

Education Represented in Spanish Propaganda Documentaries (1914-1939)

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Abstract

This article describes the main conclusions from research into educational documentaries and newsreels from the first thirty or so years of the twentieth century in Spain. It firstly sets out the general and synthetic methodology used to carry out the study, and then outlines the overall picture we have assembled of how education is represented in the films examined from a formal, contextual standpoint and through content analysis. This overview provides a complex picture of education and childcare during that period. Despite the caution that must be taken when working with visual resources, we are able to assert that analysing the material has enabled us to pinpoint nuanced details and open up new perspectives on the history of education.

Key words: educational films, propaganda, history of education, content analysis.

1. Introduction

This article presents some of the conclusions reached upon the completion of a research project on educational films from the first third of the twentieth century. Specifically, this project analysed documentaries and newsreels produced in Spain between 1914 and 1939 which implicitly or explicitly refer to issues of educational interest.

The background of this project includes the fact that in order to undertake an analysis that was as comprehensive as possible, we believed it was essential to approach the films from a plurality of training and field-specific approaches. The research team had to be multidisciplinary in order to respect this plurality. This requirement was met by bringing experts in history, psychology, pedagogy and sociology into the team. This diversity made it possible for us to better understand the educational conceptions that inspired and were disseminated in the documents and audiovisual productions.

Likewise, as presented in the Methodology section, the articulation of our understanding of the educational representations identified in the productions meant that we had to undertake a research process which included aspects like the cataloguing, analysis and interpretation of the discourses in these historical sources.

Conducting this research process designed enabled us to achieve the objectives of recovering the audiovisual memories from the period and disseminating them through a single database¹ in order to gain access to an understanding of the pedagogy promoted by the different ideologies of the period and to develop an overview of the different topics that occupied the attention of the policies and discourses of the period, most notably the production of the documentary *Viure la infància en temps de la dictadura de Primo de Rivera* (Experiencing Childhood in Times of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship).² Some of these strands studied are examined in this article.

Before delving into the organisation of the different sections, we want to underscore that different ideologies from that period, some of them contradicting each other, used this channel of communication as a propaganda strategy (Colleldemont, 2018). This fact was very important to us when both analysing these audiovisual sources and understanding the discourses underlying them. Indeed, anarchists, communists, republicans and Francoists all realised that audiovisual productions were the most effective channels for achieving an optimal impact when disseminating their principles. They also all used images with children and youths to achieve their propagandistic aims, which became their best calling card. This tendency is also found in European audiovisual productions produced in the interwar period (Aldagate, 1979; Chapman, 1998; Mendelson, 2012; Porton, 2001; Russell, 2009; Welch, 1983).

¹ Link to the record: Universitat de Vic, <https://www.uvic.cat/sites/default/files/documento-en-proceso-registro-films.pdf> [Consulted on 14/03/2017].

² Link to the documentary: under the Productes section of the following website from Universitat de Vic: <https://www.uvic.cat/museu-virtual/investigacions/radae> [Consulted on 14/03/2017].

2. Getting down to work: The methodology

To approach the complex reality entailed in analysing audiovisual productions from a clear temporal distance, it was essential to share, think and weigh the different options that the research methodologies afford us in order to decide which ones would enable us to best approach the topics of interest for our study.

The nature of the documentary sources, the diversity of ideological motivations, the features of the audiovisual narratives, the propagandistic nature of the documents, and their origin in personal interests (household documents) or public interests (public administration, political parties, etc.) are all aspects that forced us to construct a custom methodology which would integrate different gazes and disciplines.

Likewise, we had to bear in mind that one of the main dimensions contained in the sources we have worked with is the cultural dimension. The films are articulated around narratives that seek to communicate an idea, a story, a conception, etc., which should be examined, while considering and respecting their complexity (Smeyers & Depaepe, 2014). It was essential to take care not to fall into reductionist analyses that simplify what is shown to be complex, keeping in sight the goal of finding and understanding the narrative skeleton with which they were created (Herman, 2015).

At the same time, the symbolic significance of cultural material forced us to interpret it cautiously, which could easily turn into acritical judgements that ignore the uniqueness of the contexts in which they were created. It is obvious that when speaking about the importance of considering the contextual aspects of a fact, a document or a creation, not only should the temporal and physical factors be included but so should the symbols (Gómez & Casanovas, 2017). Here is where the symbols, that is, the set of meanings attributed to a certain production, lead us to consider all the elements that generate it, all the elements that come into play when attributing meanings.

While we share the temporal plane, four different personal and academic trajectories confirm the convergence of a diverse range of symbols and training which come into play in the research gaze. Therefore, deciding what to observe, where the emphasis of the analysis will be placed and the value attached to each element cannot be an automatic practice, because this could lead to an over-interpretation or an underestimation of the time and intentions in which they were created. Only by using methodological tools that guarantee that the complexity presented by the nature of our subject of study is preserved was it feasible to avoid these pitfalls. Therefore, we surveyed which methodological and epistemological elements taken into consideration in previous studies should be incorporated into this research, as they share the fact that they are all cultural creations.³

Specifically, we revisited the orientation of approaching the material with the awareness of the triple leap, referring to the temporal, generational and

³ Approach developed in the project: 'DiDD. Documentación y difusión digital del patrimonio educativo producido entre 1936-1939 en las escuelas de Barcelona. Los dibujos de la infancia sobre la vida cotidiana en tiempos de guerra', National RDI Plan I 2011-2013 (Ref. EDU2010-20280).

narrative discontinuities between the research team and the contextual elements of the document sources (Gómez, 2017).

Secondly, we also included the ideas of the imagined community—found in everyone's symbolism, and therefore in each of the team members—and the imagination of the community. Both are essential analytical indicators. In fact, when audiovisual productions are conceived as propaganda to disseminate certain messages or ideas, the indicator of the imagination of the community becomes particularly important because the imagination of the community refers to the symbolism imbued in any cultural creation by its authors, and therefore we cannot merely accept the idea that what is shown literally reflects the reality to which it refers (Comolli, 2007; Didi-Huberman, 2010; Lebas, 2005 & 2007).

This pendulum swing between the two analytical indicators found in all research, between the imagined community and the imagination of the community, especially in the interpretative phase, means that even though it seems impossible, after analysing certain pieces, an 'a priori' with which we were working has been contradicted., that is, thinking that every documentary piece will serve the imagination of the community assigned to a single ideological corpus. In fact, it became inconceivable to consider that the same production was used with different and even opposite purposes. This was the case with the film *Vidas Nuevas* (New Lives), for example; even though it was produced in 1936, before the start of the Civil War, the Franco regime appropriated it by dating the production from the 1940s and attributing it to the Ministry of Governance (Perdigueru, 2008). This once again reveals that the different contextual planes are vitally important at all times in both the dissemination and the reception of the message.

Once we were situated within the coordinates of the research paradigm, we had to more specifically systematise the technical data collection that would make the formal analysis possible. Attention to the formal aspects coexisted simultaneously with—and cannot be dissociated from—the analysis of the main thematic strands that emerged from viewing the different documentaries (such as the body, the conception of childhood, the conception of work, educational policies, etc.) and with the influence of the temporal context (such as the political, social, economic and cultural features of the period). This analysis (Prat & Padrós, 2014) was conducted by singularities (piece by piece) and serially (either by theme or by historical period).

We started the formal analysis by creating a technical file on each piece. The date, producer, source of financing and script were logged. Likewise, the different sequences shaping the film stories were identified, and the main contents and length were categorised. Next, the presence of the type of elements accompanying them (iconographic, figurative, metaphorical aesthetic resources; textual resources; rhythmic resources; and lighting resources) were recorded, which took shape in a narrative that reached the receiver with a specific type of message (emotional, rational and mixed). Finally, we observed what persuasive routes they took and the relationship established between these persuasive routes and ideology (Chapman, 1998).

3. The evolution and typology of informative cinema on education: Between newsreels and documentaries

Chronologically, our study of documentaries and newsreels is situated at the beginning of informative cinema, that is, the first third of the twentieth century, when documentaries and newsreels began to be created and developed. It is difficult to distinguish the different informative cinema productions from the early decades of that century because neither documentaries nor newsreels had developed their own style and identity yet (Paz & Montero, 1999). We find more defined formulations of documentaries and newsreels late in the interwar period.

In any case, we can highlight the fact that among the different informative cinema formats, newsreels have the features that would go on to fully define the genre. Examples of these features are: regular projections, a wide variety of topics on each newsreel, similar time spent on each of the topics and direct presentation of the facts without interpretation (Baechlin & Muller-Strauss, 1951). In contrast, the documentaries have more varied features, a less rigid structure, widely differing and less regular lengths and sometimes a much more noticeable artistic and interpretative component than the newsreels.

3.1. Cinematographic magazines, the forerunners of newsreels and documentaries

At the start of the period analysed, which ranges from 1914 to 1939, the cinema was considered a window open to the world, and a great deal cinematographic production was comprised of views (almost photographic displays of urban and rural landscapes) and newscasts. Seen from today's perspective, these views and newscasts begin to gain specific rules on style, form and news when cinematographic periodicals started to be made. The earliest cinematographic magazines were produced abroad, in France. In 1908, the company owned by the Pathé brothers created the magazine entitled *Pathé Journal*. Shortly thereafter, in 1910, their competitor Gaumont created the magazine *Gaumont Actualités*. Both companies also produced audiovisuals in other countries, including Spain.

One of the cinematographic magazines that followed the model initiated in France but was produced in Spain was *Revista Camarillo* (Ruiz Rojo et al., 2004). Its promoter was Tomás Camarillo, a photographer who also ventured into the world of cinema. Six issues of this magazine were made in 1927 and 1928. Most of its images show views, buildings and monuments of the city and province of Guadalajara, and they also report on a variety of festivals, sporting events and factory work. The educational theme is barely found: there are only education-related images in one issue. Specifically, issue 4 shows 'School group on Paseo de las Cruces', with views of the school's main façade, yet without actually showing the activity inside it.⁴

In fact, the scant presence of education in this type of cinematographic magazine from the early period is common, judging from what we found in our analysis. When educational themes do appear, they tend to show the school as a building, not its pedagogical activity. On the other hand, we occasionally see

⁴ *Revista Camarillo*, 4. Accessible at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cY1RPIsN2Yk> [Consulted on 14/03/2017].

images of children and youths, often participating in social events outdoors in public, such as the groups of scouts in *Revista de Huesca*, a 1914 film production by Antonio P. Tramullas. The film conserved of this magazine shows images of Huesca and includes a brief scene preceded by the title *Boys-Scuts [sic] de Huesca*, showing a group of scouts on bicycles riding through the city streets on 11 April, when the boy scouts were hosting a charitable festival in the city.⁵

Director and producer Antonio P. Tramullas was born in Barcelona in 1879 and moved to Zaragoza, where he created his own film production company, Sallumart Films (his surname spelt backwards). He and his son shot many metres of film. He often showed his films, which focused on upper Aragón, at the Teatro Principal in Huesca under the title of *Revista de Huesca*, which was like a newsreel or bulletin (Lasaosa, 2011).

3.2. Newsreels: Political filters of reality

It wasn't until years after these examples, in the late 1930s, when newsreels started to gain large audiences in Europe by providing eyewitness accounts of the disturbing political situation on the continent. After the direct experience of the First World War, the different political regimes harnessed the cinematographic media to serve state propaganda purposes. In Spain, the Civil War led to the swift development of newsreels on the conflict and the society of the day with the creation of production companies usually associated with different political and union organisations. Thus, the private producers making their own cinematographic magazines in the 1920 gave way to production companies owned by the state or social and political organisations. The productions that were formerly for commercial purposes now had more propagandistic aims (Chapman, 1998).

During the Spanish Civil War, cinematographic production was much more prominent in the republican than in the national zone. This is partly because the cities where the bulk of the Spanish film industry was located were in republican hands, yet also because the republicans knew how to use a modern propaganda medium like the cinema better by disseminating newsreels showing the latest news, war documentaries and even some fiction films (Caparrós, 1977).

Propaganda cinema in the republican zone encompassed production companies that were both government-owned and owned by political and union organisations (Crusells, 2003). Anarchist productions were promoted by the Show Business Industry Union, part of the national union organisation CNT-FAI, which used the brand SIE Films. The CNT-FAI produced around 30 issues of the newsreel *España Gráfica*. The topics related to the conflict include references to education, such as the documentary *El Frente y la retaguardia* (The Front and the Rear-Guard) directed by Joaquin Giner and produced by SIE Films in 1937, which contains interesting images of refugee settlements for children. These images were later used in 1938 by the republican government's Ministry of Public Instruction and Health in the documentary *La República protege a sus niños* (The Republic Protects its Children) (Colleldemont & Padrós, 2016). This is an

⁵ *Revista de Huesca* (see minute 5). Accessible at: http://www.europeana1914-1918.eu/en/europeana/record/o8625/FILM00064089c_4?edmvideo=true&iiframe=true&width=657&height=510 [Consulted on 14/03/2017].

example of a production by the government, which established a Sub-Secretariat of Propaganda to produce film documentaries in 1937.

Notable among the government's film productions are the films promoted by the Cinema Department of the Propaganda Commission of the Generalitat de Catalunya through Laya Films. This production company put out the newsreel *Espanya al Dia* in the Catalan version, and *España al Día* in the Spanish version, and it also made versions in French and English for international audiences. All told, Laya Films issued 108 newsreels from December 1936 to January 1939 (Caparrós & Biadiu, 1977). Figures from the catalogue of the Filmoteca de Catalunya calculate that the more than 100 newsreels issued by Laya Films contained a total of between 900 and 1,000 news items.⁶ Many of these productions have been lost. Of those that are still conserved, 17 news items from *Espanya al Dia* deal with education (Casanovas & Prat, 2016). The Generalitat de Catalunya undertook a vast number of propaganda actions through all the media led by the journalist and politician Jaume Miravittles, who created one of the best propaganda organisms in Europe at the time, the Propaganda Commission of the Generalitat de Catalunya, where cinema played a prominent role (Batalla & Miravittles, 2016).

Still on the republican side, we should also mention communist productions. The PCE and the PSUC had the production company Film Popular, whose most important project was publishing the newsreel *España al Día*, created by Laya films and initially co-issued in a Spanish version, until Film Popular started making its own version in April 1937.

Film production was much lower in the national or Franco zone, though nonetheless significant. A cinematographic project was launched during the war that continued in the post-war years.⁷ The main propaganda lines of this project focused on charismatic leaders, history and Falangist organisations (Tranche & Sánchez-Biosca, 2011). Some educational issues can be found in these organisations' presentations, such as in the films of the Sección Femenina, which had to do with children. This is also true of the images of a cafeteria run by Auxilio Social in a town on the east coast, collected in spools of film conserved by the Filmoteca Española.⁸

In the newsreels produced by the Franco side, including *Noticiero Español*, which began to be issued in 1937 after the National Cinematographic Department was created, what stand out in the early years is news from the front and celebrations of events within the war. In this sense, educational themes were virtually totally absent (Tranche & Sánchez-Biosca, 2011).

⁶ Filmoteca de Catalunya. Catàleg. Available at: <http://www.filmoteca.cat/web/centre-de-conservacio-i-restauracio/acces-a-la-colleccio/catalog> [Consulted on 14/03/2017].

⁷ In fact, in its news and propaganda facet, this project resulted in the creation of the NO-DO newsreel in 1943. TRANCHE, R., SÁNCHEZ-BIOSCA, V. (2006). *No-Do. El tiempo y la memoria*. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra; Filmoteca Española.

⁸ They are located on spool 4 of the films Batalla de Aragón – Ofensiva de Levante. These are five spools of unedited negatives conserved at the Cinemateca Portuguesa within the 'Guerra de Espanha' series recovered by the Filmoteca Española, which also shows that the lack of cinematographic resources in national Spain led them to turn to a neighbouring country like Portugal.

3.3. Documentaries: Interpretations of reality

So far we have traced the production of newsreels in the first third of the century. Next we shall turn our attention to documentaries. The evolution of documentaries followed a timeline quite similar to that of newsreels, yet it was somewhat delayed because they took longer to be identified as a genre. At the beginning of the period studied, documentaries were simply reports without many cinematographic pretensions. We cannot find the first specific formulations of the documentary genre until the 1920s, and in fact the use of the term ‘documentary’ did not become widespread until the 1930s (Breschand, 2007). This common origin should come as no surprise, given that the same producers that issued film magazines or newsreels also tended to produce documentaries on a wide array of topics.

The private producers during this period tended to make more documentaries than cinematographic magazines. One example is the Samullart production company, which not only issued the *Revista de Huesca* but also produced numerous documentary-style reports particularly focusing on Aragón. Gran Canaria Films is another example of a private production company that only lasted a few years but produced documentaries on ‘Canary Islands affairs’ (Betancor, 2000).

Among the varied productions of Gran Canaria Films, there is a documentary on education, the film *A pesar de todo* (Despite it All, 1926), which shows an outdoor tour by the students in a baccalaureate school in Las Palmas.

Unlike the private producers, those that depended on the public institutions which emerged during the Civil War attached greater importance to propaganda. They also produced documentaries which were heavily focused on the war. One case worth noting is Laya Films, which not only stood out for its newsreels but also started producing a line of documentaries on a wide variety of topics related to the Catalan rear-guard. In fact, some sources cite the production of the documentary *Escoles Noves* (New Schools),⁹ which examined the Catalan schools created at the start of the war but cannot be located in the collections of the film libraries consulted (Sánchez, 2006).

However, previous documentaries are accessible, such as the 1928 film *Valencia, protectora de la infància* (Valencia, Protector of Children). This documentary was made by Maximiliano Thous on commission from the Provincial Youth Protection Council in conjunction with the Valencia Town Hall and Provincial Council. It was made to participate in the Fifteenth International on Child Protection and Social Action held in Paris in July 1928, and it shows images of orphanages, children’s hospitals, maternal wards and schools with their educational practices.¹⁰ Likewise, within the Segell Pro-Infància campaign created in Catalonia in 1933 with the goal of raising people’s awareness and raising funds, the Generalitat de Catalunya promoted the production of a propagandistic film entitled *Segell Pro-Infància* (Pro-Child Campaign) made between 1934 and 1935, whose authors are unknown (Perdiguero & Castejón, 2006). Finally, one very unique case is the film *¿Qué es España?* (What is Spain?),

⁹ According to some sources, this is a 10-minute production from 1937; see: Caparrós & Biadiu (1978, p. 35).

¹⁰ Available at: <http://www.restauracionefilmoteca.com/cine-valencia-2/no-ficcio/valencia-protectora-de-la-infancia/> [Consulted on 14/03/2017].

a documentary on the modernising impetus of Spain in the 1920s and 1930s, which also deals with education.¹¹ The original film, which was probably made to illustrate lectures, underwent many changes after it was initially created in 1926, and not all the parts are conserved, nor is it clear who produced it. A second version of the film included a detailed report on the teaching activities of the Grupo Escolar Cervantes in Madrid, a model school in applying the pedagogical methodology of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza. This change was made between 1929 and 1930 by the pedagogue Rodolfo Llopis, who seemed to have used it in his tours and lectures (Lahoz, 2012).

The majority of these documentaries promoted by public institutions were one-offs produced with very specific purposes in mind, often propaganda, and they were not continued. In the next section, we outline the results of the content analysis of the documentaries and newsreels presented.

4. Content analysis of the films on education

Based on the methodology used, and after bearing in mind the type of informative films produced in Spain in the first third of the twentieth century, we shall now briefly analyse the main educational contents that appear in these films, specifically how schools and educational institutions are represented in the films analysed, the image projected of corporal education and the way children and their rights are depicted.

4.1. The representation of schools: From the building to educational practice

During the first third of the twentieth century, among the informative films in Spain there were very few documentaries or newsreels showing schools. In that period, education in Spain was subpar, with a notable lack of schools, extremely low educational rates, rampant illiteracy, very high levels of school absenteeism and extremely low status for schoolteachers. Cinematographic cameras did not focus on this lamentable situation which affected schools and education; instead, when schools are depicted in documentaries and newsreels, it is to show positive aspects, like the opening of new buildings or the innovative pedagogical practices of the period.

We can trace the educational policy on schools from public institutions or private schools through this institutional representation. In this sense, through the images from the first films analysed, we have found that that a great deal of importance was attached to school buildings in the first few decades of the twentieth century, while in the late 1920s the interest shifted towards educational practices and the new pedagogical conceptions of that period.

The years of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923-1939) are very interesting to analyse through documentary films on education. In those years, in the words of the Hispanist Shlomo Ben-Ami, there was an 'incipient attempt at development' in order to modernise the country (Ben-Ami, 2012, p. 222). In education, this was shown in a concern with increasing the number of schools,

¹¹ Put out in DVD and available online at: <http://www.restauracionesfilmoteca.com/cine-espanol/no-ficcion/que-es-espana/> [Consulted on 14/03/2017].

leading to what has been described as ‘school expansionism’, manifested in the drive to build new school buildings (López, 1994, p. 41). The figures on the number of new schools that were created in Spain during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship vary, ranging from 4,650 to 8,000 (López, 1994, pp. 106-107). Beyond the discussion on figures, however, we can state that school policy during the dictatorship was based on creating schools, the more the better, without attaching too much importance to either educational practices or children’s actual education. As a reflection of this quantitative policy, many films that show schools during this period essentially focus on openings of new school buildings.

This is the conclusion we drew by analysing four documentary films or reports on the opening of schools in Spain during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. The cinematographic cameras focused more on the building façades and the authorities opening the schools than on the students, teachers and their educational practices. This is found with strikingly similar scenes in films on the construction of a school park and the visit by General Primo de Rivera to the town of Carlet (1926), the opening of the Maria Quintana school group in Mequinensa (1927), the blessing of the school group in the village of Vinyoles d’Orís (1928) and a Gaumont newsreel on the opening of the Escola Primo de Rivera in Barcelona (1929).

After the dictatorship, during the Second Republic, educational policy shifted. Even though school groups continued to open, there is virtually no film devoted to the opening of school buildings. This is a sign that school policy had changed, and with it so did the images projected in documentary films and newsreels. During the Second Republic, educational practices and children were represented much more often in the images than school buildings. We find the most samples of documentaries and newsreels which talk about the schools’ educational practices in Catalonia, where several innovative pedagogical currents which had been introduced early in the century were cropping up.

One example of this shifting gaze can be found in the film *Canet de Mar* (1931-1936), a report on this town which begins with images of the famous Montessori School. The different scenes barely touch on the building but instead show images of students and teachers in the classrooms, where Montessori’s pedagogy was being applied, as well as schoolchildren outside on the lawn doing rhythmic activities following the method developed by Joan Llongueras (Pomés, 2011). This school was created in 1918 by the Canet de Mar Town Hall, but we cannot find a cinematographic documentary showing its teaching activity until the 1930s.

One report from 1935 entitled *Festa de gimnàs* (Gym Festival) is yet another example of how the cameras in the Second Republic focused more on educational practice than on the school building. It is a documentary conserved at the Fílmoteca de Catalunya and made by the Mútua Escolar Blanquerna of Barcelona, an institution with different schools that held a physical education festival every summer between 1933 and 1935 (Masabeu, 1989). The images show innovative methods for the era, such as the students practising physical education on the school lawn led by teacher Jaume Garcia Alsina, the vice-president of the Acadèmia d’Educació i Física de Catalunya, a platform which was highly influential in disseminating physical education in Catalonia (Torrebadella, 2013). There are also images of rhythmic exercises following the method developed by Joan Llongueras, a music teacher at the Mútua Escolar Blanquerna whose

method was inspired by the rhythms of the Swiss composer and pedagogue Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (Comas, Motilla & Sureda, 2014).

At the end of the period researched, during the Civil War, educational practices and especially attention to students gained more prominence in the documentary films. One newsreel from the Civil War years by Laya Films contained the news item 'Per als nostres infants' (For Our Children), which reports on the opening of the Parvulari Forestier kindergarten in a building owned by the Barcelona Town Hall. The images do not focus on the building itself; they only briefly show the façade and the authorities opening the building, with close-up shots of their faces. Outside, the children are seated and being given cups of milk and slices of bread. This is yet further proof that the documentaries' and newsreels' view of schools focuses on the social and political interests of every period; at the beginning of the period of study, the interest was on school buildings, in the Second Republic it was educational practices and in the Civil War, a time of scarcity, it was on feeding the children.

4.2. Constants in corporal education

Through the audiovisual representation that we find in propagandistic films, we can see a discourse on corporal education, or on how to be healthy, which shows a continuous logic that stands out for the clarity of the proposals (Collelldemont & Casanovas, 2016). It was created in different periods, and even though we know that it was constructed via a merger of different voices, it does nonetheless show narrative linearity.

The most common constant features that the films analysed show on this topic are: the representation of the body as an integral part of a group, scenes of vitality in gradual submission to society's ideas and the dilemma between caring for and cultivating the body (learning eating habits for oneself and the group).

With regard to the individual body as an integral part of a group, there is a gradual imperative of order. In the different images referring to care of the body found in the documentaries and newsreels, the individual body is constantly projected as part of a collective body. In fact, the idea of the serial body outlined by Conrad Vilanou can be found in the films analysed, as it is easy to find 'a series of bodies with no attributes that cannot be distinguish amidst the crowd' (Vilanou, 2000, p. 95) in the majority of them, especially in the documentaries and newsreels made in periods of conflict.

This projection can be found explicitly in different scenes, but especially in the practice of fitness drills. Viewed as both physical education and spectacle, what the films show is a gradual disappearance of the experience of the body as an individual entity and instead an adjustment to collective corporeality.

Thus, cultivating the body becomes a metaphor for shaping the physique towards a political ideation in which the collective, the symbolic and order occupy the focal point. All three concepts (collectivisation, symbolism and order) refer directly to the political imaginaries of the period. In fact, we cannot consider that the reconversion of fitness drills into the use of the child's body to convey a political message at a time of political clashes was a coincidence. In this sense, the film *El frente y la retaguardia* (The Front and the Rear-Guard, 1937),

produced in the midst of the Civil War, shows how a fitness drill is turned into the message 'Libertad' (Freedom).

The second constant we have pinpointed is scenes of vitality in gradual submission to the prevailing political ideas. Parallel to the rhythmic march, with clearly paramilitary references, from the very start we can also find a defence of play and movement outdoors. In this sense, some of the films show a steadily increasing presence of non-domesticated landscapes as spaces that encourage a kind of physical activity that challenges the body, which must show endurance. Thus, although at first the rural environment was viewed as an inhospitable, dangerous place, during the war the rural setting, with its climatic conditions and rugged terrain, became a 'safe place'. Different images of games in the films evoke a healthy, active, strong child who plays as exercise and enjoys movement, although there are also a few exceptions, such as the domestic film by Manuel Amat *Sant Joan de Déu* (Saint John of God, 1934- 1935), which shows outdoor activity as a prelude to health problems.

The third constant, as noted above, is caring for and cultivating the body: learning eating habits for oneself and for the group. The relationship between corporal education associated with movement and education in hygiene and eating habits is found repeatedly in the films from the period analysed. Attention to learning how to care for the body can be situated within the first half of the twentieth century, first with texts and later with graphic and audiovisual representations. Unlike attention to physical activity, however, in this case we see much slower progression. Cleaning and feeding oneself properly are first praised in intellectual manifestos and observations, while they only become part of the established discourse after the 1930s and the advent of the Second Republic.

For example, in relation to beverages, the presence of alcoholic drinks gradually disappears, while the need to bring back mother's milk and water are highlighted. Just like with beverages, the eating ideals that the official institutions wanted to promote also appear in the films. They include the quasi-symbolic presence of bread. Bread is given to children with food deficiencies, while also referring to the mystification of the countryside and traditional life. Bread is the symbol of a healthy, austere diet.

Hygiene is also represented in the films as a health factor. Refugee settlements is where we first find explicit images of children's hygiene habits on film. In the documentaries from the previous period, either adults took care of children's hygiene or hygiene habits were announced but not shown, as in *Vidas Nuevas*. Therefore, we could say that the drive to create autonomous hygiene habits was one of the propaganda motives of the documentaries and newsreels in the period analysed, especially during the war. The recurring image of children washing their faces, hands and hair as an indicator of the start of a full day is illustrated by the newsreel *Asilo de la Paloma* (La Paloma Shelter) by Laya Films, named after a war refugee centre for children in Barcelona. In fact, the frequent images of children bathing can also be interpreted from this vantage point, given that despite the official propaganda, swimming in pools and the sea did not become popular until much later on.

4.3. Variations in the presence of a concern for children's rights in education

In our content analysis of the films, we also sought to capture the sensibility towards childhood that they convey in terms of their conception of childhood, care for the sake of children's wellbeing and attention to their education. We should bear in mind that these are aspects which mattered in the international interwar context period, in which children's role was gaining more space in the political and pedagogical debate. Actions involving special care of children become visible, and the spread of new schools and educational proposals that were more attentive to global education based on the children's centres of interest and seeking integral development can be seen.

In a context besieged by war, childhood and children's education became the subjects of concern and future projection. This can clearly be seen in different forums like the Third International Congress of Moral Education, which focused the debate on education and solidarity. One noteworthy contribution was by Eglantyne Jebb, the vice-president of the International Save the Children Union, who issued a cry of hope by claiming that the future of civilisation and individual happiness depended on the attitude shown towards children. In her paper, she reflected on children whose physical needs had to be met, who wanted a good education and who wanted to enjoy themselves, yet who also wanted to receive love, be respected and exercise their power and responsibility, that is, occupy a place in the world (Jebb, 1935). This was not the first time that Jebb had spoken about the need to protect children, their interests and their rights. This schoolteacher, the founder of Save the Children,¹² was convinced that societies had to mobilise to achieve social and political changes that would allow for actions that were more sensitive to children's reality, especially children in the most vulnerable situations in war and post-war settings. With this spirit, in 1923 she drafted the first Declaration of the Rights of the Child, a seminal text that revealed the need for children and their rights to play an important role in political agendas.

Studying the films reveals that the presence of children was not merely anecdotal, but that they were the main actors in the events and situations that the documentaries and newsreels recount, even though this centrality is mediated by the propagandistic interests of the governments, which wanted to send the people messages about the 'goodness' of their policies, regardless of whether this was just discourse or a practical reality as well. Somehow, this tangible presence of children in the films corresponds to the content of Eglantyne Jebb's text on the rights of the child, known as the Geneva Declaration.¹³ There was a political will from national and supranational institutions to show that they were working in line with the content of the Declaration on the Rights of the Child, which states that it is humanity's duty to give children our best. This obligation implicitly entails non-discrimination on the basis of 'race, nationality and creed' and fulfilment of five basic rights regarding the protection of children.

¹² The International Save The Children Union, headquartered in Geneva, was created in 1919 as a humanitarian response after the First World War.

¹³ Save The Children. *Especial: 90 aniversario de Save the Children. Eglantyne Jebb. De persona com prometida con los niños a fundadora de Save the Children*. Available at: <https://www.savethechildren.es/sites/default/files/imce/docs/cuaderno-eglantyne-jebb.pdf> [Consulted on 14/03/2017]

We shall adopt these rights as our referents when analysing the way the films convey an idea of childhood and child protection. For this analysis, we shall focus on children's visibility in the *Espanya al Dia* newsreels from the Laya Films production company, discussed above.

The first article of the Geneva Declaration states that children must 'be given the means requisite for [their] normal development, both materially and spiritually'. Even though this is generic, the content acknowledges childhood as a developmental stage and children as an educationally and socially distinct group, a factor also conveyed in the news analysed. From this perspective, they promote propaganda on the creation of new schools for very young and older children, innovative educational methods and the provision of additional services like school lunchrooms. These are examples of the services that the government provided to ensure the normal material and spiritual development of each child.

Articles 2 and 3 of the Declaration further flesh out the first article and refer to attention to basic needs, caregiving and striving to ensure children's wellbeing. Specifically, article 2 says that 'The child that is hungry must be fed; the child that is sick must be nursed; the child that is backward must be helped; the delinquent child must be reclaimed; and the orphan and the waif must be sheltered and succored' and that 'the child must be the first to receive relief in times of distress'. We found that many news items show the opening of shelters, farm-schools, children's settlements and schools in the rear-guard, among other initiatives that sought to showcase the political attention to vulnerable children within a context of war. The news items referring to children displaced by war explicitly showcase the solidarity of the citizens who fostered them and contributed to covering the specific needs of the children who were directly affected, not only with regard to food—by citizens handing out snacks or soldiers handing out bread—but also by trying to ensure their affective, social and ludic wellbeing. For example, the news items on the children's colonies also show play areas with games and experiences of contact with nature, and the scenes where toys are being handed out or shipped reinforce this idea of trying to ensure children's integral development. As a whole, these news stories have a propagandistic tone that reaffirms the ideals of the Republic while showing the appropriation of an international climate that disseminates that message that in order to contribute to peacebuilding, social and educational actions targeted at children must be promoted, and these actions must be adapted to the local conditions, the context and the circumstances in which the children live. The newsreels contribute to disseminating the message that protection, care, the provision of food and education are political priorities, just as they were in interwar Europe.

Article 4 of the Declaration stresses that children 'must be protected against every form of exploitation', and it also mentions the need for them to 'be put in a position to earn a livelihood', thus referring to their education and future. Caring for the education of the children, as the citizens of the new human societies of the future, was the ideal and the challenge that also appears in article 5, which states: 'The child must be brought up in the consciousness that its talents must be devoted to the service of fellow men'. This content is conveyed in many of the news stories that particularly reflect the prime role of children as a group that is present in different sites—in institutions and on the street—engaged in specific educational, cultural and civic activities, because their education was supposed to be scientific and humanistic, pedagogical and social. In this approach, even

though they may not be the main attraction, other times children are shown participating in collective activities with adults; that is, they are present at political activities which are also shown to be examples of citizenship and civic and socially-conscious mobilisation. These news items convey a palpable ideological message through the events they recount and the images of children's participation in school openings and parades, welcoming and bidding soldiers farewell and more. They are scenes which express an interest in children's political and moral education, as they shape a new citizenry for a new society showing 'their best qualities'.

5. Epilogue

In short, as shown throughout this article, tracing the newsreels and documentaries from the first third of the twentieth century has enabled us to better understand how education was represented during this period and the concerns, ideologies and future projections of the people who promoted these films.

This is why despite the necessary reservations when analysing this type of source, as cited above, we can assert that studying them is extremely interesting for researchers in this field, as it enables us to gain insight into the complexity of any historical time. We can see this complexity, for example, when the analysis shows the interest in improving children's care by promoting changes in their habits and lifestyles, improving their health conditions and education, yet contradictorily doing so through different ideologies, a clearly propagandistic use of images of children.

Therefore, we want to highlight the fact that studying this type of source serves as a way of opening up to thinking, imagining, ascertaining and exploring the ideological and aesthetic options of the period studied, and especially learning more about the nuances of the details which would otherwise go unnoticed.

Notes

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