and discussion

Next, the preliminary hypotheses will be verified through the CDA's triple perspective (discourse, cognition and society).

Hypothesis 1. Regarding the historical perspective

As previously mentioned, the thefts were carried out throughout the entire period of Franco's Dictatorship and, while the Francoist ideology was always kept active, there were distinguishing features on a first stage, where the thefts were committed as a mechanism of political cleansing, and on a second period, where moral and economical objectives prevailed.

To verify this first hypothesis, we have analysed whether the narration studied raise awareness towards thefts committed throughout the whole historic period, and we have confirmed that a large majority of Spanish narrations (92.3%) ignores the thefts committed during the first stages of Francoism. Out of 13 stories analysed, only one of them report on the first appropriations "The Children Franco stole" by the National Public TV Service *RTVE*. Therefore, the hypothesis is confirmed.

The early events are also ignored by a large number of foreign productions, yet not as widely (53.3%). These are raised in seven out of fifteen productions, four of which are French (*TF1*, *France 2*, *France 5* and *Canal+*) while the others are Swiss (*RTS*), British (*BBC*) and Dutch (*NPO*) (insert Figure 1). Moreover, both the French broadcast "C dans l'air" and the Dutch broadcast on *NPO* network, have dealt not only with the appropriation of infants but also the Francoism's crimes (insert Figure 1).

Hypothesis 2. Regarding the causes:

This second hypothesis can be also considered confirmed because only two Spanish productions explain the political and historical context: one of "Los niños que robó Franco" [The Children Franco stole] by *RTVE*, develops the idea along the entire feature story. The second one, however, *Tele5's* "The night of the stolen children" only devotes two paragraphs in two out of its eight chapters:

"At first, the excuse was ideological. Children of political female prisoners were given to Francoists families but, over time, the suspected plot acquired a purely economic character. Stolen babies were handed over to couples who could not have babies in exchange of large amounts of money" (narration, *Tele5*, No. 10-2).

"Only two decades before, about twenty thousand children were taken from leftist republican families by the military regime, as part of an ideological cleansing operation carried out by the Dictatorship" (narration, *Tele5*, No. 10-4).

All other narrations studied avoid explaining the ideology behind the appropriations (84.6%). In particular, 76.9% of them do not explain the laws passed to permit the appropriations; 92.3% do not mention Vallejo Nágera and 46.2% do not even mention that the facts occurred during the Francoist period. On those narrations which the previous facts are mentioned, the reference is usually limited to a single sentence in most cases:

"Madrid, end of the 1970s, Francoism's death throes" (narration, *Antena 3*, No. 7).

"Practices which would have begun in the first years of Francoism and would have persisted until the first 1990s" (narration, *RTVE*, No. 4).

Contrarily, only one among the foreign narrations avoids locating the facts during Francoism and explaining the ideology (6.6%). Likewise, only 33% avoids details about the legal framework while, nearly all narrations (93,4%) connect the facts with Francoism and explain its relationship. Hence, international stories do not move away from the historical context; moreover, they explain it (insert Figure 2):

“Republican mothers had their babies stolen while they were prisoners, they were stolen so that the children would not have red ideals. What started as a political issue, turned from the 1970s into a purely economic matter.” (Narration, *NPO*, No. 26).

Spanish productions mainly focus on the moral question and the women’s vulnerable position at the time of events (75%) (insert Figure 2):

“She was dubbed “The vulture” (referring to nun Sor María). She told us not to show the babies to their mothers, to absolutely no one. She would ask all intern midwives to write down on a notebook who were single mothers, so she could visit them later. She would persuade them and, since the situation was going to be difficult for them, you could tell they were shattered” (anonymous worker, *Antena 3*, No. 6).

“Mothers mostly belonged to a social strait afraid of power, I mean, people who lack, firstly, financial resources to face a long, difficult legal process and, secondly, knowledge to do it because they came from highly vulnerable social sectors in terms of economy; so to say, these persons felt impaired in front of the established power” (Francisco González de Tena, sociologist, *RTVE*, No. 2).

Summarizing, the Spanish narrations provide details on the time’s social and moral context, but only a few relate it to Francoism. However, it must be taken into account that the morals considering single motherhood a sin was imposed by the Catholic church to which Franco granted with absolute power:

“... and, definitely, the women’s role cannot be understood without the cultural context through the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. This is basically shaped after the ideology of the *Seccion Femenina* (Female Section) [which is] basically by the Catholic Church’s idea of women. (Fernando Martínez, professor of Contemporary History, *RTVE*, No. 5).

By depicting women as victims of a socially accepted situation, politics are excluded. They are not presented as empowered women fighting for the rights snatched from them by a political system which establishes the women’s moral as the main element to be defended, but as victims of a society in which they were legally in an inferior position in relation to men.

Foreign narrations, however, grant a less important role to moral questions (40%) and, as previously seen, give more weight to the historical-political context (93.4%).

“The story of Spain’s stolen babies begins in the Spanish Civil War, in Francoists jails meant to repress the regime’s opposers. The law to change [the children’s] names to prevent families from finding them (Natalia Junquera, journalist, *France 5*, No. 19).

One further cause present in nearly all narrations, both Spanish (62.9%) and foreign (60%), is the economic factor. The appropriations were paid-for (insert Figure 3):

“Maintaining the virtue came with a prize: 25.000 is what parents paid to hide their daughters’ sin, 25.000 pesetas per month. They were entrepreneurs, military members, high-society members, who hid their daughter until she gave birth” (Santiago González, victim, *Tele5*, No. 10-4).

Hypothesis 3. Regarding the responsibilities

The third hypothesis formulated can be considered confirmed as well because most of the Spanish audiovisual productions studied consider the thefts as committed by child trafficking mobs, mainly comprising medical doctors and nuns (92.3%). The State's responsibility is pushed back to a secondary level and only mentioned by 30% of the narrations (insert Figure 4):

In 99% of the cases there is a nun or a priest in the middle, meaning, it has nothing to do with politics, war or historic memory, it is a totally external fact, a business among doctors and priests and nuns" (Antonio Barroso, affected, *Cuatro*, No. 13).

Foreign productions equally point out to doctors and nuns (86.6% and 80%), but also mention the State's responsibility more often (86.7%).

"Laws permitted no questions in adoption processes, doctors did not have to keep record of the biological mothers' names on birth certificates - apparently to protect single mothers - and baptism records were valid as birth certificates. All these characteristics resulted in loopholes thanks to which illegal adoptions thrived" (narration, *CNN*, No. 27).

Doctors and nuns involved in the facts are depicted as participants in a plot, a term used in 61,5% of all audiovisual works studied, with a larger percentage in Spanish productions (75%), than among the international ones (50%). The Spanish Word for plot, *trama*, is defined by the Spanish Royal Academy as a "group of threads that, once crossed and intertwined with those of a warp, form a fabric" and as "artifice, fraud, collusion to harm someone" (RAE, 2019). Its use implies, therefore, the idea of an illegal market, since it refers to an organization of persons united in a network and colluding to carry out, in this case, a secret children traffic pursuing a monetary profit:

"Numerous calls and messages received at the newsroom lead us towards a new presumed babies theft plot, independent from the one presumedly headed by Dr. Vela and sister María" (narration, *Tele5*, No. 10-6).

In addition to *trama*, words and phrases such as *hidden adoption networks*, *disease*, *trafficking avalanche*, *factory*, *commerce*, *scandal* are mentioned. Expressions and metaphors confirm the idea of a business which went out of control of legal courses, even without official figures to quantify the facts:

"We are talking of hundreds of stolen babies, hidden adoption networks. A large-scale child trafficking" (narrator, Canal +, No. 17).

"Antonio has created Spain's largest association. He never foresaw the avalanche of cases" (narrator, Antena3, No. 7).

"Doctor Vela has been accused of managing a «factory of babies» which provided babies on demand to selected families" (narrator, BBC, No. 22).

"The scandal currently gripping Spain" (narrator, ABC, No. 28).

Therefore, distancing from any political connotation is perceived in the vocabulary used to identify the thefts. The first audiovisual work tackling the issue, produced in 2002 by *TV3*, was titled "Francoism's stolen children" and, except for one of the analyzed works - *RTVE*'s "The Children Franco stole" (2008)- all productions have removed the terms Francoism or Franco from the thefts. It is generally spoken of "theft of babies" and occasionally also of "abductions",

“false children” or “appropriated”. Such absence is utterly significant because it reflects the drift from denouncing a crime of State to private denunciations against certain doctors and nuns acting on moral – and, most of all, economic – grounds.

As far as the discourse is concerned, it can be confirmed that Spanish audiovisual narrations have separated the thefts of babies from Francoism, firstly, because they have silenced the cases occurred on a first stage (1936-1950) as a mechanism to annihilate political adversaries and have instead focused on the second-stage cases, which have been presented as produced by child trafficking networks, comprised by doctors and nuns who acted motivated by moral and economic reasons. The State’s responsibility is relegated, as well as its relationship with Francoism, depicted as a mere background, the historical scene in which appropriations occurred, and not as the actual cause for the appropriations. The main hypothesis in the present work is therefore confirmed. Foreign narrations also focus on the child trafficking networks, but do not ignore the Francoist ideology behind, neither they silence the first appropriations.

Prioritization of issues and the vocabulary used express several shared cognitive structures. In particular, Spanish media tend to present the facts as unconnected to Francoism’s crimes. His positioning has to be explained as well by the way the Transition to democracy in Spain⁴ was carried out after dictator Francisco Franco died in 1975. As pointed out by Casanova, it was a transition “from the top, led by authorities from Francoism, although negotiated and agreed in some basic points with the leaders of the democratic opposition” (2014). The Amnesty Law passed two years later was based on pardon and oblivion of the crimes committed. This way, the State “declined to start, in the foreseeable future, any kind of judicial investigation, not even to hold accountability for the crimes committed by public servants against the people’s rights ” (Casanova, 2011). Moreover, there was no staff replacement in power institutions or in media, and Francoism legacies were kept in order to guarantee a conservative hegemony. According to Jerez “depoliticization, fear to collective commitment, or the maintenance of authoritarian cultures at institutions and professional fields (justice, education, university, security forces, journalism or church)”, affected “both to the degree of openness of the public sphere and its institutions, and to the independence of media and cultural and intellectual production” (2011: 56).

Behind those narrations are, in most cases, private TV corporations (four out of the analyzed five) whose goal is to gain audience. Purposely, all political and historical significance has been excluded from their programming. Moreover, the topic has been managed as a consumer good and has been treated not only in informative programs, but also as a bait in entertainment shows where the affected had DNA test taken in the hope of finding their relatives; the topic has even been mentioned in a program about supernatural phenomenon.

The only narration which does not ignore the connection with Francoism is “The Children Franco Stole”, produced by public TV network *RTVE*, while it was under the socialist administration of José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero’s government, when policies of recovery of the historic past were launched, such as the first national law of Historic Memory (2007). This way the third level of analysis is reached: the analysis of society itself.

Conclusions

Consequently, we may conclude that the crimes committed during the Dictatorship are not yet normally discussed in Spain’s audiovisual media, at least concerning the topic analyzed here. The

prioritized discourse is one that does not alter social order, that moves steps away from the revision of the Francoist historic past to focus instead on whatever is socially legitimated for the Spanish society, the Catholic moral and the women's condition of vulnerability in the time the facts occurred. As pointed out by Wodak:

All societies have traumatic events in the past, be it war, crimes, etc. (...) Sometimes, taboos surround such events in the public sphere; usually, narratives are constructed which mystify the participation in war crimes or other crimes. Such narratives are (re)produced through films, documentaries, political speeches and schoolbooks; moreover, they are also transferred into the private spheres of families and peer-groups (2007: 316).

This is particularly important in a country where there has been no Truth Commission to compile the events, and no biographical files to recover the vital history of those affected, as it was done in Argentina or Australia. Absence of information conditions have been remarked by United Nations rapporteur on the promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of non-recurrence Pablo de Greiff, in his report on Spain carried out in July 2014. As de Greiff pointed “the most serious shortcomings are to be found in the spheres of truth and justice. No State policy was ever established with respect to truth; there is no official information and no mechanisms for elucidating the truth” (2014: 1), which explains the lack of clear information about the current events, absence of data or official estimations.

Therefore, in the absence of truth commissions or biographical files developed from the public powers, media have the duty to register the events occurred. By showing the thefts of babies as the plot of economic mobs, however, instead of contextualized in Francoism, they have modified the collective consciousness on the issue. As pointed out by Marugan, we have missed the opportunity to “reinforce the construction of democracy by rescuing the historic memory” (2013: 4) through the issue since, as Armengou states, “it is easier to digest that bad guys stole children, instead of contextualizing the facts in a political and religious system which favored, encouraged and hid those thefts. It is easier to blame a gang of traffickers than a dictatorship” (2011: 127). Therefore we agree with these experts in considering that sociological Francoism is still winning by disassociating audiovisual narrations from Spain's historic past. As a conclusion, we notice that, in Spain, human rights violations for decades during Franco's dictatorship is a social wound yet to be treated, not only at political and legal levels, but also in audiovisual media.

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Graph

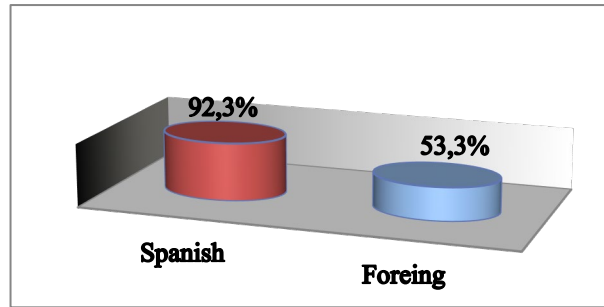


Figura 1 Speeches ignoring the thefts occurred during the first period

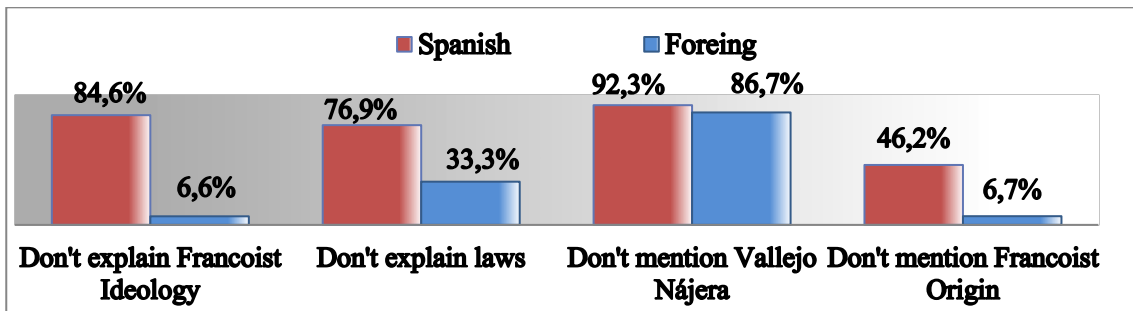


Figura 2 Narrations not explaining historical and political causes, by countries

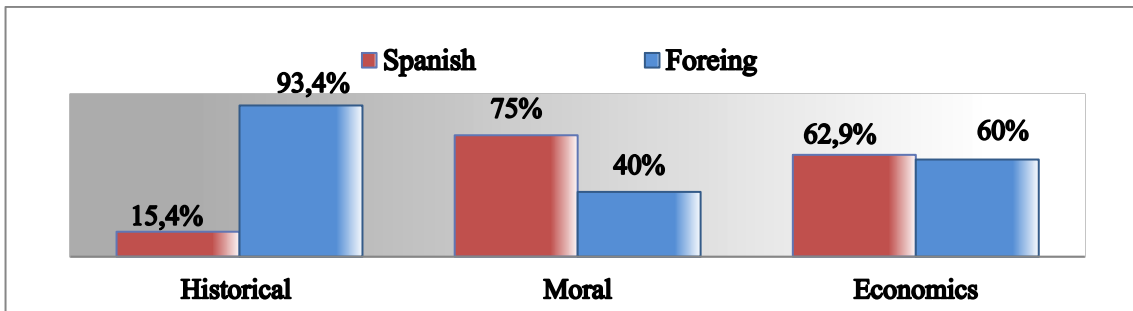


Figura 3 Explanation of causes, by countries

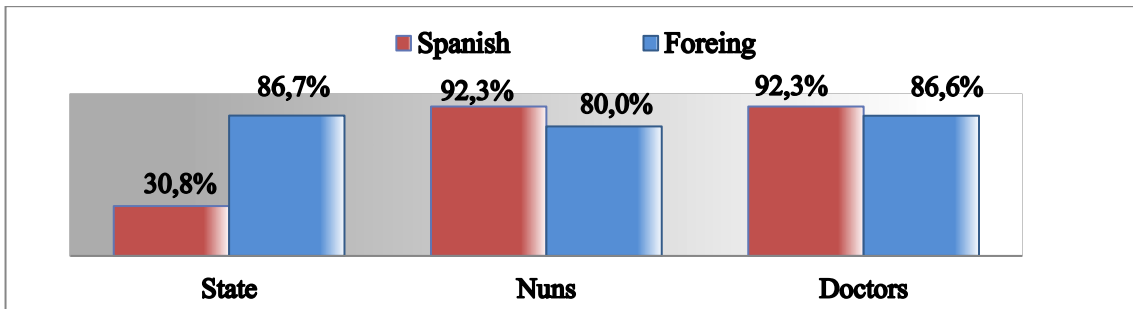


Figura 4 Comments about who is to be held responsible, by countries

¹ October, 1993 María and her daughter Antonia Radas met on a TV stage after 70 years of search. Carmen Calvo and her sister Florencia also met again after being separated as little children.

² To their understanding, marxists were all followers of leftist ideas, from anarchists to communists and socialists.

³ The order issued on March 30th, 1940, forced all minors under three years old out of the prisons where they had entered together with their mothers; the law passed on November 23rd, 1940 for the Protection of Orphans of the revolution and War permitted the Government to assume the protection of those minors who had lost their parents; the law passed on December 4th, 1941 for the Inscription of Repatriated and Abandoned children allowed minors who did not remember their names to be filed up in the Civil registry with different names (Armengou, Belis, Vinyes, 2002).

⁴ The Spanish Transition is the name given to the period when the dictatorial regime gave way to democracy after Francisco Franco's death in 1975.