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*Fighters of Order:  
Understanding Riot Police Use of Force*



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## Contents

PRELUDE .....	5
<b>1. Introduction: the problem .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>2. Theoretical departures and discussion .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>3. Methodological considerations and conditions .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>4. Epistemological precautions in the study of (police) violence .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>5. Structure of the work .....</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>I. THE RIOT POLICE UNIT: HISTORY, FUNCTION AND POSITION .....</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>1.1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>1.2. History and evolution of the Córdoba police department .....</b>	<b>255</b>
1.2.1. The Police agency within the bureaucratic field.....	266
1.2.2. The origins of the Córdoba Police Department .....	277
1.2.3. The consolidation of the police force as an executive institution .....	299
1.2.4. The internal differentiation of the police department: emergence of the public order units .....	33
1.2.5. The institutionalization of special public order units.....	355
1.2.6. The Riot Police Unit or Infantry .....	377
<b>1.3. The structure of the police department and the position of the riot police within it .....</b>	<b>388</b>
<b>II. RIOT POLICE USE OF FORCE AS DISCIPLINED VIOLENCE .....</b>	<b>422</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>422</b>
<b>2.1. The “objective cause” of the disciplined bodies: The Mission .....</b>	<b>423</b>
<b>2.2. The Means: disciplined riot police agents .....</b>	<b>455</b>
2.2.1. A police world within a disciplined society .....	466
2.2.2. Police discipline.....	477
2.2.3. Riot police disciplined disciples.....	50
2.2.3.a. The work of construction of the riot police agent’s body: carving out the infantrymen within. ....	511
2.2.3.b. Temper .....	566
2.2.3.c. The formation of the collective riot police body: integrating the infantrymen within the combat group .....	599
2.2.3.d. Metaphors of the body as metaphors of the self.....	62
<b>2.3. The instrumental use of force .....</b>	<b>644</b>
<b>III- RIOT POLICE USE OF FORCE: SKILL, POWER AND SACRIFICE .....</b>	<b>70</b>
<b>3.1 An Elite force among the police department.....</b>	<b>711</b>
3.1.1. The riot police agent’s use of force as a work of specialists .....	711
3.1.2. The riot police use of force: the strong arm of the police .....	755

<b>3.1.3. Military discipline and outfit: a symbol of power, superiority and of a military essence</b> .....	788
<b>3.2. The riot as an experienced and sacrificed unit among the security forces</b> .....	83
4	
<b>IV- RIOT POLICE AGENTS' USE OF FORCE: FIGHTING FOR ORDER</b> .....	901
<b>4.1. Prelude: the relation between riot police agents and the public as a case of supremacy of a group over other because of greater self-control</b> .....	912
<b>4.2. Warring functionaries</b> .....	945
<b>4.2.2. The opponents</b> .....	956
4.2.2.a. Case 1: Fighting for order with football fans hordes. ....	95
4.2.2.b. Case 2: Fighting political demonstrators .....	102
<b>4.2.3. An eternal struggle against the outsiders</b> .....	1101
<b>4.2.4. Crusaders of a sacrificed and disciplined morality</b> .....	112
<b>4.3. Sensations and sensibilities in riot police use of force</b> .....	1167
<b>4.3.1. Sensibilities: acceptance and tolerance to the use and spectacle of violence</b> .....	1167
<b>4.3.2. Sensations of riot police use of force</b> .....	1201
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	124
<b>5.1. Disclosing the warrior's practical logic</b> .....	124
<b>5.2. Class ethos and riot police violence ethos</b> .....	1314
<b>5.3. Official Serfdom</b> .....	138
<b>5.4. Contributing with other perspectives to understand (riot) police use of force</b> .....	143
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	147

*A gun and a night-stick are not simply weapons that terrify some and intrigue others but extensions of himself whose use (and non use) is linked to his notions about how he uses his body to do his work. But unlike anybody else whose body is the tool of his trade, the policeman uses his to control other people.*

Jonathan Rubinstein, *City Police*.

# PRELUDE\*

## 1. Introduction: the problem

The riot police world, kind of Erebus of State bureaucracy, is a strange one for most of us. The people who inhabit it are usually seen as bizarre and obscure anonymous creatures who deal with violence and disorder. This work is an attempt to throw light on their land of secrecy and mystery, which includes routines of anonymous pain, suffering and sacrifice, as well as peculiar conceptions of honor and reputation. To understand the enigmatic creatures who dwell in it, we need to unveil the symbolic universe that orients their practices and gives meaning to their actions and life in such underworld. That is what we intend through the study of one of its peoples: the members of a Riot Police Unit (from now on RPU) of an Argentinian provincial Police Department<sup>1</sup>.

We have a special interest in a fundamental aspect of riot police agent's work: the fact that they use physical force against citizens as administrators of the state monopoly of legitimate violence. However, we must clearly state that in the present work we will not engage in the eternal problem of the legality or illegality of its use, nor about the *causes* of police violence and brutality as if we would be assuming that police actions and their use of force are only matters *to be controlled*. In the present case, we rather conceive such use of force as a social phenomenon, as social action that has to be understood and comprehended. We consider the violent actions of police agents, as one type of social action that includes the use of physical force against human beings, regarding the use of physical force as a basic and undeniable condition of all human figurations or societies. We recognize with Elias that 'violence is an inherent feature of human social life which humans must learn to cope with. But its total elimination is doubtful and, possibly, even undesirable.' (Fletcher, 1997:52).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We had worked with the Riot Police Unit (RPU) of the Police Department of the Province of Cordoba, Argentina. It's official name is "*Guardia de Infanteria*", literally Infantry Guard. We will refer to it as Riot Police Unit (RPU) or Infantry. We will refer to the members of it as Riot Police Agents, or RP Officers or Infantrymen, being this last way how they call themselves.

<sup>2</sup> In the present work everything that appears in the text between 'single quotation marks' ( ' ') is a quotation from other authors' works. Everything that appears between "double quotation marks" ( " ") is a quotation

We acknowledge that the use of legitimate physical force is, because of the legitimacy that it is invested with, the most directly harmful resource the state counts with. Indeed, as it is recognized by the public and by police agents as *normal*, and accepted as a *natural* remedy for preserving social and public order. We intend to disclose and comprehend the schemes of perception and appreciation that structure the intimate relation the public users of force (riot police agents) have with the use and display of such painful resource. Indeed, we aim at understanding *the riot police agents' normal and peculiar commonsense* perception about their use of public force

The basic question we depart from is: *What are the meanings and feelings of riot police agents in relation to their use of physical force in the performance of their functions?*

For being able to address such problem we will consider what some authors had said about the it, in order to outline our theoretical points of departure and the specific questions and dimensions their works suggest.

## **2. Theoretical departures and discussion**

The symbolic universe of riot police agents is a huge and complex one. We have focused on the meanings attached to their use of force. In order to be able to unravel those aspects of their symbolic world related to the use of physical violence, we depart from the works of Max Weber and Norbert Elias. In the present section we will first analyze the central dimensions suggested by these authors in relation to the use force by the members of the state bureaucracy. We will then make a brief discussion of some relevant prior studies in relation to the categories suggested in the work of Weber and Elias. We will finally present the theoretical approach that will structure and orient the present research endeavor.

According to Weber: 'Bureaucracy has a rational character: the norm, finality, the means, with "objective" impersonality dominating its activities'(752). In relation to the meanings attached to bureaucratic agents' actions (where we include police agents<sup>3</sup>), Weber sustains that the meaning of their conduct must be understood, primarily, as

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from the interviews that were made, which are always presented in Italics. Double quotation marks also may appear as used by other author whose text is quoted. Italics are also used here in the main text or added in relation to others authors' texts which have been quoted. In those cases where we add emphasis to another author's text by using *italics* we will mark it as [o.i.] = our italics.

<sup>3</sup> We depart from Weber's work as we found that all the dimensions of the bureaucratic *condition* are present in the police agency under study. (See Weber 1992:716-723)

governed by formal rationality and *zweckrationalität* (instrumental rationality). In turn, as Weber had said, bureaucratic agents' actions, apart from being oriented by formal and objective rules, in 'the spaces of freedom the rules allow' 'the determination and the rational examination of the objective ends, as well as the consecration to them, constitutes always the norm by which their behavior is ruled.' (1992:735)<sup>4</sup>. \* Finally what is essentially for us, according to Weber 'bureaucratic domination means in general: the dominance of a spirit of formalistic impersonality: "sine ira et studio", *without hatred and without passion*, and hence *without love and enthusiasm*, subjected straightforward to the strict duty without regard to personal considerations. Everyone is subject to *formal equality of treatment*; that is, everyone in the same empirical situation. This is the spirit in which the ideal official conducts his office' (1992:179[o.i]\*\*)

In relation to the specific bureaucratic agents we know as police agents, 'the representatives of god on earth' (1992:730), as he used to call them, Weber has not referred to them in detail. Even though we can find some important clues for our study of riot police perceptions about their violence in his analysis of the changes in the *armed* parts of the state bureaucracy: the army. He sustains that a parallel process of rationalization has taken place in relation to modern armies, in line with his theory of bureaucracy. In his section on the rationalization of charisma (1992:883-889), he extends his descriptions of the formal rationality and instrumental rationality of bureaucracy to the armed forces realm, referring to the development of 'rational discipline' (1992:883). For Weber, the notion of rational discipline is the specific rationality to which the military men are subjected in the modern state. Weber's analysis of the modern and rational *warring* schemes are of great relevance for understanding the riot police units as the riot police units are the most militarized units of police and security forces in terms of discipline and instruction. Such militarized discipline and instruction was confirmed in the observations.

Weber sustains that with the rational *discipline* warring scheme 'in the place of the individual heroism, of piety or enthusiastic excitation... in the place of the cult of honor and the exercise of the hazardous act considered as an "art", discipline presupposes the *exercising in the service of the achievement of an optimum, rationally calculated, of physic*

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<sup>4</sup> We must consider that such conceptualisation is only an ideal type and as such is considered as a methodological tool more or less useful to understand the concrete processes and actions we are interested in.

\* All the quotations and excerpts of texts that appear written in Spanish in the bibliography, have been translated to English by the author, unless it is indicated.

\*\* Translation by A.M. Henderson and T. Parsons, quoted in Merton et. al., 1967

*and psychic energy developed in the masses uniformly trained*'(1992:883[o.i.]). For him 'what is decisive from the sociological point of view is that in *discipline everything is rationally calculated*, even those *imponderables*, that are *usually* not a *personal cause*, but an *objective cause, a common cause, a rationally pursued result*'(883 [o.i.]). As we see, the personal elements of enthusiasm and passion, those *imponderables* of the agent's actions, are according to Weber 'not a personal cause', but a passion and enthusiasm for the *objective cause* instead of the cult of honor and the exercise of the hazardous act. The objective cause is for Weber, in the bureaucratic world, *the reason of state*. In the case of the riot police, such reason of state is for Weber: 'one of the state's basic functions...*protection of personal safety and preservation of public order (police)*'(1992:664[o.i.]). In turn, the instrumental use of force orients the achievement of the assurance of the state legal order, characterized by formal rationality.

Such instrumental rationality in the armed parts of bureaucracy has been also described by Michaud, (in line with Weber and arguments), who depicts the rationalization of the use of violence as 'a meticulous bureaucracy of death, preoccupied for being efficient in the use of the artifacts, becoming in a planned violence with no hate...where one, expecting to find monsters, finds calm functionaries: clearly, *professionals*'(Michaud,1989:39). For Michaud, professionalism 'excludes all romanticism, all exaltation, all enthusiasm'(1989:39). The culmination of such process is for the author 'a disenchantment of violence, in the sense that for Weber the advances of rationalization is parallel to the disenchantment of the world' (Michaud,1989:85). In any case any *enchantment* is related to an objective order idea, a *passion* for the order for orders' sake.

The ideal picture we obtain from Weber's work, in relation to the meaning the use of force may have for riot police agents is that of a use of force by a *disciplined* police agent, with *passion and enthusiasm* for the objective and impersonal cause of peacekeeping, and determined by formal legal mandates, with a great diminution of the affective and irrational, *personal*, elements (i.e. such as that hazardous acts that may be a principle of honor). The use of force is a means among others for maintaining the legal order.

In relation to Elias's work, he states that with the monopolization of the means of violence by the state 'as a general rule, this violence is reduced to a monopoly of a group of *specialists*, and disappears from the daily life of the majority of the population. The



specialists, that is, the monopolistic organization of violence, exercise their surveillance estranged from daily social life'(1993:456[o.i]). However Elias does not refer to (or even neglects along his work), the *daily life* of the police specialists. As Weber, he does not refer explicitly, in detail, to the *internal* specialists of the use force we call *police agents* (as opposed to the *external experts*: military men). He rather concentrates on the effects of such monopolistic organization of violence over, and in, the lives of those subjected to such monopolies, the non-specialists, the citizens. However, even if he does not refer to such internal specialists in a concrete manner, there are also a number of elements in his work that may be useful for understanding many facets of riot police use of force against the public.

In a similar trend to Weber's conceptualizations, Norbert Elias has observed that with the formations of a monopoly of the means violence in the hands of the state, and the parallel civilizing process, the use of force by the *specialists* (external and internal ones) that administer the state monopoly of violence, has undergone a process of change from a more *expressive* use of force toward a more *instrumental* use of force: 'a shift in the balance between the generation of violence through expressive forms toward more instrumental forms.'(Fletcher,1998:52). Fletcher defines the instrumental use of force as 'violence rationally chosen as a means of securing the means of a given goal (instrumental)'; and expressive violence as 'violence engaged in as an emotionally satisfying end in itself (expressive)'(Fletcher,1997:52). According to Elias expressive violence relates to the expressive value of the demonstration of 'fighting abilities, force, and aggression, as a source of respect and honor, following a 'warrior's honor code' (Elias,1996:44-119). With E. Dunning (Elias' direct collaborator) we must understand that expressive violence is related to the use of physical force when is perceived such use as 'a source of identity, position, meaning and emotion' (See Dunning,1994, and Dunning et al. 1994), rather than a mere means for the achievement of a determined end. According to Dunning 'such expressive use of force...is also characterized by the conception of masculinity centered in its aggressiveness.'(1992:293). Such *aggressive masculinity* is nothing but a conception of masculinity that is constructed around the courage to confront an opponent through the use of force, basically through the 'demonstration of fighting abilities and certain virtues, such as courage and braveness.'(Dunning et al,1994:314). We must bear in mind that for these authors (Elias, Dunning and Fletcher), the general shift from a more expressive use of force toward a more instrumental use of force is not a

complete process, in the sense that there has been a total *instrumentalization* of violence. It is rather a shift in the balance from one form of violence toward the other one, with a result in which there is mixture of the different aspects.

According to Elias, the individual expression of the civilizing process, a more or less *civilized habitus*<sup>5</sup> (of the specialists as well as of the non specialists), has greater affinity with an instrumental use of force than with the expressive use of force. According to Elias, in the military men, one of the legitimate users of public force, that same civilizing trend takes place in the sense that ‘the hand to hand combat of the soldier against its hatred enemy has converted in a mechanized struggle that requires a strict regulation of emotions’(1993:240). Soldiers are subjected to obedience due to larger chains of interdependence and fights against an enemy that (because of the long range weapons that are used in modern war) is usually invisible or partially visible. Elias, according to Fletcher, also sustains that with the sophistication of technology and the increment in the number of agents conforming the *specialists groups*, a greater structure of self-control (in order to combine and coordinate the actions of the experts) is needed. In relation to the internal specialists he has made no suggestions or observations. However we cannot directly follow his observations about the external experts for understanding riot police (internal experts) use of force. This is based on the fact that even if internal specialists as the riot police agents are subjected to long chains of interdependency, they do not fight against an enemy that is invisible and they do not do it with long range weapons. The normal fighting relation with the public is that of hand to hand fight. We must therefore unveil the specific contents and combinations of instrumental and expressive dimensions in the meanings of riot police use of force.

As we can see, Elias’s ideas about instrumental violence coincide in a great manner with what Weber calls the *disciplinarization* or *rationalization* of soldiers use of the state monopoly of force.

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<sup>5</sup> We must remember that for Elias, the general process of civilization, means that individuals that form social figurations where a stable monopoly of force has formed, develop a certain structure of self control, one that is higher than in prior stages of development: a more civilized condition. Such structure allows the individual to increase the differing of reactions to stimulus, to increase the long term planning, and to create a more stable emotions control structure, with less violent upheavals and changes in their emotions. Parallel to such process is the reduction of the level of tolerance to the use of force, to the spectacle of suffering and violence, and to everything that reminds suffering and corporeality. A certain shame and embarrassment controls people’s visions, feelings and emotions, in relation to the use of force. With the creation of the monopolies a certain number of taboos related to the use of force appear. The mere thinking of using

Following Weber's and Elias's theoretical suggestions we consider that as a starting point for understanding the meanings of riot police agents' use of force, we must focus in the following central aspects or concrete dimensions. First in the *function*, or what Weber calls the *objective cause* of their use of force. Then we must consider the presence, or not, of such *zweckrationalität* or instrumental rationality. This relates to the presence (or not) of disciplined deployment of force (Weber) or instrumental use of force (Elias). This instrumental and disciplined use of force will have to be related with the more or less disciplined agents (Weber), and to the structure of self control of the riot police agents (Elias). However, in the analysis of the riot police perceptions about their violence, we disagree with Weber in that 'what is decisive from the sociological point of view is only that rational calculation' (1992:883) of the disciplined use of force. We think that we must also unravel what may appear as *irrational* and *passionate* elements of the actual use and control of force by police agents in order to be able to grasp in a more complete way the symbolic universe related to such use of force.

The reason why we so highly stress the importance of the *irrational elements* is that certain works about the so called *police culture* have described the presence of such elements. Several studies have highlighted the presence of great discipline, instrumental rationality, and great self control in the riot police use of force (Specially Waddington,1991; also Bittner,1990). However, according to Dunning *irrational, expressive* and *personal* elements also seem to be present in police agents use of force. In his work about hooligans (where he proposes the instrumental-expressive dichotomy referred) Dunning sustains that: 'People are sometimes trained to behave aggressively and rewarded on that account: soldiers [and] policemen are examples,...in such cases apart from the *prestige* and *financial rewards*, the *pleasure and enjoyment* derived from acting aggressively are, in part, *a form of self-award for a "job well done"*' (Dunning cited in Fletcher,1998:51[o.i.]). In the many works about police culture (Reiner,1998; Kappeler et al,1994; Chang,1996; Jefferson,1987) some traits that can be associated to what we call *expressive* use of force had been described. As Kappeler et al. sustain, in police subculture: 'The potential to become a victim of a violent encounter, the need for support for fellow during such encounters, and the legitimate use of violence to accomplish the police mandate all contribute to a subculture that stresses *the virtue of bravery*' (1994.101. [o. i.]).

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violence starts becoming self restrained. In many cases, for the majority of the population the use of force is

The presence of an aggressive masculinity is also presented as a central feature of riot police agents' 'working norm' (Jefferson,1987:123). That is, according to these last works, within the specific *police culture* their use of force may be also an end in itself as it relates and fulfill the expectations of a subculture that recognizes bravery and courage and has as a model an aggressive masculinity.

That is, we must consider not only the *objective* causes determined by the general and formal clauses of the legal order. We think that in order to understand the *total meaning* of the police use of force (that may include affective and other *irrational* elements that may coexist with discipline and formal rationality in riot police agent's *lebenswelt*) we must also pay attention to those *personal causes, reasons (or interests)*. It is also possible that the disciplined and rational deployment of violence is, in their eyes, an expressive use of force.

However, for understanding the specific meanings of riot police agent's use of force, we will not limit our work to a mere description of some aspects of the symbolic universe of riot police. We do not agree with the anthropological functionalism approach which mainly concentrates in the description of police culture, as that 'patterned set of understandings that helps officers cope with and adjust to the pressures and tensions confronting the police' according to the 'anthropological meaning of culture' (Reiner,1998:87). We will neither limit to an phenomenological description of 'common sense and official police knowledge which informs methods and practices according to which activities are done' (Brewer,1991:57. Also Jefferson,1987 and Bittner's ethnomethodological work:1998). Such approaches leave their analysis where it should really start, in the unveiling of the objective structures within which such symbolic forms exist and the place of physical force within such structure.

Riot police agents are not merely *rule and recipe followers or users* but also controllers of certain resources and capitals: they administer the state monopoly of the means of violence (Weber, Elias, Bourdieu (1996), Giddens (1987)). Following Pierre Bourdieu (see Bourdieu 1990a and Bourdieu and Wacquant,1995), we must not forget that the relation of riot police agents to their use of force, is apart from a symbolic relation, a relation of control of a certain resource or capital, a resource that determines positions within a certain system of relations. In this perspective, riot police agents are not only

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even unthinkable as an option, or acquires specific connotations (See Elias,1993).

*functionaries*, but also administrators of the state monopoly of the means of violence. They also possess other capitals or resources that constitute their position, as we will see. Therefore we must refer to the symbolic dimensions of the use of force, but considering them as related with the specificities of the structure of relations in which police agents exist and specially with the specific resources that come into play within such structure.

In the present work we will consider the space of relations in which riot police agents exist. We will focus on the system of relations conformed by their relations with members of other units of the police department, with members of other riot police units and, finally, the relations with the members of the public. In the analysis of such relations we will highlight the capitals or assets that act as elements that structure a system of differences in the relations in which the riot police agents are immersed. In the following chapters we will describe some of such capitals, and the way they function as bases of the structuring of the *schemes of perception* that riot police agents have and apply to their use of force. As we will see, in order to fully *understand* the riot police agents' use of force we must conceive their use of force, such *means*, as an asset or capital that determines positions and acts as a principle of distinction and difference in the relations in which the riot police agents are immersed, determining a position and being the basis for a sense of identity for the agents.

Proceeding in this way we will be able to deal with what remains unexplained in the vocabulary of roles and functions of the functional, culturalist and ethnomethodological perspectives: the specificities of the space of relations within which the use of force (and the skills associated to it), apart from being a means for the consecution of a determined end, appears as 'a source of identity, position, meaning and emotion.' (Dunning, 1994).

The questioning of such *idealist* perspectives also relates to their consideration of the police culture as an autonomous *occupational culture* that corresponds to an 'occupational group' (Kappeler et al. 1994:97). These approaches usually deny the previous *material conditions of existence* (which are not limited to economic conditions of existence) and tend to underestimate the social trajectory of police agents or identify it with the too general category of 'middle-class values' (97). As we will see in the concluding chapter, some elements of the riot police outlook may be related to their specific social trajectory. This denial of the police agents' social trajectory is also present in the Foucaultian and Goffmanian approaches (i.e. Sirimarco:1999,2000) that consider

‘police agents’ as the product of a ‘new self’(Sirimarco,1999:12) that is produced and reconstructed in the *totalitarian* police institution.

Finally, in the present work, resorting also to the works of Bourdieu and certain theoretical developments who had suggested the great relevance of the analysis of the embodied condition of social agents (Schilling,1993), we will give a great emphasis to the bodily condition and change of riot police agents. As we will show the riot police agent’s body is at the center of the relation of riot police agents with their use of force. Riot Police work is more than nothing a bodily trade, being the riot police agent’s body totally implicated in such trade. We sustain that it is in the analysis of the implication of their body in the use of the *state force* that resides the key for understanding the way in which riot police agents perceive their *personal and intimate* use of force and the meanings they attach to *their* violence, that is their bodily use of force.

In the present work we conceive the body as a source of resources, as a source of potentialities that may be used by *embodied* agents. Instead of conceiving the body á la Foucault ‘as an object and target of power’ (1989:140) where knowledge/power *general and impersonal strategies* impact on the ‘passive’ and ‘vanishing’ body<sup>6</sup>, we rather conceive the body as a possible source of social power, resorting to the notion of *bodily capital* (Wacquant, (1995) and Schilling,(1993)). Bodily capital is defined as accumulated (bodily) work, conceptualized by Schilling as ‘the *development* of bodies in ways which are recognized as possessing value in social fields’(Schilling,1993:127[o.i]). It is the body, through its inherent potentialities what permits individuals to engage efficiently in the many social habitats and relations in which violence and force is everyday currency, and therefore the determinant of a certain position (and therefore existence) within such social spaces. One of such spaces is the riot police world. The present analysis also intends to be a contribution to the understanding of the relation between body and violence. It also tries to be also an empirical contribution to the research agenda about sociology of the body

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<sup>6</sup> For a critical analysis of Foucault’s conception of the body as ‘passive’ see Lasch,1991. For a thoroughly critique of Foucault’s ‘vanishing body’, see Schilling,1993:79-82) By vanishing body, Schilling understands, a body that is ‘reduced to discourse’ and ‘one that disappears as a material and biological entity’ with the result of ‘ignoring the phenomenology of embodiment’. In Foucault’s work ‘The immediacy of personal sensuous experience of embodiment which is involved in the notion of *my* body receives scant attention. My authority, possession and occupation of a personalized body through sensuous experience are minimized in favour of an emphasis in the regulatory controls which are exercised from outside’.(Turner, cited in Schilling,1993:82)

which has been criticized for ‘an excessive devotion to theory in the absence of genuine research’ (Turner,1992:32).

This kind of analysis, that highlights the bodily implication of riot police agents in their trade, intends to balance the *disembodied* culturalist, ethnomethodological, and Foucaultian approaches on police (agents’) violence. As E. Bittner recognizes: ‘As if we were not fully satisfied with banishing the private use of force from the pale of respectability, our canons of good taste require us not only to avoid belligerence but “*bodiliness*” in general. That is, we tend to suppress, conceal or deny matters which, through their visceralness are related to violence’(Bittner,1990:107).

For all this, we must say that in the present work we will try to describe what are the meanings and feelings of riot police agents in relation to their use of physical force, resorting to the concepts of instrumental and expressive forms of violence. We will explore the analytical power of such distinction considering the possibility that its heuristic power may be expanded if we conceive that the riot police instrumental violence is at the same time a specific kind of expressive violence. As we have argued we must also analyze how such specific meanings and conceptions about their use of force relate to riot police agent’s social conditions of existence (as they are agents positioned within a certain structure of relations and have and control certain specific assets that are efficient in such relations). Their *specific* social conditions may be at the root of the peculiar meanings attached to their use of force.

Thus, the basic *objective* of this research endeavor is to comprehend the principles of vision [and division] of the violent practices of riot police agents focusing in the aspect of the *particular* and *personal* deployment of *public* force against citizens, analyzing the riot police agents position in a structure of relations (what entails specific interests and perspectives) and the specific resources they possess, resources that may structure and characterize the meanings attached to their use of force.

We must say one more thing about the research objectives. It must be clear that, from the kind of theoretical perspective that is used in this work, we are specially interested and emphasize the subjective dimension, taking seriously the riot police agents point of view, trying to understand their perspective on their use of force as agents with a certain positions within certain relations and controllers or owners of certain capitals or

powers<sup>7</sup>. We make emphasis on the subjective moment in the analysis of the principles of perception and action of certain police agents as an effort to balance the institutional and structural approach that characterizes most of the scarce works on police practices in Argentina<sup>8</sup> (i.e. Sozzo, CELS). Through highlighting the subjective experience of police work we will also be able to deal with the basic limitations of such structural approaches, basically the one of considering the practices of agents as mere execution of the objective structures ‘representing individuals or groups as passive supporters of forces that mechanically articulate according to their own logic.’(Bourdieu and Wacquant,1995:19).<sup>9</sup>

### 3. Methodological considerations and conditions

The present work is based on a relatively large body of interview, observational, and documentary data. The agents observed and interviewed are members of the Riot Police Unit of the Cordoba Province Police Department.

In order to make the interviews I had to get allowance to the closed world of the riot police agents, which means to face bureaucratic verticality in its full expression. I started by asking a riot police officer on the street if I could make him some questions about his work. He was not authorized by the his superiors to answer. This led me, going through all the positions in the hierarchic structure, up to the Police Chief. I sent a letter where I explained the objectives of the work (an academic piece of work to be presented at a Spanish Institution about riot police agents routines and experiences). After his approval, which was obtained after a long and inquisitive meeting, I had to go all the way down answering questions to all the subordinate positions in the chain of command. From the Director of Public Relations, passing by the Director of Special Unit Division down to the Chief of the RPU. The chief of the RPU finally authorized me to go and enter to the

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<sup>7</sup> We recognizing with Wacquant that ‘it is questionable, first, whether one can pinpoint a single, generic “native” point of view, as opposed to a range of discrepant, competing or warring viewpoints, depending on structural location within the world under examination. Second, one may query whether the so called native may be said to have a point of view at all, rather than *being one with* of which he partakes – and thus bound to it by a relation of “ontological complicity” that precludes a spectatorial posture (Wacquant,1995:491). We intend, following Wacquant, ‘rather than a depictive recounting...a *(re)construction*’ of the riot police agent’s point of view, that is ‘the synthetic view ...one can gain from the various points that may be occupied within the structure of social and symbolic relations that make up the...field’ (Wacquant,1995:491).

<sup>8</sup> With scarce exceptions, such as the ones of Sirimarco (1999,2000).

<sup>9</sup> For a critic of such objectivist analysis see Bourdieu, 1990 and Bourdieu and Wacquant,1995.



building where the unit is located and talk to the police agents. Finally they could tell their story.

In the intent of grasping the riot police agents' point of view on their *violence* I drew on in-depth semi-structured interviews held with 20 members of the Riot Police Unit (6 officers: a Commissary who Directed the Training Center, a Sub Commissary in Charge of one of the three Companies, three middle range officers, and one low level officer; and 14 Subordinate officers: two Sergeants, three agents and nine corporals). The great majority where men. (N:19 over 20) The average age was 32, ranging from 25 to 45 years.

The interviews where held between June and September of 2002. The strategy I designed and followed was first to make a series of interviews in the quite peaceful and tranquil environment of the Riot Police Unit building, their "*second home*" as they call it. Afterwards, once I got a certain *feel* of some basic categories, feelings, urgencies that conform their world, I would interview them in the more *tense* situations of "*waiting to enter into action*" (Riot police agents spend many hours waiting in specific posts before that are sent into action).

For making the interviews in the building I had to identify myself every time I got there, and I had to explain what I was doing to each of the circumstantial agents in charge of the guard. Once in the building I would catch somebody who would be willing to talk. The first series of interviews held in the Riot Police Unit building took place in the canteen, where agents who would be in their free moments would be picked up. Others where held in the officers' mess. The interviews with the instructors took place in the "*Training Center*" (a four by five meters room, with one window, high walls, full of paintings and posters and a mannequin dressed and equipped with special armory).

I visited the riot police building three times a week for four months. (On the afternoons because I work at the Court House from 8 am. to 2 pm. from Monday to Friday) On many of those visits I did not get any interview at all. Usually they where individual interviews. On some occasions a third or fourth party would get involved in the conversation. It was not so easy to find collaboration. A strong *we-identity*, made voluntaries to be interviewed quite scarce. To isolate any member of the riot police and ask him some questions separated from (but usually near) other members of the unit is to turn him immediately into a kind of betraying informant. However, once the valiant ones acceded to answer the questions, it was as if their chance to talk, to be heard, to say

something about their individual life (in an environment that tries to abolish individuality), was more powerful and the referred fear relatively vanished. What was really difficult to erase was their fear that any of their comments would get to the superiors. I promised them that their identities and ranks would be protected and changed in the presentation of the results.

As I was already known in the “*little family*” of the unit as “*the one who is doing the work about the infantrymen*” and many of them had seen me in “*the guard*”(the building) I was able to approach them in the street, during the “*wait*”. The interviews made in the street were held once I felt equipped with a basic sense of their conceptions. That minimal understanding enabled me to make questions that would be congruent with their urgencies and preoccupations and receive *confidences* and answers that implied a certain complicity based on their views about me as somebody who understood their situation. The *understanding* of their *situation*<sup>10</sup> allowed me to activate the *incorporated logic* of each interviewee in relation to specific aspects of the situation (i.e. opinions about members of the public, possible outcomes of the confrontation, past events, etc.) and confirm its recurrences which lead to a systematic confirmation of the basic categories that had been constructed<sup>11</sup>.

I did not use tape recorder because they systematically refused to. I noted down some basic ideas following a loose guide and reconstructed the interviews in the computer back at home at the night. 150 pages of *reconstructed* interviews have been produced in

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<sup>10</sup>We had made our best to *understand* in a way that ‘combines the display of total attention to the person questioned, submission to the singularity of her of her own life history- which may led by a kind of more or less controlled imitation, to adopting her language and espousing her views, feelings and thoughts- with methodical construction, founded on the knowledge of objective conditions common to an entire social category’ (Bourdieu,1996b:Understanding).

<sup>11</sup> Is important to have in mind that the in the case of the interviews the linguistic media used may have certain problems considering the of phenomenon we had to deal with: a deeply incorporated kind of practical knowledge. The relation to the use of force is not always objectified and clarified linguistically, is in a great sense a state of the body as we will see. The knowledge of the use of force is not a knowledge that is inculcated principally through the media of language. It is rather a process of acquisition of a tendency or habit related to the experiences of the agents. The problem is that of putting into words that experiences that are closer to a ‘carnal knowledge than to a symbolic knowledge. As Wacquant,(1995) sustains: ‘Are there not things about human social practice that we understand as practitioners, through carnal knowledge, that we can not communicate in a scholarly (or scholastic) idiom, through the mediation of symbols? An if so what are we to do with them?’ The problem has been addressed in Fernando Garcia Selgas (1999) and he recognizes the fictional and always partial character of any such reconstruction of certain incarnated dispositions. He proposes to overcome the dangers of arbitrary reconstruction to take into consideration the context, the rhetoric conventions, the institutional spaces where such reconstruction takes place, and the position within power relations and its historical place (1999:520) He also recommends to pay attention to non discursive aspects of practices, such as body stance, to which we added outfit, uniforms, body structure and looking or care, ways of carrying weapons, etc..

long and exhausting typing sessions with the only companion of *mate* (argentine infusion) until late at night.

I recognize that the oral data obtained from the interviews, as well as many observations are obviously full of limits and censorship occasioned by the exotic condition of the interviewer and the riot police unit hierarchic structure. There is even a certain internal rule that sustains that “*everything that happens within the unit dies within the unit*” (Agent Moro). However, in the course of the study I got more confidence from certain members of the unit, to whom I resorted many times in order to control the information provided by other more *distant* members.

I tried to do my best in blending into the landscape by using heavy shoes, dark blue clothes and maintaining my hair trimmed. My male condition and relatively big structure was of great help, as they would assume I shared a great deal of their *specific masculinity*. Telling them that I worked at the Court house was for them a certificate of being seen as on *their side* of society and order. (On many occasions, they stationed in the parking lot of the Courthouse so in the coffee brakes I would go to the patio and talk with them). That was important because I was not being seen as an intellectual with radical orientations. Many times I was inquired about the possible condition of “*zurdo*” (literally: left handed, socially: much more than that).

Face to face interviews where complemented with non-participant observation of *real interventions* of the unit and a continual ad-hoc observation also took place in the riot police building during the interviews. The whole building was shown, except for the arsenal. I have been in the Football stadium (during the weekends) trying to observe how they controlled to toughest publics or “*barrasbravas*” (see chapter four) as well as the ways in which they controlled demonstrations of different members of the public (Human Right Organizations (Madres, H.I.J.O.S.), work unions, unemployed organizations, depositors whose money has been confiscated, political demonstrations, and rock concerts). In the demonstrations where I did not have prior verbal contact with the RP agents I did not let them identify me (five times). I took notes in an separate place. Each of such ‘undercover’ observations lasted about five hours each and were recorded in a notebook.

In relation to the documents, the most relevant one has been the (relative) access to the Internal Operations Manual. Such Manual is a non-signed, 1994 dated, anonymous piece of paper (25 pages) that condenses and objectifies the *practical knowledge* and a

whole working tradition of the riot police unit. Such document is necessarily secret. Internally it is not mandatory, being kind of an orientation manual. It has not been officially sanctioned, even if it is practically sanctioned and observed day after day. It is mainly a tactics manual, that contains the principles of action and specific procedures for different operations and scenarios. However, it also contains many formal ‘definitions’ such as the ones of the infantry men, the members of the public, etc.. their general missions, etc. It is secret and could only be consulted with the assistance of an instructor who would read to us the parts of the manual that would be pertinent to the questions that were made to him about the manual, in an interview conducted under rather tense conditions. I considered the elements present in the internal manual along the different parts of the work. Some information present in the manual is reproduced in a vague and generalized manner along the work, as agreed.<sup>12</sup>

Finally, I fully recognize that the duration of the relationship with the riot police agents has been quite short bearing in mind what some authors recommend (Van Maanen,1981; Brewer,1991; Waddington,1991). However I have tried to compensate such shortage of time (determined by the time allowed for presenting the thesis) by concentrating on the specific subject of the use of force, an aspect that no doubt is at the epicenter of conditionings of their symbolic and material world and in not way it can be considered as a secondary aspect of their trade and identity.

#### **4. Epistemological precautions in the study of (police) violence**

Before starting with the substantial part of the work, we must reflect on what we conceive as a central question in any study that intends to understand violence: the scholastic and civilized dispositions that may intervene in the analysis and understanding of violence, included police violence.

In the understanding of police violence one must be aware of the intervention of what Bourdieu calls ‘the scholastic effect’ (1998:131). Such scholastic effect refers to the academics’ disposition to ‘put into the mind of agents *their* scholastic view or imputing to their object, that which belongs to the manner of approaching it, to the [scholastic] mode of

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<sup>12</sup> The only way to make them give me access to such document was through reading them the Appendix B of Waddington’s work (1991) on tactical and weaponry information related to the London Metropolitan

knowledge.’(130[o.i.]). One the consequences of such scholastic effect is to project on the individuals studied the social, material, functional, and bodily conditions of the scholar (the scientific, the lawyer, the judge. etc.). In other words, to conceive the actor whose actions want to be explained as if that agent would be in the same social conditions as the scholars or researchers, projecting into the mind of the individuals observed their same mind; denying the *different social conditions (that determines different dispositions)* of the scholar and of the individuals who are being studied.

We think that in relation to the specific problem of violence, we must also be aware of the *civilized condition and dispositions* of most scholars; conditions and dispositions that are usually projected on the minds (and bodies) of the police agents. If we, in a way or another, try to deal objectively and scientifically with the problem of police violence we must be very conscious of our own position and condition in relation to the control and experience (and types of experience) that we have with the use of physical force against human beings. A central substantial proposition in this work is that the way riot police agents conceive and feel the use of force corresponds to a certain position in relation to the structure of control of the means of violence, and therefore a certain disposition.

We sustain that in relation to the problem of violence we do not only have to be conscious of our social conditions in the cultural and economic fields which may determine a *scholastic disposition* in relation to any subject of inquiry. We must also be conscious of our position, and therefore condition and habitus (Elias,1996, Bourdieu) in relation to violence, as individuals with a certain *civilized ethos* (determined by our relations to the means of violence) that will determine our perception and emotional reactions toward any subject related to the use of force. (About the civilized ethos: Elias,1993)<sup>13</sup>.

It seems relevant to consider that the relation of scholars to their displays of force (as sportsman, amateur hunters or consumers of police services) may determine the way in which the problem of the use of force is theoretically constructed and conceived. A seminal example is the continuous attention of scholars to the *problem* of police 'brutality'

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Police. As they saw that a police agency of the first world gave that information, they could not do otherwise. The parts of the manual that are reproduced in the text are altered in relation to tactic matters.

<sup>13</sup> Such civilized deformation has been clearly noticed by Elias who sustains that 'being educated in conformity within a specific organization and control of the instruments of violence that are proper of today's nation states, and according to particular norms of self control in relation to violent passions, we apply automatically those criteria to judge the transgressions, even if they are produced in our society or if they took place in other societies situated in other state of development'(1986:154).

or the problem of police *irrational* violence. A continual preoccupation that is usually the expression of a visceral and even prelinguistic rejection towards the use of force of men against men in any way that is not the use that their own habitus may know and prefer: a cold, rational, calculated, minimal, indifferent, pacifist and distanced use of force. Such rejection, no doubt expresses the different kinds of relations and experience with the use of force and its means, the difference between the specialists and the non specialists. Much academic work about the police trade can be better comprehended if we put them under the light of a non-violent predisposition that determines the *scholars'* problems and perceptions, orienting them to focus on the problem of reducing and controlling police *brutality* rather than in *understanding* it.

The existence of that *civilized* disposition is not the problem, being such disposition an essential one to develop a scientific perspective that requires detachment and peace.<sup>14</sup> The problem is that of being unconscious of such civilized disposition. One may not be conscious of certain barriers that may have to be controlled, in order to understand (and accept as conceivable) relations and dispositions toward the use of force that may be rejected as barbaric and primitive; or even not thought because of certain feelings that arouse.<sup>15</sup> Such barriers can only be surpassed through a reflexive analysis of the relation of the scholar to the object of study.

Becoming conscious of such unconscious dispositions, and denaturalizing them is the first step toward a real understanding of police use of force. The above considerations are also a signal of alert to the reader in order to urge him to suspend, for a while, his previous notions and feelings about police and the use of force. It is also an invitation to try to imagine and position himself in the world (and the body) of those who day after day, fight hand to hand, to achieve peace in our *peculiarly civilized latinamerican societies*.

## **5. Structure of the work**

Having in mind the theoretical, methodological and epistemological points of departure we must briefly comment of the structure of the present work. The presentations of the results is structured by three parallel movements: from the outside (perspective) to the inside (perspective), from the more evident to the less evident elements, and from an analysis of

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<sup>14</sup> For the relation between civilization and scientific detachment see Elias, 1990.

<sup>15</sup> For an analysis of the emotional costs of experientially *understanding* violence differently from the cold and distanced (and some times pacifist) scholastic approach see Kraska's "Enjoying Militarism: Political and Personal Dilemmas in Studying U.S. Police Military Units"(1998).

the riot police use of force as an autonomous unit towards a relational consideration of it. The outside-inside movement starts with an external historical analysis that then gives place to a description of the agents perspective. In relation to the second movement, after such brief historical chapter, we start with the presentation of the most 'evident' subjective elements, related to an instrumental use of force, referring then to the more opaque *expressive* dimensions of riot police agents' violence. Finally, in relation to the relational dimension, we firstly describe from the outside, through a historical reconstruction, the objective trajectory and position of the riot police unit. We then start with the insider perspective, in which we first concentrate on the specific discipline, training, tactics etc. related to their use of force. We then consider their discipline and skills related to their specific violent actions but considering them in the structure of relations in which they exist and take place.

In line with such scheme, in Chapter 1, we had made a very simple reconstruction of the riot police institutional history, in order to provide the reader with a basic idea about the RPU trajectory and position within the police department, as well as about its legal and institutional functions, providing also information about its internal structure and functioning.

In chapter Two, we had observed the disciplined and instrumental rationality dimensions of the riot police work and condition, directly related to the 'civilized' habitus of riot police agents as members of a highly rationalized and disciplined unit. In that chapter we had made a great emphasis on the body discipline (or bodily capitalization) and to the disciplined and instrumental dimension of their use of force. This part of the analysis tends to consider the Riot Police Unit (use of force) in itself.

In the following two chapters, (Three and Four) we had concentrated in the *expressive* and personal elements of their violent (or force) practices and functions. These expressive and personal elements are intimately related to some specific assets or *capitals* that are identified and considered as coming into play in the semiautonomous system of relations where the violent practices of police agents find specific meaning. We consider the relevance of such capitals as the basis of a system of differences and principle of differentiation and distinction within the space of relations in which they are merged.

In the concluding chapter we firstly analyze the most important discoveries of the present work. We then consider certain aspects that should be studied in order to fully explain the social basis of the meanings they attach to their violence, presenting a brief

analysis of them. We conclude highlighting the mayor contributions the present work makes for the general understanding of the police world, critically analyzing other theoretical perspectives that intend to give light to the practices of the *fighters of order*.



## I. THE RIOT POLICE UNIT: HISTORY, FUNCTION AND POSITION

### 1.1. Introduction

In order to be able to have a better understanding of riot police agent's practices, visions and schemes of perception it may be useful to make a brief presentation of the provincial police institution, and within it, of the riot police unit, called the *Guardia de Infanteria*, we will deal with. (We will translate its official name as *infantry*, or *riot police unit*, or riot police, and from now on every time we use such names we will be referring to the Riot Police Unit of the Cordoba Police Department.). In the present chapter we will refer to the development of the provincial police department, considering in its institutional trajectory, which includes changes in its function and competences. As we will see the police institution undergoes a change from a more legislative and judicial role to a more *executive* one. We will then analyze the internal process of differentiation. Within this process we will trace the appearance, evolution and institutionalization of the special unit in charge of public disturbances: the riot police unit. Finally we will consider the objective position and formal organizations and functioning of the RPU within the Police Department. As we will see the infantry is the most executive and powerful unit of the executive police department.

The reconstruction of the history of the police institution is important for having an idea of kind of field in which the agents we will analyze in the following chapters will enter, fight, suffer and live; in one word, exist. This will not be a complete historical reconstruction, that would need a whole volume at least. It is rather a intent to highlight the mayor changes that occurred to this institution in order to properly situate its actual position within the general provincial bureaucratic field, as well as the internal changes it underwent resulting in the creation of a particular section of the police department: the riot police unit.

### 1.2. History and evolution of the Cordoba police department

### 1.2.1. The Police agency within the bureaucratic field

We conceive the provincial police department as an institution that is part and occupies a specific position, within the 'bureaucratic field' (Bourdieu,1996a). In our case such police department depends from the executive branch of the provincial government of the Cordoba Province of Argentina. Within the provincial bureaucratic field occurred, and occurs a process of internal specialization, through which different departments and institutions ended (precariously) with the control of certain resources or capitals used in relation to certain populations and territories dealing with differentiated areas of government competence. One of such departments is what we call the Córdoba Police Department.

According to Giddens, with the consolidation of the modern state, in the relation between government and citizens starts to exist 'a new nexus of coercive relations...where few were located before: The *creation of a perceived need for law and order* [that] is the reverse side of the emergence of a conception of deviance recognized and categorized by the central authorities and by *professional specialists*'(Giddens,1987:184 [o.i]): the concept of order arises. The invention of the notion of social *order* is parallel to the possibility of the state to get to the most daily routines of the population, something that before had a more local character, and was not achieved by central institutions. This last aspect is made possible because of the intensification of surveillance power, included the hegemony over the means of violence and a state monopoly to dictate the law. From then on, the individuals subjected to the state's use of force and of the knowledge produced (i.e. crime records) is not going to be any more (in most cases) 'a rebel, but a deviant, to be adjusted to the norms of acceptable behavior as specified by the obligations of citizenship.'(Giddens,1987:184).

The so-called police agencies are going to be the ones in charge of producing order, through 'policing the routine activities of the mass of the population, by specialized agencies *that separate* from the main body of the armed forces.'(Giddens,1987:187). As Bourdieu sustains, the concentration of the means of violence and the right to use and regulate it, means that 'the institutions commissioned to guarantee order separate from the normal social world; physical violence from then on can only be used by a specialized group, specially commissioned for that aim, clearly identified with the center of society, centralized and disciplined; and the army, bit by bit makes disappear the feudal troops,

threatening the nobility in its monopoly over the warring functions. ...The armed forces diversify, on the one hand the “military forces”, destined to the interstate competence and, on the other hand, the “police forces”, destined to internal “order” maintenance, an order that is physical and legal.’(1996a:101).

Within the great bureaucratic field, as we see, emerges a sub field that can be called the field of order, where agents (individually or corporately) fight for the control of certain spheres of administration related to the production of order, at the same time they collude in the social division of order work: the division in the work of fighting against crime and disorder. Within this field the police institution acquires a central position with the task of preserving such public and pacific order through the means of force (among others).

### **1.2.2. The origins of the Córdoba Police Department**

In relation to Córdoba Province police agency we observe that after a long process of institutionalization and achievement of greater autonomy, the police institution acquires precise form, with clearly determined functions and in control of certain resources within the provincial bureaucratic field. The police department is today ‘the armed civil institution, depository of public force, that has as its mission the maintenance of public order and security, exercising the functions that legislation establishes for the safeguard of the life, the property and the rights of the population’(Provincial Police Department Act, art. 1)’(1981), acting as ‘a permanent auxiliary in the administration of justice, and cooperates with the Public administration organisms, armed forces, security forces and other police agencies.’(art. 2).

The theory of police, as a method of government, a mode of governing population (Foucault,1991) is explicitly introduced in America with the Bourbons policies, in colonial times. The Viceroy of Sobremonte introduces this ideology in today’s provincial territories in the last years of the 18th century, with the *Ordenanza de Intendentes* del Rio de Plata, 1782, which intends, in the line of *policial* logic ‘to create a more integrated system, based on a rational plan, that would be as homogeneous as possible in any part of the territory, in order to promote economic growth, improve tax collection, promote a more efficient administration and reorganize defense.’(Levaggi,1991:40) With the new administration comes a whole set of new policies.

After the independence war (1810-1816) *police* competences are distributed among the national, provincial and municipal governments. In those days, a great number of the

administrative *competences* or matters were considered police matters. The bureaucratic departments that we have today were not yet defined, and some did not exist. Police matters included security and morality as well as water supply, street buildings, weight and measures control, commerce, trash, sewages and many others (see Retamosa, chapters 1-5).

The consolidation of a stable national monopoly of force was not achieved in Argentina until 1860, or even 1880. At that time the production of a more or less pacified order was in charge of the municipal, provincial and national governments.

After a long series of vicissitudes the internal security functions of police are going to be left, basically, in charge of the provincial states, while the external security functions are left in the hands of the federal government. However, the federal government had a police force, the Police force of the Federal capital, the origins of what would then be the Federal Police force, similar to the American FBI (See Andersen,2001). The other national internal security force would be the National Gendarmerie created in 1938, similar to the French gendarmerie.

As early as 1860 those *police powers* started to acquire specific contents and started to be identified with peacekeeping and security operations, as well as with crime prevention and repression<sup>1</sup>. Around the same time the competences on crime and disorder matters become concentrated under the power of the provincial government.<sup>2</sup>

In 1870 the Cordoba Province Constitution was issued. In art. 171 the constitution regulates the security police function but now not longer as a formal institution, but as a synonym of *administration*, and specified that it would be in charge of the provincial government. The act determined its competence areas as the office in charge of order maintenance. The provincial administrations started to displace the national and local administrations in internal public order maintenance functions.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1860 the Act on the provincial capital city municipal organization, establishes that regulates ‘the city police corresponds to the municipal *security* commission’.

<sup>2</sup>Art. 37 of that same act ordered that: ‘the municipality will transfer to the executive provincial department *the police, its archives and locals* that are at the time under its charge’. Must be observed the linguistic modality change that passes from the reference to an *activity* ‘the security commission will be in charge of the city police (as activity or competence)’ to a noun form that refers to a certain objectified and personified entity ‘the municipality will give to the executive power *the police, with its archives, and dependencies.....*’. That personified form is the one that has been taught to us since then. In Spanish the distinction between the noun and the verb (police and policing) does not exist. In Spanish the reference to the activity has been almost totally lost, being the noun and reified form the prevalent. Even in the form of ‘poder de policia’ (police/ing power) the construction is objectified, converted into a static noun, a reified notion of power.

In 1871 the ‘Reglamento General de Policía’ (General Police ordinance) was issued<sup>3</sup>. The police agency apart from maintaining order and security had many judicial attributions as well as all penitentiary attributions. It even had legislative powers establishing regulations regarding ‘police infractions’ (public order, morality, games, fire, streets buildings, etc.)

### 1.2.3. The consolidation of the police force as an executive institution

Within this provincial bureaucratic structure the police organization lost of some legislative and judicial competences. Gradually the police started losing the power to legislate and judge acquiring a central executive role in relation to the normative system.<sup>4</sup>

We can observe this process of change in the structural positions (and powers and functions) of police and legal and other administrative corps through comparing the attributions granted to the police in the ordinances of 1871 and the ones established in the 1981 act, passed in times of military government, as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Police responsibilities and competences according to the 1871 ordinance and 1981 Act.

1871 ordinance	1981 Act
1) <b>Dictates</b> anything related to Security police and order maintenance	<i>Security police:</i> 1) <b>Prevent</b> perturbation of public order, guarantying the peace of population, security of people and property
2) <b>Orders the apprehension</b> of delinquents, deserters, domestic searches.	2) <b>Prevent</b> terrorist attack, sabotage intents to subvert constitutional order
3) <b>Orders</b> investigations of suspects	3) <b>Provide</b> security to functionaries, agents, employees and public property
4) Makes execute orders from judicial and public authorities	4) <b>Provide</b> custody to governors and ministers
5) <b>Understands</b> and <b>solves</b> in cases of police infractions	5) <b>Assure</b> the order of elections
6) Submit to ordinary justice the cases that correspond	6) Traffic <b>control</b>
7) <b>Determine</b> , in accordance with minors defendants, the <b>destiny</b> of pupils and orphans or minors abandoned	7) <b>Control</b> the use and disposition of private weapons
9) <b>Solves</b> cattle marks conflicts	8) <b>Collaborate</b> with minority departments in the minority police.
10) <b>Classifies</b> the unemployed	9) <b>Guard</b> maintenance of good behavior
	10) <b>Survey</b> public meetings assuring its normality
	11) <b>Judge</b> minor crimes
	12) Control fires
	13) Provide additional security services
	<i>Judicial Police</i> (Intervenes as auxiliary of the administration of justice and prevents crime)
	<b>Collaborate</b> with the judicial power executing orders from competent authorities and gives support of public force when is required

As can be seen from Table 1. the police went from having the power to: ‘1) **Dictate** all dispositions related to security police and maintenance of public order, **Order** the

<sup>3</sup> In this act the ordinance structures the police force with a chief, a Commissary, a guard body, a night watch body, four police wards, a suburbs commissary and troops.

<sup>4</sup>Such executive role refers to the limited power, in comparison with prior situations, to dictate the law. The possession of such powers by a police force appeared as scandalous in the eyes of lawyers and Human Rights groups. See CELS (1998).

apprehension of delinquents, deserters, domestic searches, **Order** investigations of suspects, **Understand** and **solve** in cases of police infractions, 9) **Solve** cattle marks conflicts, **Determine** in accordance with minors defendants, the **destiny** of pupils and orphans or minors abandoned and, **Classify** unemployed people.’, to a condition of auxiliary with a great loss in the distribution of the power of the right to say the right, resulting in a subordinate condition, becoming even more dependent of the normative impositions of other powers, basically the legislative and the judicial agents.

This is clear if we see that in 1981, hundred and twenty years afterwards the provincial police: ‘1) **prevents** perturbation of public order, guarantying the peace of population security of people and property, Prevents terrorist attacks, sabotage intents to subvert constitutional order, **Provides** security to public functionaries, agents and employees and public property, **Provides** custody to governors and ministers, Assures the order of elections, controls Traffic, Controls the use and disposition of private weapons, Guards maintenance of good behavior, Provides additional security services, and Surveys public meetings assuring its normality’, finally ‘Controls fires’.

In relation to judiciary faculties we observe that in relation to minor crimes the police agency just ‘Collaborates with minority organisms in the minority police’. In relation to more specific judiciary competences, the police do have a very limited intervention in imposing fines that are under judicial control. The police agency has lost in the hands of the judicial power almost all the powers to ‘Investigate public crimes’ in accordance with the last modification of the procedural criminal code. Today the police just ‘**Collaborates with the judicial power** *executing* orders from competent authorities and gives support of public force when is required’<sup>5</sup>.

In relation to the legislative competences of the Córdoba Police Department, this were exercised through issuing ‘police edicts’. In 1890, Act 1208, declared that the police edicts are considered provincial laws. Until then police legislative powers were recognized by the law. In 1956 the provincial House of Representatives issues a ‘Faults code’ that systematizes all the police edicts, depriving the police of any legislative competence.

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<sup>5</sup> Even though the police agents retain limited judicial attributions, acting as first instance judges in relation to the occurrence of misdemeanours against morality (prostitution, vagrancy, beggars), acts against public tranquillity (public disorders, scandals, behaviour in sport events), alcohol and dangerous substances consumption, traffic safety, public security (disobedience to authorities, refuse to identify, circulation with savage animals, carnival celebrations, gang activity, fireworks use, carrying weapons, and fires).

This has meant a general change in the position within the field of order. Within this field the police is related to the great chain of legitimacy to those who determine the content of the laws (Bourdieu,2000a:172), but they have a specific role or function that is accomplished with the control of certain resources. As a result the police end up being ‘the armed civil institution, depositary of public force, that has as its mission the maintenance of public order and security for the safeguard of the life, the property and the rights of the population’(Provincial Police Act, art. 1)’. It is important to bear in mind this role of the police institution as official *executors* of the legal order. This condition seems to reproduce within the *field of order* that basic distinction typical of the bureaucratic field, between the ones who decide and the ones who execute (Bourdieu, 2001:145) an opposition that is also related a the superior/subordinate relation as is established in the legal documents that regulate the police force<sup>6</sup>.

In such position the police institution has converted in an *specialized executive organ*, more enforcers of the law than interpreters and creators of the law and regulations they apply and enforce, depending from the executive branch of the provincial government.

But such delimitation is also a delimitation in favor of the institution (and of ones who inhabit the institution, the police agents). The demarcation of competences means the assurance of control over certain areas of administration and state resources that will be monopolized by the police institution. This is precisely determined in the 1981 act. As if it were not enough with stating that the police is the depositary of public force to maintain public order and an auxiliary to other branches of the administration, in title III, in the ‘complementary dispositions’ after prohibiting the use of ‘*uniforms, chevrons, insignias, and symbols adopted by the Police, to other ‘private or public institution’*’ (art.46) sustains precisely that ‘no provincial or municipal administrative organism can use the denomination of ‘**Police**’, comprehending the exercise of the security and judicial police

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<sup>6</sup> 1981Police act. ‘The police of the province of Córdoba acts as a **permanent auxiliary of the Justice administration**, (Other power)...and **cooperates** (in a more equal position) with the organisms of the public administration, armed forces, security and other police agencies’. But this equality, this participation in the public administration is one of **dependence** Chapter 2 - entitled DEPENDENCE, ART. 5 says - The police of the province is a unit of centralized organization of the executive branch, that **depends** of the government ministry’. In relation to the judicial power in **chapter four ‘Judicial police’** art. 9 says ‘The function of judicial police consists **essentially** in the intervention, **as an auxiliary** in the administration of justice in the repression of crime’. Finally art. 12 affirms: ‘The police personal, as **an auxiliar** to the Justice Administration, will be in each case **under the authority** of Judges and prosecutors’.

power, nor provide its personal with **weapons**, nor **use police hierarchic gradations**'(art. 47)

The provincial police department, with its executive function of peacekeeping and crime and security control, in turn, has officially undergone a drift away from the military agents, along with a parallel appropriation of their previous functions and resources. With the nationalization of the military forces, the provincial security forces acquire another type of mission. This meant the introduction of a certain new logic in the use of force: maintenance of public order, basically the notion related to all the police *philosophy* that as Foucault well describes (1991), is pro-life, instead of pro-death, as are the military. But things have not been so clear. Such process of differentiation has not followed the same line of development as in Europe or the US, basically because of the constant influence of the military forces over the civil government, and therefore over the police departments: the civil armed forces.

In relation to the control of the police administration from police forces we have to consider that formally the Córdoba police department is dependant on the provincial government, and that there are no provincial militias. However, the fact that the provincial government has been for a great part of its history under military regimes has meant that such *ideological* separation from the military and the police forces has not been as great and clear as in other countries.

In this respect, it is important to notice that the supposedly civil force, the Córdoba police department, from 1870 to 1930 had from 34 police chiefs only 6 who where military (17 %). But since the 1930's national coup d'état up to 1983, from 60 police chiefs, 43 came from the armed forces (71 %). Indeed, for the period that goes from 1966 to 1982, 95 % where from military origin, and the other 5% correspond to a members of the federal police<sup>7</sup>. The following chiefs (1983 to 2003) since democratic governments are back have been all police officers.

In relation to the militaristic spirit that may regulate the police force is relevant to say that the actual statute is almost a copy of the one that was established in 1970 under the military government. The 1970 act that regulated the Córdoba Province police department, which in theory is a federal provincial state, was in fact, a local adaptation to a general

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<sup>7</sup> Own calculations based on Retamoza,1982: 252/53.



scheme that was forced upon all the provincial police forces in Argentina by the military government to fight against the *guerrilla*<sup>8</sup>. What is important of such military influence is that in such case the police manners of responding and controlling political opposition and economic class struggle was conceived ideologically, under the conception of a direct war against demonstrators and agitators that were conceived enemies of order and enemies of the country, that is enemies of the totality they are in charge of protecting. (See Andersen,2001; Rodriguez Molas,1985). Other traces of the military influence are present, and we will see them in the following chapters. However, a central one, that must be kept in mind, is the structure of the formal hierarchy that divides the police agents in three levels: Officers, Subordinates and Troops, just as in the army, being the most important difference that between Officers and Subordinates<sup>9</sup>. Other important aspect is the name that is given to the units: *Cavalry Squadron, Infantry, Explosives Brigade, Canine Division, Preventive Action Commando*, etc.

What is important to consider is the relative position and resources of the police institution *vis a vis* the other powers of the state, as a way of considering it as a great determinant of position takings, stances and perceptions of the members of the riot police. As we will see the practices of the riot police agents are in a great deal oriented because of their existence in a *properly executive institution* within the field of order.

#### **1.2.4. The internal differentiation of the police department: emergence of the public order units**

Until now we have analyzed the process of institutionalization and *achievement of relative autonomy* that, within the provincial and national bureaucratic field, has undergone the provincial police institution. We will now refer to the *internal process of differentiation* and *specialization*. Within the police institution a process of specialization

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<sup>8</sup>The 1970 Act organized the police institution with a superior 'Commandant', a 'Sub commandant', and is divided in Divisions. The Security Police Divisions consisted in Operations (N.1), Information (N.2), Administration (N.3), and logistic (N.4) divisions. The Division Number 5 was Judicial Police. The N. 2 Information Division (D-2) had a *reserved* operations statute<sup>8</sup>. The act considers the police stations as 'Social Control Units'. Beside the Social Control Units are the 'Special Units', some of which were legally authorized to act without identification. Within these special units division is the 'Antidisturbances Units', the antecedent of the riot police unit we see today.

<sup>9</sup> Formally the hierarchy is: for Officers: Superior Officers (General Commissary, Mayor Commissary, Inspector Commissary), Chief Officers (Commissary, Sub Commissary), Subordinate Officers (Principal Officer, Inspector Officer, Sub inspector Officer, and Assistant Officer). For Subordinates: Superior Subordinates (Mayor Subordinate, Principal Subordinate, Assistant Sergeant and first Sergeant) Subordinated Subordinates (Sergeant, First Corporal, Corporal), and troop (non com.)

has occurred, which must be seen not as a natural process but rather as the conjunction of the interests of specialized agents, with the necessities of external actors, specially political actors.

By the beginning of the 20th. century the city and the province started to increase in its population. Within the police organization different sections started to be created. The old **surveillance function** continued, but was specified with the creation of the investigations office ('oficina de pesquisas') in 1886, that was in charge of '*registering informs, denounces, taking a thieves registrar, a hotels index, a prostitutes index, an index of coffee shops, restaurants, billiards, and an index of suspicious persons*' (Retamosa,157). Along with this information unit in 1893 was created the *police statistical unit* that was in charge of registering crimes and detained persons.

Along the increase and **specialization in information production** the police department underwent a specialization *in more executive and force matters*. A Retamoza refers 'In 1898 the government preoccupation in improving the police force was constant. It ordered the *military instruction for sergeants, and corporals, watchmen and horse man that would constitute an Infantry Battalion* composed by four companies' As the police historian Retamoza sustains:

'one of the better police decisions was the instauration of the Civic and Military Instruction School (Escuela de Instrucción Civil y Militar). In the same year is created the Horseback section (Sección a caballo) that would be composed by 31 agents that *would get reunited only when the superintendent would decide it. This group would be composed by personal of different sections and stations that would be selected from those who would have greater bearing, presence, instruction, conduct, being expected that the horse that would be mounted by those officers should be of great high and have the same skin color... This group would be called upon when it would be necessary, that is...would be a group of eventual formation.*' (159 [o.i.]

As Retamoza refers the 'institution undergoes a process of functional and administrative improvement'(159) That means an increase in the number of agents and police stations. With the beginning of the century and changes in the political climate, is produced the appearance of distinct corps within the force that are not only a quantitative expansion. It is also a qualitative change. Until then the police organization consisted basically in the headquarters (with a Sub commandant, a treasury department, medical service, inspection, and investigations office). Under the command of the headquarters where the sectional stations, (six of them), that were distributed along the city, with their respective rural service unit. These section stations where in charge of vigilance, crime

investigation, and public order maintenance, ordinary and extraordinary. The other main sections were the penitentiary units and the fire brigade. Until these days in cases of *extraordinary* events, men from the *ordinary* section stations would be called. After the event, they would go back to their routine work.

#### **1.2.5. The institutionalization of special *public order* units**

In 1905 occurred a change in police operations organization. In that year a *permanent force for extraordinary events* is formed. That year a radical '*violent movement exploded, in which the police plays a central and important role*' (Retamoza,157). On the next year '*special units are organized for the extraordinary service of order and security in the colonies*'. Such service was called *Policía Movil (mobile police)*. Those special units would be composed by *an officer, a sergeant, a corporal, and eight soldiers* (Retamoza,164). This mobile police was going to be under the direct control of the Police Chief, would be disciplined by the general police ordinance, and its personnel would be *assimilated to personnel of a sectional police station*. That means that from then on, this mobile police would be independent from the section stations, and under the same inspections and disciplinary measures. '*The Captain would have the hierarchy of a Section Station Commissary and the officers the one of Inspection officers*'(Retamoza,158).

This mobile police unit had a military discipline and flavor from the beginning. '*The squadron's military instruction would be in accordance to the cavalry tactics, and they would receive daily civil instruction on police procedures*'(Retamoza,165) The main mission of the Mobile Police was to '*cooperate with the maintenance of order and security in the interior, maintaining a strict discipline that would be rigorously punished with arrest or destitution*'(Retamoza,165). The superior of the Mobile police would be called Captain and the second would be one First Lieutenant. That force was provided with hundred and twenty equipped horses (Retamoza,164).

The process of internal differentiation continued, and the special '*public order units*' became more organized. These special units, that are oriented toward the public order operations, are provided with specific weapons and instruction, with a *warring* scheme in the order maintenance policy. The two most powerful groups that existed in the police department, the *Cavalry battalion* and the *Infantry* started to acquire certain institutionalization.

The *Mobile police*, after a period of *effective* interventions<sup>10</sup>, was dissolved in 1909. It was replaced by the *Cavalry Squadron* (Escuadron de Caballeria), ‘that had been recently created and was absorbing all the activities of the Mobile police’(Retamoza,149). This body was prepared for controlling carnivals, public meetings, official ceremonies, and in general to control any sector where multitudinarian agglomerations that would make difficult the intervention to the agents of the infantry force. The basic principles that oriented the conduct were the same of any other policeman: ‘*force will be used as a corrective measure, or as a forceful measure when the repeated advertence and persuasion means would be exhausted*’(Retamoza,180). In those days the cavalry battalion, or Security Squadron was highly valued within the force: ‘for the agents of the mobile police or penitentiary agents their admission to the cavalry would be a stimulus for those who would have distinguished themselves for their conduct and had passed an exam’(181).

That squadron, after a significant labor for almost 60 years, had its last days with the popular revolt of 1969 called the *Cordobazo*<sup>11</sup>. According to the police folklore, and reproduced in Retamoza (1982) is ‘*practically the Cordobazo* what decides the fate of the squadron. The use of the horse to repress disturbances is not so effective anymore. Even though the cavalry had some psychological effect in some moments of its action, *the mentality of those that altered order had* changed. Now they were not afraid anymore of ‘the horses’, and for that reason was very easy to trick them. On the other hand the police comes trying new methods to *combat* [literally] those who provoke public disturbances, with elements such as the famous truck that throw colored water, assault vehicles, gas grenades, etc.’(182)<sup>12</sup>. The Cavalry Squadron would be gradually replaced by the Infantry,

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<sup>10</sup> Such as the a bloody clash that that took place on 1909 and that Commissary Retamosa reproduces in his book ‘when the police chief...with the aim of preventing an alteration of public disorder, and given the fact that he had denied the authorization for a public demonstration.(and) that the individuals present did not disperse at his orders, the troops charged against them, being resisted the cavalry with gun fire from both sides the street, and considering the gravity of the events, he orders the force to land and open fire, ceasing the battle within five minutes. The action took the life of some officers. In this actions collaborated efficaciously two sections of the mobile police’(167). The manner of public order control will became much more civilized with time, as we will see in the next chapter. I leave to the criteria of the reader the analysis of the war news style description of the event and all that that implies.

<sup>11</sup> The Cordobazo is the name that was given to a major revolt that took place in the city of Córdoba (Argentina) in 1969, with a massive participations of students and workers, that provoked the federal intervention by the national government (and army) and in the middle term determined the fall of the President Onganía.

<sup>12</sup> The same version of practical loss of effectiveness is expressed in an interview with an old member of the cavalry, a force that continued serving as a force to control parks, university locals and stadium security operations.

that would finally takes its place in the function of disorder control, but also as the most powerful and active unit of the whole police department.

### **1.2.6. The Riot Police Unit or Infantry**

In relation to the RPU, the *Infantry*, it was explicitly created in 1943. As successors of the Cavalry Squadron they are the most powerful unit in charge of public order maintenance. As Retamoza tells us: ‘this group would act in any case of public order disturbances, and in any act that could put in danger the constituted authorities’. As we can see it was created as a police force that was designed to protect the authority of the state, rather than the security of the inhabitants. ‘As an ordinary service would serve as a preventive guard in the police headquarters and its members would be an active reserve to be used when public security would be jeopardized, or when the circumstances would require the power of force, or when an extraordinary service would require for its attention more personal that the originally assigned’ (Retamoza:180).

‘The infantry would depend directly from the police headquarters, at the head of this unit would be assigned an officer with a police career; internally *would maintain at every moment militarized police discipline and instruction*’ (Retamoza, 1982:194). The constant *militarized police discipline and instruction* of this unit is something specific of it. This does not mean that other sections do not have *a militaristic view of the mission of police*. But that in some parts of the police, the militaristic structure, discipline and instruction (and corresponding *ethos*) is more explicit that in others. (We will dedicate the whole next chapter analyzing militarized police discipline and instruction and consider in chapter III the relevance of such difference in military discipline between the different police units).

This unit would be organized with a mayor commandant, a corps command, and three subunits. It also had a rations service, and a weapons section. It was clearly organized as a military organization. The officialdom would be constituted by a Chief with the grade of a Commissary, a Second Chief, with a sub commissary grade, and the troop would be constituted by one hundred men: 3 sergeants, six corporals and ninety one ‘*soldiers*’ that would form three companies. The uniforms where similar to the ones used by nazi officers, the same that where in fashion in those days in the national army.

This unit is lodged where the dissolved Cavalry Battalion was. Such placement is not casual. As the new *heavy* units of the police they are lodged in the place where the old

heavy units, the cavalry Squadron was. From then on, the beasts that would integrate the strongest unit of the police department are not horses but men, the riot police agents. In 1967, as an adaptation to actual conditions, the *Combat groups Regulation* was passed, which allows the use of CS gas, a long wooden baton, and are regulated the different formations of groups and maneuvers. In 1970 the unit had 337 men, 20 assault tracks and a watering track, called euphemistically 'Neptune'. That year its name was changed to '*Infantry battalion*', but because 'that denomination produces some bad interpretations' (Retamoza,1982), in 1976 recovers its old name. In 1977 the name is changed to *Disturbances control unit*. In the 1980 act the name is, as today's, 'Infantry guard'.

### **1.3. The structure of the police department and the position of the riot police within it**

Today the police department depends on the executive branch of the Provincial Government. The Police Department is organized in four General Divisions: Planning, Operations, Personnel, and Administration. The real, official /central police work divisions are *Operations* and *Planning General Divisions*. This two active and *real police work* General Divisions (as the *creation and decision*, based on information on the one hand, the *Planning division*, and the *executing* division, the 'Operations General Division') are opposed to the more passive Administration and Personnel General Divisions. The Planning and Operations General Divisions are the ones where the *civil* population is really a minority.

Operations Division is the most prestigious one, in line with the police department condition of an *executive force or organization* rather than a juridical stance. As we have noted above, the police force is an executive, active organization, which *maintains* and *produces* order rather than just *judges*. The executive nature of the police is reflected in many places in the 1981 Act. The executive *nature* of the police institution is reflected in a very simple but not irrelevant *priority* assigned to the Operations Division Director, which takes the place of the sub chief of police when the latter is absent, in preference to the *too theoretical* Planning Division Director, or to the not policial enough 'Administration' and 'Personal' General Divisions.

Operations General Division, as the name reflects, *is the world of real police work*. It is the core of the institution. What is seen as real police work is done in these sections. Within the Operations General Division, the two most *policial* directions are 'Security

Direction’, and ‘Special Units Direction’. Security Direction includes the police districts and subdistricts, where the police stations are. These police stations are the ones that work in the outer space, in the different neighborhoods in the middle of the *urban jungle*. Dependant from the Security Direction’ are the Preventive Patrol cars that survey in the car the whole city, on the car, in the street. Another Division that depends of the ‘Security Direction’ is ‘the Special Vigilance Unit’ in charge of patrolling on foot the center of the city, the commercial and financial zone, preventing big robberies and protecting the most important private and national and other state buildings (such as embassies and consulates). This real police work means the control of a more powerful arsenal, obliged to use protective bulletproof jackets. These ‘Security Direction’ units are the ones that develop *ordinary*, constant, daily, routine, work (even if in relation to office administrative work is a more demanding and active work).

That ordinary, constant, daily, routine work, is opposed to the one developed by the ‘Special Units Direction’. These are ‘special units’ because of the buildings they make safe, or because the *resources and missions* they have are *extraordinary*. In relation to the *extraordinary locales*, and part of the Special Units Direction we find the ‘special’ units in charge of securing the Government house, Legislature and provincial Court House. The other Special Units are those that act in **special occasions** and with *extraordinary resources and skills*. These other ‘Special units’ are the Infantry guard, the Cavalry Squadron, the Canine Squadron and the Explosives brigade. The control of certain and specific resources characterize all these special units. These are the *operative and executive units* of the *operative and executive* Special Units Direction, the reserve force, called on extraordinary occasions, in opposition to the ordinary, normal ‘Security direction’s units’<sup>13</sup>.

The riot police is then the most active and powerful part of that operative and executive organization that is the police department. The operative *essence* of the *Infantry* is not that of *detectivesc* abilities. This is the special unit that is in charge of maintaining, producing and reproducing a legal, and pacific order, through the use or threat of use of physical force on extraordinary circumstances.

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<sup>13</sup> The other special units are, the ‘feminine brigade’ (in opposition to all the others ‘masculine’ units). in charge of feminine duties: educative action (visiting schools), social service, collaboration with juvenile judges and public and human relations. Replicating some feminine virtues are in charge of ‘preserving (public) morality, relating to schoolers, children’s and juveniles, as well as intervening in any search of feminine persons. The other special units are the fire brigade, and a shock force team called ETER.

The RPU has certain specific tasks. The main task is that of maintaining order in multitudinarian events. Such as football matches, demonstrations, or music festivals. It is also called in for controlling jail mutinies and collaborate in evictions. They are also called for carrying out raids in dangerous neighborhoods. Most of these interventions are planned well in advance. Other extraordinary unforeseen events include unexpected road cuts or looting events.

The RPU is divided in three companies of one hundred men each. Each of these companies works one day (24 hours) and rests two (48 hours). Each company is formed by various *combat groups* of about 8 to 10 police agents. The combat group is the minimum operative unit. Each of the combat groups is commanded by an Officer. The number of combat groups that are deployed for each operations depends of the necessities of the situation and the size of the disorder. They are equipped with special weapons, ammunition (Cs Gas, rubber bullets, sticks, gas grenades) and protective equipment (Shields and helmets). They use blue, black and gray camouflaged uniforms with black heavy shoes. They always take their pistol in their interventions.

Every time they go out to the street there is an “*Operation Chief*” who is responsible for the whole operation. In the ordinary occasions the RPU Chief is the Operation Chief. However, the RPU Chief, usually delegates the command of the Operations to one of the Chiefs of the three Companies in which the unit is divided. In cases in which they are more extraordinary events (lootings or road cuts, or barricades), or when they are working in coordination with agents of the other Special Units (Cavalry and Dogs Squadrons) they are commanded by the Special Units Direction and the Special Units Director who in such situation acts as the Operation Chief. In either cases they report to the Police Department Sub Chief. He in turn reports to the Police Chief and the police Chief is responsible before the Provincial Governor.

7,700 police agents are part of the Operations Division (4,700 In the capital of the province, and about 3,000 in the interior). From all those that are in charge of preventing crime, only around 350 or 400 agents, are specially in charge of maintaining public order: the infantry or Riot Police Unit. They are the ones in charge of the extraordinary, the back up forces, of all the other 7300, in cases of public disturbances or the like. This riot police unit goes to the interior of province when they are called, being competent in the whole provincial territory. They are also the ones that instruct and teach the other 7,300 how to deal with public order disturbances.



The analysis of the institutional history of the Cordoba police department through the analysis of legal instruments (informed by historical accounts, some of them written by police agents) was a way of trying to grasp the objective structure and function of the riot police unit. The prior *description* intends to position the riot police force in the general habitat of the police institution.

We turn our view now to the men that inhabit such institution, which in turn, as we will see, inhabits them. We will try to see how the otherwise dead buildings, arsenals, uniforms, regulations and other objectified elements are enlivened and appropriated by the police agents who get to the institutions and learn the basic skills required for fighting for peace and order in a disciplined and rational manner.

## II. RIOT POLICE USE OF FORCE AS DISCIPLINED VIOLENCE

### **Introduction**

We are originally interested in the meaning that riot police agents give to their use of force in the fulfillment of their function.

Until now, we have mainly referred to legal and historical documents, in relation to the riot police. We have described the emergence of such riot police unit, as one of the most executive and active parts of the executive police Department. This unit is part of the provincial state bureaucratic organization that administers the state monopoly of legitimate force, with the function of securing pacific routines in the different social fields of human activity, controlling the legal use of force. We will now consider the actual function of that special section of riot police but *from the point of view* of those same bureaucratic agents that inhabit the riot police agency.

In the present chapter, we will first briefly analyze *their perspective* on their *official* function, and secondly the means through which such function is achieved: disciplined use of force. For that we will, first, briefly refer to the ‘common cause’(Weber) or objective function, as it is seen from the point of view of those same agents. We will then turn our attention to the discipline in the bodies and in the (individual and group) actions of the riot police agents. In relation to this we will first describe the individual preparation and exercise, as well as the attributes that are sought and acquired in such training, including the self-control of agents. We will then refer to such discipline as present in the coordinated maneuvers and tactics that “*combat groups*” use. Finally we will describe the disciplined and instrumental manner in which such violence is deployed.

In the present chapter, we intend to highlight the most clear and rational elements of the riot police agents visions and disposition, in order to be able to compare them with other more personal and *irrational* elements (from a formal rationality point of view) that are included in total meaning that the violence deployed in the peacekeeping function may have for the riot police functionaries.

### **2.1. The “objective cause” of the disciplined bodies: The Mission**

We now have to observe the objective function as embodied and incarnated in actual *police bodies* of the riot police members, as well as the ways in which such objective function structures the riot police agents perspectives on their work.

As Weber sustains ‘all modern war underlies the superior relevance or the moral elements in the efficacy of the troops, using emotive resources of all type...and tries during action, “to inspire” the conduct of the soldiers, ... and orients the training so that the directed penetrate with that will... and what is decisive is that the fervor possesses in its normal content an *objective aspect*, that is, means the fervor for a *common cause*, for a *rationaly pursued result*’(Weber,1992:883).

The objective mission of the bureaucratic riot police agents, as ‘increasingly, internal political violence is objectified in a “state juridical order”’(Weber,1992:469) has to be understood, analytically, as a case of a goal oriented action, that has as its end the maintenance of the state juridical order as well as a pacified situation (See Bittner,1990).

Such “common cause”, such objective cause, is the one that is inculcated to agents, during their passage through the police academy and during the instruction in the specific unit. According to Sergeant Gutierrez<sup>1</sup>, a central aspect of the training is “*conscience formation*”, in which the agent is told which is the specific *mission* that the infantry guard has to achieve, which is the function of the riot police unit. We will only cite one example of the answer that, with certain minimum variations, was systematically given about the riot police functions. Here is Sergeant Hierro’s (15 years in the unit) answer. In a literal reproduction of the legal code he informs that:

*“The police is that institution depository of public force, a civil institution, in charge of securing order and maintaining the life and property of people, that is why we are authorized by law to use force.”*

In a more practical and operational version he tells that:

*“What I care about is that order is maintained, that they do not start throwing stones, paint, or braking things, ...that is what matters, we are the ones in charge of maintaining order,...we are a necessary evil, we are obstacles,....professional obstacles. Our function is to prevent, until the moment that the crime is committed, and then in case there has been an offence, we have to repress the commission of the crime,.. in that case we have to wait the order of the judge...or when they call as for clearing a road, or make evictions, or in sport events, reestablish order,... that is the basic function”*

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<sup>1</sup> All names and specific grades that appear in the text had been changed in order to preserve the identity of the respondent. However, we had changed the grades within the officers or subordinates categories.

Such reference to the objective function has been found in all the interviews. “*Police is for the defense of life, goods and property and the rights of the people*”, recites Agent Roca. However, the maintenance of public order is the general will, the objective *intention*. The specific mission is that of “*maintaining public order*”. The excerpts are nothing special. They refer to the riot police function. This function is known by almost everybody that shares the society where riot police agents act. We present such statements as a manner of showing that police agents present themselves as functionaries of the universal, and guardians of peace, of that impersonal reason of state, consisting in peacekeepers, producers and guardians of the social peaceful conditions.

The production of a pacified order according to certain legal standards is their ultimate mission. According to their Internal Operations Manual (to which we had already referred in the methodological section (point 3 of the introduction) the *specific functions of riot police unit*, are those of:

- Disturbance control
- Protection of the life and the property of citizens, restraining the use of violence,
- Reestablishing order
- Arresting agitators

The inculcation of the mission of maintenance of order, etc. to riot police agents does not mean to introduce themselves into new mysteries that need certain special knowledge. Such sanctified notions, as life, property, peace and order, seem to be part of their common sense, of the pre-notions of the police agent common sense. Any police agent that has passed through the *scholar* inculcation of the historically arbitrary but naturalized notions of life, property, peace or order, finds nothing but the confirmation of his common sense in the directives he receives about the *mission* of the riot police. The protection of life and property, are already consecrated ends, consecrated by the state, and naturalized through its symbolic power of legitimate symbolic violence (Bourdieu,1996a). Such sanctified ends are what make acceptable the state use of force, converting it in *legitimate* physical violence. Part of the common sense, which is nothing but the official consecration of the *common sense* of some part of the public, which became universalized. As Bourdieu sustains, ‘the state imposes and inculcates common forms and categories of perception and thinking...with which creates the conditions for a kind of immediate

orchestration of habitus, that is in itself the basis of a kind of consensus over that group of shared evidences, that are constitutive of common sense.’(Bourdieu,1996a:117). The inculcation of the objectives of their work is reinforced and reaffirmed in during at their entrance to the institution.

Having observed the objective mission (their official goal) as seen by the riot police agents we will refer now to the principal *means* of achieving such objective. Their disciplined condition as well as to the instrumental rationality that orients their use of force in their interventions is their most precious weapon for achieving their mission.

## **2.2. The Means: disciplined riot police agents**

The disciplined condition, according to Weber, is the typical note of modern bureaucratized armed forces. We will follow him in the analysis of the disciplined conditions. We will also resort to Foucault’s works on discipline (1989: Chapter ‘Docile bodies’) but only for some *analytical aid* as he distinguishes some more aspects of discipline<sup>2</sup>. However, we are going to refer to discipline as a disposition that is acquired (one which in turn orients riot police agents use of force). We are specially interested in those *dispositions* (postures, patterns of movements, emotional states and emotional *skills*), that are exercised, trained and cultivated by the riot police agents. We consider such disciplinary process as the cultivation and production of disciplined dispositions, as a *bodily work* that is carried out by the riot police agents, in a process in which they mold their bodily dispositions to the conditions required in the Riot Police Unit and which enables them to form part of it and specially of it’s disciplined and rational fighting schemes. The disciplined condition is, as we will see, along with certain other dispositions, a disposition *highly* valued in the police institution, and even more, in the specific realm of the riot police.

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<sup>2</sup> Is good to remember that we are more interested *on the meanings of individual (or group) actions*, less than in *power structures*, or simply *structures*. That would mean to deny the subject, or consider it just a point where the strategies and structures of power make and impact, as Foucault does in his agentless social theory.

### 2.2.1. A police world within a disciplined society<sup>3</sup>

Before analyzing police discipline we must say that the disciplined disposition, that characterizes armed agents use force in the modern state, is not something that is limited to the military environment. In our society, a disciplinary society (Foucault,1989) the *disciplined condition*, (or *bodily docility*) is inculcated and acquired from early age from school, and even the family. To have a disciplined and docile body is a normal condition for many members of society<sup>4</sup>, and therefore for applicants to the police academy. Most of them have gone through different disciplinary instances and institutions (schools, factories, etc.). Such is also the condition of who these lines writes and, surely, of whom these lines reads.

As Corporal Juan (15 years in the force) admits:

*“Here what you learn at school, the forms, respect, obedience, discipline is preserved”.*

Or as Agent Rojo (3 years in the force, security guard before getting to the police) in another explicit reference of his disciplined condition says:

*“R: -As in every place, you get used to it, it is similar to the factory, you know, you have the foremen, the boss and the employee ,it is like the factory;*

*P:Have you ever worked in a factory?,*

*R:- Yes ,it is very similar, almost the same, the same discipline, everything... ”.*

In all cases the *bases of discipline* are already incorporated in the entrants to the police academy as members of such disciplined society. However, such disciplined condition is not an attribute uniformly distributed among the population. There are different levels of *intensity* of discipline. The discipline that agents may have when they ask to enter to the police force is just a minimum in comparison to the final requirements of the riot police work.

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<sup>3</sup> We refer to such section to leave aside that view that sees in the police institution a place where the agents are absolutely converted by disciplinary methods. We rather see such disciplinarization as a process that finds in the already disciplined agents an active and important interested complicity with the ‘totalitarian’ institution.

<sup>4</sup> We must have in mind that the ‘disciplined’ (Foucault) or ‘civilized’ (Elias) condition is not something uniformly spread among the agents situated in different positions that have different trajectories in the total social space. Different agents, with different class habitus have differential civilized and disciplined dispositions or habitus. A Elias sustains ‘The self control scheme, the modes of impulses configuration are very distinct according to the function and the position individuals have within the social figuration’ (Elias,1993:453). For other examples see i.e.: Wacquant, 2001. (For the similarities of Foucault’s analysis in relation to the ones of Elias see Van Krieken, 1990).

The police force requirement of certain discipline is relatively high. Agents that get to the institution are asked to demonstrate such discipline, in principle mainly in relation to obedience and submission. The requirements to get to the police agency include certain levels of education or disciplining experiences. Such *obedient dispositions* are officially demonstrated by finishing high school (for officers) or by the completion of primary school and military service for the applicants to subordinates school. In the case of subordinates, military service is specially required. That is, a specific disciplined condition that is highly considered and valued for entrance to the institution. The docile bodies of agents from working class origins applicants (and lately from higher classes, as the private working market shrinks) are reinforced in their submissive and obedient dispositions or habitus. There is a great elective affinity (Weber) between the military experience and the police demands. This surely determines that many working class men and woman, with very few other assets that their disciplined (and healthy) body, clean criminal records and a basic education find a place where their qualifications are relevant, considering the scarcity of decent jobs. Later on we will see that other reasons also impulse the working class applicants to enter the police force and to remain in it.

### **2.2.2. Police discipline**

*“The policeman is as any other public employee with the difference that apart from the fact that the police is an estate, [the policemen] works in a vertical, hierarchic and disciplinary institution”*  
(Commissary Eduardo, 25 years in the force).

Before we refer to the Riot Police Unit discipline we must previously analyze some related aspects of the individual discipline of the agents as mere members of the police force.

The riot police agents, before entering the unit, they go through the police school. We are not going to refer to this as we had not studied their passage through the police academy in particular. However we must make a brief reference to it as appeared in the interviews.

The police school acts as an act of passage, or “period of passage” as designated by Sirimarco in her work about the Argentine Federal Police (Sirimaco,1999;2000). The passage through school is relevant because the agents are indoctrinated, along with an increase in their obeying dispositions and the learning of the gradations and hierarchies.

As Sirimaco sustains '*the present work teaches that to construct the police subject is to construct an obedient subject*' (2000:13)<sup>5</sup>. The increase in obedience, is that of the cultivation and habituation in the disposition to 'the rationalized consequential fulfillment, that is, *methodically exercised, precisely and unconditionally opposed to any critic*, of a received order, along with the intimate attitude exclusively oriented towards such actualization'(Weber,1992:882). Such is the basic aim of such initial period. As Agent Lucas reflects:

*"It is as if discipline became automatic with the passing of time"*

It is also, in those first moments of the police career in the school that the officers and subordinates learn the hierarchies. The integration of the agents in the structure of command and obedience as tells us Officer Ivan:

*"What you first learn is the hierarchies, the structure, the salute"*.

They learn the hierarchies and the structure at the same time they learn how 'to move' in relation to them (to salute, to parade, stand firm).

*"When you are standing firm, the salute is done through raising your right hand, passing it just over the line of buttons [of your uniform], and then against your head , then quickly toward your side again."*(Officer Marcos)

In such case the emphasis on the body may be following the production of a body belief, of a *carnal intimate attitude* that is nothing but a bodily attitude, the corporeal expression of a *bodily belief* (Bourdieu,1990a: ch.4) in the knowledge and orders that are received. As Bourdieu sustains "If most organizations-...-give such a big place to bodily disciplines, this is to great extent because obedience is belief, and belief is what the body grants even when the mind says no (one could, on the basis of this logic, reflect on the notion of discipline)"(1990b:167). In such process is given the *incorporation* of the specific mission that, more than conscious awakening of the agents, is rather a bodily inculcation and incorporation of the arbitrary principles that structure the order of the force, that in turn relate to legitimating ideas of the use of force they will do, and therefore the uses of their bodies. Such change in the ways of perceiving goes unperceived As referred by agent Hierro:

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<sup>5</sup> According to Sirimaco 'the construction of the police subject implies a destruction of the 'civil', the passage through the course is converted in a space that destroys to construct, modelling a new self, that implies abandoning the prior postures, impressing in its place, a new knowledge according to which the police agent defines himself'(1999:9). We do not agree on such total conversion of the agent. We rather see



“It is a kind of change of habit, suddenly you start seeing things in another way”

The heightened obedient disposition, the new bodily situation, is directly related to the objective causes of law and order. Agents learn to salute, to walk, to talk, to communicate in specific ways: ‘the estrangement turns into understanding; modalities, the *brute manners* -presenting oneself, talk, and answer shouting, treating people in a distant manner- turn into daily practices, and what was initially a transformation turns into a new state.’(Sirimarco, 2000:10).

The changes in the bodily dispositions are existentially and temporally related to the inculcation of the official function and their conversion and institution as *functionaries*. In such case such dispositions, such promptness to obedience, also means the entrance to a new field in which they will start to serve the public in the name of law and order. That obeying disposition, that is the obedience to hierarchy, becomes the natural way of seeing and feeling:

“I think discipline is important in any aspect of life, for having a frame, a pyramid within which you can develop, you get out of it and good bye, you are lost...”(Officer Ivan)

The basic salutes, standing in firm position, through a secret pedagogy<sup>6</sup>, are initially related to the basic *knowledge* about the police world that cannot be other than the inculcation of the arbitrary ideas and principles that constitute the field. Such principles inculcated in the beginners, will be refreshed every time those basic bodily dispositions will be required. As Bourdieu sustains ‘Every social order systematically takes advantage of the dispositions of the body and language to function as depositories of deferred thoughts that can be triggered off at a distance in space and time by the simple effect of replacing the body in an overall posture which *recalls* the associated thoughts and feelings, in one of the inductive states of the body which, as actors know, gives rise to states of the mind’ (Bourdieu,1990:69)

However, we are even more interested in the specific ‘discipline’ (not limited to obedience and docility) that is acquired *in* the riot police instruction and experience within the riot police force. Police agents not only get used to obey. They also learn the skills and

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a great number of continuities in the intimate dispositions of the agents. One is the continuity of the disciplined condition. We will find others.

<sup>6</sup> ‘The cunning of pedagogic reason lies precisely in the fact that it manages to exhort what is essential while seeming to demand the insignificant, such as the respect of forms and forms of respect which are the most

secrets of their trade, all of which are intimately related to bodily abilities. We will consider the acquisition and conditionings to which they subject themselves in order to be able to be part of the riot police machinery.

### 2.2.3. Riot police disciplined disciples

The experience of the riot police instruction starts with a spatial exclusion. The Riot Police Unit has a separate building and location, the old cavalry squadron's building. In such place the agents: officers and subordinates have their specific places. But more than that, as an agent of the patrol units states while referring to the riot police,

*“each agent has their own bed, where they can go when ever they want. They do not receive sheets, but some of them even have pillows. They have keys and they have their own cupboard where to keep things. And they have the officers barracks and the subordinated barracks”*

As we can see, this is a specific case of *closure* (Foucault, 1989:145): ‘the specification of an heterogeneous space different to all others and closed over it self’. Such place is also a hierarchic place. There are *“barracks for officers and barracks for the subordinated”*, as well as an officer's rest room and restaurant and a subordinates eating room, constructing a hierarchic architecture that continuously marks ranks and functions.

Within this space some of the instruction and training process takes place. The other places where they have instruction are some former military bases, where only some soldiers guard. They have also got a farm that is lent by one of the officers, where they receive special instruction going to *survival weekends* where they strengthen resistance and group cohesion.(None of the instruction sessions were observed, because they are considered “secret”. The occasion in which the secret knowledge of the bureaucracy, the basis of its domination, is displayed in order to be transmitted. In this case the secret knowledge of this specific part of state bureaucracy are their maneuvers, formations, etc.).

The process of adaptation to the requirements of the riot police work, then continues through the gradual exposure of the agents to *real* scenarios and situations. In such real scenarios they start by having more passive roles going. With time there are

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visible and most ‘natural’ manifestations of respect for the established order, or the concessions of politeness, which always contain political concessions’(Bourdieu:1990:69)

assigned greater participation in more active tasks under the assistance of older members of the unit.

In the case of the police agents that arrive to the Riot Police Unit they train in a way in which they leave aside their heroic individualistic attitudes and sacrifice them in the name of group performance. As Weber sustains, discipline is “*training with the aim of developing a mechanized promptness through practice...all in service of the achievement of an optimum...of physical and psychological energy, developed in the masses uniformly trained*”(1992:883). We will consider the way in which riot police agents become trained and train and experienced for the achievement of an optimum of physical and psychic energy within their body. It is very relevant to always have in mind that such construction of the body is a *bodily capitalization*, where a piece of flesh acquires greater *value*, a value that is *individually possessed by the owner of the body* through ‘awakening the potencies that sleep within him, subduing the play of his own forces to his discipline’(Marx,1946[1867],Vol.1:130). Such bodily capitalization is the acquisition of the specific *bodily capital*, specific fighting skills, a specific *police bodily capital*. This includes the enhancement of the bodily muscular and resistance potencies, specific patterns of movements as well as emotional skills (See Wacquant,1995). We will describe the basic features of this bodily capitalization process. We will refer to the individual body changes first, and then we will consider these individual bodies as forming part of the disciplined units called Combat Groups. As we will now see the disciplined condition includes much more than a heightened obedient disposition (even if such promptness to obey is, as Weber sustains, a basic element of discipline).

2.2.3.a. The work of construction of the riot police agent’s body: carving out the infantrymen within.

*“Basic virtues of the infantryman are: Good physical condition, self-confidence, stable temper and being just and impartial”* (RPU Internal Manual)

The process of converting one self in a *virtuous infantrymen* is a rather long and hard process in which agents subject their body to a series of experiences and conditionings that will later permit him take part of the sacrificed and tense routines of the riot police work. Such *carnal* knowledge can not be acquired by an explicit linguistic act. The internal *official* virtues of self-confidence, good physical condition and stable temper are all, in a great manner, virtues related to a certain state of the body. As a set of physical and emotional states and abilities they must be worked out and can only be acquired

through hard work and with a great investment of time, after which a modified and cultivated body arises. As Bourdieu sustains: ‘the accumulation of cultural [and bodily] capital requires incorporation, that as long as supposes a work of inculcation and assimilation, takes up *time*, time that has to be invested personally by the investor’ (Bourdieu,1986a:11).

We use the “Basic Virtues” list as an organizer of the following exposition of the process of bodily capitalization. The virtue of *good physical condition*, is obtained in a process in which the infantryman’s body, the raw material of the pacifying machine, is reinforced, built and conditioned for greater requirements. A great synthesis of the different dimensions of the body that are trained and *worked out* in the training is summarized in an internal circular of Infantry Guard (entitled “Development and content of a normal class”), which is given by Instructors to newcomers. We reproduce the ‘objectives’ as they are presented.

*“During the classes the infantryman will start with the physical conditioning in which he will work intensely for the fortification, elasticity, coordination and productiveness of his body. Fortification not only in physical force but also in the development of internal energy.*

*\* Physical force: the infantryman will develop greater muscular force for when it is required to rapidly mobilize his own personal weight; such increase will cooperate in the augmentation of muscular contraction velocity, which will favor naturally the movement of different balances, in cyclical and acyclical actions.*

*\*Internal energy: through the development of internal energy, that is, with the liberation of the maximum tension obtained through the control of respiration, we will obtain two fundamental purposes: on the one hand the application of the totality of energy directed to the point where it is directed to, avoiding the reversion to the interior of the body, what would be a limit to the expulsion of force, and on the other hand, through breathing, in the moment of the execution of the technique there would be a maximum muscular concentration in the abdominal zone, making that such technique much more efficient*

*\*Elasticity: With the achievement of elasticity, in the infantryman, we will prevent the not so elastic muscles from not acting in a negative manner in the development of the technique, achieving that those have greater scope and effectiveness.*

*\* Coordination: in this case, the infantryman will achieve a greater motor coordination, through the executions that pertain to the discipline, **learning to know in a total manner the body in a way that he can surpass his own natural limits.***

*\*Productiveness: is obtained through discipline that will seek no only the maximum requirements from the physic, but also will act on the psychic productiveness of the infantryman, enabling him to undergo physically and psychologically those situations where he gets to the limits of the exigencies” (our emphasis and underlining)*

The increase in the forces of the body is not only a matter of physical force, elasticity and coordination of the single body, is also the cultivation of “productiveness”, which is basically self-control. With the bodily raw material, greater general power (physical force, internal force, coordination) is obtained and increased, or at least sought by the instructor and by the agent. These is done through gymnastics, running, ‘localized

exercises' (push ups, sit-up, frog leaping, etc.), and through the subjection to certain weight intervals within which the agents will have to remain in the future. As Weber states in discipline *'man is dispossessed of the rhythm that imposes his own organic structure through a systematic decomposition according to the functions of the different muscles and through the creation of an economy of forces that is taken to its maximum of production.'* (1992:889).

At the same time that the general energies of the body are increased, the effort to produce (in the instructor perspective) and achieve (in the infantrymen perspective) 'the control of activity' (Foucault,1989.155), in which the basic movements and positions are learned, takes place. With the acquisition of the specific knowledge and abilities that are transmitted by the instructors the agents will be able in the relative long run to achieve the other virtue of *self confidence* in their confrontations with the public.

In order to acquire greater confidence on what their bodies are able to do, they start with theoretical instruction. The technical elements received in the instruction process, are firstly put into practice in controlled scenarios that try to imitate the real ones. Instructor Gutierrez (wanted to be a military, 18 years in the force) gives us a hint about such process of construction of the infantryman.

*"Things are as follows:*

*First, comes the instruction period, which is the period in which the agents get instructed theoretically and practically, which takes more or less a month, but in 25 days you can get them to know something.*

*Then comes the period I would call the "formation period", in which the agent acquires practice, where details are polished, where the knowledge becomes firmer, that takes much more time and experience"*

As we can see first such a process is more of an acquisition of a bodily disposition, starting with "*practice*", where agents get their details corrected and polished. In the process of *practice* is that they acquire the *knowledge*, the fighting gymnastics, which, with time, become *firmer*, that is more deeply incorporated, an automatic, a *mechanized disposition*, as Weber called it.

According to Weber, with discipline 'men's psychophysical structure is ...completely adapted to the requirements that imposes the external world, the instrument, the machine, in sum the function'(1992:889). In this period the basic bodily patterns of movement as well as positions are learned. This includes how to march and how to stand. How to grab the baton as well as how to move the baton, how to take and how to hold the

shield, etc.. Agents learn again how to “*stand and to walk*”. The basic bodily operation of standing and walking is *adapted* in order to resist and contribute to the working conditions and to the function. As Instructor Sergeant Hierro (12 years in the force) tells us

*“We get prepared for hours standing, you need to know how to stand, otherwise you start with cramps in your body.”*

The agents also has to learn how to maintain a firm posture, straight, in a generation of the ‘correlation of the body and the gesture’ (Foucault,1989:156). With the passing of time the firm and neutral expression of the face, which reflects the firmness and straightness of the body, the specific *hexis*<sup>7</sup>, is learned. The riot police agent also learns the proper specific ‘face and body work’ in the sense that Goffman gives to it, as ‘competence in controlling the expressions, movements and communications of the body’ (Schilling,1993:83). These is clearly demonstrated in the neutral expression they learn to hold and sustains for hours. They do not intent to develop Goffman’s ‘civil inattention’, but rather an ‘incivil inattention’ in which the riot police agents just act as if they would completely ignore the presence of other people adopting a ‘senseless’ expression (as if they would not see, listen, hear) that precludes all possibility of interaction. Their face work also includes “warring face”. As Agent Mario confides:

*“When you get to the unit they tell you to put ‘war face’, war face means that you are ready to do anything, as if you would be absolutely sure of yourself, even if internally you are absolutely scared.”*

Such basic bodily conditions and dispositions for standing, walking, and looking are complemented with the “object-body articulation”(Foucault,1989:156). The agent is taught (and learns) how to *actively use* the different weapons and instruments such as “tonfa” (short stick with a handle, “T”shaped, originally a Japanese rice grinder), batons, shields, and firearms. As an example we reproduce some parts of the Internal Circular that has already been mentioned. In page five we find the following contents:

Unit 3:

- a. Tonfa: recognition of the weapon and technical uses
- b. Blocks and hits with the Tonfa
- c. How to reduce a subject with a Tonfa
- d. Tonfa, other ways of using it
- e. **Tonfa and infantry man**

UNIT 4

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<sup>7</sup> Bodily *hexis*, the general way of carrying and moving the body are ‘permanent dispositions of the body a durable way of standing, speaking, walking and thereby of feeling and thinking’ (Bourdieu,1990:70)

*Truncheon:*

a. *Truncheon: recognition of the weapon and technical uses*

b. *Truncheon: Blocks and hits with the truncheon*

c. ***Truncheon and the infantry man***

As we can see men are adapted to their function, in a relation of the man with his instrument in a way that the weapon becomes part of the man. What happens to the riot police agents happens is the same as to any other manual worker. As Marx puts it, in relation to the instruments of his work: ‘products of nature convert directly in organs of the activity of the worker, organs that he incorporates as his own corporal organs’(Capital, V. I.;132). Agent Ramon describes his dialectical relation to *his* weapon in the following manner:

*“The weapon is as part of your body, becomes part of you, when you do not have it is as if you felt strange, it is as if something was missing in you, we are all day with the weapon on us.”*<sup>8</sup>

In relation to firearms used in maintaining order, (shotguns that fire rubber bullets and shotguns that fire CS Gas cartridges) they know everything about them and how to use them. But the relation to them is more than knowing how to use them. They know them also in their effects. Even the power of rubber bullets is apprehended. Their effects is suffered and proved over their own bodies during the “practices”. Such communion with the instruments of their labor is even more intense in the case of the gas. Such gas even transposes the surface of the bodies and introduces itself in the body of the agents, who develop a mystic of the tolerance to the gas, which is clinically proved that one cannot increase the tolerance to gas. Such “adaptation” to the gas is supposedly produced in the enclosure of agents in closed spaces where they are left for some minutes.<sup>9</sup> Their daily tolerance and daily relation with CS gas is also present in their daily jokes. A very

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<sup>8</sup> The concrete and intimate relation of the police agent with the instrument of his work is epitomized in at least two movies: *Robocop* and *Judge Dredd*. Every time Robocop needed his pistol his working tool ‘came out’ of the policeman’s leg. In relation to the other movie, as Hatty so well has observed ‘Dredd (a futurist mixture of a judge and a policeman) carries a weapon he programs with verbal commands; the weapons repeats Dredd’s instructions in a deep, resonant male voice suggesting a neat symbiosis between man and gun’(Hatty,1999:160) It is enormously interesting that those two movies appeared in the interviews, and in relation to this specific subject. In relation to the last one, Sergeant Hierro recalled with emotion: “*Ohhh, Judge Dredd, that was a tough guy, have you seen that movie... he had a weapon that recognized his fingerprints, that’s cool*”

<sup>9</sup> Such place is mystically called “*the chapel*”, and through the successful resistance to the gas exposition, they “purify” themselves. Some refer, in a local joking folklore that men convert in such “chapel”, acquiring animal forms, such as cats and lions or converting into supermen, such as “Hulk” or Superman. They are also taught how to use the batons or truncheons and the shield (About such weapons see Waddington,1991: appendix B, which even if they refer to the ones used by the British police they are the same as the ones used by the Cordoba police department)

common joke consists in spreading gas in the trucks while they are traveling or waiting, and if any of the members of the combat group starts crying is softly punished by his companions who give him not so light spanks.

However what is more important is that the body of the police worker is adapted to the instrument in a dialectic relation with the instrument (Shield, baton, tonfa). A relation in which ‘he puts into action the natural forces that form his corporeality, his arms, his legs, his head and his hand, so as to assimilate under a useful manner, the matters nature gives to him. And at the same time that he acts on a nature external to him and transforms it, he transforms his own nature’ (Marx,1946,I:130). In this case the ‘matters’, the instruments of his work are not given by nature, but by the State, who has monopolized the means of production of force, dispossessing the means of force from all those who had them as their own in prior stages, as Weber has so well demonstrated (See esp. Weber, 1995). However the state can not disposes the riot police agents of their internal bodily capital and skills that are required to put into action the state resources, the means of violence. As we will see the inherently individual and personal *possession* of such bodily resources are of central importance for understanding the meanings attached to their use of force. And this is related to the development of the *third virtue* mentioned in the internal manual: *Stable temper*.

#### 2.2.3.b. Temper

*“What you are taught when you go to the riot police is movements, formations, but specially, temper”* (Agent Roca)

The training and the experience that with time is achieved is not only about knowing and controlling the non human nature of the state owned *instruments*. As we see the training seeks to augment the agent’s bodily elasticity, force, and coordination, as well as how to stand, walk, and march. The training also involves other kinds of emotional *knowledge*: an emotional skill and disposition, which is perhaps the central aim of the whole training: *temper*.

Apart from the technical aspects of the individual work, what is sought in all the training period and acquired with time is the bodily condition that will permit the agents to integrate into a greater disciplined group: the combat group. Such emotional skill (condition and disposition) is known in the local riot police folklore as “temper” (in Spanish: temple). The meaning of such term, as it is used by the infantrymen, cannot be



defined by only one of the meaning the dictionary gives<sup>10</sup>. It is a mixture of ‘1. *the particular state of mind or feelings*. 2. *habit of mind (and body) esp. with respect to irritability or patience*. 4. *calm disposition or state of mind*’ [that is metaphorically and practically related and lived as] ‘5. *a substance added to something to modify its properties or qualities*’ and specially, in what it may be the most precise dictionary definition for what riot police agents mean with *temper* : ‘6. *the particular degree of hardness and elasticity imparted to steel, etc. by tempering*’. Riot police agents seem to think that in that ‘etc.’ clause their own body and self would perfectly fit.

Such *tempering* of the mind (and the body) that is achieved through instruction, sacrifice, effort and pain, is directly related to the control of emotions and reactions of the body, to self-control. Instructor Marcos defines it in the following way:

*“what you get with trainings and experience, the most important thing is, more than the volume of your body or being in shape, is what is called **temper, the possibility of controlling yourself**”. [Such] training [acting as a furnace] “tempers the bodies”, it allows you not to get uncontrolled, not to get mad”*

Such temper is related to a *firm* body, but not in the sense that it is a muscular and strong body. It rather refers to that *internal energy*, the possibility to control the body, to have an internal firmness, apart from an external gesture and presentation of it. Such temper is also related to *resistance* or as it was stated in the internal circular, *productiveness*. The control of the body that must resist gas, and resist long hours standing in the sun or rain, or cold, hunger and thirst, as well as the control of irritations and reactions to insults and attacks, resist etceteras, everything. Such temper is also related to the *surplus of force and resistance* that the infantrymen can obtain through the control of their body (productiveness):

*“In situations in which the body gets to a limit is the brain that has to start to control it, to obtain from it the most it can give”* (Instructor Marcos)

Such temper is the development of a surplus of self-control acquired through the experience of self-control in training in strained conditions and gradual exposition to real situations. Sergeant Pablo, explains the conditions of acquisitions:

*“When you are treated as a piece of shit in the trainings, when you are humiliated, and when you are subjected to interminable physical efforts, without the right to say one word,... all that is extremely useful for when you are with the*

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<sup>10</sup> The American College dictionary, edited by Clarence Barnhardt, Random House, New York, 1951, word: Temper.

*public, they insult you and you know how to control yourself... that is the only way of acquiring temper*”

Sirimarco in her study of the Federal Police has also referred to such temper as one of the basic goals of the training, recognizing that ‘within the many informal requisites that are needed to “be a policeman” having a *strong personality* is one of them’. She relates such tough condition to the advantages of the police effectiveness in the police work, but seeing such temper as synonyms of *authority and the imposition of respect* (Sirimarco,1999:10). Such self control, as we will see, is relevant for the maintenance of authority and imposition of respect, but it is even more important for those occasions when authority and respect has been lost and has to be recovered by the means of force.

Such self-control or temper is in turn the element that permits the articulation of the actions of the different individuals in a coordinated action of another body: the combat group. Such self-control, or discipline, or temper, permits ‘the composition of forces’(Foucault,1989:148). For the riot police agents, as part of the combat group ‘his bravery or his force are not anymore the principle variables that define it, but the position he occupies.’ (Foucault,1989)

*“More important than your physic, is mental control, sometimes you have short people and people out of shape, but what matters is that they control themselves.”(Instructor Marcos).*

It is through the control of the individual that the person can be coordinated with the general group and where the individual skills can be coordinated in a collective accumulation of fighting power or ‘fighting strength’ (Bourdieu,1990a:123). It is through the acquisition of a certain self control that ‘the cult of honor and the exercise of the hazardous capacity’(Weber) is put aside and replaced by discipline, self controlled, collective and anonymous heroism. Such disciplined and *anonymous* dispositions are the bases of an anonymous but *collective warring honor* that is related to the *total power* that combat groups, or in some cases the totality of the riot police unit, can display and achieve through their use of force. As Sergeant Hierro refers explicitly:

*“those that are in the guard and are not scared, are no good, because those that have no fear do not stay in line, they run alone, and those are the little Rambos, who are no good... as soon they get here, they are restrained, they are no good,... there is no place for those here...we are anonymous heroes.”*

We want to highlight one aspect of such disciplined condition that must be stated clearly. Temper, as they call it, is a heightening of their self-control structures. We can say

that the disciplinary process is also a personal process of civilization (Elias,1993). Agents that get to the riot police, as we saw, must *work out* their self-control structure, which is continually threatened in the tense situations to which they are exposed. In most cases the agents that get to the institution have refraining internal structures that are not strong enough for the function, even though they are civilized enough to be accepted in the institution. The civilizing impact that the disciplinary process has is even greater in the cases of the riot police agents, because of their working class origin and working class habitus. Such class habitus is prone to engage in fights and to react promptly to force challenges (About popular habitus see Bourdieu,1984:393). The RPU is like a civilizing environment, where agents are subjected to larger chains of dependence, having to increase their control of impulses in order to be effective in their social function.

The temper referred to above is the basic element of the individual attitude and the kernel of the coordinated group: the combat group.

#### 2.2.3.c. The formation of the collective riot police body: integrating the infantrymen within the combat group

In line with Weber's ideas, Foucault is correct when he sustains that with discipline 'the soldier whose body has been educated to function piece by piece in determined operations, must in turn, constitute the element of a mechanism of another level.'(1989:169). In this case such 'mechanism of another level' is the *combat group* (which are in turn the elements of the riot police *mechanism*, which in turn is an element of the police force). Within such combat group, that is in itself a piece of a greater element, the agent's body is a unit, the individual agent an element of the combat group. Besides the body has already been trained and converted into a means of power. Each part of the body has been converted in a unit, that is synthesized in a certain bodily hexis and dispositions, which will be *practically* synthesized in the combat group movements and maneuvers. After that comes the coordination of the combat groups in the general tactics of the RPU, as we will see, increasing the individual's fighting power accumulated in the total collective fighting strength. Such participation in the collective fighting strength is also the participation in the symbolic rewards that the possession of such power produces. Such symbolic rewards is the basis for understanding the expressive dimensions of the use of force, as we will show it in the next two chapters. Let us continue now with the

consideration of the deployment of such collective power in the form of disciplined combat groups.

According to the definition of the Riot Police “Internal Manual”: a combat group is a *flexible and balanced organized fraction, with the mission to suppress any disturbance*”.

The members of a combat group are parts of a group that is expected to be *flexible and balanced*. The flexibility of such combat group, refers the mobility and adaptability of the agents to different functions and missions, which in turn correspond to different formations. Such flexibility is the most important *communal virtue* of the riot police agents. The combat group, according to the Internal Manual, are expected to have “*the capacity to act in different missions, in time and space, with the nature and magnitude that corresponds*”. Such flexibility is the basis of their supremacy. Not because of the “mass principle”, but, because of the effects of ‘the geometry of divisible segments whose basic unit is the mobile soldier with his weapon’ (Foucault, 1989:169).

The other central aspect of such group, according to the manual is *balance*. This refers to the proper positioning of agents according to their inherent bodily structure and position in the chain of command. as well internal consistency, or *solidarity*.

In relation to the positioning aspect, the members of the combat groups, in the formations and movements are organized according to their bodily structures, with the tallest in front (if they form in lines ) or in the center (if they form a wall).

“*You Gringo, you would be good for I*[for position 1]”, or “*What do you think if we try him as I?*” was a very common observation in relation to the bodily structure of whom these lines writes. It refers to the convenience of putting taller people on the front. Each body finds a place within the combat group according to their specific measures and structures, as in a rugby scrum.

In relation to solidity dimension of the combat group, more than the body structure, are individual skills and abilities that are required to be part of such group. In what we are most interested now is the “coordination aspect”, in relation to movement

*“you have to move and walk at the same rhythm, with the same attitude”... “We all run at the same speed. There was a time when the rhythm of running was too fast, and happened that some officials were left behind and where seriously injured by individual who could attack them, so we had decided that we would run slowly”*, remembers Instructor Hierro.

Such consistency is necessary even when they are standing still in front of the public. In such occasions *self-control* is central for the efficiency of the group. The loss of

“temper” can be catastrophic for the group, it can even “destroy it”. Instructor Marcos, refers to such occasion of lack of control:

*“If they loose their temper, in those cases you have big problems, because the whole institution is exposed, apart from that the group gets destroyed and is exposed to the possibility that something may happen to it, they eat him up”.*

Or as Corporal Juluis Cesar remembers:

*“sometimes you lose your temper, it is not easy,....once I went crazy and lost my temper, we where with the electricity union, in front of the parliament building, and we had them at less that two meters, and then a guy started passing close to me, around me, he chewed gum in my face, at ten centimeters, ‘cause they now what to do, then he turns round and spits at my face, and I could not stand any more, and pushes my shield, and I went crazy and pushed him with the shield,. and...and we almost had a big problem, thanks god nothing happened, but they provoke you, and you have to pretend that nothing is going on”*

In turn the position within the combat group is determined by the specific skills of the agents. The combat groups can have different formations, but internally is structured according to different functions. The combat group includes agents that control different weapons and instruments. Some of them only take the shield and the stick and other will just take a pistol that throws gas canisters or rubber bullets. The distribution of the tasks and functions (which in turn is related to the use of different arsenals) is determined by the official hierarchy as well as by the experience of the agents. The new ones usually use shields and sticks and the old ones use guns and direct the combat group.

*2.2.3.c.1. The movements of the disciplined body: maneuvers and tactics of the combat group*

All that coordination is oriented by certain formation and maneuvers, certain techniques that orients this ‘geometry of power’(Foucault) or better, geometricians and physicists of power. The individual agent, the ‘fragment of a mobile space’(Foucault) is integrated in the most diverse *strategic figures*: They become points of a more or less dense “*line of cordon*”, or parts of a “*wedge*”. Or they become the “*origin point*” or the edge of a rotating line which “*turns in the angles of the street*”. Or they become parts of a *literal* formation, forming “Vs” (wedges), “Hs”, or “Ms” according to the specific functions and occasions. Such lines, cordons, walls, H’s, V’s, M’s, can become more or less dense,

depending on the “proximity of the agents”. There are not only architecture, they are also *mobile* forms, put in action for the production and reproduction of order.

In order to have an idea about how do the combat groups work, let's observe how one of their specific formations work. Is thanks to this formations they their fighting power is immensely enhanced. We refer to Waddington's (1991) accurate description of the ‘Trudging and wedging’ work. We resort to Waddington's work for the analogy with the local techniques, and for the compromise not to comment on such local techniques. Waddington's book (1991) was read to the instructors of the Cordoba riot police unit, and they recognized that all that was said in relation to tactical aspects in that book was similar to what they did<sup>11</sup>.

‘Although normally conceived as static, cordons can move, progressively forcing a crowd backs either by the symbolic authority of an advancing line of police or by sheer physical force. This is the traditional method of “pushing and shoving” but one that has gradually been polished into more effective methods of crowd control. It has been found that the disciplined and concerted movement of a police cordon, especially the “chorus line”, can move a crowd of far superior numbers. This is known as the “trudging”: a series of side steps directed toward the crowd, coordinated so the moment of advance is simultaneous. When used in combination with a wedge formation, it can be very effective in splitting a crowd, gaining access to offenders in the center of the crowd of moving a section of the crowd.

The wedge is a chevron formation in which the point of the chevron is driven into the crowd as officers trudge forward, slowly but irresistibly. Like the chorus line cordon, the wedge gains its strength from officers each holding the belt of their immediate or next to immediate neighbor. A wedge is formed behind a cordon which opens progressively as the wedge passes through. Once driven into the crowd, the wedge can open, hinged at the center so as to form a new cordon, with officers from the previous cordons coming from the rear to assist. Or it can open at the center to split a crowd into two halves. Sometimes wedges used in combination, entering the crowd from different location, can isolate sections of the crowd and push them to some other position. Wedges may comprise a single line of officers or as many additional lines as are necessary to drive into the resisting mass of people.... In addition, arresting officers can be positioned in the center of the chevron to take prisoners handed through the lines” (P. Waddington, *The strong arm of the Law*, 1991:313-314.)

#### 2.2.3.d. Metaphors of the body as metaphors of the self

*Infantrymen are oiled machines prepared for the specific mission of maintaining order*  
(Agent Hierro)

The bodily process of change experienced by the agents is conceived and imagined in relation to certain metaphors related to their conception of their new body. Such metaphors necessarily relate to themselves, and act as principles of perception of themselves as possessors of the attributes of the objects of their metaphors. We will briefly comment on three basic manners of considering the body by the riot police agents that had arisen: The body as a metal instrument, the body as a machine, and the body as a piece of a machine. (We exceptionally quote their expressions within the text, between quotations marks, for exposition reasons.)

For Riot police agents the body is conceived made out of metal, the same material that the instruments of their trade, metal weapons. It is as if they themselves are *living weapons*. The raw material of their body, which is “*like steel*”, must be tempered. Such temper is obtained through “*the fire that is the experience*”. As Agent Cesar sustains “*they temper us, they “temper us”* (they use the verb *foguear*: that means: “to habituate persons and animals to the discharge of fire arms”). In turn the body acquires the virtues of the metal elements. It is through such tempering of the body, that the body becomes “*firmer*” and “*resistant*” . Such tempered body as any good steel, “*twists but does not brake*”, it rather adapts, but does not brake. During the instruction, the body is “*made harder and stronger. With no use the body may get rusty*”.

Such metal element in turn functions as a machine. According to Foucault (1989:140) and to Le Breton (1995: Ch. 2) the body as a machine is central imaginary in modernity. It is also a central image for the modern agents, included the riot police agents.

They refer that such *tempered steel* machine, such body-machine, is “*adjusted during the instruction, tuned, corrected*”, until is “*ready*” for being put into use. When they are called into action “*all the chains get tense, the rings of the chain get tense*” refers Agent Hierro, who defines the riot police agent as “*oiled machines prepared for the specific mission of maintaining order*”. The case in which such temper is lost is referred as the case in which “*the chain has come out*”), as refers Instructor Marcos. In such case the mechanism has not worked correctly and needs to be adjusted. It needs more instruction. In turn, a too great level of self-control, may turn out to be negative for the functioning of the mechanism. Such body must be used continually in order to make it “*work smoothly*”. Has to be maintained in use so all pieces remain “*lubricated*”..

Such individual machines are in turn pieces of greater social machine: the formations and maneuvers. They refer to the combat group *dispersion*, as a case if which the combat group may “*gets destroyed*”. Such combat groups sometimes acquire weapon like conditions. Such combat group acts as “*a lance*”, a “*wedge*”. Such wedge formation, is not only a formation, is a *human wedge*, as a “*wall*” is a *human wall*, an a “*cordon*” is a *human chain*. Supraindividual formations, that acquire in their representations an autonomous entity, as does the scrum in rugby. Such social machines perform functions:

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<sup>11</sup>The instructors were impressed about the content of such “publicly” available book. According to such practical equivalence we send the reader to Appendix B of Waddington’s book for references about such tactics (1991 pages 313-323).

“stop” the public, “push” people”, “clean” spaces, the stadiums, and “divide” and “disperse” the “masses”.

### 2.3. The instrumental use of force

It is time to consider the presence of Weber’s instrumental rationality in the deployment of force by the prepared, disciplined and skilled agents of the riot police unit. The riot police force function of producing and reproducing a pacified legal order is achieved day after day, occasion after occasion thanks to the rational use and coordination of their resources, and the rational procedures oriented to their function of peacekeeping.

The general objective of producing peace and order is translated in a more concrete objective. The Riot Police Unit has as its general working principle (according to the Operations Internal Manual) that of the neutral and impersonal objective of “*Neutralization of the organization and the will to resist*” of the public with which they come in contact with. In the achievement of such objective they will act according to some others *principles*, presented in such manual. Some of them are:

- 1) *Principle of economy*: the best use of the less possible resources in order to achieve the greater efficacy.
- 2) *Principle of simplicity*: deploy simple and direct maneuvers in place of complex and complicated movements.
- 3) *Principle of the mass*: force must concentrated in the most relevant (critical) place and time.
- 4) *Principle of surprise*.

In the cases of riot police intervention the basic objective is that of dispersion. As Agent Roca synthesizes:

*“what is done is prevention, that people goes from one place to another quietly, that every thing goes on with nobody ruining the party. But well, if somewhere there is somebody that ruins the thing, then we try to control the situation. In such case they order it, we repress.. but what is most important is that they **disperse**, that they do not organize”*

A similar basic objective has been described in Waddington’s work: ‘because a crowd is an entity in itself, the most sensible strategy to combat a violent mob is to disperse it. A dispersed crowd, loses its awesome potential for violence and destruction. Its members cannot commit criminal offences with such impunity...if a dispersed crowd could be kept into moving, there will be limited opportunities for its members to



acquire debris and another sources of missile ammunition as fewer opportunities to throw them'(Waddington,1991:162)

In the production of pacific routines, the riot police agents, according to the *principle of economy*, tends to use force as the last resort. Even though we do not have statistics, most of the interventions are passive actions. Their basic tactics are the same as described by Waddington,1991.: 'taking the ground' (arrive to the scene well in advance of the crowd) and 'demarcate spaces'. If the ground has already been taken by the demonstrators it will be fought for. Then comes the most basic and universal police tactic: sheer presence, which takes the form of a cordon. The cordon can be animate or inanimate. In case the cordon is animated such is made with officers. (When they work with other unit the cordon includes horses and dogs). The lines may become incrementally animate. Such animated lines may become increasingly *dense*. Such increment in turn may pass from passive to active, when the passive attitude is not enough to produce such dispersion.

Officially, their main objective is that of restoring order. For attaining such aim events are divided according to the level of conflict, not for deciding to call in other units, as is the case of the London police force (See Waddington,1991:312), but for deciding what are the actions to adopt. We must remember that the riot police of the local police department is a semi autonomous unit, directed by the Special Units Director.

In our local police force, any disturbance or public concentration is distinguished (according to the Internal Manual and in a quite poetic way), as having three basic possible moments: the "*calm*", the "*tension*" and the "*repression*".

The *calm* phase or level, is that in which there is no serious concentration (Which depends on the place and the behavior of the public). This situation is not so clearly defined, but usually refers to normal and ordered routines within the public.

Then comes the *tension* phase. In such situation there is a certain concentration of people, where they do not commit any clear infraction, other that occupying a certain space and shouting. In such conditions what the riot police does, in order to dissolve the concentration of the public, and in line with the *principle of economy* are "*demonstrations*" or better *ostentation acts*, in which they deploy a whole number of psychological tactics or tricks.

These ostentation tactics consist in a *representation* and *ostentation* of their power. They call it the "*imprenta*", which can be translated as *to cause impression*. This kind of act, in the native speech has converted into a noun form, became reified. They do

*“impression”*. What is sought with such *impression work*, is the same general objective of dissolving the concentration and prevent further events, but with no use of force. These kind of acts are all those in which the police uses not only its authority resources, as Waddington (1991) recognizes, but also the historical superiority in this kind of encounters. In such cases they resort to the *spectacular* effects of formations, in a actual display of their superior discipline and arsenal. Along with such demonstration of power comes also their appearance. They present themselves as if they where the most sure agents on earth. They make ostentation of the power they have and that they will use it if necessary. In such ostentation they use the impression that uniformity and volume makes. They use big helmets that increase their height. They display their weapons, which are really “impressive”. At the same time they make a very interesting (and effective) body work (Goffman). They move surely and “firmly”. They talk with a *firm* voice, demonstrating security. They do not talk to the public. They show themselves as an impenetrable human barrier. They show the group as compact, through marching in line or aside. They *represent* their impersonal and machine like condition and attitude with their a neutral and *uncivil* inattention and warring face. When they walk they hit the baton against the shield at the rhythm of their steps causing the impression that their steps are the steps of heavier and bigger creatures, and that they are not made out of flesh but of another material such as metal or hard plastic, producing the impression of being a machine.

The objective of such power displays is that the people leave, with no necessity of resorting to the use of real force.

*“Sometimes, if you know how to use the “impression”, is all you have to do”*  
(Instructor Hierro).

As Norbert Elias sustains referring to the monopolist organization of violence, ‘in many cases this organization acts through its own superiority’(Elias,1993:457); or in a more complex and precise way Bourdieu affirms that ‘the exhibition of force...implies an exhibition of the mastery of force, thereby kept in the status of a potential force, which could be used but it is not used. To show it is to show that is strong enough and sufficiently sure of its effects not to need actual use’(1997:96).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Such denial of force has enormous effects in legitimating their use of force. As Bourdieu sustains “It is a denial of force, an affirmation of force which is inseparably a negation of force, the very one which defines a “civilized” police force, capable of forgetting and making it forgotten that it is a force and so converted into legitimate violence, misrecognized and recognized into symbolic violence’(1997:96). However we will not

In these representations, (or symbolic and bodily affirmation of their supremacy), their self-control is central. In such cases, the men in the cordons are subjected to the most humiliating treatment. They are insulted in all the imaginable ways, shouted at their face. They receive the impacts of the most hideous objects, included bags with urine that explode on their clothes<sup>13</sup>. In those conditions they are also subjected to the explosions of pyrotechnic, that produces them serious ear damages. The basic condition to be able to remain in their positions is that *temper* we have already referred to.

Along with such “ostentation” tactics, they “negotiate”, as is so well documented by Waddington (1994) in relation to the London Metropolitan police. As the author sustains ‘the police seek to negotiate whenever they can and the negotiation is an important, even crucial, element in the preservation of order’(1991). Instructor Gimenez, confesses with reluctance:

*“we always try to negotiate, we talk to the chief of the football fans band and tell him to organize his people”.*

The same happens in the relations with labor unions. Even though the *negotiation* aspect of their work is reluctantly shown as they define themselves as “*frontline troops*”. Negotiating sometimes makes the riot police agents think that they will be seen as weak in the eyes of the public they deal with.

But when the public starts to break the law, or alter the order in a manner that is not considered correct by the riot police force, they pass from the *passive* to *active* actions, to the third phase: *repression*. According to the manual, the objective of the repression (the use of force, gas, bullet and sticks) is to “*make the infraction come to an end, under the rule of law*” In such repressions the *Manual* states that “*force will be used in a manner that does not injur the public, that they use the elements that are at their disposal and the they will not use firearms*”.

In the local police force the offensive dispersal tactic are those of the baton charge, or better baton and shield charge and gas and rubber bullet charge.

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refer to the problem of symbolic violence about state violence. We rather depart from the situation in which legitimacy already exists. It is the existence of such legitimate use which worries us as the riot police use of force is publicly accepted. We intent to grasp the RPU agents’ *common sense* relation to their own use of force.

<sup>13</sup> The most repugnant substance they had been exposed to, all agree, is the mortuary liquid that is taken out of the coffins once the dead body has been dissolved in acid. Such liquid is injected in fruit or vegetables and flung over towards them.

The order in which such repression is done is usually first *distance tactics* and then the *close range* tactics. That is: usually first the gases and rubber bullets are used in order to disperse the public and then comes the baton charge over that parts of the public that have not understood *the message* that they have to leave the place.

Before the gas is used, and after all the negotiations had collapsed, the riot police considers at last if there is enough place for the public to disperse (Otherwise the panic in the public would make the public run over them) In the cases they use gases, basic considerations are those of the wind direction (otherwise the gas will come to them) and the existence of escaping space.

The use of the gas and the plastic bullets respond to the same principle that has been described so well by Waddington, ‘the aim is not to incapacitate totally, but to inflict sufficient pain and discomfort to act as an incentive for the person to leave the scene’(1991:187). For such use they got a certain grenade as well as specially designed weapons that throws the gas canister. They take many canisters in their harness, as well as grenades, what in turn makes their appearance even more impressive.

Finally, once the gas and the plastic bullets have done their work, if the public is to stubborn, then comes the baton charge, trying also to catch some offenders.

It is obvious that the series that has been referred to does not start necessarily at the first level. It might be that when the riot police arrive to the place is necessary to intervene directly with gases, plastic bullets and batons such as in cases in which there has been pillage, or when football fans start to destroy the place.

In such baton charge, the *dispersion* objective is complemented with the *arrest* objective. In such case the agitators in the mob, or those who have been identified as the ring leaders, or those on whom they have evidence of having committed a crime are specially persecuted and arrested. In some case the arrest of the agitators is made while the concentration remains. Such operations are called “*extractions*” which are realized by special squads. Those members of the public that are considered “*agitators*” are usually the ones who are arrested. Those are the brains, the organizers, the most feared parts of the public.

As we could see, force is used as a means together with others such as the sheer presence and ostentation tactics. According to the *principle of economy* force is used in the last case. It is not that the police will use a limited amount of force, it will use all it might, but as the ultimate resource. In its use there is a great coordination, that is achieved thanks

to the self control and discipline of the infantrymen. As we see the action of the riot police warrior is not that of the individual hero that it carried by rage. It is rather the coordinated, disciplined agent part of a certain group, of a certain disciplined mass, who calculates their movements in order to the achievement of a certain goal.

According to the description we had made the use of force seems to be submitted to the objective reason of the state, subordinated to a rational use. Instrumental rationality seems to be the proper idea for understanding the riot police violent practices. It seems to be that the riot police agents, these *bureaucratized warriors*, are one more example of Weber's modern man: '*specialists with no spirit, sensualist with no heart*' (Weber,1984:225). However, Weber himself has recognized the existence of some other 'imponderables' in such disciplined agents, which, according to such instrumental and cold rationality, are described by him as 'irrational and emotive' factors. Their use of force is not only a means for an end. It is also a resource, one that is related to their incorporated resources (bodily capital), all of which are used in their official interventions. Such resources also determine a difference and constitute their position and positioning in relation to other members of the force and other riot police units from other police departments. We refer to this dimensions in the following two chapters.

### III- RIOT POLICE USE OF FORCE: SKILL, POWER AND SACRIFICE

*“I feel that the riot police is different, and it is distinct, it is...is not that it is distinct,...it has things, they tell us that it is different,...and...it is, I don't know how to describe it, but it is different”*

(Agent Julio Cesar, 5 years in the force)

*“The distinctive features of the riot police are: A) Organization, Equipment and Instruction; B)Immediacy; and C) Discipline”*

Internal Operations Manual

The disenchanting spectacle that Weber announces us about bureaucratic agents seems not to be such in relation to the agents that inhabit the riot police institution. These riot police agents seem to be enchanted, interested, existentially implicated with the field in which they exist (Bourdieu,1995:65). We shall remember that we said that many expressive aspects could integrate the instrumental use of force. Such expressive use of force is implicated in the instrumental use of force because such use of force is directly related to ‘physical power, fighting skills, and readiness to do fight’ (Elias,1996:65), basic values of any warriors society, and also basic values for the riot police agents, as we will see. Such a set of values is strange for outsiders, for those agents who do not possess the categories of perception according to which, the neutral and cold peacekeeping function, acquires and encloses a whole range of meanings, interests and stakes. In the present chapter, we will try to unravel some of such expressive dimensions that are related to their violent function of peacekeeping, as is conceived and described by the riot police agents, according to their peculiar principles of relevance and worthiness.

Considering the structure of relations in which the riot police agents are implicated, in the present chapter we will focus on their relations with the other parts of the police department and in the relations with other riot police units. In the following chapter we will analyze their relation with the public.

In the following description, we will be able to appreciate how their objective function of peacekeepers, along with their *bodily capital of fighting skills* and capital of *fighting strength* (Bourdieu,1990a:122) deployed in their official interventions has, in their

view, certain other meanings and values structuring their schemes of perception. As we will show, the infantrymen, those riot police agents with the specific function of, and knowledge for, maintaining public order, seem to be more than *disciplined specialists*. According to their specific schemes of perception, their condition gives them a sense of *special* condition, a kind of elite condition (for their mission, fighting power and skills) in relation to the other members of the police department. It is important to describe their self-perceptions because their *special condition* means that each time they perform their function, which includes the state use of force, their use of force will symbolize, and will be related to the affirmation of such self-perception and of the basis of their self-perception. Each time the riot police is called into action, their display of force will be the expression of a certain *fighting knowledge*, of a certain ability or *skill* in the use of force. Such special skills are related to a certain positioning in relation with other units of the police force. Hence, their interventions will be also the affirmation of such position.

That peculiar fighting skills and conditions also have certain distinctive values in relation to other public order units from other police and security forces organizations. As we will see their rational and methodical use of force involves certain *expressive* and *distinctive* dimensions in relation to other public order control units that are *differently* equipped and have *different* fighting schemes.

With these elements in mind we will inquire about the principles of *distinction* from other parts of the police force, as well as from other Special Units from other police or security agencies that perform similar functions. We will try to unravel such incorporated principles of distinction, that is what produces and determines a special and secret *interest*, that is disguised under the form of, and parallel to, the fulfillment of the function in official actions. As we will see, in such official occasions they secretly play *their* subtle *fight* for order, that is, in their eyes, also a fight for prestige within the specific police field.

### **3.1 An Elite force among the police department**

#### **3.1.1 The riot police agent's use of force as a work of specialists**

*'I guess I don't really regret the job' said [officer] Gus. 'I guess I think I know something that most people don't' (J. Wambaugh The new centurions)*

As it had already been mentioned in chapter one, from the 7,700 police agents that are part of the Operations Division, only around 350 or 400 agents, are specially in charge

of maintaining public order: the Infantry or RPU. They are the ones in charge of the extraordinary events, the back up forces of all the other 7300. At the same time, they instruct and teach the other 7,300 how to deal with public order disturbances through regular basic courses. They are in charge of a special function, but they are also the “owners” and “guardians” of a *specific incorporated knowledge* used for the task of maintaining order. They are specialists.

In the scarce works that could be consulted on special police forces, or *elite forces* the specific ‘identity references’ of the members of such Elite units is highlighted (See: Monjardert (1992), Marchetti (1992) and Bruneteaux 2000)), the members of certain specific units of security forces develop a sense of identity that is not based on the membership to the general institution, but one related to the specific unit to which they pertain (See specially Marchetti,1992). We have inquired about the bases of their distinctive identity, and such differentiations are directly related to *certain dimensions of their use of force*. Namely, the situations in which they use force in the name of the state, they will also be using it in the name of a certain *specialists identity*, that is nothing but their own identity. In turn, such identity will be at stake every time they are called into action.

“*We are specialists, as in any other place, one is a specialist, one has formed oneself for that, just as others are specialists in other things, we are specialists in this*”, explains Hierro.

In the *totalitarian* police institution, their specific bodily capital, the possession of a specific incorporated practical knowledge acts as a *principle of distinction*, of social difference and is at the root of a *particular sense of honour*. Such capital is the bodily capital of specific experience, the experience of whom becomes as specialist because of his experience within a specific branch of the institution. We have been talking about it in the last chapter. In the case of the riot police agents, they possess the specific incorporated abilities of the riot police techniques, as well as *the specific bodily dispositions*, resumed in the notion of *temper*, directly related a sense of *controlled* braveness (self confidence), that has been acquired through continued exposition to chaotic events and conditions. As Bruneteaux sustains a “capital d'expérience accumulé dans les Conflits” (2000 :10). This experience relates specifically to the use of force, in the active and in the passive aspects. In the passive aspects of controlling one self and in the active action of not being afraid or “tempered” for the job, being ready for fighting with *self confidence*.



Their sense of identity is based in that specific knowledge that they have acquired through hard work and time. As Bourdieu sustains such ‘cultural [and bodily and technical] capital is a “having” that converts in a “being”, a property made body that converts in a part of the “person”, a habit’(Bourdieu,1986a:13)

As agent Hierro point out *"One has formed oneself for this function, what we know cannot be acquired from one day to another."*

Their technique and their knowledge, is for them as relevant as their function, a bodily disposition that cost great time and effort. As Agent Julio Cesar, (ten years in the job:

*"To do what we do a lot of time is required, it is not something you learn from one day to the next, you have to train, to practice, you have to get prepared."*

As it happens to prizefighters (so intensely described by L. Wacquant,1995), who are viewed by the public as the most brute of sportsmen, the *most brute of police agents* (as riot police agents think they are perceived), are also technicians, *proud technicians of the manual work of order and peace.*<sup>14</sup>

Their bodily condition, their durably incorporated dispositions, incorporated through an intensive work over that body, is then something that is considered by the infantrymen as having a sense, a value, a special meaning and one of the basis for feeling special. Therefore, their function will be not only the impersonal and cold performance of a function. It will be the occasion to demonstrate their acquired knowledge, skills as well as other virtues such as self confidence and braveness.

As for boxers, riot police agents conceive that violent order maintenance is also a ‘skilled bodily trade, a competitive performance craft requiring technical know how and an abiding moral commitment that will enable them to improve their material lot but also, and more urgently to construct a publicly recognized heroic self’(Wacquant,1995:501). In relation to such heroic self, such heroism is an *anonymous heroism*, and heroism that is obtained through the participation of the collective glory and prestige of the group and even the unit, that is the honor of the fighting power as well as of the skillful achievement of such.

As Sergeant Hierro put it: *"We are anonymous heroes."*

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<sup>14</sup> About the boxers sense of honour in relation to their bodily craft see Wacquant,1995.

Their incorporate knowledge, is a very specific knowledge. Even if it may appear as a quite simple knowledge, the relevance it has for their sense of identity is enormous considering that is one of the few things they have. The limited resources around which they could construct an identity within the totalitarian institution in which they exist and pass the majority of time, makes such abilities central for their self-identity.

All this acquired technical specialization makes them feel as special in relation to the other members of the police force. In the same manner as the members of the GIGN (National Gendarmerie Intervention Group) despise other members of the force, so well described by Monjardert, the riot police agents despise the “amateurs”, the non-riot police agents, because of their lack of experience and knowledge. “*He knows nothing*” commented Instructor Hierro about a *Commissary* from the Patrol Units that was sent to the Riot Police Unit.

As an incorporated capital, such special skills, which can not be objectified (see Bourdieu,1986a). *As an incorporated capital must, and can only be displayed and proved in the occasions when they are called to demonstrate it, in the official interventions in which they use of force.* Therefore, each deployment of the state violence is also the opportunity for the expression and the affirmation of what they know and what they can produce, something that in the relations in which they are immersed (as part of the police world) is almost all what they are. They are proud of the knowledge they possess, even in the deployment of such simple elements as sticks:

*“You have to know how to hit, in order not to wound the other guys, we know how to do it, we know how to do it”* affirms arrogantly Agent Juan

This special and sect like group only consider the agents that get to the unit part of it, member of the unit, only when the agent has passed certain initiation rites or events (going to a heavy operative or been exposed to serious disorder condition), or certain time.

*“Most of the boys that have been here for more that two years had their baptism in the looting events of last December”* Sergeant Gimenez points out.

Such events (or a certain passage of time) are trials where they had demonstrated the acquisitions of the basic riot police craft, which is something that may take years

*“You should not talk to him, he doesn’t know much about the infantry work, he’s been here for only three years.”* (One of the Instructors about another Instructor).

### 3.1.2. The riot police use of force: the strong arm of the police

*“We are the ones that are called when things are burning”* (Sergeant Hierro)

In turn such technical and technological *specialization* is seen as the basis for claiming a hierarchical relation of *superiority* and also a *protection role* toward the whole police institution. In the infantrymen’s perspective the Riot Police Unit is the police agency last resort. The riot police agents consider that their task is not a mere part of the division of work, a mere part in the division of control labor. Such functional specialization carries the connotation of the *special*, and what is more important, in that they deal with the *extraordinary*. Their handling of the extraordinary makes them think of themselves as the *heroes* of the institution. They *know* they are special in a structure (that of the police force) structured around a logic of the *ordinary and the extraordinary*. In an occupational culture where danger and braveness are core values (Reiner,1998; Kappeler, Sluder and Apert,1994), and therefore core criteria of value, those units that face the most dangerous situations and for which the greatest courage is required are necessary the most *honored*.

The *extraordinary* situations in which they *heroically* intervene may be related to chaotic *situations* (such as great disturbances) or / and with the specific *places* where they go. In a logic that stresses the outside street work, as the place of danger and real police work, the most dangerous places are the most appreciated and rewarding, considering it in relation to their audacity and braveness criteria. As Agent Palacios (six feet high, blue camouflaged uniform, heavy boots and firm stance) remarks:

*“What the infantry unit has is that the infantry enters to all those places where the other parts of the police don’t, for example the “villas”<sup>15</sup>, jails, (juvenile) institutes, football stadiums, and other “heavy” places.”*

As has been referred in Reiner, in his work on police culture ‘the elements of mission in the police perspective are reflected in their sense of themselves as the thin blue line, performing the essential role of safeguarding social order’(Reiner,1998:87). For the *infantrymen* they *are* that thin blue line that divides order from chaos. In a pessimistic

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<sup>15</sup> Neighbourhoods, or better, settlements, transitory camps, inhabited by very poor people that with the consolidation of the excluded conditions of their inhabitants became permanent, situated on communal land. The Argentine version of the American ghettos, Brazilian favelas, etc., etc., etc. .

perspective; anarchy is around them, threatening the tissue of social order<sup>16</sup>. The street is a place of chaos and disorder. Within such perspective, the riot police unit, the infantrymen consider themselves the last line of retreat in the battle for order. Officer Montoya reflects about this fact, and calls our attention about their “*last bastion of order*” condition:

*“You must consider this, when we work we are the last bastion, ...after us there is nothing, after us who is left?, ...who? ...once all the police force has been surpassed, the only ones that are left are us...and then.... nothing.”*

All their special fighting skills invested in the performance of their protectors role, and their last bastion of order conditions makes them think of themselves as the “*strong arm of the police*” as Sergeant Hierro defines the Riot Police Unit (and therefore himself, his work and his actions)

According to their classification schemes, the agents of the Riot Police Unit are *superior and extraordinary*. Therefore *their* displays of force, according the their sense of *honor and pride*, are meaningful violent events, related to a certain conception of superiority, mixing the fulfillment of their function, with the feeling that they are heroically protecting the other units. In line with such conceptions they describe their interventions as occasions in which the other parts of the police only observe, as passive and *inept* spectators, their heroic entrances to the scenes of action.

*“Is always the same, the patrol cars waiting for the riot police, for the infantry guard, to enter in action”* told me agent Marcos.

*“The infantry force is the place where... when the other units are overwhelmed or surpassed, when you arrive to the place, all the cars are there, and they are waiting for us to enter, because, we are prepared for such function, we are the *shock troops of the police*”* states Corporal Roca.

The RP agents’ pride, based on such *technical superiority* (in relation to other members of the department) and their back up role, is confirmed, in their eyes, by the kind of arsenal and resources that is given to them by the authorities. The fact is that they are provided by better arsenals, in quality and quantity than other parts of the police.

They “*are in much better conditions, they have better weapons, they have better logistic support, they got the best weapons, they have machine guns, that are the latest that*

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<sup>16</sup> Joseph Wambaugh (Ten Years veteran in Los Angeles Police Department) in his Novel *The New Centurions* describes this view with great accuracy ‘*It is the natural tendency of things toward chaos, Gus thought. It’s a very natural law Kilvinsky always said, and only the order makers could temporarily halt its march, but eventually there will certainly be darkness and chaos*’: (325).

have been bought. They have the (model of rifle), and they also got the FAL<sup>17</sup>, Apart from that they have new and clean bullet proof waistcoats...they even have the newest cars, and they have all the gasoline they want” describes with exaggeration a member of a car patrolling unit consulted, putting into action the practical logic that produces evaluations and valuations about the police agents and units according to their relative total force power.

Such higher force power is central to the valuation of their condition, considering that they exist in a social universe where force is the common language, those who have the best *force resources*, are the ones that are considered special, when not *more*.

Their *elite condition* has been recently threatened by the recent creation of a *too militarized* patrolling unit specially created to prevent and control looting episodes: Preventive Patrol N°. 4 (from now on: PP4) which was provided with special 4 wheel drive trucks, as well as disturbance control arsenal and instruction. The creation of such unit threatened their *de facto* share in the oligopoly over the control of *extraordinary* events (such as roads blocking, improvised picket lines, looting, etc). The PP4 got training in riot control tactics, and uses a camouflaged uniforms, similar to the ones they themselves got. Their opinion about such *too close to them* group could not be other than that of *devaluation*, depreciation. Such devaluation was done through putting emphasis on the PP4 *patrolling* essence in opposition to the riot control and repressive role of themselves, based on the lack of skills and experience of the members of the PP4:

“They do not know anything about maintaining order”...“patrolling units are something else, they do prevention, we do repression” emphatically observed Commissary Roble

During the observation, that new PP4 unit, was sent to the riot police building, making the riot unit share their headquarters with the PP4. The tension produced by this uncomfortable coexistence appeared continuously in the dialogs with the infantrymen, referring to the PP4 members as *invaders* of the special patrol unit.

In turn, the riot police agents have closer contacts and greater affinity with the Canine and Cavalry squadrons, which are seen as their *natural* companions in the harsh duty of control of extraordinary situations. As one agent comments:

“If one meets one of the patrol guys, is as if they would not know you, they do not even pay you attention, but the “dogs” or with the guys from the horse squad, that

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<sup>17</sup> Light rifle (*Fusil de Ataque Ligero*).

*sometimes we see, we greet them,... is as if we would be in the same boat, while the ones that are on the other units, they do not even greet you...is as if it would be another police...they are one...and we are another police...*

The high value that is given to the extraordinary nature and essence condition of their work, is proved, according to the same logic, in the questioning and complaint that the infantrymen, specially the old members of the corps, did in relation to their *new* use they were being destined to from a couple of months ago: specially the realization of preventive work, such as car control, or mere surveillance

*“They take us out for everything, for being there for hours not doing anything, just looking, ...in the old days the infantry guard was called only when a quarter of the city had already been burned.”* says with nostalgia Agent Ramon, 20 years in the unit (that was his first destiny and will be his last one, as he plans to retire in one or two years).

Such preventive work in which they are used by the police department authorities contradicts and undermines their self image as *“last bastion of order”* and their self assigned role as heroes of the force. However, they manage to affirm their prestige through considering themselves as the guardians and preservers of the what they consider the most pure and important police tradition: discipline

### **3.1.3. Military discipline and outfit: a symbol of power, superiority and of a military essence**

For Weber, on the one hand ‘discipline in general is something “objective”, and presents the most firm objectivity at the disposition of any power that gets interested in it, and knows how to establish it’(Weber,1992:882/3). However as Weber states, always worried about *understanding* human actions: ‘it is only through discipline that the preservation of estate or status group prestige and the stereotyping of the life style becomes something that has been to a great extent *consciously and rationally wanted*’(882[o.i]). That is, discipline *symbolizes* their career; the past, the future and the present of the disciplined agents, as it acts as a *symbol* for what they became. *Discipline* is the idea around which “estate prestige” is symbolized, as perceived as wanted and, what is more important, as obtained, and continuously cultivated. As Foucault himself sustains, disciplined bodies involves a *“bodily rhetoric of honor”*(1989:139[o.i]). The disciplined condition is, in part, a *consciously* preserved and valued condition. A condition that has

been obtained, of which the agent is proud, a “honorable” condition, that is at the same time the basis of the judgments of honor. In this case *discipline* is mainly related to their obedient and respectful dispositions to authorities. However, obedience and respect to authorities is also a basic and central attitude present in their official interventions.

The disciplined agents that use the state’s force are not the neutral bureaucrats, but rather the interested agents for whom such disciplined condition, and the disciplined use of force is, as we had already said, an active engagement with the field where such disciplined condition is so highly appreciated and valued. As Agent Martinez sustains in relation to his disciplined condition:

*“Once you get it, you do not want to loose it, it cost you a lot to get it, so you have to maintain it, even if it is not so difficult, we are all day doing it...the problem is when they send you to another Unit, where they don’t care about it.”*

In our perspective, following Weber who sustains that “it is not that discipline is radically opposed to charisma or estate honor”(1992:883), and resorting to Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, as a principle of classification, we think that such disciplined condition, (as the acquired bodily capital, incorporated “bodily” capital), functions within the police force as a principle of distinction. Such incorporated disposition, socially acquired, felt as quasi natural tendency, that appears as ‘nature’ cultivated, is relevant for differentiating themselves from other agents, and the expression not only of the possession of a technique but also the expression of a difference: the possession of a *military essence*.

Considering Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, we can understand that the “disciplined condition” as the “structured structure” (based on the exposition to certain social conditions and experiences) serves as the principle of distinction and differentiation of the riot police agents in relation to other parts of the police force. ‘The habitus is both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgments (and practices) and the system of classification (principium divisionis) of these practices. It is in the relationship between the two capacities which define the habitus, the capacity to produce classifiable practices and works, and the capacity to differentiate and appreciate these practices and products, that the represented social world i.e. the space of life styles, is constituted” (Bourdieu,1984:170).

Such disciplined condition is even more important if we consider that it is the result of a change in the body. According to Bourdieu ‘the degree to which the body is invested in the relation [with the social and material world] is no doubt one of the main

determinants of the *interest and attention* that are involved in it and of the *importance* – measured by their duration and intensity, etc.- of *the bodily modifications that result from it.*’ (1997:141[o.i.]) The body is intensely and durably implicated in the violent craft of the riot police agent as we had already described in the previous chapter. Such degree of implication with the world greatly determines the “interest and attention” to that same bodily condition, of them and of the other police agents.

This incorporated disposition is used, or acts, as a principle of differentiation from other parts of the police force. The Riot Police Unit higher discipline structures the judgments about themselves and about other parts of the police force. Because of their highly disciplined condition they feel that they are the last arbiters and judges of discipline matters, guardians of the sacred fire of discipline:

*“Here is the place where the discipline is preserved”,* pointed out agent Juan. *“Here everything is really hierarchic, nothing to do with how it is in the other places”*

In a *demilitarization* policy induced by the democratic governments that came after the military regimes, the legitimacy of their sense of honour is has been threatened<sup>18</sup>. The older agents interviewed (officers and subordinates) all recognize that the discipline in the infantry guard has relaxed in a great manner. However, the Riot Police Unit is still (jointly with the cavalry squadron) the most disciplined part of the police. They are proud of conserving the *old* styles. As the guardian of the discipline, some of the superiors had been called from the Police Academy in order to teach some *discipline*. Agent Roble, referring to a cohort that came out of the academy with “*no manners at all*” clearly expresses their guardians of the discipline self perception:

*“A couple of years ago, a group of officers in the headquarters decided that it was better to loosen up the discipline, resulting in a cohort of officers, who when passing by in front of an officer would salute him as if he was one of them, and that cannot be; so they realized that the best thing was to send them to the infantry guard for a while so we would teach them some discipline. We had them for two or three weeks, and they started to bring them here so we would “adjust them”, until they realized that instead of bringing them here the best thing was to take one of us there, so they called me, and I have been there for some years*

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<sup>18</sup> This lessening of the discipline is parallel to a decrease in the aggressiveness and confrontation style that once reigned in the infantry guard, as well as a change in the arsenals and equipment, in the direction of a softer, most defensive, restrained and dialogical manner that is disliked by the old people. This elder officers, with more than ten years in the unit, had been socialized in a much more militarised style.



*...and it is not that we spank them, but it is the only way that the cadets get to be obedient and disciplined.”*

But such effort was not enough. They still get to the Riot Police Unit to *soft*, and need to be adjusted. Instructor Montoya is worried about the way they come out from the school:

*“There in the school, they come out and they do not know nothing, have no respect, they are good for nothing, ...they had to be taught not only the infantry stuff, such as movements and formations, we even had to teach them how to stand, how to march, how to salute, 'cause they came with such manners that you can not imagine.”*

However, the importance they give to discipline does not have to be understood in itself. The value they give to their higher discipline has to be considered in relation to what in turn symbolizes. Such higher discipline acts not as a symbol of their new bodily state, but also as a symbol of their greater force power, as it represents their militarized condition. As (Sergeant Hierro):

*“What you must know, and that instructor Gutierrez didn't tell you is that the riot police is the place where there is military instruction and discipline.”*

The possession of such intense discipline, as a proper military discipline, is equated to the possession of military traits, and therefore is the basis for their military aspirations and desires. It is the basis to highlight the *military essence or condition* of the riot police unit. We must keep in mind to understand such judgment that the riot police “higher and intense discipline” is felt as the participation in the military world. Their *military discipline* is a prove of their *military essence*. The possession of the military essence means to think that they possess the qualities of the most powerful and strong parts of bureaucracy, the real *military agents*. For the agents of the riot police, as agents that exist in a field structured around the possession of the public means of violence, and the skills to use them, the fact of thinking that they share the features of the most powerful force organization (the military) is of extreme importance and relevance. Commissary Roble, makes this point even clearer:

*“The riot police is the part of the institution where there is greater discipline, where there is hierarchy, where there is a chief, where there is obedience, there is respect. In case you are here, you have to like It”. Inquired about the people who like it he responds: “for example those people that wanted to do the military career but for one reason or the other could not get into the military force. Or for those people that went to the military schools.” (he confessed afterwards that such was his case).*

From the four instructors interviewed, three expressed that their dream was to be part of military forces, but could not do it: they did not have enough contacts, or had physical traits that did not permit them to get into the army. It is as if in the security forces realm, or field, *the level of discipline would be an index of fighting or warring power and of the distribution of that relative power within the field*. In relation to the other parts of the provincial police institution, their degree of discipline was presented as the central difference from other units.

Their disciplined condition as a distinctive of the riot police essence, is also related to a certain moral superiority. Such bodily rhetoric of honour, acts as a criteria of moral value, according to which the most disciplined are better kind of people. In relation to the situations in which they are doing additional surveillance services they emphasise that :

*“When you see that one of the infantry guard in making surveillance or guarding a buildings, usually important buildings such as banks and consulates, or public buildings, you will never find him leaning on the wall, or trying to be in the shade, he will not try to cheat, as do others from other units, he will be standing firm and alert all the time, that is what differentiates us from the men of the other units.”* reminds me agent Serrano.

Their function as the ones in charge of the extraordinary, in use of heavy and massive arsenal, capable of controlling multitudes that number over them by fifty to one, is essential for their sense of identity. Their conception as last resource and last bastion of the whole police force makes them feel absolutely special. All that is reflected and affirmed in the *objective certification of such powerful* condition: the uniforms that are authorized to use, which they guard and respect with so much care and jealousy.

Respecting the official “blue” colour that police forces use in Argentina, the infantry guard uses a *camouflaged* blue outfit. In prior times they wore a military uniform with soldiers helmets (iron helmets). The uniform included a whole system of harnesses and ropes where to hang the weapons such as grenades, bullets, etc. The official uniform of the olden days was similar to the one of the WWII German Army (included the Nazi style helmets). With the coming of the democratic regime it was changed to a more ‘democratic’ blue camouflaged one.

The fact is that this camouflaged outfit that has no *practical camouflaging utility*. It rather serves two basic functions: it is important for the “ostentation techniques, we have mentioned, where the militarized outfits produce greater effect in the public. At the same time such blue camouflage uniform symbolizes their military character, and acts as a

principle of difference in relation to the other parts of the police. The use of the blue camouflaged outfit is prohibited for police agents that are not part of the riot police or other special units. The only agents authorized to wear such camouflaged suit are some units from “special divisions” agent: The “Dogs, the Cavalry and the Riot police units. Was observed in many occasions that agents of other units that were called to order maintenance operations did not have such outfits. With the creation of the “special patrolling unit”, the PP4 a certain conflict aroused when such unit were assigned a white and gray camouflaged suit, threatening share of the riot police agents in the oligopoly on the military like dress used by police agents. The uniform is not a banal question, at the point that the uniform for the PP4 had to be specially authorized by the police authorities.

The military style includes military like berets. The military uniform is also present in all kinds of artefacts that can be related to their military origin. They wear the most spectacular heavy shoes; they wear as heavy jacket a copy of the one that is used by the United States Aviation (the flying jacket model “A”). They even wear the *French Legion* style caps, when they are not in service.

As we have mentioned before, the differentiating elements attached to the use of force, means the each time the agents will intervene in the line of duty their use of force will mean the affirmation and demonstration of a certain force power, of the skills that the agents has incorporated, of the experience they got. It will also be the fulfillment of a last bastion of order conception and a protector’s role, in relation to the other units of the local Police department.

However to understand the specific meaning attached to their use of force, is not enough to consider their position within the police department. As an Elite force, is necessary to consider them in their relations with other Elite force. It is within such space of relations that their use of force acquires also specific meanings. To the consideration of the riot police agents use of force within such space of relations we orient our attention now.

### **3.2. The riot as an experienced and sacrificed unit among the security forces**

Their meanings attached to their use of force also derives from the distinctive value it has in the relations with other ‘disturbance control’ or public order maintaining units. Within such structure of relation their specific and peculiar fighting skills, style and power acts as

a principle of distinction and differentiation from the other units and as a source of pride for the local riot police unit. If in relation to the *amateurs* patrol officers their disciplined condition, knowledge and function had an important differentiating value, in relation to other *experts* their specific knowledge about public disorder control, and the peculiar manners and conditions in which they perform it, acquires even more relevance and interest as a principle of distinction.

The relation they have with other riot police units can be distinguished, analytically, as relations of cooperation and relations of competence (obviously not in terms of direct confrontation).

Such cooperation relations referred to are not the formal cooperation that relate to material and or intelligence help. It rather refers to the cooperation in relation to the transmission of the *sacred* knowledge related to public order maintenance: produced and transmitted in Conferences, meetings, courses, visits, etc, or in workshops.

In relation to such cooperation relations the Riot police agents interviewed are absolutely proud of having as companions people that has been sent to the United States to receive military police instruction. They are even more proud of having direct relations with the Military Police of Sao Paulo, that, reminds me Instructor Gutierrez,

*“Has even gave us a copy of their operations manual and instructed four of our guys in their specific anti disturbance techniques.”*

The respect the Unit has for the Sao Paulo Military police is reflected in the walls of the Training Centre that is full of posters given by that force. Another peculiar detail is a miniature of a *Paulista infantryman*, with his helmet, shield and his stick in a typical attack posture that the chief to the infantry unit has on his desk

The military police of Sao Paulo, as a pure military police, is a basic referent for them. The link with the Brazilian force is continual, constantly sending agents to be prepared

*“Willing that some day we will be able to invite some of them, and show them what we do”* as dreams in loud voice Instructor Hierro.

The relation is neither so cooperative with the argentine Federal Police Riot police Unit, nor with the National Gendarmerie force. Even if in the end there is a common *collusion* with the members of other provincial forces, or with the members of the National Gendarmerie in relation the common purpose and necessity of maintaining a pacified order, there is also an subtle competition between them. This competence cannot be other

than for the *technical supremacy*, or the *technical differentiation* from each of those forces, given the fact that these forces are never put into confrontation.

The relations with the members of the powerful the rich federal police force, the Policia Federal are limited to invitations. However, as it always happens in Argentina with everything that comes from the capital city of Buenos Aires, the comparison with the Infantry unit of that force is obligatory. The opinion of Cordoba's riot police force members interviewed is that

*“With the federal police force it has always been the same, they are just as us, the difference is that they have all they want, they have better arsenal, they have ammunitions, they have also got the water truck, that is the difference with us.”*

In relation to such unit, the emphasis is given to their amount of arsenal and weapons. That is the only difference between them. Córdoba RP officers think they are as good as Federal Riot Police Officers, and if sometimes the latter appear to be better than the former it is only due to the greater amount of resources they have. Many agents dream about the occasion of demonstrating their skills and measuring them against other Public Order Control units. To get a notion of their *real* position, the only way of *really* measuring their relative power is competing against the most powerful riot police force in the country, the Federal police. That can only be a dream, because they never confront.

*“I know it is not possible, but one day I would like to compare forces with the infantry guard of the federal police, and see who is tougher.”*(Instructor Hierro).

The competition with the National Gendarmerie force is not imaginary, it is brutally real. The National Gendarmerie is the force that takes their place when they *are surpassed*.<sup>19</sup> The case is that every time the National Gendarmerie intervene (unless it is a case of “pure federal” competence, such as actions in national buildings, or in national roads, or other national matters) it is because the *last bastion of the provincial police force* has been surpassed, that is, because the Infantry has been surpassed. That makes the National Gendarmerie their *natural* competitors in relation to force matters and techniques.

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<sup>19</sup> The National Gendarmerie is a national militarised police force, created in 1943 for pacifying the country from the attacks of armed bands (See Andersen,2001). The National gendarmerie defines itself is a ‘Security force, of military nature and characteristics of intermediary force, that depends on the State Minister, and that realizes its mission in the realm of internal security, national defence and the assistance of the national foreign policy’. It has as part of the internal security attributions, among others intervention in cases of actions that alter public order’. As the federal guardian of internal order, they intervene at request of national authorities, or when the provincial forces require it. In the continuum of police military character, the National gendarmerie is the most military of the forces authorized to act in internal affairs. As such, they are the maximum competitors of the provincial police forces. (See National Gendarmerie, 2001)

The positions of the riot police in relation to the National Gendarmerie members have been systematically oriented toward highlighting first of all, the greater firepower the National Gendarmerie got. They have much more arsenals as well as more sophisticated one. That is a great difference. The provincial Riot Police Unit has much less arsenals and resources As Commissary Roble explains:

*“They [the National Gendarmerie] has given us a truck with a water canon, we do not have any one, but the difference is that they are much better armed, they, for example, have gas masks, that we do not have, we have to suffer and resist the same gas we throw to the public. Every time we use it, it comes to your face, and that, is not as an illness that you develop antibodies, you cannot get used to gas, it is impossible, and then you are the whole day with headache, so you have to learn to tolerate it. Apart from that, they only give us ten liters of gasoline for each vehicle,.. some times you go to nearby towns and you don’t know if you are going to be able to get back.”*

That greater amount of resources, seems to be reflected in the kind of fighting strategies the Gendarmerie develop according to the descriptions of the riot police members:

*“The gendarmerie? That’s another thing, when they intervene they do it from a greater distance. They arrive at a place, and they stand in lines at at least two hundreds meters from the public, and then they start with gas and rubber bullets, and they go on like that, till the disorder is off, ..it is not as us, who have to fight in direct combat....”, sustains Commissary Roble.*

In a similar depiction of the national gendarmerie Commissary Leandro says:

*“They are a lot, they form companies that have around seventy people, and those 70 form a line and start, (in a guttural reference) “pum, pum”, giving them with the rifles and rifles... but we, we are just ten, and those ten have to face everything that comes up.”*

As we can see in relation to the most powerful internal security force in the country they highlight their distance-fighting scheme and their greater arsenals and equipment. In opposition to that distant fighting style, the local riot police is proud of their obliged hand-to-hand struggle, a manner of fighting they feel proud of.

This distinction is relevant, because in actual conditions of the riot police, in relation to resources and fighting schemes their body acquires a central place, as a starring element that will decide the fortune of the confrontations. In such cases, given the lack of resources, they face the rigour of their condition by “*resisting the cs gas*” given the lack of gas masks. In such material conditions:

*“What is missing in resources we replace it with all our heart, putting our body.”* states proudly (and resigned) Commissary Roble.

The achievement of the function, which includes the use of force, implicates necessarily their own body, their physical strength and resistance (getting used the gas) as well as their braveness and courage, in their necessity of fighting in closer (hand to hand) combat, considering the reduced arsenal they got (that would only be enough for a while because they would be left with no bullets in a relatively short time). As the popular and dominated habitus that makes virtue out of necessity (Bourdieu,1984:397ff) the Riot Police Force, present as a virtue their lack of resources, that obliges them to resist the same gas they throw to the public, as well as to confront in much more dangerous combat style. In such conditions they bravely state:

*“What we lack of resources, we have it in balls.”* (Instructor Hierro)

Such “closeness” with the public is related to the “preventive” formations and practices we referred to in the previous chapters (specially cordons work). The National Gendarmerie is essentially more “repressive” than “preventive”. They intervene in public order disturbances in cases in which the disorder has already started. In the continuum that goes from the preventive to the repressive styles in public disorder situations, there is no doubt that the national gendarmerie occupies the most repressive position, with the provincial police departments riot units in the middle and the patrolling police units in the most preventive position. Such continuum is a continuum that goes from the most *active* to the most *passive*. In such continuum the position of the Riot police is intermediate, with a preventive and repressive role.

That specific fighting tactics makes the provincial Riot Police Unit have more *experience in dealing* and interacting with the public. This relates to two aspects, more contact with the citizens, and greater experience in urban scenarios. In the case of gendarmerie, they intervene mostly in national roads.

That greater experience in urban scenarios is specifically emphasized by the Riot Police agents indicating another difference they have with the National Gendarmerie, and assuming for that a superior position. Referring to looting episodes in which the National Gendarmerie had to intervene in the Cordoba city (December,2001), when Riot police members were sent to accompany the Gendarmes to different points of the city, they refer to such events as if they where the *protectors* of the *inexperienced* gendarmes. As Sergeant Hierro remembers:

*“H: In [last] December the National Gendarmerie had to fight in the street, in the neighborhoods, and was at night, and you know what? ... They asked that we go, they asked for Combats groups to go with them, to accompany them.*

*P–They were scared?*

*H: No, not because they were scared, but because of their lack of experience, because, even if they have all those weapons, many more weapons than us., but us...we are the ones that go out to the street everyday, the ones that have experience, we are used to that.”*

One more time their sense of distinction is that of the specialists, based on the experience that they got and nobody else got. In relation to the units that perform similar functions to the ones they do they stressed the fact that they had a lot of arsenal *but* where not so “*sacrificed*” as them. In relation to the national gendarmerie, the difference is in urban experience and less arsenals and equipment.

The central element seems to be their *experienced* and *resistant body*. That same resistant body that implicates in the battle for order and appears in their view (and also in reality) as a central piece in the machinery of peace and order. In such conditions their body, and themselves are converted into a weapon, part of the arsenal, converted into an instrument. Their body, their skilled flesh acquires a value, a social existence.

As we can see, the occasions on which they put in action such *living weapon*, in which they are ordered to stand, to resist, to rotate, to look firm, and then, to advance, to hit, to shoot, to run, to trap, the living agent gets into action, gets into life, life acquires sense. For all that, their use of force expresses their most intimate and valued assets. Through that expression they express their internal power, apprehended and cultivated disciplined and skilled dispositions.

Public order operations, and the use of force, are occasions on which that bodily capital, that bodily techniques, cultivated and appropriated, acquire value and are offered to the owner of the means of production of force: the state, who in exchange, gives the owner of the body, material and symbolic rewards (Honor, recognition, salary, social security, etc). But more than that, the owner of the body, the infantryman, receives his sense of being, of acting, of socially existing as experts whose abilities are recognized by those who share the same principles of perception, his peers and the members of the other security forces.

That proud resistant and sacrificed body, which is the central and most important asset the riot police agent, individually possess, is continually consecrated, officially and unofficially. Officially through the recognition that it is given to the acts and behaviours



that the agent demonstrated in his work in the periodical (every three years) evaluations they are subjected to and which determines their promotion. But as important as such official evaluations is the recognition they get from other police forces. The summit of that is when they were told, a couple of years ago, by an agent of the north American FBI that

*“They were incredible, that is a pity they did not have so much arsenals as the American forces, but with the “balls” they got, nobody could beat them.”*

As we see, again and systematically they refer to such bodily conditions, incorporated techniques and specially adapted bodily disposition. Those virtues of courage, resistance and fighting abilities are, represented by and related to their masculine virtue of *“the balls”*.

The local press has confirmed that same pride. The local financial newspaper published. In a 2001 note (that was continuously cited by the infantry men) the editor points out “riot police force has given proofs of professionalism and discipline on many occasions. One of such occasions was during the 1995 burnings of the Radical Party house, when an agent was attacked with heavy calibre fire works, and had to be taken to the hospital. Even though, as was latter known, he got injured in one testicle, he afterwards lost, he did not *break lines*, in a clear demonstration of experience and professionalism”. Copies of that newspaper article were displayed in almost every room of the riot police building (In the guardroom, first place you know if you visit the Riot Police Unit building, in the personnel room, in the Training centre walls, and in the canteen). Maybe the editors of the newspaper did not know it, but the article resumed the essence of the riot police agent: an expert stands firmly and does not react, thanks to his temper and resistance, even on the occasion in which he is injured in a testicle, a dolorous and highly humiliating attack.

As we can see the riot police agent world is not the cold and clean world of the rational bureaucrat, but a world of illusions, interests, bets, sacrifice and rewards, that give life and fervour and sense to the riot police agent use of state violence. For all the above mentioned in this chapter, from the infantrymen’s perspective, each official intervention is an occasion for the display of their differentially possessed attributes and virtues, and an demonstration of their specific *possessions* (capitals) and *position* within the system of relations that includes the relations with members of the Provincial Police Department as well as the relation with other riot control units of other departments or forces.

Until now we had this long considered and analyzed riot police agents conceptions about their use of force in relation to the other experts or *peers opinions and relations*. Is time to turn our attention to their categories of perception that structures their relations with the *quotidian* and real *opponents* they deal with day after day in their continuous work of peace and order production. That is, the meanings attached to the use of force RP agents make against more or less violent *citizens*.

## IV- RIOT POLICE AGENTS' USE OF FORCE: FIGHTING FOR ORDER

In the previous chapters, we have referred to the aspects of the riot police use of force related to the disciplined use of force, and we have seen that such disciplined and rational use of force is accompanied by a number of expressive dimensions. Such use of force was surrounded by a pride for their incorporated fighting abilities. Such abilities, when accompanied by their conception of a protector's role and a powerful unit. In turn, such use of force included their pride for the resistant, experienced, brave body of the infantrymen implicated in their fighting practices, in opposition to the distant fighting tactics of other riot police units. It is time to get out from the institution and analyze the specific meanings attached to the use of force but in the relation to between infantrymen and citizens. It is in relation with the public that we are really interested, considering that is against them that the physical force is used. In the present section we will deal with the meanings attached to such use of force in the relation with the public.

We sustained in the introduction that instrumental use of force, may not be incompatible with an expressive use of force. Considering all we had already presented we can sustain that the *rational* and *technical* use of force it is *also expressive violence*. We sustain that for the riot police agents their instrumental use of force is 'a source of *position, identity, meaning* and [it is] *enjoyable*' (Dunning et al. 1994:313 [o.i.]). Such symbolic values of their use of force is related to their position and possessions within a specific structure of relations. In the present chapter we will present elements that give force to such idea.

The affirmation of a certain position and therefore of a certain identity (symbolic results) of the affirmation of certain fighting strength or virtues, can come from the mere use of force (demonstrating courage and braveness), as from the outcome of the struggle (that marks the skills and relative power), or from both dimensions. Such supremacy (even if it is obtained in a disciplined manner) makes sense, and gives sense, to the lives and identities of those agents that fight in violent ways, that is, resort to the use of force. Such identities, valuations (and enjoyments) of the struggle and use of force, are again related to a specific set of values and principles of perception: a warrior's society scale of values, 'a

*scale of values in which physical strength, skill and readiness personally to do battle are ranked particularly high, if not highest of all'* (Elias,1996:65 [o.i.]).

The riot police use of force is related to the practical aim of maintaining and reproducing a *de facto* supremacy. However, riot police agent's use of force is also source of their identity as agents with a *position* in a *configuration* (Elias). Such position physically secured and reproduced is also symbolically experienced as the possession and affirmation of greater fighting strength, lived and condensed in the embodiment of a superior *masculine* force<sup>1</sup>. The disciplined and self controlled users of official force conceive the clash with the more or less *amateurs* users of force (the public) as a relation in which there is also a fight for the prestige in the ability to fight, and the demonstration of courage sustaining an aggressive masculinity, as happens to the hooligans Dunning describes.

#### **4.1 Prelude: the relation between riot police agents and the public as a case of supremacy of a group over other because of greater self-control**

To understand the expressive nature of instrumental use of force we must have in mind that the *special* bodily techniques the infantrymen deploy, their energy and their instruments are used over other human beings, in a *social relation between groups or agents with different capitals and power*. In the confrontations the agents of the riot police are involved in their work, in such relations, they are the most powerful agents in the public disorders situations. The basic difference in such relation is the greater control of the *capital of fighting strength* (Bourdieu, 1990a:122) in the specific relations, as well as their specific fighting skills (or bodily capital).

According to Bourdieu, in his work about the kabil society, the '*capital of fighting strength, [is] linked to the capacity for mobilization and therefore to the number of men and their readiness to fight*'(1990a:122). The capital of fighting strength of the riot police

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<sup>1</sup> Such values and conceptions of aggressive masculinity, physical intimidation, intention to damage or produce suffering in the opponent, seems to be a constant in situations in which the use of force has not the mimetic conditions of the playful events we call *modern sports*. As a *real* battle, or fight, the relation has all the elements of risk and danger that are excluded or limited in the reconstructed sportive contest (See Elias,1994:65) In the case of the riot police agent's use of force, such use of force is 'serious' matter. Such confrontations are actual and *real* battles between agents that possess certain resources. Such clashes are real fights in a continual struggle for material and, of even greater importance, *symbolic* rewards that arise from the dynamic of the relation.

agents is achieved with more than the '*number of men and readiness to fight*'. In the case of the riot police agents, their usual superior condition, in a situation of numerical inferiority, is given by a number of other *efficient resources*. Rather than the 'number of men', the first difference in favor of the police agents is the *number of weapons*. As administrators of the state monopoly of violence, they have a greater accessibility to riot control weapons and arsenals. However, the *differential in access* and control of the means of force, that favors the riot police situation, can be shortened in the case of riot *weapons* (as sticks, Molotov bombs, stones, etc.), and equipment such as helmets and shields that are within the public's grasp and can not be confiscated by the state. As Michaud sustains 'In the demonstrations we see the use of slings, sticks. The urban war has as its symbol- *even if usually is nothing but a symbol*- the Molotov cocktail. The first moments of the insurgence see the rising of the hunting rifles' (Michaud,1989:28). The infantry from time to time confiscates, such home made specially designed "riot weapons" (such as hard cardboard shields) as was confided by some agents.

The critical elements for the police supremacy is (apart from information, and the legal and *legitimate* possession and use of arsenals) their organizational and coordination resources, which allows them to maintain a continual front. In contrast to Bourdieu's Kabil fighters (whose fighting strength was determined by the number of men and readiness to fight), the capital of fighting strength possessed by a *minority* of police *specialists* is based in their fighting skills, specially their self-control and organization.. These police specialists (the infantrymen) have specific *fighting dispositions*: disciplined, self controlled, organized and anonymous dispositions, in opposition to the less restrained and prompt to disorder dispositions of some members of the public who confront them.

This is a clear case of bureaucratic supremacy. As Weber sustains 'The fully developed bureaucratic apparatus compares with other organizations exactly as does the machine with the non mechanical modes of production. Precision, speed, unambiguity, knowledge of the files, continuity, uniformity, unity, strict subordination, reduction of frictions and of material and personal costs- this are raised to the optimum point in the strictly bureaucratic organization'(Weber,1992:731). However, a special difference is given by the fact that infantrymen know how to control themselves and possess the knowledge for fighting. The riot police agents are usually outnumbered. They have to control masses of people that form groups ten to thirty times larger in quantity than them.

We are in a case in which the greater self-control of one group is one of the sources of supremacy over other (Elias,1994).

The bureaucratized riots police unit as a disciplined organization is superior because of all those aspects of precision, speed and unambiguity as well as, and even more relevant, those of continuity and unity. The riot police agents, as specialists in the *mass administration* (Weber) of the administration of the masses, have their superiority, in the last term because of the continuity and unit. Their basic tactic of dispersing the public is correlative with their own of concentration and continual re-concentration. Such unity is achieved through the self-control of each of the agents.

As Agent Rojo said, in cases you loose the temper *“in that case, we will surely loose. Because if you think for a while: ten organized guys are able to clean a whole tribune. And how many are they, more than one or two thousand. Imagine they would get organized and with helmets and shields; we would never be able to beat them. That is why is so important to be tempered, to be firm.”*

With the combination of the referred resources (discipline, legal use of weapons, and information), the riot police agents are able to control greater numbers of agents. The proportions of human beings that can be controlled differs among the riot police agents. However, most RP agents agree that the *“case of forty agents against a combat group [8], is nothing”* sustains Instructor Sergeant Hierro. Roble considers that *“one knows that in relation to a combat group, such group is capable of stopping three or four hundred people”*. Agent Roca, reminds us that *“a combat group can clean a tribune of one or two thousand”*, while Gutierrez *“recalls that in the ‘Cordobazo’ (1969) the riot police (300) “had to divert a column of men, not to let them get to the center of the city, and they confronted against 5000/6000 men”. “When I got to the institution they told us that a combat group is capable of stopping 20.000 people, which is what they where telling us, to give as confidence”*. This last number is obviously an exaggeration. But the fact is that in the cases of riot police operations, the riot police units are outnumbered on most occasions.

For remaining superior in a situation of numerical disadvantage the only way is to remain together. Greater self-control, long term planning dispositions, are central elements and conditions for their supremacy. The infantry is superior, in part, as long as *“the companion does not go to forward or to backward”*(Sergeant Hierro), in line with the Homeric principle that ‘prohibits to fight out of the line’ (Weber,1992:883).

Thanks to the combination of all the mentioned resources a great amount of fighting power is accumulated by the unit, greater than the one the groups that confront

them can deploy and espouse. The result of the contribution of each riot police agent to the collective power of the force means also a shear in the collective honor (and dishonor) that the Riot Police Unit accrues through its interventions, according to the criteria of fighting power and skills.

## 4.2 Warring functionaries

*“This comes from the times of the Romans and even the Greeks, we are modern warriors, who fight in line, in squads, as the Spartan soldiers did”*(Sergeant Hierro, Riot Police Unit)

On those occasions in which the members of the public use force illegally and the riot police intervenes to control or pacify the situation, their intervention is conceived as a response to a defiance to their supremacy, a supremacy that has to be preserved on each occasion. The factual supremacy, and legal function, of the riot police agents, puts them in the position of being obliged to maintain any situation peaceful and controlled. That makes every encounter is seen as a defiance to their supremacy and hegemonic position. In those cases in which their *de facto* supremacy is disputed, the situation is seen by them as a *contest*.

It is important to consider that it is not a *competence* in the sense that out of result of the contest one of the parts will loose what the other will win. If the Riot Police Unit is beaten or surpassed the other part (the public) will not get their functions and resources. What is at stake for the riot police agents is to maintain their supremacy. To be the ones that control situations. On most occasions, the riot police maintains such condition.

It must be also clear that we are describing how the relation with the public is *conceived* from the Riot Police agents' point of view, and how do they define their own use of force against the public. We do not affirm that every time there is a clash with the riot police, all the members of the interaction (infantrymen and public) are trying to demonstrate their warring abilities, or their masculine courage. The public may have different reasons to use force. In some situations (such as with trade unions, or some specific publics) the case is that the public does not engage in the relations with the aim of demonstrating fighting strength or virtues. In other cases some parts of public are directly worried in the expression and effective use of fighting abilities, braveness, courage, etc. as in the cases of certain football fans or the case of some other *semiskilled warriors* such as *“professional agitators”* that make a living out of using violence for specific trade unions that pay for their *services*.

The individuals the riot police agents deal with include a huge range of possible organizations, objectives, peoples, scenarios, etc. Nevertheless, on those occasions in which they have to secure the maintenance of their supremacy, in their view, a subtle and personal contest takes place between them (whose primary working resource is the use of force (Riot police) and the different groups of citizens who resort to violence. Those groups include people who use of force as a last resource, and groups of individuals for whom force is their prime means of subsistence. In either cases, the common denominator is that the police agents *have to be* the ones that reign or control the situation, and for that they have to use force or threaten their use and their skills.

#### **4.2.2. The opponents**

We considered that the best way of analyzing the way in which the strife that exists between the agents and parts of the public is perceived by the infantrymen, is through considering specific relations. For analytical purposes we focus more on the relation with trade unions and with football fans groups. Other cases that we will only comment on briefly include looters, illegal occupants of land or buildings, and jail inmates.

In the analysis of each of these relations, we will focus on certain *categories* of perceptions that appear as structuring the relation with the different types of groups. The recurrence of similar *schemes of perception* seems to constitute the kernel of the *symbolic universe* that surrounds their actual displays of physical force against the public.

In the following description we will see that the fulfillment of the legal function is related to other kinds of considerations that go beyond it, coming near to an ostentatious display of force, secretly ‘usurping’ the public force that is given to them. A concealed symbolic appropriation of state violence takes place by the infantrymen as they personally and intimately accrue the symbolic rewards that the use of state means of violence produces, conceiving themselves as the most powerful group of men within the game of order and violence.

##### 4.2.2.a. Case 1: Fighting for order with football fans hordes.

In the relation with the football fans (or *hinchadas* and especially with the *Barra Brava*<sup>2</sup>) along with the *function* of achieving and securing everybody's rights to have a good and peaceful time in the stadium, there is a conception of the relation as if it would be a continual and tense competence. We are not interested in a detailed description of any kind of development and causal dynamic of *interactions* (that may end in a violent confrontation or not), as we are in understanding how do the infantrymen symbolically construct their *relation* with the football hooligans and public. Again, we will not analyze the "causes" of violence. We are interested in the basic general categories that they possess and continually apply to the members of the public with whom they usually clash in a violent manner.

The fans group or *hinchada* is conceived by the members of the riot police as an organization, within which there is a *chief*, followers of *that chief*, (those conform the Barra Brava) and *members* of the *hinchada*, the general group (called individually '*Hinchas*'). The whole community of assisting fans (the Hinchada) that includes the *barras bravas* are seen as violent *systems*. In an amateur sociological effort agent Gutierrez describes the power dynamic of such groups:

*"In the "hinchadas" the ones that command them, the barra bravas, got to that position through the use of force. The ones who command the "hinchadas" proceed in the following way. The first thing they do is to subject a limited group, five or six, to follow himself, and then those start to subject the others and so on. Those are the ones that occupy the central position in the whole group. There are many competing groups. All those groups fight for tickets, for contacts and for being in the middle of the tribunes, or for taking the larger [team's] flag. The directors of the club give the Barra Brava some tickets so they can sell them, and from selling them they get the difference and make good money. Besides, they receive money for the trips and the food when the team goes to play outside. For that, and for the money they make, they fight for. For example: Tito, the chief of the Belgrano Club Barra Brava is a guy that is 'barra brava' since he was 16, and he made his place in the group through violence, and that is how the hinchadas are sustained: through force."*

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<sup>2</sup> Argentine vocabulary: *Hinchada (s)* refers to the group of fans of a certain football team. *Barra brava* (literally Brave Band) is the group that *commands* the *hinchada*. There can be more than one Barra brava in each *hinchada*.



The hooligans are seen by the police as forming (as them) a *hierarchic structure*, with the particularity that it is commanded by violent fans, and controlled through the use of force<sup>3</sup>.

The riot police agent's knowledge of the supporters is quite intense and complete in relation to each of these groups. These *hinchadas*, are groups that have each of them peculiarities in relation to making trouble and using force. According to the police agents:

*"We know everything about each of them, we know when they will start to fight, when they will not. That is related to the team, to the present game but also to the position in the league. There are also relations between the bands, some are friends, and others hate between themselves. All that, in turn, changes with time."* (mentions Instructor Marcos).

The police classify these brave bands by their practical urgency and interest: bands are classified according to their habitual use of force and disturbance production. The most disturbing bands are classified according to their "*weight*", in a range that goes from the most heavy ones to the "light and tranquil" ones. Such *heaviness* is related to their frequency in which they resort to force. Their most important and heavy opponent is *Club Atletico Belgrano's Barra Brava*. As Agent Marcos sustains:

*"We know every hinchada, each one of them has its own modalities, but the one of Belgrano, that is one we always have problems with, one with which there is continual tension, doesn't matter if they win or if they loose, they are always looking for trouble"*<sup>4</sup>

It appears as if the riot police agents conceptions of the football fanatic, instead of being an impersonal conception, as formal rationality would order, it is rather a detailed knowledge of the groups with even a personal knowledge of their chiefs.

Inquired about the actions of the members of the *barras bravas*, when they insult them or when they provoke them, Agent Juan explains that:

*"For them it is like a big emotion that the police runs them and that they can escape, that we see them and they escape, they play with us, they make as signals, as V-signs, and for them is like an heroic feat."*

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<sup>3</sup> As policemen, *Barra Brava* members make a living through their use of force, even if it is conceived as an illegitimate use of force.

<sup>4</sup> Correspondingly, the member's of the Club Atletico Belgano's Barra brava conceive themselves as the greater troublemakers to the police. In a interview to one of the members of that Barra Brava the Belgrano *Hincha* sustains that "*The police organizes the security operations thinking about us, not the other groups*"(Oliva,1998).

With his words, Agent Juan synthesizes a whole cosmology, according to which the riot police is situated in the middle of that cosmos as the yardstick with which to measure the courage of everybody else (including the more or less quiet public and the more or less violent hooligans). In their view, being the riot police the most brave force to confront, it is the parameter that determines the degree of courage of the fanatics that want to appear as brave: through challenging the riot police, the football fan performs a brave and courageous action, and *“heroic feat”*.

*“You know what, it is something with us, it is only with us that they behave like that, because... I have seen it many times: they do not do too much with the other members of the police,...but when they see us, when they see the infantry, oh, ...they start insulting and shouting and going crazy, I don't know, it is kind of a fixation with us.”* (Sergeant Hierro, referring to the actions and insults of the Barras Bravas)

But it is more than that. For the riot police agents football fans

*“Go prepared for everything, that is why they go to the field, looking for trouble... but it is simple, if you look for trouble, you will find us, you will find us...be sure of that.”*

The riot police is the limit that will prevent the fan to be as brave as he wants. That mere act of insulting them, is seriously taken by the police agent: ‘makes me go crazy’ admits agent Juan. They feel it as a loss of respect, that defies not only their authority, but their physical supremacy. That act of insulting the police can have terrible consequences for the football fans:

*“It is simple, they know that if you tell things to another barra brava, at the end of the game, they will get you and beat you up to death...well, the same thing happens if you mess with the infantry guard, if you look for trouble with us, you will find us.”*

Any member of the public that defies and messes up with the riot police *“will find it”*, will find out that you must not mess around with the most powerful unit of the police force. You cannot question that supremacy through trying to hurt them or insulting them. The defiance made by the *dominated* members of the public, is a relevant feat for the those that need to *prove* their courage through defying the infantry guard. For the most powerful riot police agents their position is different. They do not have to prove anything, unless they are defied. Suggesting Agent Juan that they are implicated in the same game he answers:

*“Well yes, but we are not eager of going out looking for trouble, but if they look after us, they will surely find us, and if they look for us, then they have to withstand it.”*

Such acts of *looking for trouble*, insulting, burning the place, and attacking the Riot police bodies are conceived by the riot police agents, as defiant acts, considering that the fan members should *not try to be heavy*, to be aggressive.

The infantryman’s representation of the relation as a subtle competence, appears more clearly when we consider that such acts of violence and defiance that come from the members of the *Barra Brava* are read and conceived by the infantrymen as acts that want to demonstrate braveness, courage, manliness, all of which is resumed in the notion of “*cartel*”. Riot police agents, denounce that the members of the Hinchada, try to seek for *cartel*. To understand that general game we must first make clear what is the “*cartel*” notion. That will allow us to see that the riot police agents are implicated in a game of competition related to the supremacy in courage and manly honor against the defiant public.

#### *4.2.2.a.1. The symbolic capital of fighting disposition and strength: Cartel*

*Cartel* can be literally translated as *sign*, but it means more than that. This term signifies, within the police world, the prestige of the police agent for his acts and works. It is the designation of a very peculiar sense of honor and prestige, an honor that is appreciated by the agents that have incorporated the same categories that structure the field.

It is observed that *cartel* has different meanings in the different units of the police agency, as the capital of prestige according to the function one has in the institutions, it depends on where one works (investigations of robberies, in the street patrol, etc.). However, it is always directly related to the braveness, courage, *balls*, “extraordinary acts” that have been demonstrated through the exposition to dangerous situations in the their work. The *possession* of *cartel* is *recognized* by the members of the police force to those agents that had demonstrated courage through confronting dangerous situations. In a loose logic, it is also used to refer to the fighting or force power of a police unit, even though is always referred to the individual agents that pertain to such unit (In the cases that somebody that comes from a special unit, such as the paramilitary units of the Federal Police, or the members of the Special assault unit, such as the Israeli special units, or the

French gendarmerie, or the ones of the national gendarmerie, those agents are revered as having *Cartel*, or being “*carteludos*”).

That same criteria of prestige, *cartel*, constructed around braveness, toughness, and courage to fight is used by the infantrymen to refer to the toughness of violent members of the public. When the members of the public “look for trouble” with the riot police such act is perceived by the Riot police agents as an act that wants to demonstrate “*cartel*”, as a physical and symbolic defiance that wants to show the possession of those warring virtues such as courage, bravery, and audacity. Referring to the *barras bravas*, Agent Ramon reflects (20 years in the force):

*“what is even worse, is that for them [the fans] hitting you with a stone, or confronting you, would give them cartel [prestige]”. Agent Hierro believes in relation to “the ones that go to the football game” that “for what I see, does not matter if they loose or if they win, they just break everything, and you know what... they just look for cartel”.*

The Riot police agents critique or depict the violent public that assists to the football match denouncing that “*they think they are ‘carteludos’ (brave, heavy, strong, having balls)*”. The fact is that the same notion and principle of classification that they use to refer to themselves and to other members of police or security force, they use it for referring to activities and identities of the violent actors of the public they face in that parallel fighting field, the tribunes.

Even if we will not analyze the relation from the point of view of the football fans, we must say that Gil (1998) analyzing the situation from the Argentine’s fan perspective arrives to conclusions that correspond to the discoveries made from the point of view of the police agents: the presence of a fight where the same mythical substance: “*cartel*” is at stake. It is in the clash between the riot police agents and the *barras bravas* that the symbolic expression of braveness and courage and the affirmation of a fighting and masculine superiority can be accrued or preserved. In relation to such masculine violent affirmation Gil (1998) has explained how the fans believe in the symbolic capital of “*aguante*” that can be understood as endurance, fortitude, firmness, vigor on bearing: the fans version of riot police agent’s *cartel*. In a more complex analysis than the one made by Dunning et. al, Gil relates such expressive violence to a competence for the “*endurance*”. According to Gil’s analysis the game of masculine violent affirmation of football fans, includes not only the relations between the football fans, but also the ones with the police agents. We are interested in such relations. According to Gil:

‘Within this habitus that guides the behavior of those fanatical of the sportive activities we must recall the value that is given, conceived as an essential attribute of those who form part of the sportive ritual, to “el aguante” [endurance] The ‘aguante’ is a typological attribute based in the art of not escaping (Elbaum,1998). It is eminently defensive, it implies enduring “whatever comes”. To have “aguante” [endurance], means the opposite of stigma: to be a chicken appears as a negative feature in the realm of the sportive ritual. The masculine ideal implies that one suffers the “aguante” with no help. “Aguante” disputes, defies the supposed winner, confronting superiority [included the police], the order of the supposed. [Aguante] disbelieves in discipline. All the fans groups feel that they are the owners of the “aguante” because a fan with no “aguante” is not a real fan. There is within the followers of the teams the necessity to position themselves as the owners of that *symbolic capital* that is acquired in each match in each demonstration of braveness, fervor, and fidelity, and won in each fight won. The aguante (endurance) points to many meanings at the same time. The affirmation of the self body as bearer of any eventuality (“It does not matter what it takes”, “I don’t care about police”) constitutes one of the central elements and self positioning as a point in dispute, because ‘aguante’ only has sense if one has the less chances to win. The easiness and velocity to run away of the rival, the tendency to arm oneself with elements (stones, metals and weapons), ...to refuse the presence of stronger allies and the necessities of remaining together, appear as common terms in the "aguante".’ (Gil, “El cuerpo en los rituales deportivos [The body in sportive rituals], 1998)’.

As we see the masculine affirmation of the *Barras Bravas* and *Hinchadas* is centered in such displays of “demonstration of braveness, fervor, and fidelity” to the team, proper of the aggressive masculinity that Dunning et. al (1994) refer to. Such braveness is symbolically designated by the loose reference to *aguante*, that was translated as endurance, fortitude, firmness, but also with a great connotation of resistance. In such situation, the Barras Bravas fight for the symbolic capital of *aguante*, among other things, through defying the police (“confronting the superiority, the order that is supposed). Making virtue out of necessity, according to their objective position in a realm of force where they are always dominated, they are proud of the *resisting virtues*: as Gil says: ‘aguante only has sense if one has fewer chances of winning’. Many police agents seem to be right when they think that when the members of the public defy them gives *cartel* to the

challengers, according to the criteria of their group. It seems to be that such *cartel* in which police agents believe, adopts in the eyes of the fans the meaning of *aguante*, a symbolic capital highly valued by football fans, according to Gil's description.

For the members of the riot police the relation is read as an always-potential confrontation. The language is that of the battle, and not in the metaphorical manner in which one refers to a *court* battle. There are rather real battles, even if the main objective "*is to injure the less possible number of them or us*" (Hierro). Many are real combats, which are repeated two or three times a year with the different band, being more likely to clash with the heaviest of the local *barras bravas*: the Belgrano *hinchada*. (In the Argentine football slang there are central matches that are called classics (*clasicos*), when two very prominent teams play).<sup>5</sup> According to the riot policemen, they have their own *classic* with the Belgrano fans.

The subtle and discrete masculine competence gives a special meaning to the relation between the agents of the riot police and parts of the public, and therefore to the use of force of the riot police over the defiant fans, every time the warring fans "look for them" and find them in the form of *cs. gas*, rubber bullets and baton charges that mark their bodies in a clash heroically presented as *hand to hand* combat.

The public's demonstrations of warring courage is read by the members of the riot police as a direct defiance of their supremacy: "*I think that most of them go with the intention to confront us, they go just for that, I think they go prepared for violence, I believe they get prepared.*" affirms Sergeant Leon.

Let us observe now, how these symbolic elements (a confrontation with more or less brave groups, that seek to achieve *cartel*), replicates in the conceptions about their relation with the demonstrators they have to deal with and who try to defy their *de facto* supremacy.

#### 4.2.2.b. Case 2: Fighting political demonstrators

Primary objective of interventions: Neutralize their organization and the will to resist  
(*Infantry guard Internal Operations Manual*)

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<sup>5</sup> There are even super *classics*: being in Argentina River Plate vs. Boca Junior's. To have an idea can be compared with the Spanish Real Madrid vs. Barcelona.

Such neutral, warring working principle for the different interventions involves a whole set of values, contents, dimensions and aspects. Such cold and neutral directives are filled up with peculiar symbolic elements, some of which were already referred in the description of the relation with the football fans opponents. Some others are identified in the present section. The battle logic that structures the relation with the members of political demonstrations is even more clear as in relation to police demonstrators as they fight against certain *formal* organizations.

*“Every case is different, it depends on what labor union you are working with, for example the ones of EPEC [the provincial electricity company] have tried to forcefully impose a certain policy on the present government, and now you see that they can not do that, they tried to be strong guys, and it is clear that they are not strong at all.”* recalls Commissary Roble (proud of the war that was won against one the most violent labor union in the province, which was fought to avoid the privatization of the publicly owned energy company)

The relations with demonstrators is also constructed as a competence in which both parts measure forces. Agent Juan explains it clearly:

*“-J: If the people come, ok, and if you tell them to disperse and they go, ok. But, if they don't do it, and they get tough, well, I am sorry, but we have to repress*

*-P: Why are you sorry?*

*-J: I am sorry for them, for messing with the infantry guard.”*

The unions or the demonstrators in general, are also classified according to their fighting *weight*. As Agent Juan explains when inquired if all labor unions are all the same?:

*“No, No, some of them are “heavier” than others, such as the ones of the electric company, or the truck drivers, or the national workers union, and so no...no....”.*

Within these more or less heavy demonstrators organizations there are professional agitators, and the ones who follow them, as well as more peaceful members of such organizations.

*“Within the members of the union you must understand that there are agitators, professional agitators, that are the ones that throw the bombs, the ones that go in the front and make that the heavy things happen, those are the ones we must control.”* continues Commissary Roble.

Confronting them the riot police agents see *professional* illegal fighters: the professional agitators. Beside and following them they see troops of ad hoc followers, hordes *“of used and guided people”*. Whole armies of amateur demonstrators, whole

armies of opponents. According to the Riot Police agents, within every organization or mob there are the ones that are in charge of using force, or at least of organizing it: *professional agitators*, that are the professional fighters; and the *ad hoc* fighters, those that follow the agitators.

“-P: Are there people that makes a living out of the demonstrations?

-Agent Hierro: *Of course, and they are always the same, and it is very difficult to catch them, they even got cell phones, as that agitator that was called from Paraguay to teach the local picketeers [piqueteros:people of the pickets]<sup>6</sup>”.*

The figure of the agitator is a central piece to understand the police cosmovisions. The agitator occupies a central position in the dynamic of the confrontation. It is necessary to recall that the basic and primary objective of the riot police, according to the internal manual is that of ‘Neutralization of organization and of the will to resist’. The agitators are the agents that can be the central actors of the organization, or may be the principal agents that preserve and encourage the ‘will to resist’ The professional agitators have in relation to the workman or the bulk of the popular masses the same role as police Chiefs and instructors have in relation to the riot police agents. As Sommiers sustains ‘*La médiation syndicale et la préparation des actions spectaculaires semblent se voir ainsi assigner la fonction de transformer une violence colérique, pulsionnelle et spontanée, et à ce titre propice aux incidents, en violence instrumentale, calculée, froide et orientée vers une fin définie*’ (Sommiers,2000:10).

The other kind of agitators, are young men, that is hired, paid, or for many other reasons, goes to “*confront them*”

*“To a demonstration you have that ten thousand people go, of which five thousand are right, they have good reasons, but the other fifty percent are the ones that are paid to go, and those are the ones that look for trouble, those are boys, and no way...they are the worst.”* affirms Officer Ariel.

In turn, the confrontation with the demonstrators (and with football fans) is in the eyes of the infantrymen a *masculine confrontation*. For the infantrymen, the work of the riot police is a masculine work, “*you have to have balls to work here*” states explicitly Officer Ivan. The people that confront those masculine infantrymen are, in their view, also men.

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Piqueteros’ is a nationwide movement of unemployed people (product of the neoliberal policies ) who ask for unemployment salaries and other kinds of government assistance resorting to common means of action, specially obstructing roads with barricades and fire (See Auyero, 2000)



We must consider that the riot police are the part of the police where age is a central dimension: “*the average of the people here is between twenty five to forty*”. As a relatively young unit, actualizes and possesses the virtues of force and courage of youth.

-P: Why don't you go to the street? I asked Agent Ramon, who a Saturday afternoon (football afternoon) was left in the radio room

-R: “*Because I do not run anymore, I do not get where they get, and I can't stay behind, ...I could go, but I may have to take shortcuts to reach the combat group, but is not like that, you have to leave space to the younger people.*

- P: But do the combat group usually run that much?

- R: *But that is not the point, the thing is that you can not be jeopardizing the group, occupying other's place... You can not give them any advantage.”*

In such low profile civil strife, their *idealized* rivals are relatively young men, what in the realm of force is an *honorable* opponent. In such logic, the presence of woman and kids brings great problems. From an exterior point of view, one can think that the legitimacy of their use of force is threatened if the proportion of force is so unequal between the parties. From their point of view, the problem is that it is not an honorable opponent. In cases in which woman and kids are present in the demonstrations, their presence is seen as a *tactic of the real fighters*: men. As we can see in the following excerpt from a conversation of with Instructor Hierro:

*“What **agitators** do is to go with the women and with the children and they put them in the front, and in that situation you can not intervene, because it looks as if you would hit the women and the kids, while they, from behind, they throw stones..., and that is where we are now.”*

For the riot police agents the tougher *real* opponents hide behind the women and children. In cases in which there is a too great presence of women and children (a situation that become more common as the work force and protests get feminized (see Auyero,2000), the riot police tends to “*clean*” the mob from the its weakest members, leaving in the battle field only the bravest, their most honorable contenders .

*“As you know, we first do the “imprent” [ostentation maneuvers] and in the majority of cases the woman with their children leave, the same with the old people, they leave, the ones that stay are the ones that go there only really to fight,... [they stay] either because they are crazy, or because they want to demonstrate something”[and attributing the same mystical intention that was attributed to the football fans] “the ones that go to the place because fighting or facing the infantry guard is as if it would give them cartel [prestige] in their neighborhood or in their gang. They say to each other then: hey; have you seen that, how I faced the infantry. And then it is valuable for them, it is as if it would give them prestige.”(Instructor Hierro).*

Sergeant Gutierrez ratifies the idea: “*Those young kids are the ones that then show themselves telling everybody that they have faced the infantry guard.*”

As we see, the confrontations that end up in “repression” (baton and shield charges, or shootings with rubber bullets) are constructed by the riot police agents as a confrontation in which they *face* the tough men, *cartel seekers*, as women, children and old people usually leaves with the ostentation maneuvers they make:

“-P: In those cases, only men are left, because women, children and old people have left thanks to your displays...

-H: “*Exactly, and the most carteludos [bravest, toughest] stay*” says agent Hierro.

This virile business relation with the public is also present in their recalling of some of the most important historical interventions of the riot police. Remembering the historical events of 1969 during the so called “*Cordobazo*”, they recall that

“*A column that was about to get into the center of the city, coming down from the factories, armed with nuts and slings, and the riot police were ordered not to let the column enter downtown, in General Paz Square the column was obliged to turn and they did it, and was the infantry guard alone against five or six thousand employees, that where all men...all men.*”(Sergeant Alvarez, 18 years in the unit)

The riot police perception of the struggle with the labor union and workers, perceived as a masculine and virile confrontation, may have similar meanings for certain parts of the working class public that engages in violent confrontations with them. According to Sommier ‘dans une société où sont chaque jour un peu plus dépréciées, non seulement les valeurs de masculinité, mais aussi la force physique dans le travail industriel, où la force de combat peut difficilement s'investir dans un projet politique, l'affirmation identitaire se réduirait, pour ces militants ouvriers, à une théâtralisation de la force de combat. On rejoindrait la "nostalgie de l'épreuve", nostalgie de "l'épreuve virile comme critère d'identité.’(Sommier, 2000:10).

The internal operations manual posits that the other object, apart from *neutralizing organization*, is neutralization of *the will to resist*. Such objective is the basis for constructing the relation as a resistance competition. The mere persistence and reticence to leave the scene is defiance to their power and authority

In those cases in which the riot police agents are ordered to advance, trying to disperse of the resistant members of the public they perceive it as an act that makes it clear who are the ones who command the situation:

“*We are shock troops, we are not trained to stay and look, and leave that everybody does whatever they want.*”(Agent Juan)

This advancing movement, an hypermasculine movement according to the logic of facing and confronting the opponent, is related as emulating certain heroic and hyperpowerful armies:

*“When they give us the order to advance, we step over everything and everybody, and the one that does not get aside, he is screwed...and where the infantry guard steps nothing is left, it is as the Huns’s army, is like that”* tells Agent Juan; *“Where the infantry steps the grass doesn’t grow any more”* says Hierro, in a direct reference to the legend of Attila’s horse that burned the grass it stepped on.

The message is that demonstrators do not have to confront the infantry guard, they have to leave when they are said to, they have nothing to do there, they do not have to defy, to disobey what the guard says They should not to try to be “*carteludos*” (pretend they are brave)

The same masculine menace and cartel seekers are present in the prisons and reformatories when the riot police have to pacify prison riots. The same rewards, or even greater ones, are awaiting the agents that control such more violent scenarios.

Agent Raul, affirms, applying the same practical formula, that *“The same with the juvenile reformatories, the CETRAN\* I, II and III, where we had to intervene some time ago; when we got in there some civilians told us that after confronting the infantryguard, they [the young inmates] were doing cartel [praising themselves] for having faced us.”*

According to the logic that praises and judges events and people according to their fighting power, or courage, the honour acquired is not the same in all relations. The stronger the specific opponent the higher the honour (and the higher the excitement). According to such logic prison inmates are the most *interesting* opponents.

Some detained people are *deposited* in police stations, which are overcrowded with people waiting for the trial. In relation to those inmates of the police stations, they are constantly producing riots, because the places are overfull. In such cases, the heaviest part of the police, the riot police, is called into action. In relation to them, Agent Julio Cesar comments:

*“The people who are in jail in the different police stations are afraid of us, when they [Police agents in charge of the inmates] want to calm them, they tell them that they will call us and they become calm, the inmates know that they can not play with us.”*

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\*Short form for Centro de Tránsito: Transitory Center

Even if overcrowded police stations are dangerous places, the epitome of the world of violence and chaos where man is the wolf of man is the prosecuted prisoners jail. The battle against the people that inhabit the “in transit” prisons is according to Officer Aguada “*the dream of any member of the riot police*”<sup>7</sup>. Two thousand people waiting. No time to make alliances. The rule of force. A short time, after which, you go home or you are sent to a *condemned* jail. Overcrowded. A place for one thousand *masculine* inmates, lodges two. The occasion appeared some years ago. The inmates started a riot. Sergeant Aguada (ten years in the force) remembers the day:

*“The dream of any member of the riot police is to intervene in a riot in the prosecuted prisoners jail. I remember that some years ago, six or something like that, we were called to intervene. And well, they told us to get down from the trucks and form. And I remember the boys, oh boy....you could not keep them at ease, you could not control the boys, they were going crazy. They were screaming and excited, breathing intensely....I was telling them to be quiet, but I could not. They were so excited, because they had to intervene in that place. Some old chiefs who had been part of the lower echelons knew what that place meant, and they did not say a word, they look to the other side and the guys kept on screaming and craziness increased. They knew what the boys where feeling, was incredible... and we got in. ... Because...it is like that you prepare all your life for those moments in which you have to demonstrate what you know and what you have been prepared for. But now, they transferred the jail to outside the city and we do not have the chance any more of intervening in such place.”*

Sergeant Roca evokes the event as follows:

*“They had taken control of the place. We had to recover it. We got there and all the cars were waiting. O boy, I was scared, so scared. The prison guards advised us that the inmates had a lot of tricks. They had put grind glass in the gate handles. They had spread the stairs with soap and water, so we would slide... that is a six-story building. One of our boys was severely injured, he fell down the staircases, when they started throwing things from the top. Another guy got cut. Another lost his conscience. In six hours, with the help of the prison guards, who were beside us we recuperated the place. We made the inmates form in the patio. We made them undress and stand against the wall. And counted them. Then we*

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<sup>7</sup>People in jail, waiting for a trial are separated from those who have been convicted. The institutions where they are maintained are the most violent environments over the country. As a *transit place* with no permanent power structure, such prison is a land of violence, where ephemeral positions are gained and secured by the actual and constant display of force, or rather by the courage and demonstration of being able of doing anything. In the other condemned prisons there is a more stable order, with hierarchies and semi permanent alliances. The greater violence that exists in the prosecuted prisoners jail can be observed in the greater number of riot that are present in such places. ‘According to a study on jail protests in the last 16 years in Argentina: from the 354 protests registered since 1986, 229 (65%) correspond to riots made by ‘in trial’ detained citizens. There have been 59 disturbances of diverse characteristics and 66 hunger strikes’ La Voz del Interior, 17/12/2002.

*revised them. We made them lean and give us the back, so we could inspect them, just in case they had some cutting elements in their ass. The press said we were torturing the guys through an 'injurious treatment'. But it is not like that, we were searching for knives and other things, you never know. You give them your back and they may stab you.”<sup>8</sup>*

The most dangerous members of the civilians, the most brave ‘public’, in the logic of force, the most prestigious the opponent, and therefore the bigger the honor.

As we can see the ways in which the agents of the riot police relate to the members of the public they fight with is not that of the impersonal function, or the problematic situation, that the external observer may think takes place. In the description we had made their functionary acts are also the symbolic demonstration and ostentation of their power in relation to the “*all those that want to appear as carteludos*” or what is the same all those parts of the public that defy their physical and fighting supremacy through “facing” the riot police.

The classification of the public in organizers and fighters follows the classifications implicated in their basic operative principles: Neutralize organization (that is the same as neutralize organizers) and the will to resist (that is the same as to neutralize their followers). What seems to happen behind these judgments is that riot police agents apply the same structures that structure their organizations (Commandants and troops scheme) to the members of the public. Therefore they clearly construct any segment of the public as opponents, that has the same structure of organizations as them (Command and troop), and each of the members of the public can have their same properties or qualities: fighting skills, courage, force, and are all *cartel* seekers. Even in the cases in which the public just stays, they construct them as opponents. In turn the more powerful the opponent (ranging from disorganized feminine, old and pacific publics to the most manly, young, violent and organized publics) the more the excitement and the interest on subduing him, showing him who the master and dominator of the field is, in that continual low scale civil war they are engaged in.

We go on to discuss two other aspects of this competence that are of extreme importance to understand their perspective on their use of force. The first one is the fact that the struggle they are engaged in is conceived as eternal, or at least with a continuity in

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<sup>8</sup> Three inmates were killed that day, after six hours of struggling the inmates surrendered.

time with a past, a present and a future. The second is that such struggle involves kind of a secret crusade in the name of certain peculiar and shared values, that are not necessarily the values of the rules that legitimate their use of force.

### 4.2.3. An eternal struggle against the outsiders

“You mean that when you strike them, it is as if you gave them a lesson or something like that?”

“Of course” replies me Agent Hierro “*there is not a hit without a lesson.*”

The charges, injuries and suffering they impose on the population have a moral content; they are not allowed to defy their superiors. According to the Internal Manual of the infantry guard the *General objectives* of the riot police interventions are those of “1) Prevent; 2) Persuade; 3)Educate”.

Such *three* General Objectives, seem to correspond to the *three* basic *moments* of the riot police interventions we saw in chapter three (according to the manual that distinguished the calm/tension/repression instances). Such calm/tension/repression moments of their intervention seems to corresponds with the: Prevent / Persuade / Educate objectives of their actions.

<i>Moments</i>	<i>Objectives</i>
Calm	Prevent
Tension	Persuade
Repression	Educate

According to such logic the repression moment has a general educative meaning and intention. We will analyze two important consequences of these *educative intentions*. The *teaching* and moral element that the repressive moment has, tells us many things. First, it validates our assumption that the riot police holds a continual struggle for the supremacy over the *same parts* of the public. The other aspects are the moral contents that are transmitted in the repression events. We refer to the first aspect now, a we will analyze the other one in the next section.

The continuity of the relation between the riot police and the members of the public that is implied in the consideration of the repression as an act that *teaches* the members of the public “*so they know that they do not have to mess with the riot police*”. The teaching moment assumes an idea of *identity* in the public. They are always the same: the agitators, and their followers (or the football fans) the ones who defy us. Their struggle and

confrontation with different members and groups of citizens is continual, has a history, a past, a present and a future.

Their formal origins, as we had already seen, relate to the year 1943. All the members interviewed knew the year and *the day* the infantry guard was created. They know that other *heavy* special units derive from the infantry guard. They know that they were originally created to provide security to the police headquarters.

What is more important is that such historical entity maintains an identity in time through the adoration of their own heroes: The fallen in duty members of the riot police. ‘The first man who fell in duty was agent badge number 71 Roberto Transito Ceballos’(Retamoza,195). Many other have fallen in the line of duty, a war origin euphemism for dying pro patria. The ‘fallen’ agents are paid homage in the little altar consecrated to a Virgin, that has the names of the agents in “the Bronze” plaques that are attached to it. The altar is *just* below the *fatherland symbol, the flag*, that is *just in the center* of the official center of the unit. The bronze plaques over the stone altar resembles those war monuments where the names of the fallen soldiers are written. Two dozen plaques share “*agent badge number 71 name* in the stone, a symbol that they had taken their ‘*eternal leave of absence*’ as Retired Commisary Jaime so poetically put it. (Jaime, 1997).

Agent Ramon, the oldest member of the infantry guard, recalls the continuity in the *eternal* and continued confrontation:

*“Some things have changed inside, as things have also changed outside,...before there were the guerrillas, and then came democracy, before we had the FAL, now we have sticks, but things are just the same, before there were the zurdos [radicals], now there are their children who rob you and kill you. The point is that we are always a mobile target, before they had the ideal of the people or of society..., now they do it for them, doesn’t matter why, but they send you down [they kill you] the same, it is the same thing.”*

The eternal Infantry Unit, with an identity in time, confronts an enemy that is also identical in time. Such temporal identity is even related to a biological continuity “*now there are their children*”, the *other* has an essence. That essence remains in time, perpetuates and reproduces. That same perpetual battle is signaled by Sergeant Hierro, in a peculiar manner, that involves a whole cosmology of the we/them relation: He rhetorically asks:

*“Well, is it not as it has always been, ...on the one side the soldiers, and on the other the Indians, is it not like that?”*

The future is also present in their perpetual struggle. Such persistent confrontation presents the infantry guard as the continual winners. In their views, this is the only position they are destined to have. No other position is even thinkable and compatible with their *essence*. The future is also one in which the confrontation will continue, one in which they must maintain their superior condition or perish. Inquired about the possibility that the increasingly armed *others* will surpass the infantry guard some day, Officer Ivan explains:

-I: *They will not pass over us, they will not win over us.*

-P: I don't now, I would not be so sure?

-I: *No, they will not pass us.*

-P: They'll never do?

-I: *No.*

-P: And if the day comes that the force is surpassed?

-I: *That day I leave.*

-P: Why, for personal shame or for institutional shame?

-I: *For both<sup>9</sup>...but...that is not going to happen, we are the strongest, and it is very difficult that that will happen."*

#### **4.2.4. Crusaders of a sacrificed and disciplined morality**

'It can always be observed again and again, the members of the groups that are more powerful than other interdependent groups, believe themselves to be better human beings than the others. The literal expression of aristocracy can be an example, was the name that a high class of warriors applied to that peculiar distribution of power in Athens...the dominance of the better,...it would not be difficult to find other examples'

(Elias,1996)

"What do those Creoles know about sacrifice, nothing"  
(Riot police officer)

Another aspect of their symbolic universe that infuses their use of force with a peculiar meaning is *a pretended moral or ethical superiority*, in relation with the agents of the public they deal with. Such moral superiority is intimately related to the total cosmology in which the riot police agents exist. In the last instance, it seems that many interventions of the riot police force, and therefore their use of force, is trying to sustain not only a certain public order, but also a moral order that is related to their actual and past conditions of existence: a disciplined and self-sacrificing existence.

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<sup>9</sup> To inquire about *institutional or personal shame* was a mistake. When he answers me that "For both" he is actually demonstrating me that his personal shame (or honor) is the same as the institutional one, as they are the same. He is the institution in the incorporated form, at the same time that he owes almost everything he is to his instituted condition.



This moral order is reflected in the attributes they denounce and highlight in their *opponents* as seen in the judgments they make about them. There are many kind of opponents, as we had seen: Union leaders, football fans, prison inmates, home or land usurpers. What is relevant is that they make systematically the same kind of critiques and highlight the same kind of aspects in their *opponents*. The following excerpt condensates the way riot police agents morally depict the groups they deal with:

*“The ones of the stadium...they are degenerated, they bring it in their blood, in the genes since they are born, they are like that..., people who do not work, who do nothing, they are all day without doing anything’; the demonstrators ...you give them a house, that they could hav’it for fifty pesos a month, no,.. Instead of paying it, they want it for free and they do not want to work. Or if you give them a social security salary<sup>10</sup>, they do not want to work, they want that everything falls from above, that you give them everything, and it is like that,.. They want everything, and if you give it to them they do not value it, these people don’t value anything. They are a bunch of abandoned, that they are not interested in anything, progress, a family, a career, advance, nothing. In the case of the labor unions leaders, that is all politics, they cheat the people. You also have the other people that makes a living from what others throw, parasites of society.”* tells Agent Juan. That same people are conceptualized as *“beasts that do not learn when you get strike them”*.

Because they do not want to work, they want the state gives the everything with not sacrifice they are considered as animals, less that humans. Their essence is determined in their blood, degenerated individual that cannot be changed, even if they are punished with violence.

In relation to football fans, the same points are highlighted by the members of the riot police as the sources of their sub human condition:

*That is people that “does not work, that live from what they get from the club. They spend the whole week without doing nothing, and they travel, they have always before the match good barbecues [asados] well accompanied with wine.”* tells Agent Juan.

But the rubbish of society does not end there:

*“You have all those that are all day doing nothing, the hippies, the lefties, those that have an earring, or two or three, or those that consume drugs, or the ones that are all day “peace, buddy, peace”, or the ones that are listening rock all day, of the lefties that you ask them “Who’s Che Guevara, and they know nothing, ... or the ones with aids, ...I have nothing against them, but they are all the same, the*

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<sup>10</sup>It is a social security benefit, given by the federal government in which case the person who receives it has to work four hours a day in whatever they can.

*same trash...and they are the same good for nothing, the same violent good for nothing, the same lazy bastards, that go to see football.” (Officer Ivan).*

It seems that the riot police fight against some less than human “*human parasites*”. Their less than human condition is based, as we saw, on certain criteria. In relation to the agitators, they denounce the “*selfishness*” of their use of force, in opposition to the impersonal and disinterested public function the riot police does. But in relation to all of the members of the public the most constant critic and principle of distinction is that the members of the public they face are people who make no sacrifice, are not interested in a career, in advancing, in working, in having a house. In turn these are people who do not respect, that do not obey, that have no discipline in their life.

They also detest those who as their opposite “*all day smoke marihuana, use drugs, listen rock, the ones that use earrings*” and even “*the ones with aids*”. Their loose body, a body that is not like the riot police agents’ disciplined body, is rejected. Another case of their existential opposition, are the “*ones with aids*” that relates in their view, with gays as well as with drug users.

In this case we have a principle of differentiation from the warring members of the public, that focuses in the aspects of sacrifice (heavy effort) over the long term (a career, a family), working hard (not lazy), all central elements of their *real masculine* and *real man conduct*. Some other examples:

In relation to demonstrators:

*“Yesterday I was observing the people who were demonstrating they were saying that the government does not give them a solution, but I am sure that is to give them a job, any job, no one is left, and if you give them a pick and a shovel, not even one is left.”*

Labor union leaders:

*“Those are the ones that exploit the workers, they live without working.”*

Illegal Occupants:

*“In the cases of throwing, for example the ones of the IPV\* that are about to be finished, ten or twelve families get inside illegally, and it is not proper that the ones who have worked all their life for a house, these ones have never done anything and take their house. I know that the ones who seize the houses need them, but those have worked, and these ones take their homes.”*

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\* Provincial Housing Institute.

Radical activists (zurdos):

*“They are controlled by the agitators that do not work, they are cheated by the ideologists.: “What do they know about Che Guevara?”<sup>11</sup>*

Hippies:

*“They do not work, they are all day with the ‘make love not war’ stuff.”*

The lack of such virtues of sacrifice, effort, and hard work along with the disciplined and productive body are the most detested characteristics of some parts of the public. This includes the repulsion also for those people that do not have a *respectable life*. A respectable life includes all those who do not earn a living thanks to sacrifice, effort and hard work.

In an application of the same principle, those who do not use their body for working hard (not productive and undisciplined bodies) are rejected. That is the case of those who destine their bodies for putting earrings, or being smoking all day.

Following the signals that the bodily hexis gives about the *nature of people*,<sup>12</sup> the agents that present a different, and usually *disordered* body aspect, that is, a body that is not as theirs (converted in the norm in relation to which all other bodies may be compared), must be corrected and punished. They hate long hair (*“If the military come the first thing they have to do is to make everybody cut their hair”*), people that *“use one, or more earrings”*, or the ones who smoke marihuana (This last element is a substance that *softens* the body and reduces the control over it, the opposite virtue of their firm body).

The supremacy that is obtained by their technical knowledge, arms, and disciplinary supremacy, is reconverted in supremacy because of their sacrifice, effort, and self-control. Therefore, their use of force is also the affirmation of a moral order (which includes an order of the bodies). Such order is one in which they appear as the most perfect realization of its virtues. The many kind of *“parasites”* of society are their almost perfect opposite, their negation.

Dunning et al. sustain that expressive violence is related to the use of force as a source of ‘position, identity, meaning and *enjoyment*’(1994). Until now we can say that we

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<sup>11</sup> In relation to ignorance to Che Guevara we do not know if the critic is because Che was a Marxist, or about the fact that Che was a soldier, disciplined and brave combatant. I could not make that point clear.

<sup>12</sup> ‘The assumption of the correspondence or parallelism between the “physic” and the “moral” that underlies practical or rationalized knowledge, is what permits the association of “psychological” or “moral” properties to physiognomic indexes’(Bourdieu,1986b:183)

have mainly concentrated on aspects related to the use of force in relation to position, identity and meaning. We must analyze that last dimension, that is related to the feelings of the riot police agents in relation to their violence.

### **4.3 Sensations and sensibilities in riot police use of force**

#### **4.3.1 Sensibilities: acceptance and tolerance to the use and spectacle of violence**

We must say that in the present work we have mainly referred to the actual social categories and meanings that symbolically structure the riot police use of force, rather than to the emotions and feelings that arise in relation to such violence. However we will briefly refer to this last aspect as it may be relevant to understanding the specific elements of the riot police violence.

According to Dunning expressive use of force is related with a greater tolerance to the use of force and a reduction of guilt feelings (1994:311). In turn, Elias and Dunning sustain that for greatly civilized agents use of force is accompanied by a certain felling of guilt, or internal displeasure according to the specific *civilized* structure of self-control that the individual has. This is related to a higher threshold of acceptance of the spectacle of violence, and of the use of force in itself.

To unravel such situation in relation to the infantrymen, we have inquired them about their first violent experiences with the public. Specifically about the first occasions in which the riot police agents consulted had to shoot against other human beings or strike them with their baton. Most agents referred that their first time they where in a demonstration, surrounded by a more or less violent mob, they felt pretty much scared. Specifically in relation to their first time they had to shoot or hit somebody they usually felt *greatly inhibited*. We present two clear examples. As Officer Ivan expresses:

*“I remember the first time, the first time I was very afraid, I was like paralyzed, I had a shooting gun, and told my companions that the shot did not come out, or that the thing didn’t work, but then came an old guy, he touched my back and told me “do not be afraid”...I remember it was crazy, I had like fifty people round me...I even thought of running away with the public and going home..., but then you just do it, you get used to it.”*

Instructor Hierro refers a similar experience.

*“We where in a football field, we where making the people stand on a line, and I was telling the guys “please, please, would you just wait, please go back, come*

*on, like talking to them, and suddenly and old Juan (police officer) came and told me, “no boy, that is not how you do it”, and started to push the people with his stick making them go back Go BAAAACKKK!!!!, and he sent back like 40 people with his stick, that is how you do it.”*

As we can see the agents were not willing to use force in that first time. The lack of experience in shooting or hitting another human being seems to be quite relevant, considering that after that you “get used to it”. Those same agents say that today it is just part of their job. The same Officer Ivan (7 years in the unit) says quite naturally:

*“Every time I get one [a kid] I pull his sideburns,...not to leave traces, and ...in relation to shooting to people, what you do is shoot them in a way that you do not injure them, so as not to ruin it, not to damage it.”*, as if he would be referring to certain material element.

In that case, it is clear that they became greatly used to the use of force against other human beings, and even to the production of (light) suffering in their bodies. This facility to cause pain to other people is expressed in most agents interviewed. It seems that even if they have a high degree of self-control (in comparison with other individuals), they have a very low level of repulsion to the use of force.

In relation to the blows and shoots they apply to people, most have recognized that they try to do it in a way that they produce the least number of injured people as possible. And the ones who are injured must be the least possible. But such limits on the production of injured people seem to come from what Elias calls “external controls”, rather than their own sense of repulsion. As Agent Juan refers:

*“-J: We know where we hit, we know that you have to hit in the zones where there is more flesh, in the ribs, in the shoulders, we never hit from up to down, we hit from the side. We grab the baton with both hands and we hit with the end, because, otherwise we could kill them,.. with a baton strike you can perforate his stomach, or one in his neck you kill him, we know that, that is why we do not do it,..... we do it in a manner that is not seen, but you have to do it very carefully, because a blow badly stricken and you lose everything,*

*-P: What do you mean?*

*-J: You give a blow badly and you lose everything, first, you are suspended, and if you are lucky they only give some days arrested, they leave you inside for a while, you can lose everything, and I tell you, before I hit I think a lot*

*-P: What happens, can it ruin your promotion?*

*-J: No, it is not that, the problems are with the additional works<sup>13</sup>, while you are suspended you can not make additional work, but I to be honest, before giving an*

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<sup>13</sup> Additional work refers to the surveillance work that police officers do. The public in the Additional Services Office purchases such services. The money they get from doing these services equals what they get

*extra hit, it is as if all your family came to your mind. And if you injure somebody you know all that can happen, goodbye, Imagine that one of our own chiefs sees you, they do not say anything, or they do as if they would not have seen you, but if somebody else denounces you, bye bye, - and if you come out on TV and they identify you, goodbye; that is why you cannot hit them as you would like to."*

As we can see, the control comes from the consequences that the act can have. As integrated agents, in a certain configuration, and his total dependence on remaining part of the force, they produce as few injuries as possible. The instances that intervene as external control are not their own chiefs, but the ones of the other units. The chiefs of the Riot Police Unit accept and conceal such practices. As Chief Montoya says:

*"With the people we have, there are cases in which when they arrest somebody, they start hitting him, giving them blows with the sticks, but I tell them: hey, guys, that is not the moment, do not to hit in public", they will have time for that to show him he was wrong."*

They know what it is about. In case they are discovered in committing excessive force, the problem is that as they are arrested *they can not make additional security services*, which means a great loss in their salary, considering that it is around half of what they get every month. They can ever be ejected. The other instances are the media and the justice system. As sustains Officer Ivan *"if you commit a mistake in this work, you pay it with the jail"*. All those elements prevent Agent Juan of striking *as he would like to*.

As we can see the external controls are much more powerful that the internal controls in relation to the use of force, in relation to the guilt aspects. In such case the use of force is not accompanied by those guilt feelings that Elias refers to. On some occasions, it may even come accompanied by feelings of rejoice and satisfaction.

What is of central importance, is that every time I ask the agents about the production of pain and suffering with gas or bullets they always reminded me they knew, by themselves, what is felt with the gas and with the bullets. They know it from their practices, and from the fact that the gas is suffered by them because they do not have masks. This reference to the mutual suffering (theirs and the one of the public) again makes sense if we relate it to their conception of their relation with the public as a competence with the public. For riot police agents, if they could resist it, the public can also resist it. The riot police agents believe that, in relation to the suffering of the members

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as their monthly salary. Riot police agents have always more additional services, some of which are paid by

of the public, they themselves had already suffered much more than what the public can do with the bullets or the gas they throw. They themselves know what is the effect of rubber bullets or gas, and it is “*no such big deal*”. Through their greater resistance, one more time the riot police superiority is demonstrated. As for the French gendarmes for whom ‘la valeur pratique des forces de l'ordre commence par leur capacité à supporter les effets des techniques utilisées contre les contestataires. Il faut ainsi qu'ils soient en quelque sorte à même de devenir insensibles à leur propre violence, avant de l'administrer aux autres.’ (Bruneteaux,2000:9). According to the author ‘Selon les unités et la mentalité de l'officier qui dirige à un moment donné le centre, l'insensibilité peut constituer non seulement défense mais un véritable principe d'honneur’ (Bruneteaux,2000 :10). In our case, it seems that their own higher resistance acts as a *principe d'honneur*. Such principle of honor, produces a greater insensitivity towards the suffering of the public. As a local riot police corporal comments

“*What we do to the public is not even a third of what they do to us in the training sessions.*”

However not all members of the riot police force manifest such feelings in relation to the use of force. From the interviews done, in two cases, agents sustained that they did not like hitting. In one case it was a young woman who had never been involved in *active actions*, which can be related to the lack of experience, and her gender. On the other case the agent alleged that he “*hit just what is necessary, even the less possible*”. This same agent manifests that he hits much less than many of his companions. He recognizes that his companions call him “*the saint*”. He is obviously a strange case as is recognized by himself<sup>14</sup>. Inquired about the causes of that greater tendency to hit and strike with greater delight in present in his companions he relates it to the *family* from where other agents come.

The fact is that, in general, the highly disciplined and self-controlled agents interviewed agreed and highly accepted the use of force against other people, with no guilt at all. As for those participants in the duels so well described and analyzed by Elias, who, even if they were highly self-controlled, had a great acceptance to the use of force, at the

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the Government and had been required in higher quantities since December 2001.

<sup>14</sup> Even though that same agent, according to his answers shared what has been said about riot police use of force. He is Instructor Marcos that was cited many times along the work.

same time that their structure of control was one that depended greatly on the external controls rather than in the internal ones (See Elias,1996:44-119).

#### **4.3.2. Sensations of riot police use of force**

One final element that we will consider in the analysis of the use of force is the most intimate sensations of riot police violence. According to Elias 'once the monopoly of physical power has passed to central authorities, not every strong man can afford the *pleasure of physical attack*. This is now reserved to those few legitimized by the central authority (e.g. the police against the criminal), and to a larger number only in exceptional times of war or revolution, in the socially legitimated struggle against *internal* or *external* enemies' (1993:240[o.i.]). The author does not explain quite precisely what such pleasure consists in.

One would be tempted to think that the pleasure of physical attack by riot police agents is existentially similar to the ones most people have in their physical attacks experienced during those activities we call sports, particularly in the so called *combat* sports. However, such understanding would be a mistake. It is true that the riot police use of force involves the experience of great excitement produced by the tension that precedes a more or less violent outcome, as happens in many sports (see Elias,1994:56). However, the feelings that arouse in such circumstances are not that of sportive activities, where feelings of '*imaginary* danger, and *mimetic* fear and pleasure, sadness and joy'(1994:57[o.i.]) where 'a controlled and enjoyable decontrolling of restraints on emotions is permitted'(1994:98) without the dangers and risk of real life (Elias, 1994:57). The sensations that that arouse in the riot police work and use of force are absolutely *real feelings of fear, pleasure, sadness and joy*, with a real sense of danger in the course of their *real* life. As Agent Juan put it:

*'This is not a game, not at all, this is serious business.'*

Riot police work involves, as in sports the experience of tension. But the emotion and excitement produced by the tense situation is enormous and serious and can not be felt and enjoyed as in sports. Such tension may last for hours. On some occasions they go to the places with more than five hours of anticipation. They stand for long hours. In the great majority of their intervention their role is limited to the mere preventive and ostentatious



maneuvers. For the long hours they endure the insults of the public (mainly by obviating them) they must be careful that a missile does not hit them and produces severe injuries.

*“You must be alert that a stone does not brake you face. The other time, we where standing and suddenly an orange that they had injected acid in it got smashed at two meters from where we where standing, imagine if it hits you in the face, it can let you blind.”* remembers Agent Roca.

On many occasions they do not receive injuring missiles, but humiliating ones such as rotten eggs, urine, shit, or other hideous elements. Their clothes get filthy and ruined.

*“That makes me go crazy, you want to kill the bastard who has ruined your cloth and who wanted to injure you.”*

Most of the times their interventions are passive. In such cases the only way of putting down the stress they have undergone is through going back to the station and getting a cold bath in order to calm down. In those situations in which they are not ordered to advance and repress

*“It is as if all the muscles would hurt you, if they do not make you advance, then you the only way of coming down is having a cold bath.”*

On those occasions in which the advance for dispersing the public is decided their alert and tension increases. After long hours of maintaining the position through standing in the middle of the most disordered situations, with great fear (and risk), great anger and frustration is experienced.

*“You want to kill the bastards who have been insulting and attacking you, so he does not go away as if nothing had happened.”* (Agent Juan)

The great tension that is undergone during the tension phase can find a certain release during such baton charges. As Waddington sustains ‘Baton charging is also physically arousing because of the exertion involved. In striking members of the crowd officers are likely to experience pleasure, not because they are sadists, but because they will undergo a reduction in physical stress which is experienced as pleasurable and which will encourage to repeat the aggressive action’(1991:178)

However, there is not so such free expression of pleasure. As so well remarks Agent Juan

*“You can not hit at ease, a hit badly given and you loose everything.”*

Despite what Waddington says about the tension release, in the interviews the baton charge appeared as a source of even greater stress. The tension and stress they feel does not end until the crowd has been dissolved and the situation is controlled. The baton

charge in itself is not a source of ‘reduction of physical stress’, but an increase of it. As Agent Hierro metaphorically puts it:

*“When we decide to make the charge all the chains of the machine strengthen, get tense.”*

Agent Juan explains it with more detail and with another metaphor:

*“Look, you accumulate anger, and you accumulate it..., and when they order you to advance it is as if dynamite would come up through your body and explode inside you.”*

On the occasions in which the riot police agents advance, i.e. baton charges, great emotion and excitement is experienced. However, it is only when the public leaves that the menace of the public disappears.

*“It is something that I cannot explain, but is like if everything is confusing and the only thing you got is your combat group, eight of us, that you see that you advance and people run, and you see that you can make hundreds of them go back, and that they finally respect you. And when they are away only then is that you feel better. The fear goes away. The most important thing however is that we have managed to control the situation, it is the pleasure of carrying out one’s own duty of re-establish order.”( Agent Vera)*

Or as Hierro says: *“It is only when the public leaves that the fear ends”*

As we could see there is no such *pure pleasure* in the use of force as a tension release. The baton charges constitute a rather tense and fearful deployment of violence, a situation in which is highly probable that the infantrymen will get seriously injured. However, a certain element that is enormously important is *feeling* that they are incredibly powerful, a feeling that arises when they advance and people moves out of their way. As Agent Moro tries to explain:

*“That is something very difficult to explain, but it is as if you would feel that you and the group are the most powerful men on earth, that they respect you, that they fear you.”*

Such sense of power, such sense of control over the situation, which is a control over people is an extraordinary event that they can only feel when they are in their uniforms, protective equipment and weapons and act in their official role.

*“You may see me in the street with civil cloth and you may not even take notice of me, I may appear as a normal person, but when I put on the camouflaged cloth and the helmet and they give me the stick, I don’t know, but it is as if I would convert, ...you see that people fear you, respect you, that you move and they move away, it’s an incredible sensation, it’s great.”*

Even if these powerful sensation is usually related to their pacific interventions, and not to their actual use of force, it is important to consider that they know that the respect and fear they receive from the public is based on their fighting power, on their strength, and on the fact that they appear as capable of doing and facing anything and anybody. It is as if their representation as superpowerful men, would finally be the bases of their convincement and felling that they *are* “*the most powerful men on earth*” (Agent Moro).

With the description we have made in the last two chapters, related to the categories of perception that structure the relation of the Riot Police agents with the public as well as with other police agents (members of their force or from other police forces) we can say we have a certain basic understanding of their symbolic elements that surround their use of force. The capitals of bodily abilities and skills as well as the capital of fighting strength appeared as central elements that determine a difference, a position, and a sense of identity as well as certain specific feelings. With all these elements in mind we pass to the last and concluding chapter where we summarize the basic findings and discuss certain aspects related to such elements.

## Chapter Five

# CONCLUSION

After this journey into the symbolic (and material) world of the bureaucratized warrior we call Riot police agents is time to analyze and discuss, in this concluding section, what has been presented in the previous chapters. We will first consider the central elements observed and described, discussing such results in the light of the theories that were at the starting point of our analysis. We will then complete the present work suggesting further lines of inquiry for understanding riot police use of force, considering the social trajectory of riot police agents. We will then make a brief commentary on the not so glamorous aspects of the riot police routines and conditions of existence providing the reader elements that may permit understand the relevance they their personal and specific abilities and skills have for infantrymen as they are agents almost completely deprived of any other resources and are continually exploited by the controllers of the state bureaucracy. We finally close the present chapter by critically comparing the results of the present work with other studies on police violence that depart from different theoretical approaches, highlighting the main contributions of this work for the understanding of police practices and violence.

### **5.1 Disclosing the warrior's *practical* logic**

The basic questions of this work had been, first to consider the manner in which the rational and instrumental use of force (as understood by Weber and Elias) is related to what Dunning et al call *the expressive use of force*, and analyze how do those symbolic aspects of the infantrymen use of force are related to their position and possessions (capitals) within the structure of relations that conforms the specific field in which they are existentially implicated.

The first thing we must say is that, according to what has been observed, instrumental violence, as it is deployed by riot police agent is, at the same time expressive violence. Their instrumental and rational deployment of violence is at the same time a source, and basis, of their position and identity within a specific configuration, and at the same time a source of meaning and enjoyment.

We could appreciate through the material presented that the use of force by the riot police agents is not only related to passion by the 'objective cause' and the impersonal functionary that Weber refers: the objective mission of the bureaucrat, and the function of peacekeeping. Such passion for the objective cause is concomitant with the *passion* for the supremacy in a relation of competition and struggle. The social figuration within which the riot police agents are implicated is a continual fight where warring virtues, skills and power are deployed and shown<sup>1</sup>. In this perspective the riot police agent, in the execution of his function, is taken by the game, by the objective logic of the relation, as a relation of competition and struggle in a configuration where those same fighting power and skills are the elements that structure the relations and the *categories of perception* of the RP agents.

According to what was shown, we must therefore complete the cold and impersonal conception of the riot police bureaucrat (along with the function conception) with one that includes the skilled and *virtuous fighter of order*. The *meanings* attached to the use of force constitute a much more complex and subtle symbolic world than the one that the bureaucratic instrumentalist perspective considers and presents.<sup>2</sup> In Weber's conceptualization, such honor or *irrationally* oriented actions are related to what he would call *irrational elements*. We consider that it is more precise to say that we are in the presence of *another rationality*, and therefore another *social logic* (Bourdieu,1990a), one that corresponds to the field (or space of relations) in which the riot police agents exist and fight, being such logic determined by the specific capitals that are efficient within such structure of relations.

The determination of the efficient capitals (the referred police bodily capital and fighting strength capital) that riot police agents possess, has allowed us to disclose some aspect of the specific logic that characterizes such space of relations, being able to unveil many aspects and subtleties related to their intimate meanings related to their *official* use of force. Such objective logic is replicated in its incorporated form, in the form of the individual schemes of perception and classification of the riot police agents.

According to such schemes of perception their use of force is the actualization of a skilled body, the realization of certain virtues. That skilful activity and knowledge of the

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<sup>1</sup> Or at least is how it is seen by those who have the riot police craft (and perhaps also by some members of the public as is suggested by the works of Gil and Sommier referred).

<sup>2</sup> The above considerations do not mean that Weber's ideas are not proper. Considering that we departed from an *ideal type* concept, of better a *conceptual type* (see Giddens,1971:141). As Weber himself

skills is a satisfactory event in itself, as the demonstration of acquired abilities. These acquired abilities are in turn a bodily condition, *a police bodily capital*. In the direct confrontation with the public, the riot police agent is essentially implicated as his body and his resistance seems to be the central pieces of the force, given the shortage of resources in comparison to what other riot police units possess. All these elements turn each official intervention an occasion to demonstrate and affirm all their skills and power, infusing such use of force with a concealed sense of glamour and heroism. As was described in chapter three, in such occasions each agent is a vital and central factor of the outcome of the confrontations, infusing such events sense to their lives and existence, as long as such events permit the display of their most intimate and personal abilities, their incorporated and personal *fighting skills*.

The concept of capital of fighting strength (which is directly related to the police bodily capital of fighting abilities, but must not be confused)<sup>3</sup>, also allowed us to understand the intricacies involved in the riot police use of force in their confrontations with the public. All their individual fighting skills and abilities, which concentrated gives us the total capital of fighting strength, is put at stake in each of the confrontations they have with the public, as well as in relation with the members of the other parts of the police department, as they have to sustain their role as protectors and strong arm of the police department.

The same practical logic, constructed around fighting abilities and power, makes the agents of the riot police perceive their public interventions (that any outsider would describe as an act of fulfillment of their function) as a contest. In such competition, they fight for the achievement and maintenance of their historical supremacy in a struggle where braveness and fighting virtues are demonstrated. A competition where the police agents are intimately involved and *interested*. Within such confrontation logic, or better, *battle logic*, their rational and disciplined dispositions, are considered and appreciated as distinctive fighting dispositions and virtues. In such logic, the rational and disciplined conditions are subjected and surrounded by the determinants of the *fighting practical logic* that infuses their violent actions with sense and emotion. Within such warring logic each *official* intervention of the riot police force is felt and lived by the members of the riot

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recognizes, type concepts are hermeneutical tools from where one has to depart for the comprehension of the infinite elements of reality.

police force, individually and in groups, as a directly personal matter, making such confrontation occasions in which the *individual and group honor* are at stake and must be preserved.

As we had already seen this warring logic has certain objectification in the intimate and secret *Internal Operations Manual*<sup>4</sup>. Such internal manual is full of explicit and explicit references to the warring logic that structures the police agents perception and therefore practices. Such Internal Manual talks i.e. about *neutralizing* organization,, *neutralizing* the will to resist.

However, we must mention now that such *police bodily capital* is not only relevant in those occasions in which they confront with members of the public or compare with other units. This personal capital of the riot police agents is related to the possibility to determine a position within the police structure, a position accorded to the experience in the trade. This personal bodily capital, is one of the few personal elements that members of the Riot Police Unit personally possess, as they are part of the structure that administer the state monopoly of the instruments of violence (the means of production of violence). Even if such abilities can only acquire social value in such field in which they were acquired, they are central for their own sense of identity as they determine a position within the unit.

Their specific fighting abilities and experience is the basis for an informal parallel hierarchic structure that exists within the police force. Within the Riot Police Unit a *double hierarchic structure* exists, where the official hierarchy is paralleled by an hierarchy determined by the specific experience and fighting practical skills. In the riot police force, occurs as in the French GIGN (Intervention Group of the National Gendarmerie) where ‘La logique qui ordonne une société comme celle du GIGN implique qu’une hiérarchie formelle comme celle du grade coexiste avec celle, informelle, de acquis du terrain’ (Marchetti,1999:29).

The parallel and informal hierarchy based on personal skills and experience determines specific position for those better equipped with such capitals. This informal hierarchy is confirmed by the fact that out of five members of the Training Center, only

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<sup>3</sup> It must not be confused because the total volume of capital of fighting power includes their combined bodily capitals as well as the state property means of violence.

<sup>4</sup> This seems to be the same warring or fighting logic that is present in the English *Tactical Options Manual* of the London Metropolitan police (cited by Waddington,1991) that oriented the charging into a violent crowd with the following words ‘Short shield officers....they disperse the crowd and *incapacitate* missile throwers and ring leaders’. The incapacitation language is similar to the *neutralization* concepts of the local police unit.

one is an officer, the other four being Subordinate agents. For the subordinates officers being part of the Training center means to them that they train the following cohorts of members of riot police agents, being widely respected among all the unit. These higher positions of the *formally* subordinates in relation to the new and inexperienced Officers means a great sense of fulfillment for those who formally are *subordinate* agents.

For Agent Garcia, the skillful abilities and experience

*“It is all you have, to teach somebody else what you know...At the end of the day those are the satisfactions that you have in this, to tell somebody what you know”<sup>5</sup>.*

The subversion of the formal hierarchy by the informal one is present also in the practical work in the street. Indeed, even if each of the Combat groups are *officially* commanded by an Officer, all groups have a sub chief, that is always the most experienced and elder Subordinate. This subordinate is usually the *“most respected member of the group*, acquiring in many instances a tutor’s role in relation to younger formally superior Officers that command the combat groups. The informal hierarchy is a parallel structure that positions agents in the symbolic structure of pride and honour based on their experience. It’s the greater experience of agents what determines the price and pride of agents. As *Officer* Leon explains:

*“What is worth here is the street, the experience you acquire in what you do, so when you are in an operation you see what the other guy does, and you try to copy him, and you realize that what is worth here are the years you are in the force, as in the case of Agent Oro, he is a corporal, or a Sergeant, or whatever, but I totally respect him, because of the years he’s got I myself do not, and I have to learn a lot from him”*

Such experience is what makes the individuals worth within the riot police unit. The same is for all the agents that are constantly *investing* in courses, in order to increase their fighting and technical abilities.

*“Otherwise, how could you explain that the guys are constantly making courses, and spending money and time for going to such courses?”* inquires rhetorically Sergeant Rosa.

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<sup>5</sup> *“My personal achievements?...well In relation to that this last weekend I had some agents to instruct, and in the way back they told me “was very good, we needed it, etc”, is that, that is what matters, to transmit one’s knowledge, tell them and that that gets to them, the knowledge all of us need”* Instructor Sergeant Gutierrez tells me with pride.



The specific field in which they exist, in turn appear as determining a quite specific psychological structure. Within such warring society (as happens to the low class actors described by Dunning et al (1994)), the riot police agents are involved in a field in which ‘they are recognized publicly by their rudeness, braveness in the quarrels, their courage, [and] their group loyalty.’(Dunning et al:315), sharing similar ultimate conceptions of masculinity, based on ‘braveness, courage and physical supremacy’, similar to the ones of the ‘rude working class individuals’ described by Dunning.

The main difference between the ‘rude sectors of the working class’ and the riot police agents, in relation to their psychological structure, is that the riot police agents even if they ‘enjoy the spectacle and use of force’, with an ‘open expression of force’ they develop and possess a great level of self-control, are *greatly civilized*. This is a case in which the existence of a pretty much high level of self-control goes hand to hand with a relatively high acceptance of the use of force, and even with the absence of displeasure for the suffering of the other and with the actual display of force.

The riot police agents at the same time have a great structure of self control and discipline, and a very high acceptance of the use of force in accordance to such warrior code of honour. Riot police agents integrated in a ‘functional bonding’ (see Dunning, 1992:288) have not a “high threshold or repulsion to violence” (as Dunning would have predicted for agents implicated in such kind of configuration (See Dunning, 1994:284-289). They rather have a great acceptance of the use of force. In the case of riot police agent’s instrumental violence (which requires great self-control) is mixed with low threshold of acceptance to violence even if they are clearly immersed in a strict and dense chain of interdependence.

The specific psychological structure the members of the riot police unit, is similar to the one of the members of Elias’s ‘*satisfaktionföhige* duelers’, where the external controls are greater than the internal controls in relation to repulsions ‘or repugnance, with respect to witnessing or perpetrating violence expressively’(Fletcher, 1997:52). We are not arguing that the riot police agents are not highly civilized. They obviously are, but in a specific manner. The fact that they use non-mortal weapons is a clear element of civilization, as well as the “*consideration in not ruining people*” or “*killing them with the baton*” as they said. The fact is that such considerations are not incompatible with the actual desire to inflict pain in many members of the public and the great acceptance and tolerance of their use of force.

The warring logic that structures their space of relations is highly charged with gender implications. Such warring logic traps the agents in a struggle for the preservation of a *manly* honor. As many other fighting masculine actors, the riot police agents are trapped in what Bourdieu calls the *masculine privilege*, a privilege that ‘imposes the duty to affirm in any occasion, its virility. And as long as it has as a subject a collective subject [the infantry] of virility, understood: as sexual, social and reproductive capacity, but also as the aptitude for combat and the exercise of violence.... is fundamentally a burden’. As a burden has to be demonstrated in relation, ‘in front of the others’ (Bourdieu,2000b:68).

The collective identity of the riot police as the strong arm of the police, is immersed and trapped in a continual game that has to be played in order not to lose the collective (masculine) honor in front of others parts of the police and in front of the violent parts of the public (that as we saw is constructed by the infantry men as a masculine public). In turn, such threat replicates in relation to each officer and agents, to each individual riot police agent. With Bourdieu, we think that we are in presence of one of those ‘forms of braveness, the ones that are required in the armies or police agencies (and in particular the “elite units) and the criminal gangs, that have as their principle, paradoxically the fear to lose the esteem or admiration of the group ‘lose one’s own face’ in front of the colleagues and to be relegated to the typical category of “fragile”, the “womanish. The so called “braveness” is based on a species of cowardice.’(Bourdieu,2000b:68).

The fear of the feminine can only be restrained by the actual affirmation of the masculine supremacy. Such defiance response model has been seen in the previous pages. Such defiance does not mean that every time they are attacked they will engage in a strength proof, explode into rage and attack the defiant public. There are many ways of responding in that game of honour. The continual demonstration of supremacy goes hand in hand with the masculine and aggressive stances and looks. The ostentation techniques, which include showing oneself sure, in standing, marching, forming, also means the upholding of the masculine virtue of facing the challenge. Such acts and stances are not only tactical. Such “*tactics*”, are mixed with gendered judgments:

*“You can not get there an talk and give orders in a low voice, you have to show firm, in loud voice, otherwise the ones of the unions or the football fans will start thinking: “Hey, have you seen how soft the infantry is lately” says Chief Montoya.*

However, the masculine supremacy that is preserved through their effective interventions is doubly rewarding as they realize the expectations and desires of their

specific aggressive masculinity. Such aggressive masculinity is the masculine model that many of the agents already possess at their entrance to the institution, which is stressed and confirmed within their violent trade. Their victorious interventions appear then as the fulfillment of their most deeply incorporated notions and feelings of gender identity. According to their criteria of such aggressive masculinity, they embody the supreme expression of such masculinity. The work of the riot police agents, allows the agents who possess such type of masculinity (one that is shared with the popular sectors of the public), to express publicly and in front of everybody such *masculine* prowess. Such masculinity is also officially recognized and appreciated by the institution in the form of recognitions, medals (for brave acts) and prizes (i.e. "*Infantrymen of the Year*").

The intimate symbolic rewards that their powerful and hypermasculine victorious violent interventions provide are obtained through the use of public resources, the state means of violence. The intimate sense of supremacy and power produced by the position they uphold within the relations in which they engage in their violent trade is the most well preserved 'collective' secret. "*This is not a game*", reminded us Sergeant Hierro, "*This is very serious matter*". By denying such condition, they secure that they will not be criticized. And what is more important, they *present* the situation as a mere function fulfillment: "*We are not the chiefs, it is our function to maintaining order*". Such concealment is necessary for the maintenance of their legitimacy. In relation to this proclaimed function, we must consider that formalism, that is, adherence to the form, is an excellent manner of appearing altruistic and disinterested, concealing other personal interests and intimate rewards produced by their use of the public violence resources. As Bourdieu sustains 'paying due respect to forms means giving an action or a discourse the form which is recognized as suitable, legitimate approved, that is, a form that if presented in any other form would be unacceptable'(1990b:85).

## **5.2 Class ethos and riot police violence ethos**

However, we think that not all the symbolic elements related to the riot police use of force can be attributed to their actual conditions of existence within the police field. It is not probable that their preference for sacrifice, hard and *productive* work, an resistant and *productive* body derives only from their actual membership to the police force. We think that for a complete understanding of the meanings of their use of force we must also

consider the trajectory of those fighters of order. We briefly analyze such dimension presenting the arguments that justify considering such trajectory a central aspect to be analyzed in further research endeavors.

Police work, but specially the riot police work, is *a working class job*, ‘that is a means of earning a living...by exchanging the only tangible asset that those bereft of inherited wealth and educational credentials possess: *their bodies and the abilities it harbors*’ (Wacquant,1995[o.i.]).

As we have seen, they systematically contemptuously depict their opponents for not having a sacrificed and hard working body. They abhor the football *barras bravas* because they live without working. They despise labor union leaders because they exploit the people that follow them and they themselves do not work. They dislike radical activists because they do not work. They look down on people that illegally occupy the houses of those who “*had worked all their lives*”. They scorn prison inmates because they like living without working, and robbed. They spurn politicians because they use and exploit working people, or unemployed people for their political acts and interests.

Such morality is not the one that is reflected directly in the law, nor is related to the legal and political explicit reasons in the name of which they produce order. Such morality does not relate directly to those aspects of “*liberty, freedom and life*” that officially justify and legitimate their violent work, as determined in the legal instruments that are cited and that where analyzed. Nowhere in their official instruction does it say that the riot police will repress the:

“*lazy*”, “*violent*”, “*defiant*”, “*doped*”, “*exploiters*”, “*parasites*”, “*homosexuals*”, “*radicals*”, “*marihuana smokers*”, “*rock music fans*”, “*people that do not like to have a career*”, those who use “*one, two, or three earrings*”, “*users of the people*”, “*non sacrificed*”, “*lazy Creoles*”, “*who know nothing about sacrifice*”, who “*want that you give them everything*” “*who do not work*” “*who are no hard workers*” etc. etc. etc.

It appears as if not all the symbolic universe related to the riot police use of force seems to be determined by the warring logic that structures the field and the relations with the members of the public. Such warring practical logic is combined with certain values and conceptions that seem to be those of the social class from where the riot police agents are drawn. We suggest that the police culture values that are present in the symbolic world that has been described, correspond to the symbolic elements present in those parts of the social spaces from where the police agents are recruited: mainly urban and rural manual working class. It seems that the cultural symbolic meanings (and corporal tolerance)

related to violence of riot police agents are similar to the symbolic elements and values of working class origins individuals, indeed to their working class habitus.

These working class values seems to be the principle serves to divide and classifies respectable and not respectable members of the public. The characteristics of the *practical ethos* that is found in the conception of the members of the riot police force analyzed, is the practical ethos that highly corresponds to the *working class habitus and ethos*. It is as if the class habitus of the riot police agents would infuse the *symbolic* relation they have with violence (official and private) and the meanings they attach to it.

*Class habitus* is a concept described by Bourdieu to refer to the common experiences of those agents exposed to similar material and social conditions and therefore to similar trajectories: 'A system of dispositions common to all products of the same conditioning, to a class of identical or similar conditions of existence and conditionings' (Bourdieu,1990a:59). Such habitus has a certain inertia and rigidity. In the formation of such habitus, the first experiences are eminently important, structuring the followings ones, and structuring the perception of the agents that enter to the most different fields. Class habitus structure a class ethos: an objectively systematic set of dispositions of ethical dimensions, or practical principles that do not need to be explicit and intentionally coherent as are Ethics.

We could think that the ways in which they conceive their use of force is stained by their *working class habitus* (Bourdieu) that acts as a principle of perception of their identity, their function, their work, their use of force, and of the way they judge the members of the public.

According to Bourdieu 'must be considered that who occupies the margins of liberty that are always permitted to functionaries (always different according to their position in the hierarchy), is *not a pure and free individual*. As in other fields, what fills here the spaces left by the rules is the *habitus*; and, in the ordinary situations of bureaucratic existence, as well as in the extraordinary occasions that total institutions allow to social drives, agents can take possession ...of the existing margins permitted by their position, expressing the socially constituted impulses that determines their *habitus*. Thus, the subordinate posts of regimentation and control of total institutions (asylums, quarters, etc.) and in general the executive positions of the great bureaucracies, owe many of *its most characteristic features- that are never envisaged in any bureaucratic regulation-* to those dispositions that, in a given moment, *import* or take those who occupy

them: the functionaries “carry out their duty” with all the characteristics, desirables and undesirables, of their *habitus*. (Bourdieu,2001:149)

Therefore, the principles under which the use of force is conceived, valued and judged are not only those explicit principles that are taught at the police academy, nor solely the warring practical logic that seems to structure their meaning attached to violence. Such elements would be combined with the principles of vision and division (*habitus*) of the agents that get to the institution. Such (manual workers class) *habitus* structures the perceptions of the social value of force, the conception and values of violence, the values and considerations about the public, all subjects that are not *envisaged in any bureaucratic regulation*.

Such *working class habitus* or *popular habitus* according to Bourdieu includes among others ‘the most typically popular disposition, the cult of manliness and the taste of a fight, toughness in ‘contact’ and resistance to tiredness and pain, and sense of solidarity (‘the mates’) and rivalry and so forth’(Bourdieu,1984:213)<sup>6</sup>. In turn, such popular and working class *habitus* ‘being authoritarian by nature, the working classes can consciously espouse authoritarian ideologies; because their intolerance inclines them to a simplistic, Manichean view of politics, ...Thus the political incompetents have every likelihood of placing themselves in the camp of the champions of the moral and the social order, and even of appearing more conservative in this area than the conscious defenders of the social order, whenever they are led to apply the categories of their class ethos’ (Bourdieu,1984:431). The popular *habitus* has as another trait a great pragmatism with a ‘division between practical, partial tacit *know-how* and theoretical, systematic, explicit *knowledge*, between science and techniques, theory and practice, ‘conception’ and ‘execution’, the ‘intellectual’ and the ‘creator’ and the ‘manual’ worker’ (Bourdieu,1984:387) positioning themselves in the practical, executive and manual side.

The elements of the police culture (that are usually only related to a certain ‘occupational culture’(Kappeler et al.,1994) must be related to the conceptions related and produced in the experience of being raised in a family where most of the members have manual works. Reiner (1998), and also Kappeler et al. (1994) argue that in relation to the

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<sup>6</sup> Bourdieu affirms that in relation to such working class ethos ‘one needs to ask oneself if the popular valorization of physical strength as a fundamental aspect of virility and of everything that produces and supports it is not intelligibly related to the fact that both the peasant class and the industrial working class depend on a labor power, which the laws of cultural reproduction and of the labor market reduce, more than to any other class, to sheer muscle power’(1984:387)

manners in which police agents' classify the members of the public is according to middle class values. According to Reiner "the fundamental division is between non respectable and respectable elements, those who challenge and those who accept the middle class values of decency that most police revere"(1998:93). We think that rather than 'middle class values', the ones that are present in the police are rather working class values.

If we observe what Reiner (1998) describes as the central elements of such police culture, we find those same elements of the popular ethos described. Some core elements of such police culture is to be *highly conservative in moral and social issues*, with and *'old fashioned machismo'*, *highly pragmatic* ('the final element of police culture...the very pragmatic, concrete, down to earth, anti theoretical perspective which is typical of the rank and file, and indeed in chief constables. This is a kind of conceptual conservatism' (Reiner,1998)) along with the aggressive masculinity. Reiner recognizes that that the racial prejudice of police agents 'is a reflection of the racism of American culture generally, and especially the social groups from which most police *are drawn*, Lower middle or working class with no more than higher education', 'the bulk of officers were drawn from the working class, and these processes still operates today. Even chief officers come predominantly from working class origins'(Reiner,1998:96)

Police agents are drawn from the urban and peasant working classes, skilled and semiskilled, according to Reiner. In most Argentinian Police forces, until recent times, one could get into the police with only elementary school education<sup>7</sup>. There are no precise statistics about the *social origins* of police agents in Argentina. There is strong evidence that the individuals who get to the police force come from such working class origins. According to information from the State Department, of all the members of the police forces of Argentina, 64 % only had elementary school, 33 % had received High school education, and 3 % holds university degrees (Cels,1998:81). From the twenty agents interviewed most of them come from working class origins. Officers in the force, have usually *police blood*, that is, they are sons of police agents. The five officers interviewed where sons of police agents. For the subordinate agents, such working class origins are clear<sup>8</sup>. The previous working experiences of subordinates, before the entrance to the force

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<sup>7</sup> Even if with the increase of educative credential, many police forces had established as a requirement to have high school education to apply for entrance.

<sup>8</sup> Subordinates social origins by father's profession: Industry workers= 5, Manual independent occupations= 4, small land owners= 4, rural workers= 2. (own data drawn from the interviews). The ones who worked

was always related to manual works, with the exception of one individual that was a security guard in a local disco: again bodily work.

It would be nonsense to try to distinguish between the determinations of the position within the field of the riot police, and the determinations of the working class habitus. As Bourdieu sustains ‘it would be futile to seek to distinguish those aspects of practice which derive from their positions and those that derive from dispositions they bring to those positions. These dispositions tend to govern their perception and appreciation of *their position*, their *behavior within* it, and consequently the ‘*reality*’ of their position (Bourdieu,1981:311[o.i.]).

The influence of such working class habitus is relevant in two basic aspects. On the one hand it is related to the basic conceptions about violence, and of the “aggressive masculinity” conceptions that they may bring to the force, a conception that determines their perception of their use of force in a great manner. As we had seen, according to Dunning (1994) and in line with Bourdieu’s ideas, such *violent masculinity* is a central dimension of the working class habitus. Such aggressive masculinity is reinforced in the police institution, even if it is subjected to the requirements of discipline and instrumental rationality. Therefore the disciplined fighting skills acquires the sense of an hypermasculine power, according to their working class habitus perceptions. Such dimension of police agent’s trajectories should receive much more attention by the troop of social scientists worried about police violence.

On the other hand, the working class habitus is relevant in the determination of the values they respect, that are the ones that structure their opinions about the public and therefore the justifications about their use of force resulting from the contractions they make of the public.

The future police agent class ethos is compatible, reinforced, secured, and affirmed in the police institution and specifically in the working conditions of the riot police units. The institution allows their class ethos to be realized, as a field that requires the demonstration of those working class virtues of sacrifice, endurance, solidarity and hard work. Their virtues are the central and legitimate ones for achieving and having a respectable life. They themselves embody and are the champions in a moral order that

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before getting into the police had a manual work: security guard, builder’s yard worker, factory worker, labourer, plumber, etc..



values such virtues. They have a career, which is achieved through the hard work and sacrifice required in their work.

The embodiment of such highly disciplined, sacrificed body and disposition, turned into a conception of not being a parasite, justifies the interventions and use of force against the hordes of economically and materially excluded. In the cases in which they fight against what are perceived as less *productive* and less integrated sectors of society they compare to them as if they (the infantrymen) would be the winners and the excluded members of the public the losers of the market, a market that supposedly rewards hard workers and punishes laziness. They use their own trajectory and biography (constitutive of their habitus) as the yardstick to compare with, and judge, the *nature* of those parts of the public who usually they confront with. What the riot police agents believe in is in the value of hard, manual work and sacrifice as the center and source of a good and respectable life.

The citizens with whom they usually violently clash, do not embody these conditions. In this way, the unemployed and excluded who violently fight for a place in the exclusive market economy, are conceived as responsible of their own exclusion, because they do not want to work and they ask everything to the state. The labor union leaders, conceived as exploiters and abusers of their working class companions, are also detested according to the same principle, the one acts as an extra element of justification of their ‘neutralization practices’. Even working class agents, who ask for better work conditions or better salaries, are criticized because they do not appreciate the work they got. From the perspective of the police agents, the private worker’s conditions are much better, compared with the riot police sacrificed working conditions. Those same unemployed and excluded people are also seen as stupid people that are cheated by the working unions leaders. The same applies to the force used against violent football fans, against illegal tenants, against radical parties members. The same principles justify the rage against prison inmates who are just that part of the working class that decided not to work and started robbing. Some had recognized that on some occasion they had been under really economically stressing situations but never crossed the line.

*“In 1989 in my house we had really hard times, ...on some occasions all we could get for eating was bread with cow lard that we would buy at the slaughterhouse, however, I never crossed the line.”* affirms proudly Agent Hierro.

The riot police agents perceive themselves as agents that could make a living, a life and a future thanks to their hard work and sacrifice. Thanks to their individual hard

working virtues they could achieve a simple and respectable life, embodying, respecting and representing the same virtues of the honest and respectable working class from where they come. As Agent Juan (a sergeant, who comes from a working class family and has fifteen years in the force) declares

*“I feel I am somebody, that I am not excluded, that I have something to do, that I exist, that I am part of society, that I am productive and that I am not a parasite to society.”*

Within such frame of reference they appear as the champions of such moral order, as happened in the symbolic universe determined by the practical warring logic. Their superior condition in the moral and fighting dimensions make them feel sure and secure of their most violent and crude violent acts. They are closed to any critic from anybody that does not respect and holds the basic virtues of sacrifice and courage. As the champions of that moral order their life and function acquires, and has a strong meaning, making worthwhile the great sacrifice they do and to which they are subjected.

### **5.3. Official Serfdom**

The previous descriptions showed the riot police agents as the heroic, masculine, strong, and living realization of the moral standards of their social class, has to be completed with succinct reflection on the ‘not so glamorous’ dimensions of the hard and sacrificed craft they endure day after day as members of the state peace forces.

As we have described, their actual positions and identity are obtained thanks to the administration and control of the state means of violence. Their total dependency from the owner of the means of violence, the state, and the interests of those who decide about such state resources (politicians and judges) is the basis for the crude exploitation to which they are subjected in their daily existence.

All their fighting abilities are relevant only in relation to certain resources, such as gas, plastic bullets, batons, formations, guns, all resources that can only be used if are provided by the state. All such resources can be used by them only as *officers of the law* as the representatives of the state. The state, and specifically those who control it, Governors (who designate the Police Chiefs) impose the hardest working conditions and tasks to the dominated riot police agents. At the same time they ask from them all their social and vital energies, the administrators of the state appropriate the product of their work in the form of the maintenance of a legal order of which the authorities appear as the constructors and

guardians or in the fulfillment of the most peculiar policies in the name of the public welfare. Within such political field the riot police agents are nothing but ‘marionettes’.

*“We are the marionettes of the government of the moment, and you have to adapt..., in the political celebrations, they take us and put us in the dark so people does not sees us” For the judges, everything is pretty much simple, they just tell you what to do, with three words “clear-the-road”, but it is us who have to face thousands of people and do the job.” (Agent Hierro)*

In the cases in which the group has a good intervention, their chiefs take all the honors, expropriating it from the members of the lower echelons, and from them by the political (and judicial) authorities. As Agent Gutierrez states

*“You think that when something good happens, that we have a great intervention, or we make a good job, somebody recognizes it, or recognizes it to you, no, nothing, from the Headquarters they call the chief and tell him, very good, congratulations, for use, the one who did the job, nothing, we do the job, they take the honors.”*

Riot police agents live in a parallel social time regime. The routine working day is 24 continued hours, and usually 12 more. As agent Rosa argues

*“We usually work for 36 hours, and rest for 36. But in fact, when you get out, you go and you do the additional, which takes 8 hours, so we work like almost 48 hours continuously.”*

In conditions of budgetary reduction the riot police agents are used and abused the 24 hours of their shift. They are put to do surveillance work on the streets or in the highways. When they are not intervening in public disorder situations they are on the highway or in the street.

The chiefs exploit the riot police agents conceptions of resistance and hard work demanding from them exhausting working days. The logic that was described calls the agent to subdue to the same logic in which resistance and suffering is the principle of pride, being trapped by their own ideals. Agents are asked to stay, systematically, for around 12 to 24 extra hours; they are required to stay in “*surcharge*”. With their working time system they officially work one day (which is actually two) and rest two (which is actually one). In turn, given the rotations system they have only one “*normal*” weekend (Saturday and Sunday) each every month.

When the time comes that they have to intervene in public disorder situations they are obviously tired. On many occasions, they have to help each other not to get asleep standing in line. That strained conditions reduces their *internal energy*, not being enough for controlling themselves, they get irritated more easily, and lose their control, for what

they are sanctioned. In turn they are sanctioned with surcharge and the loss of “normal” weekends: “normal Saturdays and Sundays”.

The riot police agents have normal salaries, (according to their expectations), and the work market conditions. They receive around what equals 75 USA dollars as the starting salary. Within ten years they can get 300. But the fact is that the state does not provide them with clothes, nor special equipment, other than the helmets and the shields. They have to buy their own protective elements such as shin guards.

Such twenty-four-by-forty-eight hours working shift means also that they do not go home. Such shift produces a constant distance from the family. They cannot see their families and their wives for many days a week. Plus every time they see them, they are so tired or when the kids are in school, that their family life is almost disintegrated.

*“Either you are unfaithful to your wife or you wife cheats on you, there is no other option”* sentences Agent Juan. *“You are out of your house fourteen nights a month, there is no way your wife can stand it.”* (Agent Roca)

The heroic masculinity that is built, and felt by them is parallel to a familiar and erotic loneliness that marks the lives of the infantrymen. Ninety percent of the riot police agents are separated or divorced. Most of them have continual affairs, but continually miss the well-built families. The ones that do have a family stress the great tension that exists in the marriage, because of the tensions that are discharged within the couple. Their partners even see the infantry guard as a competence and blame the infantrymen to devote more time to the infantry guard than to their wives or kids. As Agent Leon sustains

*“I have four kids, and my wife does not understand, even if when we met I was already in the police: sometimes I have to call her because they order us surcharge and she thinks that I stay because I like it, and she does not understand that I have to work, that they oblige me, as you can see, we have pressures from the house, pressures from the work, and pressures from the public, it is not easy, sometimes I ask myself why I did not became a plumber.”*

That means that the riot police group of peer’s become almost the only family the riot police agents got, spending most time with them.

*“This is like your house, you are all day here, and the guys are your familys”* says Agent Roca

The effects of their exploitation are not only given in their social, erotic, and matrimonial life, it is also felt in their bodies and in their health. The riot police agents only are there for not more that fifteen years. After a certain time they are not sent to the street but not for not being in physical shape, mostly for not being in mental shape.

*“It is not that you are tired, it is that your head is burnt.”* tells Agent Rolo (fifteen years in the force)

The exhausting and tense sessions in which you they are standing for hours in the sun, in the cold, winter, summer with no water, no food, being subjected to the most humiliating treatments, makes the agents of the riot police force end up with high emotional disorders.

The members of the riot police units are the ones that have the higher ratio of injured people, (according to the information provided by the personal of the police Hospital). Their role includes the greater sacrifice a human being can make, giving their own life. There are fewer mortally injured people in the riot police than in the Patrol Units. But they have the higher proportion of injured people. The most common injuries are broken bones.

They are obliged to take their weapon all day with them and to intervene in any violent event they may come across, even in their free time. If not they are suspended and fired. Most police deaths take place in their off duty interventions, for reasons of usually being outnumbered (See Cels,1998)

The majority of the police officers interviewed do not want that their children follow their steps. But most of the children won't find a decent job in the shrinking private market, and they will surely end up being recommended by their parents to enter in into the official servitude that is police work.

According to Bourdieu ‘the further one moves from the ordinary functioning of fields as fields of struggle, toward limiting states, which are perhaps never reached, in which the struggle and all resistance to domination have disappeared, so that the field hardens and contracts into a ‘totalitarian institution’ -or in a rigorous sense an *apparatus* – which is able to demand everything, without conditions or concessions in its extreme forms, and has the physical and symbolic means of restructuring earlier habitus, the more the institution tends to consecrate agents who give everything to the institution. Such *agents perform their oblation all the more easily because they have less capital outside the institution and therefore less freedom vis-à-vis the institution and the specific capital and profits it provides.*’(1981:314 [o.i])

The police field is one of those fields structured as an apparatus. The riot police agent is the one that owes everything he is to the police institution. The Police Department, the State, has given him a position, has given him honour, has given him a house, and

economic credit. The police agency in turn can take him everything, and dispose at will of him, his time, his family, his location and his life.

“How close is self-possession from dispossession?” inquires Wacquant (1995:522). The self-possession that the agent acquires through the practice, suffering and experience, is nothing but a possession for the owner of the means of production of violence. The state, the absolute master can in any moment decide that the agent has to be sent to some other destiny, and life can have a horrifying turn. The owner of the means of violence is in the last term the owner of the official warrior. The potencies his body has incorporated can only be used by the organization that monopolizes the means of violence. The owner of the means of violence is in turn the owner of the body that has that potency. The only buyer of the riot police abilities is the State.

The agents that get to the riot police come from the same social strata of agents that are exploited in the private sector. Their destiny is similar. The riot police is one of those places where those deprived of all other social energies, dispossessed of almost all capitals except their working and bodily forces, can go and sell them in exchange for a salary. In the case of the police agents, such material rewards are accompanied by those symbolic rewards that cost nothing to the State: Honor. The states, as the institute that monopolizes symbolic violence, consecrates these working class fighters and converts them in low grade State nobles. The police force has elevated him from the working class origin, and has sanctified his brave and fighters condition and dispositions.

The state expropriates the working force of the worker of order and converts it in public peace and order, in exchange for the taxes the more or less integrated and peaceful parts of the populations gives for such security.

In this huge operation of public and state exploitation, the riot police agent fights to extract a sense of control and meaning for their life. The official *fighters of order* are engaged and trapped in that kind of crazy and self-destructive *passion* that Wacquant relates to boxers, ‘a *coerced affection*, a captive love, one ultimately born of class necessity’(1995) A *passion* that, paradoxically (for Weber) is provided, produced and reproduced in the entrails of the cold State, feeding with their own flesh and blood the voracious appetites of the State, ‘the coldest of all cold monsters’ (Nietzsche). The cold monster of the police underworld gives the infantryman honour and wealth in exchange for the agent’s time, body integrity and, on many occasions, his life. He can exhort everything

from him as long as the life of the infantryman can only remain meaningful as long as he serves, with all his heart, his master, the cold monster.

#### **5.4. Contributing with other perspectives to understand (riot) police use of force**

In this closing and final section we must say that the present work has also intended to contribute to the general understanding of the police word and police violence, as well as to overcome certain limitations that are present in other works about police violence that are informed by certain theoretical perspectives.

In the present work the notions of bodily capital that we had related to the disciplined bodily condition has been of enormous analytical utility. It has allowed us resuscitate the agent from the *agentless* structuralism of M. Foucault. We saw that the disciplined condition of the riot police agents, is not as Foucault presents it, the mere condition of passive docile bodies. The disciplined condition is also a bodily capital, a bodily state that permits the riot police agent be part of a fighting organization: the combat groups, and in last term, of the whole riot police unit. Such implication with the field permits us posit that their specific meanings related to their use of force are the specific products of the specific schemes of perception (*habitus*) of interested riot police agents. Products of an *habitus* that is the internalization of the specific principles that structures the space of relations in which they exist.

Conceiving the riot police agent as an agent that acts within a specific field has permitted us to unveil the many subtleties that surround their use of force. Such subtleties and specificities remain unrecognized by those who in a Foucaultian line of analysis (and from an exterior point of view) conceive police representations (included the ones related to their use of force) as the local effects of a *general political rationality*, not recognizing the specificities of the space of relations where police agents exist and forgetting the social trajectories of the police officers. One example of such agent-less structuralist Foucaultian approach, is Sozzo's work on police violence practices in Argentina (Sozzo, 2000), where, after analyzing some figures concerning police and civilian death rates, he (mysteriously) concludes that 'the uses of police violence are finally the *manifestation* of [a] political

rationality' structured around 'the absolutist state/liberal state dichotomy', a 'militarized model of police' and 'the impact of positivist criminology.' (Sozzo,2000 [o.i.])<sup>9</sup>.

The analysis of the history of the agents, specially their class habitus, is in our view a potent tool for understanding certain traits of their principles of perception, in particular their conservatism and their authoritarianism so many times denounced, but rarely explained (and specified) in relation to Argentine police forces. In some works about argentine *police* authoritarianism (i.e. Chevigni, 1995), such dispositions are confused with a *scholastic* authoritarianism. Not recognizing the different *modes of production* of political judgments that social agents can possess, police agents are conceived as scholars or politicians, as if their practices and judgments would be oriented by a 'system of explicit, specifically political principles, amenable to logical control and reflexive scrutiny" (Bourdieu,1984:418), rather than by the products of their class ethos reinforced by their disciplined *ethos*.

The present work also tried to compensate the lack of attention to the specific interests and conceptions of the (police) social agent that is common in those works that perceive, in a Marxian approach, the Police Force as an apparatus (i.e. Recasens,1994). The present description and understanding of riot police use of force permits us understand the riot police actions as actions performed by *interested, existentially implicated and active agents* rather than as effects of *an impersonal apparatus*, that has its own will. In any case, as we had seen, the total implication of the riot police agent, as agents interested and with a basic illusion in relation with the field, is the basis for understanding the *functioning* and reproduction of such (field that works as an) apparatus (See Bourdieu,1981).

Our analysis also suggests that the ethnomethodological and culturalalist approaches are not enough for understanding riot police use force. In relation to the first approach, represented by the work of E. Bittner we must say that we cannot think that such use of force in the relation with the public is only the *fulfillment of a function*, dealing with a problem. In such case the notion of function, or mission, conceals the *personal* aspects of the function. To think the violent practices of riot police agents in the logic of *function* makes the other part of the relation disappear; it annuls it, converting the public in an

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<sup>9</sup> Understanding such *omnipresent* political rationality as 'changing discursive fields within which is produced the conceptualisation of the exercise of power, that is, definitions about who can govern, what is govern and who and what can be governed'(Sozzo, 2000:21)



obstacle for the achievement of the function or an element that solely produces information that the riot police agent will have to possess. Such functionalist or phenomenological perspectives present police practices as oriented by professional skills and practical recipes, not considering that their skills and resources are the basis of their position and their most precious possession, within the structure of relations in which they exist. Such skills are differently possessed by the members of the RPU and the public.

As we could see, in the relations with the public the use of force is not only an asset involved in the law enforcement and peacekeeping problem. It is not the case that ‘the capacity to use force lends thematic unity to all police practice, in the same sense in which lets us say, the capacity to cure illness lends unity to everything done in the field of medical practice.’ (Bittner, 1990:127). In our view, the riot police capacity to use force is used in relation to the violent members of the public as the medical knowledge is wielded by the doctors in relation to non-authorized healing experts, such as witches, and other esoteric practitioners, that is, as in a relation of competence for the specific virtues and powers at stake. The ‘capacity to use force lends thematic unity to all police practice’ as it is one of the resources or assets that determines the existence of the police, and the social existence of the riot police agents.

Finally, we must say that the elements described above may be useful for understanding in a more complete and sustainable way the contents of police culture, so well described, but poorly explained, by the *culturalist* approach. We posit that the analysis of the conditions of existence of police officers can not be underestimated if one intends to possess a realist and theoretically sound understanding of the contents of the so called police culture. In the present work, the unveiling of the interests, illusions, stakes and necessities of the riot police agents, directly related to their conditions of existence (as agents -with a specific social trajectory- that exist within a specific field within which they control certain and efficient resources), permitted us to understand in a profound and precise manner why the ‘the core of the police outlook’ may usually consist in a ‘subtle and complex intermingling of the themes of mission,...love of action and pessimistic cynicism’ ‘seeing all social trends in apocalyptic terms, with the police as a beleaguered minority about to be overrun by the forces of barbarism.’ (1998:88).



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### **Comments on finalized thesis by Paul Hathazy**

Since January 2003, the first draft of the thesis was discussed intensively between Paul and myself, as shown by the comments. In addition to these comments, Paul was provided with an abundance of comments written in the margins of the off-print and sent back to him at the end of January. Whilst the comments in the email exchange were more formal, the comments in the margins were specific and to the point. Some of the exchanges refer to these comments.

Paul has considerably improved his first draft, with regard to all comments mentioned, in particular the more formal ones. The thesis has now a convincing formal structure. His writing has been improved a lot, and he has eliminated most of the repetitions, which makes the thesis an interesting and easier reading. In particular the description of the Riot Police force, and its history has added invaluable background information, which is in particular necessary for foreign readers. His methodology chapter is a very precise and good description of his work and methodology, as well as it is reflexive and critical. All quotes are well selected and properly annotated throughout the text.

His interpretations of his empirical material are much more focussed than in the first draft, and as well innovative as they are precise. Paul has a great gift for organising and interpreting his material, given the problems involved in its collection (no tapes!). The theoretical framework is well developed, and used in the interpretation in an appropriate way.

I think that this is an outstanding piece of work at the MA level. Paul should be encouraged and supported to publish an article, and to pursue his studies on the doctoral level .

Keele. 27 April 2003

Susanne Karstedt



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*(Created on 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 1988)*

**This is to certify that**

**PAUL C. HATHÁZY**

*has obtained the degree of Master of Arts in the Sociology of Law  
with the grade of Eximia cum laude approbatur*

*Title of the Dissertation: "Fighters of Order: Understanding Riot Police Use of Force"*

*Tutor: Prof. Dr. Susanne Karstedt*

*Jury of the Dissertation presented*

Prof. William L.F. Felstiner

Prof. Johannes Feest

Prof. Amadeu Recasens

*Oñati, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2003*



**Scientific Director  
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**Minister of Justice, Labour and Social  
Security of the Basque Government**