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What Is the Problem? Representations of Men's Violence Against Women in a Swedish Context

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What Is the Problem? Representations of Men's Violence Against Women in a Swedish Context

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Abstract

Abuse and violence against women is not only a serious violation of human rights, but is also, according to the Swedish government, the most acute and greatest obstacle to a gender-equal society. The aim of the current study was to investigate discourses that govern social work practice in Sweden analysed discourses of violence against women in five Swedish public working guidelines using Carol Bacchi's social constructivist analytical approach *What's the Problem Represented to Be?* Our findings show that violence is framed in the guidelines within a heterosexual context and is represented as an individual problem of women within close relations and families. This framing also promotes a division between violence against Swedish-born women and violence against foreign-born women. The analysis also shows that equality seems to be more about the inclusion of men rather than looking after women's situations. How violence against women is understood will affect how violence can be predicted, prevented, and treated, and thus there is a risk that these representations might affect women subjected to violence differently depending on how social workers interpret and apply these guidelines. Findings also suggest that these representations maintain gender hierarchies and other structural and societal inequalities and ignore violence against women as a major global social problem.

Keywords: men's violence against women, violence in close relationships, honour-related violence, social work, social policy

¿Cuál Es el Problema? Representaciones de la Violencia de los Hombres Contra las Mujeres en el Contexto Sueco

Helena Hoppstadius
Mid Sweden University

Abstract

Los abusos y la violencia contra las mujeres constituyen una grave violación de los derechos humanos, y de acuerdo al Gobierno sueco, es el obstáculo principal en una sociedad de igualdad de género. El objetivo de este estudio fue investigar los discursos que rigen la práctica del trabajo social en Suecia, analizamos discursos de violencia contra mujeres en cinco directrices de servicio público en Suecia usando el enfoque analítico constructivista social de Bacchi (1999). Los resultados muestran que la violencia se enmarca en un contexto heterosexual e individual de mujeres en relaciones cercanas y familiares. Se verifica una diferencia entre violencia contra mujeres nacidas en Suecia y las nacidas en el extranjero. Asimismo se muestra que el foco de esa similitud es la mayor atención que se brinda a la inclusión de los hombres, sobre la situación de las mujeres. La definición de violencia contra las mujeres afecta la forma de predecir, prevenir y tratar esta, así como la interpretación e implementación de las directrices. Nuestros resultados verifican que estas representaciones reproducen inequidades estructurales y jerarquías de género ignorando la violencia contra las mujeres como un importante problema social global.

Keywords: violencia de hombres contra mujeres; violencia en relaciones cercanas, violencia relacionada con el honor; trabajo social; política social

Abuse and violence against women is not only a serious violation of human rights (e.g. Garcia-Moreno, 2006), but is also, according to the Swedish government, the most acute and greatest obstacle to a gender-equal society (Regeringen, 2018). The work to combat men's violence against women has been on the political agenda in recent decades, and academics, activists, social workers, and social reformers have issued a call to action. The visibility of the problem and its magnitude have resulted in a great deal of commitment, and various lobbying organisations have succeeded in challenging attitudes sanctioning violence against women (Eduards 2002; Heise et al. 2002; Mattsson 2011). Swedish legislation has been tightened to protect women, and there have been several changes in policy regarding violence against women since 1965 when Sweden was the first country in the world to introduce a law against marital rape.

Despite changes in legislation and new approaches to the problem, men's violence against women is still a frequent and serious problem. Estimates are that every third woman in the world has been subjected to violence at some point in her life, and women are more frequently subjected to violence by a person close to them compared to men (Johnsson-Latham, 2005; World Health Organization, 2014; Hvitfeldt, Westerberg & Irelander Strid, 2016). The superior position of men in society furthermore contributes to the fact that women's life situation is affected to a greater extent than men in similar situations (Holmberg, Stjernqvist, & Sörensen, 2005).

Over the past decade, the Swedish Government has increased its efforts to combat violence and to increase the awareness of violence against women. This ambition is evident by various policies such as the Swedish government's communication "Power, goals and agency – a feminist policy" (Skr. 2016/17:10) and the government's "Action Plan for combating men's violence against women, violence and oppression in the name of honour, and violence in same-sex relationships" (Skr 2007/08:39).

How men's violence against women is framed in policies has practical significance on several levels. This is because in addition to clarifying society's position, the frameworks of such policies also highlight how to pay attention to and address a particular problem. A policy operates on both a practical because it is centred on a real "problem" and on a symbolic level because it represents or attempts to influence society's values and beliefs

(Krizsan & Popa, 2010; Murray & Powell, 2009). Such policies in turn have an impact on professionals', for example, social workers', understandings, reflections, and practices (e.g. Burnett, Ford-Gilboe, Berman, Wathen, & Ward-Griffin, 2016; Ljungwald, 2011). Therefore, because policies have a normative role, it is important to consider how they represent a certain problem and what the consequences of such representations might be.

The purpose of this study was to examine discourses about violence against women that govern social work practice in Sweden using Carol Bacchi's social constructivist analytical approach *What's the Problem Represented to Be?* (WPR). Discourses of violence against women in five Swedish public working guidelines that were derived from the "Action Plan for combating men's violence against women, violence and oppression in the name of honour, and violence in same-sex relationships" (Skr 2007/08:39). This work focused on three central research questions. (1) How do the working guidelines term men's violence against women? (2) Which theories are used to explain violence against women? (3) How is violence against women defined?

Policy representations of violence against women

The problem of violence in general is situated in contexts where different discourses express society's view of the problem in the shape of legal aspects, social norms, and media attention (Ljungwald, 2011; Lorentzen, 2008; Wendt, 2002). These discourses change over time and affect those considered to be victims of violence and perpetrators, how to consider causes of violence, what acts are regarded as violent acts, and so on.

In addition, the terms used to name violence against women, such as *family violence* and *domestic violence*, can be understood in different ways. On the one hand, the policies define the terms that are used, and thus they can include different persons in different policy contexts. For example, in an Australian context the terms *family violence* and *domestic violence* include family members, former partners, people sharing the household, and/or other related persons regardless of gender depending on which policy is being considered (Murray & Powell, 2009). In Canadian policy use, the term *family violence* pays particularly attention to children, while women do not

have any prominent place and are even presented as co-responsible for the violence that children are exposed to (Nixon och Tutty, 2009).

On the other hand, such terms represent implicit understandings of violence against women. For instance, *family violence* and *domestic violence* indicate in which context the violence is located. These representations place the causes of violence on family members and people's homes (Pratt, 2000), with the consequence that the violence might be interpreted as less serious because these terms are associate with people's homes and with privacy (Bacchi, 1999; Hearn & McKie, 2008). Emphasising the importance of the home also jeopardises focusing on violence among couples who do not live together or violence that occurs outside the home (Hearn & McKie, 2008; Watson, 2001). Family perspectives also often assume that the violence is caused by dysfunctional individuals or relationships and that such violence should be addressed on an individual level (Nixon & Tutty, 2009).

Because *family violence* and *domestic violence* are gender neutral, they do not indicate who is considered the offender and who is considered the victim. In other words, gender-neutral terms hide the fact that it is primarily women who are exposed to violence and that the perpetrators most often are men (Holmberg, Stjernqvist & Sörensen, 2005). Terms like *wife abuse* and *violence against women*, clarify that it is (mostly) women who are subjected to violence, but these terms still conceal the perpetrator. A term that highlights the more complex nature of violence, and reveals both perpetrator and victim, is *men's violence against women*. Although gender-neutral terms hide the gender of both perpetrators and victims, some argues even though gender-neutral terms are used in policies, these policies still interpret and explain violence from a gender perspective (Murray & Powell, 2009; Hearn & McKie, 2008). For example, some countries in Central and Eastern European include implicit gender-equality elements in their gender-neutral perspectives (Krizan & Popa, 2014).

In some contexts, violence against women is described in terms of honour-related violence, a term specifically focusing on immigrant populations (Burman, 2012; Carbin, 2014; Hong, 2014). Some argue that honour-related violence is to be seen as a form of gender-based violence, while others are critical of such an approach because such violence can also affect men (Gill, 2010; Idriss, 2017). In a Finnish context, Hong (2014) found two forms of causal explanations for such violence. The first was

related to a lack of gender equality, while the other was related to a culture in which the violence was framed as a consequence of power relations in patriarchal families, men's backgrounds, and social roots in women's countries of origin and in immigrant communities. The term *honour-related violence* might affect how to interpret the violence because honour can have many meanings, and it is often associated with respect and dignity and can thus lead to the appearance of such violence as defensible (Gill & Brah, 2014).

In addition, policies can refer to various forms of violence such as sexual and physical violence; psychological, social, and emotional violence; social isolation; economic violence; and damage of property (Murray & Powell, 2009). Concepts such as abuse, violence, and battery indicate physical violence, while concepts such as violation and insult might be more difficult to define (Hearn & McKie, 2008). Definitions of violence and violent acts are thus central, not only because they determine how violence is explained and understood and should be treated, also because they affect how we use statistics to understand the problem (Itzin, 2000).

Swedish policy context

In years past, there was great tolerance for men's violence against women in Sweden. The violence was looked upon as a private issue outside the public policy domain, and violence against women was explained by alcohol consumption among men, marital or family relationship problems, and other individual problems, but such violence began to be interpreted as a problem due to gender aspects when the Violence Against Women Act was adopted in 1998 (Leander, 2006; Nilsson, 2009; Wendt, 2002). Today Sweden is one of the few countries in Europe that considers violence against women from a structural gender-equality perspective, and the responsibility for helping and supporting women subjected to violence is stated in the Swedish Social Services Act (SFS 2001:453. *Socialtjänstlagen* ([Cit. SoL]). A structural gender-equality perspective emphasises women as particularly vulnerable, and it understands violence as a universal problem, meaning that it can affect individuals regardless of class, age, functional ability, ethnicity, or personal beliefs (Krizan & Popa, 2014). Hearn, Strid, Husu, and Verloo (2016) state that Swedish policies visualise the interaction between gender and other

inequality aspects (age, ethnicity, disability, etc.) through the division of women into different target groups, the categorisation of women in "particularly vulnerable groups" is, according to them, a way to emphasise that violence is interpreted from an intersectional perspective (i.e. it takes into account gender and various aspects that can complicate the situation of women). However, critics argue that Swedish legislation is exclusionary in both how it frames the problem of violence and how it is applied. Ekström (2012) is of the opinion that the categorisation and the attention to different specific aspects of inequality place the responsibility for the violence on women and not on social structures in society, which might result in inadequate support that does not meet women's individual needs (Ekström, 2012). Some also claim that Swedish policies do not problematise violence against women theoretically to any significant extent and that violence is framed as problem of individuals in heterosexual relationships (Burman, 2010; 2012; Wendt, 2012). Others point out that foreign-born women's vulnerability in practice is considered a non-Swedish problem because women who lack a permanent residence permit do not have the same legal rights as Swedish-born women. In addition, women subjected to so-called honour-related violence are interpreted and framed as either active agents (if they have left their family) or as victims due to cultural aspects (Burman, 2012; Carbin, 2014). Honour-related violence is also, according to some, represented as a matter of integration or lack of integration in Swedish society (Balkmar, Iovanni & Pringle, 2009).

Methodology

To analyse discourses of men's violence against women in Swedish policies, the study used Carol Bacchi's (1999) social constructivist approach *What's the Problem Represented to Be?* (WPR). In line with Bacchi, we regard discourse as more than language. Discourses are also ideas, beliefs, and theories about the world that are used to frame a problem, and a basic assumption in WPR is that policies contain both explicit and implicit framings of a problem, i.e. problem representations. There might, in other words, be different underlying understandings of causes of violence against women within a text that are in contrast to those understandings that are clearly stated in the policy. WPR makes it possible to study how the

discourse and the use of language around a representation of a problem affect how the problem is perceived, the possible assumptions that underlie the problem, and how the effects differ when some issues are considered problematic while others are considered problem-free. Policies based on this approach are not only considered as attempts to solve a particular problem, but also as things that can actually create or constitute a problem. The framing of a problem is therefore central because it will consequently affect what we consider needs to be done to address the problem. It is therefore important to study concepts such as domestic violence and family violence to see how they are part of the problem representation in a policy (Bacchi, 1999). Bacchi's approach is based on the following critical questions with respect to the main question of what it is represented as a "problem" in a specific policy (Question 1). What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the "problem" (problem representation)? (Question 2) How has this representation of the "problem" come about? (Question 3) What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be thought about differently? (Question 4) What effects (discursive, subjectification, lived) are produced by this representation of the 'problem'? (Question 5) How and where has this representation of the "problem" been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted and replaced? (Question 6) (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 20).

The problem in focus in this study is men's violence against women, and the material examined consists of five Swedish public working guidelines derived from the Swedish Action Plan (Skr. 2007/08:39) concerning violence against women. The focus of the individual guides is women with addiction or addiction problems, women with disabilities, elderly women, women with a foreign background, and persons exposed to honour-related violence and oppression. The overall purpose that unites these guides is to improve awareness and competence in matters of violence among professions operating within areas such as the social services, health care, the police, and NGOs. In addition to providing information and knowledge about women subjected to violence in general, the guides focus on the specific situations of the previously mentioned groups of women, children subjected to violence, society's responsibilities, different interventions, and guidance on how to meet and act when supporting women subjected to

violence. The guides were published in 2011 and 2013 and can be accessed via the National Board of Health and Welfare¹. Table 1 lists the included guidelines.

Table 1

Included working guidelines.

Year of Publication, Title	
1	Socialstyrelsen (2011a). Sällan sedda: utbildningsmaterial om våld mot kvinnor med funktionsnedsättning [Looking the Other Way: A Study Guide to Female Victims of Violence with Disabilities]. Stockholm: Socialstyrelsen
2	Socialstyrelsen (2011b). Skylla sig själv?: utbildningsmaterial om våld mot kvinnor med missbruks- eller beroendeproblem [Their Own Fault? A Study Guide to Female Victims of Violence with Substance Abuse or Addiction Problems]. Stockholm: Socialstyrelsen.
3	Socialstyrelsen (2013a). Blånader och silverhår: utbildningsmaterial om våld mot äldre kvinnor [Bruises and Silver Hair: A Study Guide to Violence Against Older Women]. Stockholm: Socialstyrelsen.
4	Socialstyrelsen (2013b). Ensam och utsatt: utbildningsmaterial om våld mot kvinnor med utländsk bakgrund [Alone and Vulnerable: A Study Guide to Violence Against Women With a Foreign Background]. Stockholm: Socialstyrelsen.
5	Socialstyrelsen (2013c). Vänd dem inte ryggen: utbildningsmaterial om hedersrelaterat våld och förtryck [Don't Turn Them Away: A Study Guide to Honour Related Violence and Oppression]. Stockholm: Socialstyrelsen.

Initially, the linguistic characteristics of the texts were analysed through a textual reading of the parts describing violence against women and social services responsible for supporting these women, in order to get an overview of the discursive processes in the working guidelines. Then three different aspects of the texts were studied. The first aspect aimed to identify how

violence against women is termed, it was an analysis of the words used to describe men's violence against women. The second aspect investigated framings of violence. Words, statements and assumptions, as well as interventions claiming to address the problem, were explored to determine which theories the guides use to explain violence against women, including both explicit and implicit framings. In other words, the analysis to determine if the violence is interpreted from a structural gender-equality perspective or as the result of other causes. The last aspect investigated how violence against women is defined. The reading focused on words and statements describing violence against women in order to determine which acts are considered to be violent acts.

In order to provide an alternative picture of how the discourses in the working guidelines can be understood, I theorised on what these representations hide, the possible consequences of this ignorance, and who most likely will benefit from these representations. The results are presented under the following headings: *Terms used to name violence against women*, *Framings of violence against women*, and *Definitions of violence*. Since language use affects the meaning of sentences in a text, the included quotations have been translated to illustrate their meaning.

Results

Terms used to name violence against women

How violence against women is termed is vital because it says something about who are included (or excluded) as victims of violence and as perpetrators. The analysis shows that the guides use two disparate gender-neutral terms hiding both the victims and perpetrators, as well as their genders – *violence in close relationships* (VCR) and *honour-related violence and oppression* (HRV). VCR points out in what kind of relationship the violence is perpetrated, while HRV indicates the underlying causes of the violence.

It is primarily the partners or former partners of the women, other family members, and relatives who are considered to be closely related persons (namely, the perpetrator) in VCR. It can also be other persons with different kinds of relationships to women, for example professionals within special

accommodation, personnel within health and social care, neighbours, as well as persons who have otherwise had a close relationship with the victim. For women with alcohol abuse or addiction problems, closely related persons also include temporary personal contacts, police officers, prison guards, and treatment specialists (Socialstyrelsen, 2011b, p. 16). The term VCR does not say anything about who primarily are considered to be victims of violence, but according to the guidelines both women and men can be subjected to violence.

The term “close relation” can thus indicate that there is a closeness between victims and perpetrators, or that the perpetrator is spatially close. These representations show that it is a woman’s own individual life situation that determines who is close to her or not, with the consequence that it is sometimes difficult to determine who is to be considered a closely related person (i.e. perpetrator) or not.

When it comes to HRV, the term indicates why women are subjected to violence, namely that the violence occurs in a family with norms of honour. Because the word “honour” is often associated with respect and dignity, such violence might be understood as legitimate and understandable (cf. Gill & Brah, 2014). Although the term hides both victims and perpetrators, but the guide mentions victims of HRV as women, men, and transgender persons. Those who are stated as possible perpetrators is a more limited group of peoples than those in VCR, and it includes only men and women within in the immediate family and other close relatives. A possible consequence of framing such violence as “family violence” is that violence against foreign-born women outside this inner circle is overlooked and that other kinds of violence (i.e. VCR) are ignored. The description of such violence as occurring within the family also risks that efforts will be aimed only at families and family members and that structural causes of violence in society will be overlooked.

Both VCR and HRV have a clear emphasis on family members and relatives as well as other closely related persons as perpetrators, which locates the violence within the private sphere. This might lead to understandings of the violence as a private problem and thus that violence as a global social problem is ignored. The use of two different terms, including different victims and perpetrators, also creates a distinction between Swedish women and foreign-born women. When violence is associated with women’s

backgrounds, there is a risk that the violence will be collectivised and that the solution to the problem and to women's vulnerability will be linked to culture and ethnicity (cf. Gill & Brah, 2014).

Framings of violence against women

It is not just the way violence against women is termed that matters. Also central is the framing of the problem, meaning the theoretical understanding of violence against women. Although the guides mention a variety of theories as useful to understanding violence against women, the guides provide only limited information on structural, socioeconomic, sociopsychological, psychological, intersectional, and ecological or holistic perspectives on such violence (Socialstyrelsen, 2013b, p. 13). In addition, there is a cultural, gender, and intersectional perspective in the guide on HRV (Socialstyrelsen, 2013c, p.13). It is not stated which of these perspectives the National Board advocates, if any of them comply with Swedish legislation, or how to use them in social work practice.

However, through the implicit representations of the problem, the guides mainly frame violence against women from a gender perspective. Women are framed in a heteronormative context, which is in line with the equality discourse and the rhetoric surrounding Swedish law. However, the gender of the perpetrator is hidden, and men's part in the violence is diffuse in most of the guides. Only one guide (focusing on violence against women with foreign backgrounds) frames men explicitly as perpetrators. One consequence of this is that men's responsibility for violence is invisible, and specifically the responsibility of Swedish men. In addition, the guides point out that men can be victims of violence, as shown by the following quotation from the guide on violence against elderly women:

Both elderly men and women are subjected to violence – in close relationships, by health and social care workers, by neighbours in special housing, and by participants in day-care. But women are not only exposed to violence because they are older, but specifically because they are women (Socialstyrelsen, 2013a, p. 7).

The quotation highlights that both men and women can be subjected to violence, but it hides the perpetrator. The representation thus moves the

focus to the woman. The reason why women are subjected to violence is because “they are women”, and not because men abuse women, and this is a framing that can lead to an understanding of violence against women as a normal act. The analysis further shows that other causes of why women are subjected to violence are not problematised, as shown by following statement from the guide about women with disabilities:

She is financially dependent on her partner, she would have trouble finding a place of her own, her religious or culture values say that families must be kept intact, and she thinks that keeping the family together is best for the children (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a, p. 43).

These framings neither describe nor problematise these social inequality aspects. The text omits that women generally have lower incomes than men, that it might be the man who controls her economy, and that a solution to the problem of violence might be that the man should move out of the home. The causes of violence can instead be interpreted as individual shortcomings of the woman, which she needs to address in order to limit the violence or to make it to end (see Paterson, 2009). Other statements indicate that a woman’s individual characteristics might have an impact on the violence, as seen in a citation from the guide on HRV:

The woman might be afraid of loneliness and isolation, and she lacks support from the outside world (Socialstyrelsen, 2013c, p. 30).

This quotation suggests inherent weaknesses in the woman, and she has to change her way of living to prevent the violence. In other words, she has to learn to live on her own and has to grow a new network outside of her family and cultural context for support. These framings not only move the attention to women from men, they also frame the woman as co-responsible for the violence. These framings also focus on the consequences of violence instead of the causes of violence, which privileges men and disadvantages and subordinates women. Women’s own responsibility for limiting and preventing violence becomes particularly evident in the (few) short-term and long-term interventions presented in the guides. These efforts aim to provide women with counselling and support, security planning, sheltered or other temporary housing, and financial assistance. In the long run, the social

services are expected to determine her thoughts about the future, her prospects for employment or other means of support, how her short and long-term housing is to be arranged, and if her personal data need to be protected (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a, p. 73). Even outreach activities and information (Socialstyrelsen, 2011b, p. 80) and municipal action plans (Socialstyrelsen, 2013b, p. 45) aim to reach and pay attention to women in different ways. This implicit individual perspective is strengthened by the lack of information about actions directed against men's violence, such as preventive work. Only one guide (the guide on HRV) indicates a form of prevention through the intervention "work towards change within the family", which leads to an understanding that women are co-responsible for the violent situations and that they have to participate in activities including the perpetrator. Because these representations focus on interventions aimed at women, when addressing the consequences of violence the problem of men's violence can be considered as an individual problem for women. Such representations thus clearly neglect a structural equality perspective.

Definitions of violence

In addition to how violence is termed and framed, the definitions of violence say something about how violence against women should be understood, and they clarify which actions are to be regarded as violence within a certain context. The guidelines point out that violence against women consists of different patterns of violence and that it often includes several actions of violence. These acts are linked to the terms used to name violence and to the framings of violence; in other words, what is considered as an act of violence depends on whether it refers to VCR or HRV.

According to the guidelines, the following acts are to be regarded as violence in VCR: physical, psychological, and sexual violence; emotional abuse; financial control and material violence; neglect; and violence related to disability (e.g. Socialstyrelsen, 2013a, p. 25). Violence or other abuse is thereby defined as including acts that both are and are not regarded as crimes. The meanings of these forms of violence are described briefly in the guides, but without any further problematisation, and this can make it difficult to determine when, for example, neglect becomes an act of

violence. Another risk is that not punishable acts might be regarded as less serious.

Acts defined as acts of violence in HRV are not as well-defined as those in VCR, which the guide on HRV points out. The guide states that there is a lack of consensus on actions covered by the definition, but named acts of violence include physical, psychological, and social violence. The violence can be expressed through control and limitation of women's everyday lives, such as choice of clothing, social interactions/activities, education, work, marriage, and divorce. It might also include threats of violence, murderous violence, genital mutilation, and forced marriages (Socialstyrelsen, 2013c, p. 19). It is also emphasized that HRV is different from VCR due to factors not found in VCR, for example, that the woman might have been exposed to violence from an early age and that the violence might be collectively sanctioned (see Socialstyrelsen, 2013c, p. 11).

The division into two distinct forms of violence thus supports the perception that the woman's background (whether she is Swedish or foreign and her relation to the perpetrator) are factors that determine what acts are to be regarded as acts of violence. This means that acts considered as violence are clearly confined to a specific group of women and their ethnicity. Consequently, it becomes difficult to determine in which context acts are presumably turned into violence. For example, the encouragement of a teenager to go home immediately after school can in one context (VCR) be interpreted as the proper upbringing of a child and as kindness, while in another context (HRV) it can be seen as a restriction on freedom of movement and thus defined as an act of violence. Another consequence is that all kinds of violence (VCR) against women with a foreign background risk being interpreted as HRV and that the framing of HRV as more serious than VCR might have the effect that VCR is not considered as much of a risk and therefore is not given sufficient attention.

Conclusion and discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how men's violence against women is represented in five Swedish working guidelines published by the National Board. The study examined how violence against women is termed, framed, and defined and then theorised on what these representations ignore,

the possible consequences of this ignorance, and who most likely will benefit from these representations.

The study showed that despite the Swedish Government's opinion, namely that violence and abuse of women is the most acute and greatest obstacle to an equal society, these public working guidelines use two gender-neutral terms, violence in close relationship (VCR) and honour-related violence and oppression (HRV). These terms consequently conceal that victims of domestic violence most often are women and that the perpetrators most often are men. The violence can thus be perceived as a problem affecting women and men in a similar manner and to an equal extent. These gender-neutral terms mainly include perpetrators in women's private sphere, which means that violence can be interpreted as a kind of family violence. The consequences of this are that violence against women as a major global social problem might be neglected and that efforts might focus on the needs of individuals or families and not on efforts to combat men's violence against women.

When it comes to causes of violence, meaning how the guides frame violence, this study shows that the guides rarely problematise or visualise violence against women from a structural gender-equality perspective. The guides instead frame violence against women as an individual problem in a heterosexual relationship and focus on the consequences of violence. The underlying message is that women need to address different individual problems in order to reduce the violence or to make it end, which in part leads to representations of women as co-responsible for the violence (cf. Hearn & McKie, 2010; Paterson, 2009). By failing to problematise men's behaviour, gender inequality, structural causes, and effective efforts, the violence is likely to continue, which is mostly to the detriment of women.

How violence is defined determines which acts are regarded as acts of violence, and such definitions depend on whether the guides refer to VCR or HRV. The division into two different forms of violence supports the perception that a woman's individual background determines which acts are to be regarded as violence (cf. Volpp) and that it matters what a woman's relation to the perpetrator is and whether the woman is Swedish born or foreign born. In other words, the violence is interpreted differently depending on "who she is". A consequence of this categorisation is that HRV is collectivised and that solutions to the problem risk being connected

to culture and ethnicity and that efforts might focus on integration instead of on the violence itself (cf. Gill & Brah, 2014; Balkmar et.al., 2009). There are also other risks; for example, when particular attention is on gender equality there is a risk that other inequality aspects affecting a woman's situation are overlooked (Arousell, Carlbom, Johnsdotter, Larsson & Essén, 2017) and there is the risk that the term used to name HRV can lead to understandings of the violence as understandable and defensible (cf. Gill & Brah, 2014). As a result of the dichotomous groupings, the guidelines tend to treat HRV in sharp contrast to, and sometimes as more seriously than “our violence” it will say VCR, which might be interpreted as a form of “mainstream violence”. The effect is that individuals from Swedish society are interpreted as good and equal, in contrast to individuals with backgrounds in foreign countries.

When summarising the results, three primary findings come to the fore. The first is that these guides frame violence against women within close relations and within families in a heterosexual context, and the violence is also framed as an individual problem of women. The second is that the guides promote a division between violence against Swedish-born women and foreign-born women. This is done despite the fact that the term VCR includes all women, even foreigners. Third, equality in the guides seems to be more about the inclusion of men than about looking after women's situations. The representations in the guides frame women as weak and in a subordinated position, which is indicated by the titles of the guides that portray women without power and agency – “Alone and Vulnerable”, “Bruises and Silver Hair”, “Don’t Turn Them Away”, “Looking the Other Way”, and “And Their Own Fault?” (Socialstyrelsen, 2011a; Socialstyrelsen, 2011b, Socialstyrelsen, 2013a; Socialstyrelsen, 2013b & Socialstyrelsen, 2013c). The attention on women’s abilities as well as their individual situation due to different inequality aspects visualised by the guides will consequently affect social work practice because the categorisation within the guides at least to some extent reflects target groups of needy people within the Social Services Acts.

How we interpret and understand violence against women might affect how violence can be predicted, prevented, and treated (Cunningham, Jaffe, Baker, Dick, Malla, Mazaher & Poisson, 1998), and women subjected to violence can therefore be affected by these representations depending on

how social workers interpret and apply these guides. If violence against women is attributed to individual causes, and if different aspects are considered one at a time, there is a risk that women's overall situation and structural causes for violence will be overlooked. This might lead to inadequate support measures at the community level, as well as a lack of measures with a global perspective, which will have negative consequences for women worldwide. There is therefore a risk that these representations maintain gender hierarchies and other structural and societal inequalities and ignore violence against women as a major global social problem.

Understanding violence through this analysis hardly presents the only truth. The study has tried to sort out the specific characteristics of each part studied in the text, but texts can of course imply other representations. Additionally, the approach did not intend to evaluate policies or to clarify what the "real" problem is in order to develop appropriate solutions. The analysis should instead be considered as an attempt to question representations of the problem of men's violence against women and to give an example of how discourses within the guides can be interpreted and understood. Thus this work might be valuable for social workers and social work students, as well as for others working with women subjected to violence, in order to encourage a critical view of the knowledge contained within various working guidelines and documents.

The study is limited by focusing on only five documents published by the National Board. In order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of how men's violence against women is represented in a Swedish context, the analysis should be complemented with additional policies as well as other public documents published by different authorities.

Lastly, the work with this analysis involved a focus on women's situations, but this do not mean that men cannot be subjected to violence or that women cannot be violent. Women are at focus simply because vastly more women are subjected to violence compared to men globally and because society's patriarchal structures affect women more negatively than men in similar situations. The analysis is therefore influenced by the researchers' view of the problem, and it is also influenced by the context in which the researchers are located, as social science researcher with interest and knowledge in critical social work.

This study has provided an understanding of how discourses of violence against women in policies can be interpreted, and it raises questions for further studies. An area of interest is how social workers interpret and understand violence, and because discourses refer to knowledge rather than to language it is also important to examine what knowledge social workers have and how they apply their knowledge in social work practice. Interesting for further studies would also be to examine which discourses social workers take part of in their work in supporting women subjected to violence.

Notes

¹ <http://www.socialstyrelsen.se>

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Gender Stereotypes in Spanish Phraseology

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Gender Stereotypes in Spanish Phraseology

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Abstract

In this paper the results of research on gender stereotypes underlying Spanish phraseology are presented. Its main aim is to reveal which gender stereotypes are explicitly or implicitly present in commonly used contemporary Spanish Phraseological Units (PUs). In order to achieve this goal, all PUs associated with men and women documented in the most complete dictionary of current Spanish phraseology (*Diccionario fraseológico documentado del español actual: locuciones y modismos españoles*) have been analysed. In order to systematize the analysis, an inventory of stereotypes has been collected and split into five main thematic categories: physical characteristics; attitude, personality and abilities; sexuality; family; activities and professions. Moreover, a sixth, transversal category has been added – the opposite male and female conceptualisations of the passing of time.

Keywords: spanish phraseology, gender, stereotypes, society

Estereotipos de género en la fraseología española

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Abstract

En este artículo se presentan los resultados de una investigación sobre los estereotipos de género que subyacen tras la fraseología española. El objetivo es sacar a la luz qué estereotipos de género se hallan, ya sea explícita o implícitamente, en las unidades fraseológicas (UFs) españolas de uso generalizado en la actualidad. Para ello se han analizado todas las UFs asociadas con hombres y mujeres presentes en el diccionario de fraseología española más completo (*Diccionario fraseológico documentado del español actual: locuciones y modismos españoles*). Además, se ha creado un listado de estereotipos de género que, con el fin de sistematizar el análisis, ha sido dividido en cinco categorías temáticas principales: a) características físicas; b) actitud, personalidad y habilidades; c) sexualidad; d) familia; y e) actividades y profesiones. A estos grupos se les ha añadido un sexto apartado: la distinta conceptualización del paso del tiempo en hombres y mujeres.

Keywords: fraseología española, género, estereotipos, sociedad

Since the seminal work on gender and language by Robin Lakoff (1973), many authors have analysed and discussed the relationships between gender and language from numerous perspectives. As can be observed in Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013: 66–79), all levels of language are affected – phonetics and phonology, morphology, the lexicon, syntax, semantics, pragmatics, and discourse. However, neither these authors nor any other scholars devoted to language within gender studies and the feminist movement have accomplished an extensive analysis of gender and phraseology. The reason could be found in the lack of an established tradition of studies of phraseology in the Anglo-Saxon world, where the interest in language and gender emerged and where this discipline has been mainly developed.

On the contrary, those countries and regions where phraseology has been perceived for decades as a major linguistic discipline – such as the former Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia or Poland – did not develop gender studies until recent times. Logically, it is not surprising that scholars have not yet paid enough attention to the way Phraseological Units (PUs) echo the gendered asymmetry of society.

This fact is especially crucial since phraseology seems to be a highly explicit and direct device for revealing the cultural and social values of a given group compared to the other elements of language. According to Dobrovolskij and Piirainen (2005: 1), idioms ‘record and preserve relevant knowledge as part of their content plane (as image traces), including, above all, reflection of the respective culture’. Moreover, at least according to these authors, along with many other scholars connected with the cognitive linguistics approach to phraseology, the majority of PUs are not linguistic but conceptual in nature; in other words: ‘An idiom is not just an expression that has a meaning that is somehow special in relation to the meanings of its constituting parts, but it arises from our more general knowledge of the world embodied in our conceptual system’ (Kövecses, 2002: 233). This fact reinforces the importance of applying the gender studies perspective to PUs in order to show the stereotypes associated with men and women that underlie phraseology.¹

As previously mentioned, it is in Eastern and Central Europe that the studies of phraseology have a more established tradition. It is therefore not surprising that the first attempt to apply gender studies to PUs is to be found

in Russia. Veronika Teliya, one of the first specialists devoted to culture in phraseology, presents some PUs reflecting the Russian conception of the relationship between women and sexuality and women and intellect. By means of this innovative (though still partial) analysis, Teliya (1996: 260–269) aims to illustrate how phraseology conceptually reflects the Russian idiosyncrasy regarding women.

More recently, Piirainen (2007: 217; 2008: 213) lays bare the fact that the gendered asymmetry of society can be a significant object of study in phraseology. Piirainen presents gender-specific PUs in English (*to be left on the shelf; an overdressed old bag; mutton dressed as lamb; a big girl's blouse; to be tied to sb.'s apron strings*), Dutch (*een zijden sok; een zacht ei*), German (*seinen Hut nehmen*), and Japanese (*hitohada nugu*), all of them revealing cultural models in the societies in which these languages are spoken.

One of the most inspiring works published to date is an analysis of 107 potentially gender-specific German PUs by Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2010). After a corpus analysis had been performed it was shown that sometimes the use of PUs is gender-specific because of the idiom's true etymology and therefore, in some cases, the present-day use of an idiom 'can only be explained by addressing its history, i.e. these idioms cannot be used in contexts that are not compatible with their etymological origins' (2010: 92).

Another inspiring work was that of Katerina Kedron in her book *Gender Aspects in Slavic Phraseology (Based on Belarusian, Polish and Czech)*² (2014). Among the cross-linguistic conclusions Kedron proposes the existence of a common gender model in the three languages in question. In other words, in Belarusian, Polish, and Czech there are many matching features regarding the conceptualisation of *men* and *women*. Moreover, Kedron brings to light some (minor) divergences among these three Slavic languages, such as, for instance, the lack of an image of an aggressive woman in Belarusian.³

If we now focus on the specific topic of this paper, i.e. Spanish phraseology, there are no previous studies investigating the values and stereotypes associated with men and women. On the other hand, there is an established tradition of gender-oriented studies on Spanish sayings and proverbs, i.e. in the frame of paremiology. Although a clear distinction can

be drawn between phraseology and paremiology, in the most prestigious taxonomy of Spanish phraseology Corpas Pastor (1996) includes paremies into her classification of phraseology. However, and for a few years now, it has generally been admitted that sayings and proverbs do not belong to phraseology in a strict sense (see, for instance, García-Page Sánchez, 2008).

In her book *Stereotypes and gender roles in popular proverbs*,⁴ Fernández Poncela (2002a)⁵ states that these linguistic expressions reflect the hegemonic cultural model of Spanish society, according to which women are ‘gossiping, indiscreet, incoherent, changeable, lying, evil, dangerous, guilty of every evil, usable objects, sillier than animals and worst than the devil himself’ (2002a: 118).⁶ In addition, Spanish proverbs reflect the way women should behave according to a series of *idealised* features clearly opposed to their *real* behavior: ‘quiet, discreet, obedient, home-loving and hard-working’⁷ (2002a: 118). In her own analysis of stereotypes of women in Spanish proverbs, Mitkova (2007: 91) adds a list of further very similar characteristics associated with idealised women – submissiveness, sweetness, fidelity, honesty, and prudence.⁸

One of the problems of inferring extralinguistic conclusions from the analysis of proverbs is that most of them represent archaic states of the language and they are not used (or even known) by the majority of the contemporary speakers of the language in question. On the contrary, a common speaker masters thousands of PUs and uses (some of) them often. So, unlike proverbs, by analysing present-day idioms it is possible to reveal which values are potentially active in contemporary society.

The aim of this paper is to reveal which gender stereotypes are explicitly or implicitly present in commonly used contemporary Spanish PUs. In order to achieve this goal, 407 PUs associated with men and women and excerpted from a dictionary of current Spanish phraseology have been analysed.

Theoretical principles and methodology of research

In this research it is assumed that languages are not isolated from the contexts they are spoken in and that they actually reflect the values and stereotypes of the societies in question. These assumptions can take us to a certain extent back to the tradition of the Sapir-Whorf doctrine of linguistic relativity, and especially to its *mild* hypothesis, commonly associated with

Sapir, who, for instance, states that ‘[h]uman beings do not live in the objective world alone [...], but are very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society’ (2008 [1929]: 221–222). This premise is also generally accepted within the framework of gender and feminist studies, as can be read, among others, in Mills (2008: 9): ‘Language does indeed reveal to us the values of groups and institutions within our culture in the past who were instrumental in encoding their own perspectives within the language’.

Moreover, some feminist authors support the so-called *stronger view*, maintaining that ‘language does not just reflect gender divisions; it actually creates them. Things like differences in the use of politeness strategies [...] actively create and sustain inequality’ (Talbot, 2010: 15). According to this, by changing the way we speak, we could change the inferior position of women in the patriarchal society. This more extreme standpoint is closer to the ideas of Sapir’s pupil Whorf, who radicalised linguistic relativity to the extreme that language does not just influence the speaker’s worldview, but that it determines our thoughts:

It was found that the background linguistic system (in other words, the grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual’s mental activity, for his analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of his mental stock in trade. [...] The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds—and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. (Whorf, 1956: 212–213)

For the purposes of this paper, it is not particularly important whether language just reflects the gender asymmetry in society or it actually reinforces it. Its aim is to analyse gender values and stereotypes present in today’s Spanish phraseology and, in particular, all PUs associated with men and women documented in *Diccionario fraseológico documentado del español actual: locuciones y modismos españoles* by Seco, Andrés and Ramos (2004). This dictionary does not include proverbs and sayings, but just idioms (and only from Spain, not from American Spanish). In addition,

the dictionary is *up to date* and *documented*, since all its 16 000 PUs are illustrated with examples excerpted from Spanish texts dated between 1955 and 2004.

The methodology of the analysis is structured on three levels of specificity.

On the first level, *Conceptual Stereotypes in Focus* (CSFs) are taken into account. What is meant by a CSF is a generalised conceptualisation or stereotype in a given society that has become phraseologised as a result of a figurative process.⁹ For instance, the widespread stereotype that men are (both physically and mentally) stronger than women clearly underlies the Spanish PU *Sexo débil* (just the same as its English counterpart *weaker sex*). Of course, it is not argued that every widespread stereotype automatically implements a PU; it is claimed that the very foundation of the process of phraseologisation often relies on generalised conceptualisations shared by a significant portion of the society. For instance, the stereotype referring to the supposed inability of women to drive cars properly has not activated any PU in Spanish such as **Bad driving sex* or the like.

On a second level of specificity, I make use of the concept of a *Frame* proposed by Fillmore, who defines it as ‘any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one of them you have to understand the whole structure in which it fits’ (2006: 373). In its application to the study of phraseology, Dobrovolskij and Piirainen (2009: 24–25) stress the importance of analysing not just the explicit elements of PUs, but also their implicit constituents. These authors illustrate it with a German PU with Spanish cultural motivation: *Ein rotes Tuch für jmdn sein* ‘to provoke someone’ (lit. ‘to be a red rag [to a bull] for someone’, similar to the English expression *Something acted like a red rag to a bull*). The image component of this PU can easily be inferred when examining it within the frame BULLFIGHTING. This frame includes some other implicit elements (called *slots*) such as BULLFIGHTER or BULL that provide the PU with its lexicalised metaphoric semantics. By applying this approach to the specific topic of this paper, a PU such as *Hijo/niño de papá* ‘someone living at the expense of his/her well-off father’ (lit. ‘Daddy’s son/boy’) implicitly refers to the frame (PATRIARCHAL) FAMILY, in which the father is the head of the family and the only person who has financial resources at his disposal. A female version of this PU with ‘mother’ **Hijo/niño de mamá* has not been conventionalised in

Spanish, probably since children stereotypically *do not* live at the expense of their mothers, for the simple reason that in the (near) past most women lacked proper incomes.

The third and lower level of specificity provides less conclusive data. In this case, it is not possible to extract any CSFs or to analyse frames implicitly present in the PUs. For this level, non-figurative elements of the lexical form are taken into account. This sort of analysis is especially productive when considering activities and professions that have been performed through the centuries exclusively by men or by women. For instance, although at present both women and men practice legal professions, all the documented PUs with the lexical form *abogado* ‘lawyer, advocate’ are male-specific: *Abogado de causas perdidas*, *Abogado de secano*, and *Abogado del Diablo*. Consequently, it can be concluded that this occupation was historically segregated by sex.

In this study it is assumed that the gender stereotypes present in Spanish phraseology will reflect the speakers’ conceptual system and values regarding men and women. Therefore, it is necessary to characterise what a gender stereotype is and which the most common ones in Western culture, to which Spanish society belongs, are. According to Eckert and McConnell-Ginet:

[Stereotypes] serve as a kind of organizing device in society, an ideological map, setting out the range of possibilities within which we place ourselves and assess others. They are means for constructing and highlighting social categories, whether for positive or negative purposes. For this reason, stereotypes, and their relation to behavior, are central to the study of language and gender [...] stereotypes typically constitute norms – often rather extreme norms – that we do not obey, but that we orient to. As such, they provide us with crucial information about the ideological landscape in which language unfolds. (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2013: 58–59)

For this study, an inventory of stereotypes has been collected mainly on the basis of gender oppositions excerpted exclusively from works written within the framework of gender and feminist studies,¹⁰ such as, for instance, the list below presented by Connell:

[...] bodily strength and speed (men are stronger and faster), physical skills (men have mechanical skills, women are good at fiddly work), sexual desire (men have more powerful urges), recreational interests (men love sport, women gossip), character (men are aggressive, women are nurturant), intellect (men are rational, women have intuition) [...]. (Connell, 2009: 53)

In order to systematise the analysis, the inventory (see Tables 1–5) was split into five thematic categories: physical characteristics; attitude, personality and abilities; sexuality; family; activities and professions.

Table 1

Physical characteristics

Physical characteristics	
Men	Women
Strong	Weak/Delicate
Muscular	Thin/Little
Quick	-
-	Beautiful (temporally)
-	Walking gently
-	Care for outward appearance

Table 2

Attitudes, personality, and abilities

Attitudes, personality, and abilities	
Men	Women
Rational	Irrational/Intuitive
Impassive	Emotional/Unstable
Controlling	Submissive
Tough	Sensitive
Rough	Gentle
Indifferent	Empathetic
Direct	Indirect
Practical	Nurturing

Attitudes, personality, and abilities	
Determined	Shy
Discreet	Given to gossip
Competitive	Cooperative
Aggressive	-
Stoical	-
Independent	-
Brave	Timid
Adventurous	Passive
Realistic	-
Wise	-
Intelligent	-
Mechanical skills	Fiddly work
-	Incompetent outside the home
-	Communicative
Interested in cars/sports	-

Table 3
Sexuality

Sexuality	
Men	Women
Sex-driven	Relationship-driven
Sexual predator	Evasive
Promiscuous	Monogamous
Active	Passive
Boastful	Coquettish
Younger partners	-
Rapist	-
Homophobic	-

Table 4
Family

Family	
Men	Women
Incompetent father	Competent mother
Head of the family	-
Sustenance	-
Authority	-
Discipline	-
-	Homemaker
-	Children's carer
-	Kitchen
-	Cleaner
Do-it-yourselfer	-
Take care of and use the car	

Table 5
Activities and professions

Activities and professions	
Men	Women
Public sphere	Private sphere (home)
Doctor	Nurse
Hunter	-
Fighter	-
Warrior	-
Contact sports	-
Hero	-
King	-
Writer/Composer	-
Thinker	-
Judge	-
-	Friend
-	Wife/Partner

Activities and professions	
-	Lover
-	Breeding
-	Teacher of children
-	Secretary
-	Stewardess
-	Prostitution/Pornography

As can be observed, not all male stereotypes are necessarily more positive than the female ones. For instance, while men are incompetent fathers, women are competent mothers. Unfortunately, in the androcentric society even these positive characteristics associated with women tend to be used against them. For instance, a favourable and undeniable fact such as ‘only women are able to be pregnant and give birth to children’ turns into a much more questionable assumption: ‘only women are competent at raising kids’. As a result of this, women have to stay at home long after the birth, taking care of the children and the house, which reinforces their socio-economic discrimination. In this sense, Oakley refers to the so-called ‘mystiques of motherhood’:

However, the male idealisation of motherhood proceeds by representing mothers as higher in the scale of core human values than men. Mothers’ lives are seen as geared to the production of love and the facilitation of growth in a way that is contrary to the values of the rest of (male) society, which occupies itself in the aggressive pursuit of self-aggrandisement. (Oakley (2005: 181)

However, it is evident that many changes have occurred in Western society and that today’s women can pursue a professional career and be mothers at the same time. Nevertheless, new negative stereotypes have appeared regarding this new role of women as working mothers that tend to coexist with the so-called *conservative stereotypes* (cf. Gill, 2007). According to these new stereotypes, women devoted to their employment are ‘bad mothers’. On the contrary, ‘good mothers’ are not efficient at work.

Results of the analysis

As a result of a detailed search, 407 Spanish PUs related, to a greater or lesser degree, to male and female characteristics were documented in the *Diccionario fraseológico documentado del español actual: locuciones y modismos españoles* by Seco, Andrés and Ramos (2004).¹¹ After the application of the three-level research methodology presented in Section 2 to these PUs, the following conclusions can be drawn.

Physical characteristics

An unexpectedly low number of units reflecting these sorts of stereotypes was documented in the dictionary. One of the most salient conceptualisations reproduced by Spanish PUs is that men are bigger and stronger than women, as can be explicitly observed in *Sexo débil* (*Weaker sex*) and its counterpart for men *Sexo fuerte* (lit. ‘strong sex’). Additionally, the positive PU *Buen mozo* (lit. ‘good boy’) refers to a handsome, tall, and strong young man and, on the contrary, *Medio hombre* (lit. ‘half a man’), to an emaciated, cowardly man. Moreover, *Niño bonito* (lit. ‘pretty [male] kid’) is associated with adjectives like *boastful* or *privileged* (in its negative connotation), which could imply that ‘real men’ are not supposed to be pretty.

On the contrary, (young) women are stereotypically beautiful, as can be observed in *Sexo bello* (lit. ‘beautiful sex’) or in *Bailar con la más fea* (lit. ‘to dance with the ugliest [woman]’), which metaphorically expresses the necessity of dealing with the worst part of a given issue. In addition, there are some PUs with *barba* (‘beard’) and *bigote* (‘moustache’) – *Jugarse el bigote*, *Tener bigotes*, *Por barba*, *Correrse una barba*, *Mentir por (la) mitad de la barba*, *En las barbas/En sus propias (mismas) barbas*. Although we are dealing here with clearly male physical characteristics, all these expressions can be used for denoting men and women. This would speak for a man-human being identification. Since no female features are metonymically used in the Spanish phraseology for denoting both women and men, these expressions would evidence the androcentric nature of Spanish society.

Attitude, personality, and abilities

Compared to physical characteristics, the PUs regarding attitudes, personality, and abilities are more frequent in the dictionary. The most salient male characteristic is *courage*, as can be observed in PUs such as *Ser un hombre (para algo)* (lit. ‘to be a man [for something]’), *Tener huevos/pelotas/cojones (bien puestos)* (lit. ‘to have (one’s) eggs/balls/bollocks (in their right place)’), equivalent to the English *Have the balls*), *A puro huevo* (lit. ‘to pure egg’), *(Con) dos huevos huevos/pelotas/cojones* (lit. ‘(with) two eggs/balls/bollocks’), *Tener pelos en los huevos/cojones* (lit. ‘to have hair on the eggs/bollocks’), or in the previously mentioned *Medio hombre*.

On the other hand, the PU *De hombre a hombre*, a clear equivalent to the English expression *Man to man*, seems to point to the fact that men are open and frank, probably in opposition to the ‘gossipy women’ stereotype. Interestingly, Seco, Andrés and Ramos (2004) include in their dictionary a female version of this PU, *De mujer a mujer*, with exactly the same meaning as the male version.¹² This relatively new but already established expression (otherwise it would not have been included in an up to date dictionary) would suggest that some of the advances accomplished in the last decades in Spanish society regarding gender are starting to be present in the phraseology.

Sexuality

Regarding sexuality, the more than 130 documented PUs echo the fact that men have a more active attitude than women – *Meterla* (lit. ‘to put it inside’, roughly ‘to have sex’), *Metérsela* (lit. ‘to put it inside someone’, *idem*), *Mojar (en) caliente* (lit. ‘to wet (in) hot’, *idem*), *Hacer mujer (a una virgen)* (lit. ‘to make a woman (a virgin)’, roughly ‘take the virginity’), *Hacer un hijo* (lit. ‘make a child’), *Hacer un bombo* (lit. ‘to make a bass drum’, roughly ‘make a woman pregnant’), *Arrimar material (a una pers.)* (lit. ‘bring material closer (to someone)’, roughly ‘to rub a woman up lasciviously’), *Poner rabos (o un rabo)* (lit. ‘to put tails (or one tail)’, *idem*), *Viejo verde* (lit. ‘old green [man]’, roughly ‘dirty old man’). Moreover, there is a relatively long list of PUs denoting male masturbation (*Hacer una paja*, *Machacársela*, *Meneársela*, *Pelársela*, *Hacer fuentes*) and fellatio (*Comer la polla*, *Chupársela*, *Mamarla*, *Me la chupas*). On the contrary, just one

female PU denotes oral sex performed on a woman: *Comer el coño/chocho (a una mujer)*.

In addition, a woman who does not behave elusively and reticently regarding sex is commonly evaluated very disapprovingly. It can be observed in PUs such as *Abrirse de piernas (una mujer)* (lit. ‘to open her legs’), *Más puta que las gallinas* (lit. ‘worse bitch than the hens’, used to stress the licentious habits of a woman), and *Ligero de cascos* (lit. ‘light of helmets’, used for people, but especially women, having sexual open relationships). Moreover, the PU denoting a provocative woman *Pedir pelea (una mujer)* (lit. ‘to ask for fight (a woman)’) recalls the stereotype according to which men are conquerors and women have to be conquered. The opposite situation, when a woman feels attracted to a man, is expressed by the PU *Estar (un hombre) para hacerle padre (y darle las gracias)* (lit. ‘to be (a man) for making him a father (and thank him for it)’. This PU could be analysed as a sign of female sexual liberation. However, it has to be taken into account that, even in this sort of open expression of female sexual desire, there is a clear underlying link to their main role as women. Unlike men, women seem not to be able (or allowed) to isolate motherhood from their sexuality.

On the other hand, male genitalia are the source of dozens of units, probably because of the enormous expressivity associated with this element: *Con un par de huevos/pelotas/cojones*, *Con dos cojones*, *Costar un huevo/un huevo y medio*, *De cojón (de pato o de mico)*, *De cojones (o de tres pares de cojones)*, *De pelotas*, *De las pelotas*, *Estar hasta los mismo (cojones)*, *Hasta las pelotas*, *Hinchar los huevos a alguien*, *Hinchársele a alguien los huevos*, *Importar (algo a alguien) tres pelotas*, *Los cojones*, *Manda huevos*, *Ni cojones*, *No haber (no quedar, no tener) más huevos*, *Ole tus huevos*, *Pasarse (alguien algo) por los huevos*, *Poner las pelotas encima de la mesa*, *Poner los huevos encima de la mesa*, *Por pelotas*, *Qué pelotas*, *Rascarse los huevos*, *Salirle (algo a alguien) de las pelotas*, *Tener (alguien a un hombre) cogido por los huevos*, *Tener pelotas (algo)*, *Tener las pelotas bien puestas*, *Tenerlos bien puestos (un hombre)*, *Tocar las pelotas*, *Tocarse los huevos*, *Tócate las pelotas*, *Un cojón*, *Como si se la machaca*, *Cortársela*, *Hacer (a alguien) la picha un lío*, *Me la refanfinfla*, *Ponérsele (algo a un hombre) en la punta del nabo (de la polla)*, *Salirle (algo a un hombre) de la punta del nabo (de la polla)*, *Sudársela*.

One of the most interesting phenomena revealed in the study is the existence of phraseological variants that explicitly name female genitalia: *Hasta el coño*, *Hasta los ovarios*, *Qué coño*, *Salir del coño* (*algo a una mujer*), *Salir del chocho*, *Salirle de los ovarios*, *Sudar el chocho*, *Tener (una mujer) los ovarios bien puestos*, and *Un par de ovarios*. The last two PUs are especially remarkable, since they are used for expressing *courage*, one of the key male features. The presence in the dictionary of these nine PUs – exclusively used by women – is truly remarkable, since they are related to two taboos for women: sexuality and vulgarity. This seems to be further evidence of a clear tendency to adjust language to the advances in favour of women achieved in Spanish society in recent decades. This is particularly evident when compared with the only two ‘original’ PUs expressed by references to female genitalia, both with a patent negative connotation: *Dar el coñazo* and *El quinto coño*.

Besides, although in the PUs regarding male homosexuality a clear negative connotation is revealed, this stereotype is not documented in the corpus as frequently as expected; in the dictionary there are just six PUs denoting or involving homosexuality, and not all of them have a pejorative connotation: *Contra natura*, *(De) la acera de frente* (*o (de) la otra acera*), *Marica/maricón el último*, *Palomo cojo* (*o más maricón que un palomo cojo*), *Poner rabos* (*o un rabo*), *Tener pluma*.

Family

Spanish phraseology echoes the traditional domestic gender division of roles in the family. While *Hombre de la casa* (lit. ‘man of the house’) refers to the classic male figure of the head of the family, its counterpart *Mujer de la casa* (lit. ‘woman of the house’) is focused on her role as homemaker and children’s carer. Seco, Andrés and Ramos (2004) document other units that reproduce this clear gender division, such as the previously mentioned *Hijo/niño de papá* or *Estar de rodórguez* (lit. ‘be like rodórguez’) that recalls the situation (usual in Spain some years ago) when men stayed alone in the city working during the summer, while their non-working wives enjoyed the holidays with the children out of the big city.

Undoubtedly, there are many expressions that reflect the condition of women as wives and mothers. However, three of them need to be

highlighted here, since they unmistakably reveal the way the whole life of adult women revolves around getting married. Consequently, when they get old without a wedding that fulfils their main duty in life, women ‘lose their meaning’: *Pasársele el arroz (a una mujer)* (lit. ‘to overcook the rice (to a woman)’), *Quedarse (una mujer) para vestir santos/imágenes* (lit. ‘to be left (a woman) for dressing [statues] of saints’) and *Irse al poyetón (o quedarse en el poyetón) (una mujer)* (lit. ‘to go (or to stay) on the stone bench (a woman)’). According to these last two expressive images, women who do not find a husband while they are still young are doomed to spend the rest of their lives without a meaningful duty. On the other hand, the metaphor underlying *Pasársele el arroz*, although quite transparent, is more abstract – a woman that waits too long to find a husband gets *ruined* in the same way as rice that is boiled for too long does.

Finally, the presence in Spanish of PUs reflecting the so-called *new men*, who at least partially share the housework and childcare, is almost imperceptible.

Activities and professions

In this sense, Spanish phraseology echoes the secondary role played by women during history. In opposition to the huge spectrum of male activities (up to 40 are documented in the dictionary), the female ones are limited to the space inside the house or the convent (the only exceptions are milkmaid, grocer, witch, muse, queen, and old maid). In addition, most of the female activities performed in the public sphere tend to have a very pejorative connotation, with prostitution – the most common profession in the dictionary, including the male ones – standing out among all of them. In total, Seco, Andrés and Ramos (2004) register 17 PUs denoting or involving prostitutes: *Casa de putas*, *Como puta por rastrojo*, *Como putas en cuaresma*, *El oficio más viejo del mundo*, *Hacer chapas*, *Hacer la calle*, *Hacer la carrera*, *Hacer la(s) acera(s)*, *Hijo de la gran puta*, *Hijo de puta*, *Mala mujer*, *Más puta que las gallinas*, *Moza de fortuna (de(l) partido)*, *Mujer de la calle*, *Mujer de vida alegre*, *Mujer de precio*, *Pasarlas putas*, and *Putón verbenero (desorejado)*.

These extreme differences regarding male and female activities speak volumes of the endurance in Spanish phraseology of a radically androcentric view.

Conceptualisation of the passing of time

A last, transversal category has to be added, since it has been shown to be one of the most interesting revelations that has emerged from this research on Spanish phraseology – the opposite male and female conceptualisations of the passing of time. A negative association is clearly evident with regard to male children. According to the values underlying the PUs that were analysed, only adult men fulfil the archetypal characteristics of *real men*, i.e., brave and strong. This stage of a man's life is symbolised in Spanish phraseology by the presence of hair on the face (*Con toda la barba*), chest (*De pelo en pecho*), and genitalia (*Tener pelos en los cojones (o en los huevos)*). Consequently, boys are conceptualised in a negative or even derogatory manner. Accordingly, Seco, Andrés and Ramos (2004) propose adjectives such as tacky, arrogant, immature, affected, or insubstantial in their definition of the following PUs, all of them including the word *niño* 'boy': *Niño de papá*, *Niño de Serrano*, *Niño gótico*, *Niño litri*, *Niño mimado*, *Niño pitongo/bitongo*, *Niño zangolotino*, and *Ser (como) un niño*.

On the other hand, female children are *treated* better in Spanish phraseology, probably since, unlike their male counterparts, the stereotyped positive values of little girls and young adult women are not in contradiction (beauty, fineness, sensitivity, small size, etc.).

Contrary to this, and always according to the excerpted PUs, as soon as women leave childhood behind, they have to find a husband in order to fulfil their main task in life as mothers and homemakers. Otherwise, they end up alone and useless to society, as was previously observed.

Final observations

Although Spanish phraseology does not reflect all the Western societal stereotypes related to male and female roles, it is more than clear that many of them are explicitly or implicitly included in the 407 phraseological units that were analysed. In general, it can be proposed that Spanish phraseology

reflects the subordination of women in society. Nevertheless, it reveals above all the very same division of almost all dimensions of life into two discrete groups – men and women.

However, Seco, Andrés and Ramos (2004) document the generalisation of female versions of PUs regarding male prototypical stereotypes and characteristics. Given the strong tendency of phraseology to perpetuate values and stereotypes for centuries, even after the society they are based on has left them behind, the presence of these PUs in a dictionary seems to speak for a firmly established change in the situation of women and men in contemporary Spanish society. Consequently, it could be interpreted as a sign of the decadence of Western androcentric society, a society that has subjugated women for centuries and that in many senses – despite all the advances accomplished in recent decades, especially in Spain – keeps on treating them as second-class citizens.

Notes

¹ Even so, some specialists (Pirainen, 2008a, p. 220; Sabban, 2008; Mieder, 2007, p. 402) warn about the danger of overgeneralising this kind of analysis. Logically, in this study PUs will not be treated as mere mirrors reflecting specific cultural worldviews, but as fragmentary pieces that allow us to reconstruct a holistic view of the topic in question.

² *Genderové aspekty ve slovanské frazeologii (na materiálu běloruštiny, polštiny a češtiny)* in its Czech original.

³ Within the framework of the Slavic phraseological tradition, a few papers on gender have been published recently, for instance, Zakharova's analysis of male and female cultural dimensions in Russian and English Phraseology (2014), Hrnjak's works (2012; 2014) on Russian and Croatian PUs regarding women, or the paper focused on English PU semantically oriented to men by Konopleva and Kayumova (2015).

⁴ *Estereotipos y roles de género en el refranero popular* in its Spanish original.

⁵ Along with a whole series of papers analysing values and stereotypes associated with men and women in Spanish proverbs (cf. Fernández Poncela, 1994; 1996; 2000a; 2000b; 2001; 2002b; 2010; 2015), this author published a second book about gender stereotypes in Catalan proverbs (cf. Fernández Poncela, 2004).

⁶ 'charlatanas, indiscretas, incoherentes, mudables, mentirosas, malvadas, peligrosas, culpables de todo mal, objetos utilizables, más tontas que un animal y más malas que el mismo diablo'.

⁷ 'calladas, discretas, obedientes, caseras y trabajadoras'.

⁸ Analogous studies can be found in Cebrián Sevilla (1996) and Calero Fernández, who deals with this problem from a general perspective first (1991) and, later, focusing on two occupations that were traditionally performed by women – sewing (1998) and prostitution (1993). Finally, Álvarez Díaz (2007) devotes his analysis to the relationship between women and weapons as it is reflected in Spanish proverbs.

⁹ This activation of some stereotyped characteristics by means of conceptual focusing is based on the more general cognitive theories of profiling by Langacker (2006).

¹⁰ Cf. Bradley (2013), Collier (2004), Connell (2005; 2009), Doka and Martin (2010), Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2013), García Mouton (2010), Kedron (2014), Kimmel (2011), Lakoff (1973), Martín Casares (2012), Mills (2008), Oakley (2005), Talbot (2010).

¹¹ A full list of all the excerpted and analyzed PUs is included in Annex 1.

¹² Neither the *Oxford Dictionary of Idioms* (2004) nor the *Cambridge International Dictionary of Idioms* (1998) includes the PU *Woman to woman*.

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Annex 1. List of all excerpted and analysed Spanish Pus

a capa y espada; a cuerpo de rey; a puro huevo; abogado de causas perdidas; abogado de secano; abogado del Diablo; abrirse de piernas (alguien); abrirse de piernas (una mujer); acordarse de Santa Bárbara cuando truena; al baño (de) maría (María); año(s) de Maricastaña/tiempo de Maricastaña;

aparecersele la Virgen; arrimar material (a una pers.); así se las ponían a Fernando VII; averíguelo Vargas; bailar con la más fea; bien armado/-da; bien dotado/-da; buen (o real) mozo; buen samaritano; cada uno de su padre y su madre; cagarse en su madre (en su padre); caja de Pandora; cajón de sastre; callarse como un puto; cara de juez; cara de pepona; casa de putas; casar(se) por el sindicato de las prisas; casarse de penalti; caza de brujas; ciento y la madre; colgar los hábitos; comer el coño; comer el chocho (a una mujer); comer la polla; comerse una rosca; como don Tancredo; como la madre que lo parió; como Mateo con la guitarra; como Pedro por su casa; como Perico por su casa; como puta por rastrojo; como putas en cuaresma; como si se la machaca; como un anacoreta; como un carretero; como un figurín; como un Judas; como un maharajá; como un marqués; como un novio; como un patriarca; como un pepe; como un príncipe (hecho un príncipe); como un/a rey/reina; como un sacamuelas; como un señor; como un señorito; como un sultán; como un tren/para parar un tren; como una bruja/más que una bruja; como una Dolorosa; como una Magdalena; como una pepona; como una ursulina; como una verdulera; compuesta y sin novio/compuesto y sin novia; con dos cojones; con pólvora ajena (del rey); con toda la barba; con un par de cojones/huevos/pelotas; conceder la mano (de una mujer a un hombre); conocer mujer; conocer varón; contra natura; correrse una barba; corta, Blas, que no me vas; cortársela; costar un huevo/un huevo y medio; criar (una mujer a alguien) a sus pechos; cuando Fernando VII gastaba paletó; cuando San Juan baje el dedo; cuéntaselo a tu abuela/se lo cuentas a tu abuela; cuéntaselo a tu tía; cuéntaselo a un guardia; cueva de ladrones; chupársela (a un hombre); dar (alguien) palabra (de caballero); dar a luz; dar el braguetazo; dar el coñazo; dar el pecho (una mujer a alguien); dar la teta (a un niño); dar tres cuartos al pregonero; dar un revolcón; darle calentón (a alguien); darse el calentón; de (entre) caballeros; de bigote(/s); de bombero; de cojón (de pato o de mico); de cojones (o de tres pares de cojones); de flor en flor; de Herodes a Pilatos; de hombre a hombre; de la acera de frente; de las pelotas; de los cojones; de mujer a mujer; de padre y muy señor mío; de pelo en pecho; de pelotas; de propia minerva; de psiquiatra; de puta madre; derecho de pernada; descender de la pata del Cid; desertor del arado; Dios y su madre/y su padre; doctores tienen la (Santa Madre) Iglesia; dolor de viudo; don Juan; donde dije digo, digo Diego; dos huevos; dos pelotas; dueño y señor; echar un casquete; edad de

merecer; el cuento de la lechera; el eterno femenino; el hijo de mi madre (de mi padre); el hombre de la calle; el hombre del saco; el huevo de Colón; el oficio más viejo del mundo; el parto de los montes; el Preste Juan (de las Indias); el quinto coño; el rey de la creación; el rey de Roma; el rey del mambo; elemental, querido Watson; en estado; en sus propias (mismas) barbas; entre caballeros; eres mi padre; (eso) será lo que tase un sastre; estado de merecer; estar (un hombre) para hacerle padre; estar/quedarse en bragas; estar cañón; estar de rodríguez; estar hasta los mismos (cojones); fe del carbonero; hacer (a alguien) la picha un lío; hacer a pelo y (a) pluma; hacer chapas; hacer el amor; hacer fuentes; hacer la calle; hacer la carrera; hacer la(s) acera(s); hacer mujer (a una virgen); hacer un bombo; hacer un hijo; hacer un hombre; hacer una paja; hacer vida marital; hacerse el Lorenzo; hasta el coño; hasta el moño; hasta el Tato; hasta las pelotas; hasta los cojones; hasta los huevos; hasta los ovarios; hecho un adán/como un adán; hecho un nazareno; hijo de la Gran Bretaña; hijo de la gran puta; hijo de papá (de familia); hijo de puta; hijo de puta/perra/su madre/mala madre/Satanás/la grandísima; hinchar las pelotas/huevos/cojones; hinchársele a alguien las pelotas/ huevos/cojones; hombre de armas; hombre de la casa; hombre de paja; hombre de su casa; hombría de bien; importar (algo a alguien) tres pelotas/huevos/cojones; irse al poyetón (quedarse en el poyetón); Juan Lanas; Juan Palomo; jugador de ventaja; jugarse el bigote; jurar por mi madre/padre; la acera de frente/la otra acera; la gran vida/la vida padre; la jodimos, tía Paca (tía María); la madre del cordero; la niña de sus ojos; la purga de Benito; la reina de los mares; ladrón/-na de guante blanco; lanzar el guante (a alguien); las bodas de Camacho; las de Caín; le digo a usted, señor guardia; ley de Murphy; ligero de cascos; lo dijo Blas, punto redondo; lo que ve la suegra; los (señores) del margen; los cojones; los polvos de la madre Celestina; llevar (a alguien) a la silla de la reina; llevar los pantalones bien puestos; llevarse a la cama; machacársela; madre de alquiler; madre de leche; madre mía (madre de Dios); madre mía (madre santísima); madre patria; mala mujer; mamarla; manda cojones; marcar paquete; más (maricón) que un palomo cojo; más desgraciado que el Pupas; más feo que pegarle a un padre; más feo que Picio; más galán que Mingo; más hambre que un maestro de escuela; más listo que Briján; más listo que Cardona; más papista que el Papa; más puta que las gallinas; más que Carracuca; más que el palo de un churrero; más tonto que Abundio; más

tonto que Pichote; más viejo que Matusalén; matar al mensajero; me cago en tu madre (en tu padre; en tus muertos); me la chupas; me la refanfinfla; medio hombre; meneársela (alguien a un hombre); mentar (a) madre; mentir por (la) mitad de la barba; meterla; meterse a farolero (alguien); meterse a redentor/-ra; metérsela; mi santo; mojar (en) caliente; mover el bigote; moza de fortuna (del partido); mujer de la calle; mujer de la vida/de vida alegre; mujer de precio; mujer de su casa; nacido de madre; ni cojones; ni el Tato; ni la madre que lo parió; ni su padre; niño bonito; niño de papá; niño de Serrano; niño gótico; niño litri; niño mimado; niño pitongo/bitongo; niño zangolotino; no casarse ni con su padre; no contar con la huésped; no haber (no quedar/no tener) más huevos; no haber más (no quedar/no tener) cojones; no hay tío pásame usted el río; no hay tu tía; no te enrolles, Charles Boyer; no tener/necesitar abuela; no tener padre (alguien) padre ni madre ni perro (o perrito) que le ladre; objetor de conciencia; ole/ olé tus huevos/pelotas/cojones; padre conscripto; padre de alquiler; padre de la patria; Palomo cojo; pantalón de montar; para que te vayas con los soldados; pasarlas putas; pasarlo teta; pasarse (alguien algo) por los huevos/pelotas/cojones; pasársele el arroz (a una mujer); pedir la mano; pedir pelea (una mujer); pegársele el arroz (a una mujer); pelársela (a un hombre); pelos de bruja; pellizco de monja; Perico el de los palotes; pillar cacho; poner las pelotas encima de la mesa; poner los huevos/pelotas/ cojones encima de la mesa; poner rabos (o un rabo); ponerse como el Quico; ponerse como un pepe; ponerse los pantalones; ponerse moños; ponérsele (algo a un hombre) en la punta del nabo (de la polla); por barba; por huevos/pelotas/cojones; por los cojones; príncipe azul (encantado); putón verbenero (desorejado); qué cojones; qué coño; qué pelotas; qué risa, tía Felisa, quedar como un cochero; quedarse (una mujer) para vestir santos; quedarse para vestir imágenes; rascarse los huevos; real hembra; Rita la cantaora; saber más que Lepe; sacar de madre; salir del coño/chocho (algo a una mujer); salir(se) de madre; salirle (algo a alguien) de las pelotas/huevos/cojones; salirle (algo a un hombre) de la punta del nabo (de la polla); salirle de los ovarios; santo varón; ser (algo) como tener un tío en Alcalá; ser (algo) Juan y Manuela; ser (algo) puñalada de pícaro; ser (alguien o algo) la carabina de Ambrosio; ser hombre (con una mujer); ser hombre (para algo); ser madre; ser moza; ser mujer (una jovencita); ser padre; ser profeta en su tierra; ser un niño; sexo femenino (débil/bello); sexo masculino (fuerte/feo); soplar (a alguien) la

musa; su abuela/tu abuela; su madre; su padre (tu padre); sudar el chocho; sudársela; suplicio de Tántalo; tener (alguien a un hombre) cogido por los huevos/pelotas/cojones; tener (una mujer) los ovarios bien puestos; tener bigotes; tener huevos (tener los huevos bien puestos); tener las pelotas bien puestas; tener más cuento que Calleja; tener pelos en los cojones; tener pelotas (algo); tener pluma; tener un polvo (estar para un polvo); tener un revolcón; tenerlos bien puestos (un hombre); tiempos de Maricastaña; tío bueno; tío de América; tirar de la oreja a Jorge; tirar los tejos (a alguien); tocar las pelotas/huevos/cojones; tocarse las pelotas/huevos/cojones; tócate las pelotas; tócate los huevos (manda huevos); tomar (a alguien) por el pito del sereno; un cojón; un par de ovarios; venir el tío Paco con la rebaja; verdad de Pero Grullo/ Perogrullo; viejo verde; y lo que te rondaré; (morena); yo que tú no lo haría, forastero.

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Intersection of Sexual Violence against Women and Sectarian Agendas in India

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Intersection of Sexual Violence against Women and Sectarian Agendas in India

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Abstract

Using thematic analysis techniques, this research examines how gang rape is used in sectarian agendas in India. It demonstrates that the responses of government, the main opposition political party, and prominent leaders of Hindu nationalist forces to rape cannot be separated from the intersection of gender, misogynist culture and politics. Findings indicated that violated women's bodies became a space for political debates between a conservative, opposition political party's claims about Indian traditions and the government of India. These findings have important implications if we want to challenge rape myths that obscure the need for social and political transformation to stop rape. The highly publicised rape of Pandey marked a turning point for the anti-rape movement in India.

Keywords: rape-myths, misogynist-culture, sectarian agenda, India, political debate

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Abstract

Usando técnicas de análisis temático, esta investigación examina cómo la violencia grupal es abordada en las agendas sectarias en India. Demuestra que las respuestas del gobierno, el principal partido político de la oposición y los líderes prominentes de las fuerzas nacionalistas hindúes respecto a las violaciones no pueden separarse de la intersección de género, la cultura misógina y la política. Los hallazgos indicaron que los cuerpos de las mujeres violadas se convirtieron en un espacio para los debates políticos entre las declaraciones de un partido político opositor y conservador sobre las tradiciones indias y el gobierno de la India. Estos hallazgos tienen implicaciones importantes si queremos desafiar los mitos de la violación que dificultan la necesidad de una transformación social y política para detener las violaciones. El caso de la violación altamente publicitada de Pandey marcó un punto de inflexión para el movimiento contra la violación en la India.

Keywords: mitos de la violación, cultura misógina, agenda sectaria, India, debate político.

On December 16, 2012, Jyoti Pandey (Pandey), a student, was gang raped on a private bus by six male assailants in Delhi, India, including an underage boy ([The Hindu, 2012a](#)). She was coming home with a male friend after watching a movie. Her friend was also assaulted by the attackers. The assailants threw the victims' bodies on the street; the victims were taken to the hospital. Although her friend survived, Pandey died 13 days after the attack. The public took to the streets of India demanding justice for Pandey, which prompted a speedy trial and rape law reforms in February 2013. On September 13, 2013, the four convicted men received the death penalty ([The Hindu, 2013a](#)). The underage assailant received three years in a reform facility ([The Hindu, 2013b](#)).

This research analyses the narratives of the rape of Pandey by the government of India led by the Indian National Congress (the Congress) in 2012, the leaders of the Bharatya Janata Party (BJP), the main opposition political party of India in 2012, and prominent leaders of Hindu nationalist forces who were closely aligned with the BJP. Using an English online national newspaper of India called *The Hindu*, I examine how the narratives and counter narratives reproduce rape myths and, at the same time, give new meanings to rape. I explain how the government attempted to diffuse tension among the public by using rape myths to defend its legitimacy. I explain how the BJP politicised the highly publicised rape of Pandey to prove that the Congress was incompetent and used religious and gender ideologies to project the gang rape of Pandey to advance their political objectives. I examine how Pandey's rape is used in sectarian agendas in India. I demonstrate that government and the BJP responses to rape cannot be separated from the intersection of gender, culture and politics.

This article does not address the history of the conflict between the Congress and the main opposition political party of India, the BJP. This article briefly addresses the conflict between the Congress and the BJP to foreground the narratives of the rape of Pandey.

Conceptualising Gang Rape, Rape Myth and Hegemonic Masculinity

Gang rape refers to rape that is committed by two or more offenders. Earlier researchers perceived rape as sex crime. Rape had been conflated with sex crimes. Perceiving rape as a sex crime minimises the power differential between the victim and the perpetrator ([Baxi, 2012](#); [Parashar, 2013](#)). When

rape is perceived as a sex crime, the perpetrators are depicted as deviants acting out of their pathological sexual desire. This classification led to individualised solutions to rape, such as the death penalty. This view obscures the need for social and political transformation to stop rape. A rape myth is defined as a stereotype about rape victims, perpetrators, and rape itself (Brownmiller, 1975). Rape myths are false cultural beliefs that shift blame from rapists to victims. It is a mechanism that denies that rape ever occurred. Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1995) noted that rape myths cause women to minimise their personal vulnerability to rape and help men justify rape. Rape myths are widely accepted by the public, and more men than women believe them (Lonsway and Fitzgerald, 1995).

Sexual violence against women is perpetrated by men with hegemonic, masculine traits (Connell, 2000). These traits are often achieved and reinforced by the sexual, physical, and emotional degradation of women. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) defined hegemonic masculinity as “the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” (p. 832). Hegemonic masculinity is the idealised form of masculinity that subordinates women. Other types of masculinities are measured against hegemonic masculine ideals. Men who do not have these hegemonic qualities are marginalised, and they typically belong to exploited groups.

Intersection of Sexual Violence against Women and Sectarian and Political Agendas

Feminist scholars have produced considerable literature on sexual violence against women. They identified the prevalence, causes and consequences of sexual violence (Ryan, 2011; Brownmiller, 1975; Lonsway and Fitzgerald, 1995). A less developed area of inquiry – but notably growing – is sexual violence toward marginalized women, such as women of colour. As a result, when experiences of marginalized women are studied, researchers take an essentialist approach by universalizing experiences of women victims of violence. They exclude one social groups to the primacy of another. This approach proclaims that violence against women cuts across race, ethnicity, class and other dimensions of life and affects all women similarly, which essentially represents White women’s experiences of violence. This

approach fails to recognize the complexity of marginalized women's experiences of violence, where gendered violence comprises only one aspect of different types of oppressions these women face (Crenshaw, 1991).

Researchers are critical of scholarship that emphasizes diversity of gender but homogenized race, ethnicity, social class, religion, age, ability, sexuality and many other groups and situations. Collectively known as intersectional researchers, they noted that various dimensions of inequality add up to great disadvantages for some categories of women. They explain how various systems of oppression, domination, and privilege and multiple overlapping identities of people create the structure of oppression and privilege. Crenshaw (1991) argues, for example, that violence toward women of colour is an intersection of racism and sexism. Multiple forms of identities and systems of oppression do not act independently of each other. Instead, these forms of privilege/oppression are experienced differently by people who belong to different social categories in different political, social, and cultural contexts. A less developed area of analysis is the interaction of violence toward women and sectarian and political agendas of developing societies characterized by diverse social groups, such as India, where political parties routinely use sexual violence against women to advance their own political objectives. Using an intersectional approach, this article explores the intersection of sexual violence against women and sectarian and political agendas of India.

There is a paucity of scholarly research on rape and rape myths in countries other than the United States (Barn and Powers, 2018). There is not enough scholarly research on rape in India. According to 2017 National Crime Records Bureau (2017), there were 38, 947 cases of female victims of rape in India in 2016 alone. While these are the reported cases of victimization, actual number of rape in India may be much higher than reported because of the stigmatization of rape victims. The existence of rape myths may not encourage women to report their victimization. There is a growing body of research on rape in India after the 2012 high-profile rape and murder of Pandey (Simon-Kumar, 2014). But this research hardly explores the intersection of sexual violence against women and sectarian and political agendas of India. This study makes an important contribution to the literature by exploring the intersection of sexual violence against women and sectarian and political agendas of India.

Sexual Violence against Women and Hindu Religious Radical Right Parties

Researchers have argued that sexual assault against minority women in India are propagated by right wing religious parties (Baxi, 2012; Adawy, 2014; Robinson, 2010; Basu, 1999). These parties promote an exclusive Hindu state (Anand, 2007; Robinson, 2010; Khanna, 2008). A coalition of various religious parties, including the BJP, collectively known as Sangh Parivar, frames Islam and Christianity as foreign entities and promotes assertive Hindu identity politics based on the superiority of the Hindu religion (Anand, 2007). Scholars have noted that religious radical right parties use the rhetoric of religious superiority to undermine the enforcement of laws against sexual violence against women in other religious communities (Anand, 2007; Robinson, 2010). Researchers have noted how the image of Hindu women has been manipulated by the religious rights movement and political parties (Basu, 1999). Adawy (2014) noted that, historically, the anti-colonialist movement and contemporary Hindu nationalism of India used Hindu women's bodies as a symbol of culture. The Hindu nationalist movement promotes the belief that traditional Hindu women are, in Basu's (1998, p. 3) words, the "repositories of religious beliefs and the keepers of the purity and integrity" of the community. According to Robinson (2010), Hindu rights parties try to "purify" the Hindu community by controlling women's behaviour (p. 365). These parties politicize violence against women to assert the superiority of one religion over others (Adawy, 2014). They successfully mobilised Hindu women to endorse violence against women of other religious communities. For example, in 1992, when violent communal riots broke out in India after the destruction of Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, right wing political parties, such as the BJP, and Hindu radical movements, such as Rashtrya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), successfully evoked and amplified the emotions of Hindu women by using images of Hindus being attacked by Muslims during religious riots. Hindus were portrayed as culturally superior to Muslims. As a result, Hindu nationalist women readily supported violence against religious minority women (Robinson, 2010). A point neglected by researchers is how Hindu women derived significant compensatory benefits from their relationships with the men in their families and the communities by what Schwalbe et al. (2000, p.

426) had called “trading power for patronage”. Researchers noted that right-wing Hindu parties propagated the mass rape of women from minority religious communities during incidents of communal violence (Adawy, 2014; Anand, 2007). While the Hindu national movement has regularly evoked the emotions of Hindu women by portraying them as the victims of violent Muslim lust (Adawy, 2014), it is possible that Hindu women who allowed violence against minority women during riots were encouraged by Hindu nationalist men. Although these women may not have achieved a high status similar to that of Hindu nationalist men, they nevertheless may have gained socio-economic and political benefits of patronage for themselves by accepting a subordinate status (Schwalbe et al, 2000), a topic that needs further research.

The narratives of leaders of Hindu nationalist forces demonstrate that they attempted to hyper-politicise sexual violence against women to redraw communal boundaries. These leaders used the gang rape of Pandey to further the Indian Hindu nationalist agenda by constructing the differences between traditional India and the West. Indian traditional values were connected to Indian women’s bodies and sexuality and were glamourised. Shandilya (2015, p. 465) explained why Pandey’s brutalised body became “a normative symbol of Indian womanhood”. She argued that Pandey was represented by conservative political forces as a Hindu upper-caste, middle-class woman who was used for larger political mobilisation.

Aim of the Study: Research Questions

1. How the narratives of rape reproduce rape myths?
2. How the counter-narratives of rape give new meanings to rape?
3. How the government attempts to diffuse tension among the public by using rape myths to defend its legitimacy?
4. How the BJP politicises the highly publicised rape of Pandey to prove that the Congress is incompetent?
5. How the BJP uses religious and gender ideologies to project the gang rape of Pandey to advance its political objectives?
6. How Pandey’s rape is used in sectarian agendas in India?
7. Can the responses of the government and the BJP to rape be separated from the intersection of gender, culture and politics?

8. What are the impacts of the socio-cultural context on the production and reproduction of rape myths?
9. How Hindu nationalist forces use rape myth and politicise of rape?

Method

This research is based on a content analysis of reports of Pandey's rape in an on-line newspaper, The Hindu, from December 17, 2012 to January 24, 2013 to understand the discourses of gang rape. I focused on how the government, the BJP and a few prominent leaders among Hindu nationalists interpreted the gang rape of Pandey. I examine the discursive frames embedded in the narratives of the gang rape in India.

Media coverage of rape is primarily biased coverage that is based on reporters' subjective evaluations of the newsworthiness of rape cases (Meyers, 1997). To reduce the biasness in the stories reported in The Hindu, I cross-checked these reports with reports published in the online versions of The Times of India, The Daily Mail, and YouTube. I accessed all on-line newspapers using the LexisNexis newspaper database.

Sample

I collected and coded the reports of the gang rape of Pandey that were published in The Hindu. According to the [Indian Readership Survey \(IRS\) \(2014\)](#), The Hindu is the third most popular English daily newspaper. I identified the reports of Pandey's rape by reading the entire newspaper page by page searching for such reports. There were hundreds of reports on the Pandey gang rape in The Hindu from December 17, 2012 to January 24, 2013.

I distinguished the narratives of rape by the government officials, the BJP politicians and prominent leaders of Hindu nationalist forces from the narratives of others. I categorised stories as reported by the above individuals by examining the positions of those who expressed their views about rape, claims that they made, political parties to which they belonged, and the positions of the leaders of Hindu nationalist organisations.

The Times of India is the most popular daily English newspaper in India ([IRS, 2014](#)). For reports published in The Times of India, The Daily

Mail, and YouTube clips, I used a keyword search. Using the LexisNexis newspaper database system and using a keyword search from December 17, 2012 to January 24, 2013, I found 1,130 reports with the keywords “Delhi gang rape” in *The Times of India* and *The Daily Mail*. I cross-checked these reports with the reports published in *The Hindu*. Eighty-five reports published in *The Hindu* matched the stories reported in *The Times of India* and *The Daily Mail*. From these 85 reports, I randomly selected 25 narratives by government officials, BJP politicians, and the leaders of Hindu nationalist forces. I also selected 10 counter narratives by the activists who challenged the government, politicians and Hindu nationalist forces. I selected 15 other narratives from *The Times of India* and *The Daily Mail* because more detailed information was provided by the reporters of these newspapers compared to *The Hindu*. The reason of using only English newspapers is reports of Pandey’s rape were most consistently and extensively covered by these three newspapers that are available on-line. Moreover, these newspapers are among a few influential media of India that covered the discourses of rape in India from late 2012 until the end of January 2013.

Using “Delhi gang rape” for the keyword search, I reviewed YouTube video clips available online from December 2012 to December 2013. I found hundreds of documentaries about Pandey’s rape. From the documentaries, I selected interviews with politicians, members of the Indian parliament, and spiritual leaders who were closely associated with the BJP who spoke to news reporters about their views of the rape. This produced three video clips that are closely related to the research question.

Data analysis

First, I read all 50 stories published in the newspapers and 3 YouTube video clips without coding to gain in-depth knowledge of the data. Then, using NVivo Version 10 software, I analysed the data using thematic analysis techniques. I focused my attention on key phrases and thick descriptions of the reports in analysing the stories published in the newspaper. Each key phrase and thick description was then labelled using codes. I used these codes to identify the broader patterns of meaning of rape that the government officials, BJP politicians and leaders of Hindu nationalist forces closely connected to the BJP attached to their responses. I then sorted these

codes into themes, categories and subcategories. Each report was categorised into narratives of the a) government and b) BJP politicians and leaders of Hindu nationalist forces. I looked for major themes in each narrative. Major theme(s) in each narrative that emerged upon analysis of the data include (1) Government: de-politicisation of rape and use of rape myths and (2) BJP politicians and leaders of Hindu nationalist forces: politicisation of rape and use of rape myths.

Results

The Government: Use of Rape Myths and De-politicization of Rape

It is important to understand the socio-cultural context that causes rape myths and the impacts of these myths on society at large (Suarez and Gadalla, 2010). The Congress was in power of the central government of India for forty-nine years, since 1947. Congress endorses socially liberal policies and emphasises secularism. The character of Indian politics has been changed as an effect of Hindu nationalist mobilisation in contemporary India (Van der Veer, 1996). The Congress party experienced serious challenges from right-wing Hindu nationalist political parties from the 1990s (Basu, 1999). Religious rights movements and the BJP, the single largest political party (Basu, 1999) and the political front for Hindu nationalist movements, appealed to public emotion by pointing out the weaknesses of the Congress-led central government. Hindu religious rights forces used Hindu nationalist ideology to garner public support (Kumar, 2001). These forces successfully mobilised Hindus across castes to wage a holy war against Muslims to protect Hindus (Khanna, 2008). These forces became a powerful opposition to the Congress government in the 1990s. The BJP won a majority of votes in the 1996 and 1998 parliamentary elections. The BJP's major goal has always been to attain political power (Basu, 1999). The BJP was the main opposition party in 2012 when the central government was represented by a coalition of parties led by the Congress and when Pandey was gang raped. The responses of the government and the BJP to the gang rape of Pandey must be understood in this light because the BJP used the weakness of the Congress government to question its legitimacy and garner public support on its behalf.

The narratives of government officials demonstrate that rape myths were used to normalise and depoliticise sexual violence against Pandey. Accepting the occurrence of rape challenges the legitimacy of the government on the civil society, which empowers the BJP. Many government officials argued that Pandey should not have been out at night to watch a movie. The Chief Minister of Delhi and the police commissioner stated that rape is largely caused by women dressing provocatively and because women venture out late at night without an escort. The Chief Minister's statement implies that it is the responsibility of women to control the sexual desire of rapists. The rape of women is the consequence of their behaviour. She noted that women should be protected by men; thereby, she denied women's agency to challenge the misogynistic culture of India. The Chairperson of the Chhattisgarh State Women Commission, Rao, also stated that women are equally responsible for rape. She dismissed the power differential between the rapists and the victim and indicated that Indian women's provocative display of their body is responsible for rape ([The Hindu, 2013c](#)). According to government officials, a woman's desire to have sex with a man is misinterpreted as an invitation to rape. According to them, the problem of sexual violence is the fault of women who are willing to have sex ([MacAskill, 2013](#)). They reformulated rape as sex, thus diminishing the real meaning of rape as a violent crime. Moreover, they failed to consider rape as a crime against a woman's bodily integrity, as emphasised by [Bennice and Resick \(2003\)](#). Since Pandey's rape was considered to be her desire to have sex with the perpetrators, the accused pleaded not guilty of Pandey's rape ([The Daily Mail, 2013](#)). Rao explained that the ignorance of Hindu epics that teach values, the breakdown of joint families, and exposure to Western culture in the television and the internet are responsible for sexual assault on women ([The Hindu, 2013c](#)). Although Rao was a member of the BJP, she used Hindu epics to defend her position as the Chairperson of the Chhattisgarh State Women Commission. She failed to explain how epics often help to perpetuate sexual assault on women. She also failed to explain rape of minority tribal women of Chhattisgarh who had no access to television and internet and exposure to the Western culture.

Government officials tried to depoliticise Pandey's rape. A member of the parliament (MP), the son of the President of India, referring to the protestors, stated, "Those who claim to be students – I can see many beautiful women among them ...I have grave doubts whether they are

students” ([The Times of India, 2012](#)). Implicit in his statement is his attempt to dismiss the gang rape as a violent crime against women. His comments also reflect his belief that the protestors were not genuinely concerned for Pandey.

The responses of the government led to the counter-narratives by Pandey’s father. As a challenge to India’s law that forbids the release of the name of a rape victim to the media, Pandey’s father disclosed her identity to the media by stating that he wanted the world to know who Pandey really was so that other rape survivors would be encouraged to report their victimisation and seek justice. According to [Indian Penal Code Section 228\(A\)](#), the disclosure of the name of a rape victim is criminal offense, unless the family of the victim agrees to release the name. Pandey’s parents challenged this law and said that Pandey did nothing wrong. Her mother stated that Pandey never invited rape, so why should her name not be released? ([The Times of India, 2015](#)).

Activists connected the responses of the government to larger societal attitudes in India, which they felt needed to be addressed to stop violence against women. For example, referring to a study conducted on the responses of police officials in Delhi, an activist mentioned that 90 percent of these officials reproduced rape myths ([The Hindu, 2012b](#)). Reporters also provided traumatic testimonies regarding Pandey. The description of Pandey’s mutilated body in news reports became the lynchpin of mass mobilisation ([The Hindu, December 19, 2012 to January 24, 2013](#)). The newspaper published articles written by activists who explained the culture of shaming the victims who report their rape and discourages them from reporting their victimisation ([The Hindu, 2013d](#)). Another report traces gruesome rapes in Delhi dating back to 2001 ([The Hindu, 2012c](#)).

The protestors took to the street after Pandey’s rape and participated in a demonstration in front of the Delhi police station for hours ([The Hindu, 2012d](#)). Students staged demonstrations demanding that the police and the government make the country safe for women ([The Hindu, 2012e](#)). In response, the government attempted to crack down on the protestors by deploying an emergency police force, imposing curfew in parts of Delhi and using tear gas and water hoses on the protestors ([The Hindu, 2012f](#)). These actions led to a massive protest in the country.

Rape myths were also found in the Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance passed by the government in April 2013. After Pandey's rape, a committee was empowered to recommend government action against similar incidents. The committee reported that failure of the government and police was the main reason for gender-related sexual assaults (The Hindu, 2013e). The report recommended severe penalties against "rape" but opposed the death penalty. The government introduced a Presidential Ordinance that instituted capital punishment for the perpetrators of certain aggravated sexual assaults. The Ordinance rejected the report's recommendation to reform political, law enforcement, and military institutions as correctives to the existing rape law. Activists argued that the new rape law omitted the recommendation to criminalise marital rape, sexual intercourse by a person in authority, and sexual violence against women by the military. They argued that by rejecting the report's recommendation for the reform of the political, legal and military institutions, the government allowed men from these male-dominated institutions to sexually violate women with impunity. For example, activists have noted that conflict-prone areas of India are characterised by large-scale sexual assault against women with impunity by the military (The Hindu, 2012g). By dismissing the committee's recommendations, the government has played an important role in sustaining patriarchal values in legal discourse.

The government responses were challenged by activists, BJP politicians, and the public. The BJP politicians blamed the government for making the country unsafe for women. Men and women took to the street in many cities in India after Pandey's rape. The Pink Underwear Campaign, a non-violent protest movement, the Slut-Walk marches, and Take Back the Night were organised. The public accused a non-receptive government for propagating rape culture. Pandey's rape marked a turning point for the anti-rape movement in India. Challenges were also found in the counter-narratives of activists. According to Baxi (2012, p. 2), "Surely if the Chief Minister, who gets elected year after year, dismisses the mass scale of sexual violence as a figment of imagination, this generates...a new national rape culture". Such counter-narratives challenged sexist indifference to the issue of rape by the government and brought sexual violence against women into political reckoning. Following a public protest against the statement of the Chief Minister of Delhi, who mentioned that rape is largely caused by

women dressing provocatively, the Chief Minister of Delhi admitted that Delhi is the rape capital ([The Hindu, 2012h](#)).

To summarise, the government responses to rape cannot be separated from the intersection of gender, culture and politics. To defend its legitimacy, the government attempted to diffuse tension among the public by using rape myths. The discourse of the government failure helped transform the categorisation of sexual assault against women as a sex crime into a political issue. Sexual Assault Helplines were launched to encourage women to report their victimisation ([The Hindu, 2013f](#)). Nationwide protests against the gang rape of Pandey placed the issue of sexual assault on the policy agenda.

BJP and Leaders of Hindu Nationalist Forces: Use of Rape Myth and Politicisation of Rape

It is important to understand how the BJP politicised the highly publicised rape of Pandey to prove that the Congress was incompetent and out of touch with the real-life experiences of people. This section demonstrates how the BJP and a few prominent leaders of Hindu nationalist forces who are closely associated with the BJP used religious and gender ideologies to project the gang rape of Pandey to advance their political objectives.

A wealthy spiritual leader, Babu — who is closely connected to the BJP and has millions of followers — noted that Pandey was equally responsible for being raped. Babu stated, “She [Pandey] should have taken Swarasswati’s [Hindu Goddess] name and could have held the hand of one of the men [rapists] and said to the other two ‘Brother I am helpless, you are ... my religious brother...then, the misconduct [gang rape] would not have occurred” ([The Times of India, 2013](#)). He claimed that protests against Pandey’s gang rape has led to an anti-men campaign. Referring to the possibility of the introduction to a new law against sexual violence against women, he claimed that this law could be misused against men, such as the Dowry Prohibition Act ([The Times of India, 2013](#)) that was introduced in 1961; conservatives claimed that this possible law would help disgruntled wives bring false cases against their husbands. Similarly, opposition to the anti-rape law was rationalised by Babu to protect men’s interests: the right to protect men is the right of men to rape. His narrative demonstrates that

religious leaders play a central role in the production of masculinity and reproduction of violence against women. He presented the Hindu normative order as the correct ordering of public life and a moral crusade against sexual aggression.

The leaders of Hindu nationalist forces attempted to redraw communal boundaries and argued how Western popular culture has influenced India and destroyed traditional feminine modesty, thus creating a rape-prone environment against women. For example, after Pandey's rape, Mohan Bhagwat, a leader of the Hindu rights organisation RSS, stated, "Such crimes hardly occur in Bharat, but they frequently occur in India. You go to villages and forests and there will be no such incidence" ([The Hindu](#), 2013g). He portrayed the village of Bharat (India) as a safe place for Hindu women where Indian traditions are valued and women are respected, while modern India is depicted as a dangerous place for women because it is polluted by Western values. He stated, "in the Bharatiya tradition, we have great respect for women, and if we go away from the Bhartiya tradition of respecting women, one will end up in indulging in such criminal acts" ([YouTube](#), 2013). This view reconstructs rape as cultural deviation and not as a gender-based political struggle that intersects with class, caste, sexuality, religion, space and other structural dimensions of society. The non-Hindu West is imagined as foreign, violent, hypersexualised and untrustworthy. Thus, a strategy to control Hindu women's sexuality is the utilisation of Hindu nationalist myths. This strategy is an attempt to reproduce the moral superiority of Hinduism by producing anxiety and portraying non-Hindus as deviants who must be confronted and is a social construction of gender in religious terms ([Basu](#), 1998). Anand's (2007, p. 257) research on Indian Hindu nationalist activists illuminates that "anxiety, masculinity and sexuality are crucial ingredients in their identity politics". Hindu rights parties foster identity politics among Hindus that is closely connected to sexuality and violence against women. In this sense, the gang rape of Pandey has become the discourse of cultural otherness, which blames modern Indian culture that has been adapted by those who are excluded rather than people who follow the Hindu traditions of India. Such attempts of religious rights parties to connect religion and gendered violence are meant to oppose the Indian National Congress that advocates for secularism and pluralism. This illuminates strategies that these parties use to create an

identity based on religion and to mobilise public support against the Congress.

BJP politicians used Pandey's rape to demonstrate the incompetency of the Congress. For example, Swaraj, the leader of the BJP in the Indian parliament, accused the Chief Minister of Delhi of failing to arrest all the accused perpetrators of Pandey and blamed the Congress for failing to make India safe for women. Swaraj called Pandey a "living corpse" while she was in the hospital (YouTube, 2012a). Swaraj demanded the death penalty for the perpetrators, which feminist activists opposed. Like many BJP leaders, she failed to acknowledge the multitude of gang rapes of women from minority communities.

Many female members of the Delhi BJP also staged demonstrations in public places in Delhi and demanded the death penalty for Pandey's assailants (The Hindu, 2012i). BJP leader Modi (the present Prime Minister, who is an avid follower of a Hindu spiritual leader) blamed the Congress and mentioned that "dirty politics" is responsible for Pandey's rape (YouTube, 2012b). When Modi was challenged by the Congress, he dismissed the role of his government of Gujarat and Hindu nationalist forces in the anti-Muslim riots of 2002 when hundreds of Muslim women were gang raped in public (Anand, 2007). Modi was the state Chief Minister of Gujarat in 2002.

To summarise, violated women's bodies became a space for political debates between conservative, opposition political parties' claims about Indian traditions and the Congress. Opposition political parties attempted to mobilise men and women of various classes, castes, and genders by blaming the government for failing to make India safe for women. Scrutiny of the narratives of BJP politicians and the leaders of Hindu nationalist forces reflected that rape myths are widely believed by them. They identified the forces of rape that normalised it by reproducing rape myths.

Conclusion

In this research, I used reports published in an online newspaper from December 17, 2012 to January 24, 2013. Based on the feminist scholarship on rape, I examined the discursive frames embedded in the coverage of rape of Pandey. These discourses reproduced rape myths and provided new meanings for rape that challenged rape myths. Rape myths create an

environment that leads to widespread sexual violence against women in India. Religious rights parties, elected officials, and government have identified the forces of rape that normalise it.

The narratives of government officials demonstrate that rape myths were used to normalise and depoliticise sexual violence against Pandey. For example, a Congress spokesperson from Haryana was challenged by the BJP for the increase of gang rapes in Haryana. In response, he used a rape myth and said, “I don’t feel any hesitation in saying that 90 percent of the girls want to have sex intentionally, but they don’t know that they would be gang raped” (*The Hindustan Times*, 2012a).

Accepting the occurrence of rape challenges the legitimacy of the government on the civil society, which empowers the BJP. Therefore, the BJP politicised the rape of Pandey to prove that the Congress was incompetent and advanced its own political objectives. After the Congress MP expressed his doubt about the protesters (mentioned above), BJP politicians did not lose any time in defaming the Congress. Referring to the comment of the Congress MP, Irani — the BJP head of the women’s section and the member of parliament who was nominated from the state of Gujarat, where hundreds of Muslim women were gang raped by the Hindu extremists during the riot in 2002 — said, “This is exactly the mind-set that the youth is fighting against” (*India Today*, 2012a, December 27). Irani failed to acknowledge the complicity of the BJP government of Gujarat in the riot of 2002. BJP leaders failed to acknowledge the multitude of gang rapes of women from minority communities. According to a BBC reporter (2011), “I analysed the rape figures for 2007, and I found that 90 percent of the victims were Dalits [untouchables] and 85 percent of Dalit rape victims were underage girls”. Similarly, referring to the gang rape of an impoverished sixteen-year-old Dalit girl by six men, a reporter of *The New York Times* (2012a) noted that most of these men were from a higher caste and had substantial economic and political power in the northern state of Haryana. The rape of lower caste women is regularly ignored.

Rape myths were found in the narratives of BJP politicians. Referring to Pandey’s rape, a BJP politician and the Industry Minister of the state of Madhya Pradesh reconstituted the rape myth that “women ask for it”. He recounted the story of the Hindu epic Ramayana and the abduction of Rama’s wife, Sita, by the demon god Ravana. According to Ramayana, Rama, Sita, and Rama’s brother, Lakshmana, were living in a forest. When

Rama was not home and Lakshmana needed to leave home, Lakshmana wanted to ensure that Sita would be protected from harm while the brothers not home. He drew a line (Lakshmana Rekha) around Sita, which would protect Sita as long as she did not cross the line. While both brothers were not home, Ravana came to Sita in the guise of a beggar and asked her for food. To give Ravana food, Sita crossed the Lakshmana line and was abducted and taken away by Ravana. The Industry Minister mentioned that the Lakshmana line represents the moral boundary not to be crossed by women. He stated, “One has to abide by certain moral limits. If you cross this limit, you will be punished” ([The India Week, 2013a](#)). He further argued that India should be renamed Bharat because Bharat is the real identity of India and the name Bharat reflects the true culture and spirituality of India. Interestingly, his attempt to politicize religion, women, culture and sexual violence against women is reflected in his further comments. Referring to the possibility of building a “Ram temple” in the controversial Ayodhya, he stated, “The Parliament has to and will be forced to take a decision on constructing a Ram Temple at Ayodhya” ([The India Week, 2013a](#)). A BJP politician and member of the state of Rajasthan’s Legislative Assembly demanded a ban on wearing skirts at school, which he argued would safeguard women’s modesty. Another BJP politician blamed women’s clothing, fashion and nudity for inviting rape ([The India Week, 2013b](#)).

The use of rape myth by the government officials and politicians led to a massive protest in the country. To defend their legitimacy, government officials connected the intersection of gender, class, and the migrant status of men as being predictive of gang rape. For example, the Chief Minister of Delhi connected the influx of poor rural migrant workers to Delhi and high rates of sexual violence against women in Delhi ([India Today, 2012b](#)). The Prime Minister of India noted the necessity of absorbing migrants in the process of India’s economic growth to stop them from committing sex crimes ([The Hindustan Times, 2012b](#)). Sexual assaults have become the discourse of controlling poor immigrants who are portrayed as foreign, savage attackers of Indian women that are un-trustworthy and hyper-sexual. Anti-immigrant discourses, and not the failure of the government to stop sexual assaults and misogynist culture, are connected to sexual violence in India. This poverty-rape nexus was challenged by others, who argued that rape occurs across all classes ([Simon-Kumar, 2014](#)).

A massive protest in the country following Pandey's rape forced the Prime Minister to respond to the demand that the government make the country safe for women. The responses of the Prime Minister to the mass protest came too late to appease the protestors. In a televised speech, seven days after the rape, he stated that the government is determined to ensure the safety of women. However, after his last sentence, he inadvertently said, "Is that okay?" which reflected his attempt to defend his government ([The New York Times, 2012b](#)). His comments unleashed further protest in the country.

Conservative Hindu Rights groups have claimed that non-Hindu culture has destroyed traditional Indian feminine modesty, thereby creating a rape-prone environment. The narratives of leaders of Hindu nationalist forces demonstrate that they attempted to hyper-politicise sexual violence against women to redraw communal boundaries and the boundary between eastern and western cultures. Asokh Singhal, a leader of Vishwa Hindu Parishad, a conservative party that is closely connected to the BJP, blamed western culture for sexual assault on women. "This Western model is alarming. What is occurring is we have imbibed the US. We have lost all the values in the cities". Referring to the period before the British colonisation of India, he said, "Virginity was preserved. However, the purity has been totally disturbed now. We are losing it" ([India Today, 2013](#)). Conservative Hindu Rights groups' use of the Hindu religion for political purposes facilitates sexual assault on women. The raped bodies of women have become a space for political debates between conservative claims about Indian traditions and the government who have attempted to mobilise men and women of various classes, castes, genders, ages, and religious groups. These debates need to be recognised and challenged to establish the fact that a woman's right not to be violated is a woman's basic human right.

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Hombres que han Ejercido Violencia Intrafamiliar: la Deserción en un Programa de Intervención Municipal en Montevideo, Uruguay

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Men Who Have Exercised Intrafamily Violence: the Desertion in a Municipal Intervention Program in Montevideo, Uruguay

Ismael Ocampo

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Abstract

The deaths of women at the hands of their (former) male partners have increased in recent years in the Uruguayan territory, with domestic space being the most vulnerable site for a woman today. This fact has led to the implementation in Montevideo, Uruguay, of the program "Men Who Decide to Stop Exercising Violence" [PHQDDEV] for those men who have exercised intrafamily violence [HEVI]. After its first four years of implementation, it has been sought to identify the causes of the high level of abandonment, which this program, like the majority worldwide, has through interviews with former participants. It was found that: low levels of motivation to participate in the program, together with processes of justification and minimization of violence, added to the victimization before the judicial system, together with sociodemographic factors, such as having low educational and economic levels, encourage abandonment premature. Despite leaving the program, the interviewees have been able to carry out a process of reflection based on learning some concepts and techniques, encouraging them to claim to have new healthy ways of relating to their partners.

Keywords: domestic violence, masculinities, intervention with men, abusers, gender violence

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Abstract

Las muertes de mujeres a manos de sus (ex)parejas hombres se han incrementado en los últimos años en el territorio uruguayo, siendo el espacio doméstico el sitio de mayor vulnerabilidad para una mujer en la actualidad. Este hecho ha llevado a que se implementara en Montevideo, Uruguay, el programa “Hombres Que Deciden Dejar de Ejercer Violencia” [PHQDDEV] para aquellos hombres que han ejercido violencia intrafamiliar [HEVI]. Tras sus primeros cuatro años de implementación, se ha buscado identificar las causas del alto nivel de abandono, que este programa al igual que la mayoría a nivel mundial posee, a través de entrevistas con ex-participantes. Se encontró que: los bajos niveles de motivación a participar del programa, junto con procesos de justificación y minimización de la violencia, sumado a la victimización ante el sistema judicial, conjuntamente a factores sociodemográficos, como tener bajos niveles educativos y económicos, fomentan el abandono prematuro. Pese a abandonar el programa, los entrevistados han podido realizar un proceso de reflexión a partir del aprendizaje de algunos conceptos y técnicas, propiciando que éstos afirmen tener nuevas formas saludables de relacionarse con sus parejas.

Keywords: violencia doméstica, masculinidades, intervención con hombres, maltratadores, violencia de género.

El presente artículo se plantea exponer los resultados más importantes, con especial énfasis en las razones abandono, de la evaluación interna del PHQDDEV, de sus primeros 4 años de implementación en el municipio de la ciudad de Montevideo. Dicho programa continúa la tendencia regional de intervención con HEVI, principalmente hacia sus (ex)parejas mujeres. Es así que podemos encontrar programas gubernamentales tanto en Chile (Barker & Aguayo, 2012), Argentina o Perú (Guzmán, 2013), sumados a una importante gama de programas privados que se dan en todo el continente latinoamericano y asumen el creciente compromiso público e institucional a trabajar el tema de la violencia doméstica, ya no solamente con las víctimas mujeres, sino también con los hombres agresores, tanto preventiva como reactivamente. La importancia de implementar políticas públicas con HEVI

Se justifica socialmente por la oportunidad que hay que dar a los agresores para cambiar su conducta, por la protección a las víctimas actuales, por la prevención de la violencia con posibles víctimas futuras y por la evitación de la extensión de la violencia a los hijos. Se trata además de interrumpir la cadena de transmisión intergeneracional y el aprendizaje observacional por parte de los hijos (Echeburúa, Sarasua, Zubizarreta & Corral, 2009, p.200).

Al mismo tiempo el aumento de la violencia contra las mujeres en todo el continente ha llevado a que los distintos organismos internacionales recomienden cada vez más la necesidad de intervención con los hombres con el fin de erradicar la violencia intrafamiliar, aspecto que paulatinamente cada país va integrando a sus políticas (Barker & Aguayo, 2012).

Es así que, el presente artículo presenta las causas de la deserción del PHQDEVI, realizado en su evaluación interna del primer semestre del 2017. La deserción en los programas de intervención con HEVI es uno de los principales problemas con los que éstos deben de afrontar a nivel global. Por ese motivo, primero se presentará el debate teórico/metodológico existente al respecto, desde el cual partió la interpretación de la evaluación. Posteriormente, se presentarán los resultados de la investigación cualitativa realizada, con el fin de intentar interpretar causas y motivos que intervienen en la deserción.

El debate teórico y metodológico

El trabajo con HEVI se encuentra en un proceso de construcción y reflexión tanto en el debate teórico, como en la elaboración de metodologías y técnicas de intervención (Garda-Salas, 2009), por lo que en la actualidad existe un creciente espacio de discusión al respecto. La bibliográfica ha encontrado tres principales tendencias de investigación: (1) las causas del origen de la violencia masculina hacia sus parejas mujeres, (2) el modelo de intervención, (3) la evaluación y la pertinencia del trabajo con HEVI.

Origen de la violencia doméstica

Probablemente uno de los ejes más influyentes en el estudio de las violencias masculinas, proviene de los estudios de género, en donde se entiende que las creencias patriarcales y los modelos tradicionales de masculinidad, serían los causantes principales de la violencia doméstica (Ferrer y Bosch, 2016). El patriarcado es entendido como un orden social genérico de poder, basado en un modo de dominación cuyo paradigma es el hombre. Este orden asegura la supremacía de los hombres y de lo masculino sobre la inferiorización previa de las mujeres y lo femenino. Es asimismo un orden de dominio de unos hombres sobre otros y de enajenación de las mujeres (Lagarde, 1996, p. 52).

De esta manera, los hombres buscan reafirmar su identidad masculina a través de establecer su poder, siendo esta actitud la que conlleva a las prácticas violentas (Abarca-Brown, Carvajal-Fuentes, & Cifuentes-Astete, 2012), buscando reafirmar su virilidad masculina y así poder acceder a los dividendos patriarcales que el “ser hombre” conlleva (Del-Valle, 2001).

Es importante introducir el ya clásico concepto de masculinidad hegemónica de Connell (1995), el cual explica que las masculinidades son múltiples y jerárquicas, en donde existen hombres que someten a otros hombres, propiciando una cadena de sometimientos donde estaría al final de la misma, todo aquello que sea emparentado con lo femenino, sea perteneciente al sexo biológico femenino o masculino. Por lo que, la violencia doméstica estaría relacionado con una reafirmación continua de la masculinidad del hombre, en un marco de competitividad constante.

Sin renunciar a los aspectos estructurales del componente patriarcal, otros autores remarcan factores micro, psicológicos y de historias de vida en

las causas del comportamiento violento. En este sentido, las historias de vida personales pueden ser factores que fomenten la violencia, donde, por ejemplo, el haber vivido situaciones de violencia en la familia durante la infancia, se relaciona con una mayor probabilidad de que se ejerzan violencias intrafamiliares durante la adultez (Haack, Pressi & Falcke, 2018). Así también, la experiencia exitosa en la resolución de conflictos (tanto propia como observada) mediante la violencia, fomenta que se entienda la violencia como una forma simple y eficaz de resolver conflictos (Echeburúa, Sarasua, Zubizarreta & de Corral, 2009). A su vez, la violencia y el desprecio a lo femenino están presente en ciertos rituales de paso hacia la masculinidad que los varones hacen durante su adolescencia, naturalizando la violencia masculina (Ibarra-Casal, 2011).

Por otra parte, desde el enfoque psicosocial se manejan una serie de patrones cognitivo-conductuales, que son importantes en la creación de un perfil HEVI, como por ejemplo la baja autoestima (Catalá & Lilla, 2013), poca tolerancia a la frustración (Filardo-Lamas, 2013), tendencia al control y los celos, identidad narcisista, trastornos psicológicos como la paranoia, dificultad para el manejo de emociones y dependencia emocional hacia sus parejas (Echeburúa & Amor, 2016). Otras razones para el ejercicio de la violencia, se atribuyen al: consumo de alcohol, siendo que quienes tienen problemas a dicho consumo, tienen entre 3 y 5 veces más de posibilidades de ejercer violencia contra sus parejas (Thomas & Bennett, 2009); a problemas de índole económico por parte del sujeto (Bosch-Fiol, Ferrer-Pérez, Navarro-Guzmán, Ferreiro-Basurto, Escarrer-Bauzá, Ramis-Palmer, & García-Buades, 2011); así también, algunas investigaciones remarcan la importancia de algunos de los ideales románticos, en la idea de posesión del otro en una relación amorosa, que pueden fomentar la violencia machista en las parejas (Jimeno, 2004; Cubells & Casamiglia, 2015; Bard-Wirgdor, 2018).

Los modelos de intervención

La revisión bibliográfica, marca que en la actualidad se pueden dividir los programas de intervención en los ejes: obligatorio/voluntario, público/privado, grupal/individual. En este artículo nos centraremos únicamente en aquellos programas grupales para los HEVI de tipo voluntarios a hombres en libertad.

Respecto de la intervención grupal, existen tres enfoques de intervención: (a) las terapias cognitivo conductuales [TCC]; (b) de las emociones; (c) la perspectiva de género (Filardo-Lamas, 2013). (a) Las TCC, tienen como objetivo la reducción de las conductas violentas, mediante el reconocimiento de éstas por parte del individuo y del aprendizaje de técnicas no violentas para resolver conflictos y manejos de la ira (Ferrer-Perez & Bosch-Fiol, 2016). (b) el enfoque emocional, busca resaltar el yo real del sujeto, que en principio no desea ejercer violencia y a partir de ello, trabajar la autoestima de éste, reflexionar sobre la violencia y e incorporar herramientas para poder tener relaciones libres de violencia (Ayllón-González & Vargas-Urías, 2008). (c) Por último, se encuentra la perspectiva de género, que se inclina por explicar el aspecto cultural que conlleva a ejecutar el rol masculino, existiendo diferentes formas de ser hombre y los costos que conlleva el llevar a cabo el mandato masculino (Filardo-Lamas, 2013). Estas tres perspectivas en la actualidad son trabajadas en conjunto por la mayoría de los programas, que basan el trabajo a partir del modelo ecológico, el cual tiene en cuenta aspectos culturales, contextuales e individuales para la intervención con los sujetos (Soto, 2012).

Pero pese a que la mayoría de los programas incluyen los tres enfoques, algunos ponen mayor atención en uno u otro. Por ejemplo, Garda-Salas (2009) no comparte que se deba priorizar el tema de las masculinidades a la hora de trabajar la violencia doméstica, debido a que reflexionar sobre la masculinidad no necesariamente conlleva a que se disminuya la violencia, por lo que es trabajar con masculinidades y lo que es trabajar con violencia contra las mujeres suele confundirse. Éste plantea, que el objetivo principal de los programas es garantizar la seguridad de la(s) víctima(s), evitando que el HEVI no retome o agrave su acto violencia a ésta(s), por lo que lo principal es la reducción de la violencia. Así también, cada vez son más los autores que toman en cuenta otros factores aparte de los roles masculinos a la hora de trabajar con hombres, como son temas de vulnerabilidad social, alcoholismo o aspectos psicológicos del HEVI. (Fernández-Montalvo, López-Goñi & Arteaga, 2011; Catalá-Miñana & Lilaa, 2013).

Por otra parte, en los últimos años, se ha enfatizado la necesidad de categorizar entre los distintos tipos de HEVI, en cuanto el grado de violencia cometido y la propia personalidad del sujeto. Se considera que “los

maltratadores no constituyen un grupo homogéneo, sino que especialmente de cara al tratamiento con los mismos podemos diferenciar tres tipos diferentes de agresores: impulsivos, instrumentales y sobre-controladores” (Holtzworth-Munroe, A., Meehan, J. C., Herron, K., Rehman, U., & Stuart, G. L, 2000, p. 476). A su vez, se debe de tener en cuenta a aquellos sujetos que tienen condiciones psiquiátricas graves, que requieren otro tipo de tratamiento y procedimiento judicial (Echeburúa & Amor, 2016). Así también, se propone asumir que no con todos los HEVI se puede trabajar y que existen una serie de hombres que, debido a sus características psicológicas, socioculturales y sus propias historias de vida, son “irrecuperables”.

La evaluación y la pertinencia del trabajo con HEVI

En la actualidad, existe en general una falta de sistematización de los programas y en menor medida, de evaluación de los mismos. Los resultados obtenidos hasta el momento conllevan al debate de la pertinencia del trabajo HEVI. Uno de los mayores obstáculos que han tenido que afrontar los programas voluntarios, radica en el alto nivel de deserción (Echeburúa, Sarasua, Zubizarreta, Amor, & de Corral, 2010), variando según los programas y las evaluaciones, pero en su mayoría son niveles elevados. Subirana & Pueyo (2013) registran en su investigación que el 50% de los participantes no finalizan los programas, Jewell & Wormith, (2010) afirman que solo el 20% finalizan dichos programas. Echeburúa, Sarasua, Zubizarreta, Amor, & de Corral (2010), comentan que los programas suelen tener generalmente entre un 50 y 75% de abandono.

La bibliografía nos indica que, las principales causas de los altos niveles de deserción, estarían principalmente causadas por la baja motivación que tienen los participantes (Echeburúa, Sarasua, Zubizarreta, Amor, & de Corral, 2010), así como el sentimiento de victimización que muchos hombres tienen ante las denuncias judiciales, donde el 80% de los hombres en el mundo, exceptuando Europa, cree que las leyes condenan a los hombres por violencia contra su pareja injustamente (Taylor & Barker, 2013). Dentro de las variables que influyen el abandono, varias investigaciones han encontrado relación entre los bajos niveles educativos y económicos (Saunders, 2008), y tener problemas con alcohol y/o drogas (Boira & Jodrá, 2010).

Estos bajos niveles de finalización, conllevan a que se plantee la eficacia, eficiencia y suficiencia de este tipo de programas (Gondolf, 2009). Los defensores de los programas afirman que la medición del éxito de los mismos, no es una tarea sencilla y no pueden ser marcadas por la inmediatez (Taylor & Barker, 2013). Así también critican que generalmente se hace una exigencia de resultados de tipo cuantitativos que limitan los objetivos de los programas, sin tener en cuenta los aspectos profundos y complejos del asunto de la violencia doméstica (Autcher & Backes, 2013). A su vez, Rothman, Butchart & Cerdá (2003) estiman que entre el 50 y el 90% de los sujetos que terminan los programas de intervención, no recaen en conductas violentas en los siguientes tres años, teniendo menores niveles de reincidencia que aquellos que abandonan el programa.

La revisión bibliográfica refleja un creciente espectro de abordajes con HEVI, que marca la importancia que está teniendo este tipo de programas a nivel global. Los artículos muestran que dicho trabajo se encuentra en constante construcción dialéctica, por ese motivo varios autores sugieren el extremo cuidado en cuanto a los propósitos y promesas que se hacen sobre los programas pueden ofrecer (existir) en la actualidad (Gondolf, 2009).

Objetivos y metodología de la evaluación

El objetivo principal de la evaluación era poder identificar los principales factores que motivaban el abandono de los participantes al programa, en el marco de los primeros cuatro años de implementación del PHQDEVI, en la ciudad de Montevideo, Uruguay. El programa, promovido por División Asesoría Para la Igualdad de Género de la Intendencia de Montevideo y llevado a cabo por el Centro de Estudios sobre Masculinidades y Género, utiliza el modelo de intervención CECEVIM, creado en la década de los noventa por el psicólogo Antonio Ramírez, quien recoge aspectos de los programas implementados por MenAlive en San Francisco, EE. UU., y que ha sido implementado en México, EEUU, Panamá y Uruguay (Rodríguez-Añón, 2016). El modelo continúa con el planteamiento general de muchos otros modelos de intervención con HEVI, fundamentando su propuesta en el análisis de género y el modelo ecológico, al cual le suma una aproximación espiritual, que se fundamenta en el uso del modelo Gaia planteado por la

ecología profunda (López-Pérez, 2012). La modalidad del programa suele plantear grupos de un máximo de 16 participantes, conducidos por dos facilitadores que guían el proceso de reflexión de los distintos participantes durante un total de 24 sesiones semanales, mediante el relacionamiento de unos conceptos con los procesos violentos de éstos, con el fin de lograr identificar los aspectos culturales, sociales y personales que influyen y participan en las violencias. Para poder participar de los grupos, es necesario que quienes lo hagan, reconozcan haber ejercido violencia en algún momento de su vida y aceptar una serie de compromisos. Así también, el programa promueve el uso de un espacio de ausencia de violencia, el cual se denomina “el retiro” o “time out”, proponiéndose que el sujeto busque acuerdos con su pareja, donde en el momento en que éste reconozca que está entrando en un momento de tensión que puede desencadenar en una conducta violenta no controlable, mediante una señal, evada el conflicto alejándose durante un tiempo del lugar de conflicto (Vargas-Urías, 2009).

El PHQDDEV inició su trabajo en el 2013 y hasta febrero de 2017 habían pasado por él un total de 281 participantes, de los cuales se decidió finalmente trabajar con un total 251. El programa tiene una tasa de finalización del 24%, habiendo un 46% que abandona antes de la sexta sesión. A partir del análisis de las fichas de ingreso de los participantes al programa, se identificaron tres variables que influyen en el abandono del programa: el tener bajo nivel de estudio, poseer bajos niveles de ingresos y la edad del participante, para aquellos participantes de menor edad. Así también, estas variables se encuentran relacionadas entre sí, siendo que tanto los usuarios jóvenes de bajos niveles educativos y que cuentan con bajos recursos económicos, tienen una mayor probabilidad de abandonar prematuramente el programa y no finalizarlo¹.

El apartado cualitativo que se comenta en el presente artículo, se realizó mediante 8 entrevistas en profundidad con ex participantes que habían abandonado el programa antes de la sesión 12 y otras 4 con participantes que lograron hacer las 24 sesiones:

Tabla 1:

Ficha de entrevistas

E1	24 sesiones. M/C ² . 31 años. Secundaria completa
E2	3 sesiones. M/C. 44 años. Secundaria completa.
E3	24 sesiones. 66 años. 1° Liceo.

E4	6 sesiones. M/C. 44 años. Primaria.
E5	8 Sesiones. M/C. 40 años. Primaria.
E6	4 sesiones. M/C. 42 años. 5° Liceo.
E7	3 Sesiones. M/C. 29 años. 4° Liceo.
E8	24 sesiones. 38 años. Secundaria completa.
E9	10 Sesiones. 43 años. 4° Liceo.
E10	12 Sesiones. M/C. 39 años. Universidad.
E11	24 sesiones. M/C 48 años. Universidad
E12	2 sesiones. 52 años. Primaria

Los criterios que se utilizaron para la selección de los entrevistados fueron: selección aleatoria para el caso de quienes no terminaron el programa, donde se llamó telefónicamente a los distintos ex-participantes, decidiéndose terminar con ocho, debido a la dificultad que presentaba poder contactar y entablar una entrevista con estos y porque se identificó que se había alcanzado la saturación discursiva; en el caso de quienes habían terminado el programa, se les solicitó a los facilitadores que recomendaran participantes que podían ser interesantes para el objetivo de la investigación. Posteriormente se realizó un análisis de discurso de las 12 entrevistas con la ayuda del programa analítico Atlas.Ti, en donde se procuró identificar tendencias y sentidos en los significados en los discursos de los 12 entrevistados (Valles, 1999).

Resultados

A continuación, se presentan los aspectos más relevantes obtenidos en las entrevistas realizadas a cerca de la deserción y lo aprendido en el programa

Motivación y el estado emocional al llegar al programa

Los motivos por los cuales los participantes acuden al programa son diversos, pero la mayoría de éstos, acuden tras haber ejercido violencia contra su (ex)pareja y recibido la denuncia correspondiente, llegando al programa tras una recomendación judicial. De esta manera, aunque existen diversas percepciones en cuanto al acto violento cometido, la mayoría llegan al programa con cierta negación de su violencia: “Yo pensaba que no era violento, pensaba “yo no soy violento, estás loco”, pero bueno quieren que

vaya podría ir para complacerlos a ellos, pensaba al principio” (E10). Otros pocos en tanto, acuden con cierto grado de preocupación por sus violencias e intencionados a trabajarlos: “Quería que me ayudaran a dejar la violencia” (E3). Aunque lamentablemente, estos son los menos y mayoritariamente quienes acuden al programa, tienen una baja aceptación de la violencia cometida y su motivación principal pasa por la recuperación de la relación de pareja y el miedo a la posible sanción judicial.

Las expectativas que se tienen de participar en el programa, se vuelven un factor importante en la forma en que el sujeto se relacionará posteriormente con éste. En este sentido, algunos participantes confiesan no tener muy claro de qué se trata el programa al primer momento de acudir: “pensaba que era un grupo como narcóticos anónimos. Y no nada que ver, estaba equivocado” (E10). Al mismo tiempo, existe unanimidad en los entrevistados al afirmar que llegan al programa en un estado de depresión y angustia, así también sentimientos de vergüenza por el acto de violencia cometido y por el posterior estigma social recibido: “me sentía avergonzado, me sentía perseguido y juzgado por todo el mundo” (E7). Esta situación de depresión, conlleva a que la motivación por trabajar la violencia propia, se torne compleja y que aparezcan dudas sobre el sentido de seguir en el programa: “Quizás cuando entras en algún poso de depresión, pero ya no es por el programa sino por algo personal. Qué sentido tiene sino lo voy a implementar, pero no lo baso en el programa” (E1). Así también, la confrontación que reciben los participantes en el grupo, al trabajar su responsabilidad en la violencia cometida sin poder justificar ni minimizar, puede generar un proceso reflexivo en el sujeto, que agrave el sentimiento depresivo:

La autoestima es baja por todo que pasó, los costes y el estigma que recibes (...) cuando te hacen ver la realidad vos te sentís responsable y culpable y eso pesa mucho en la cabeza y puede llevar a cualquier cosa en la cabeza, yo he tenido pensamientos feos. (E9)

Victimización, justificación y minimización

Los entrevistados generan estrategias de evasión de sus violencias en sus discursos, la principal de éstas es la justificación de su acto, remarcando que la violencia se debió a una situación que se fue degenerando en el tiempo, hacía una inevitable explosión de violencia: “si bien le grité y le agarré del

pelo, yo creo que ningún hombre llega a ser lo que hace de un día para el otro” (E6). La justificación es planteada marcando las culpas de la mujer víctima del acto de violencia: “No quiero justificar nada, ni minimizar. Yo creo que todo llega por algo, todo se va perdiendo de a poquito, no creo que haya ninguna persona que un día se levante y le pinte pegarle a la pareja o pegarle un tiro” (E7). Así también, afirman que el programa les ha enseñado a no minimizar ni justificar y en todo momento afirman que no lo están haciendo, aunque mantienen sus justificaciones:

Yo no soy violento, soy violento de reacción, el facilitador me decía que eso era una justificación, pero yo no lo justifico, desde mi punto de vista es que yo no soy de buscar problemas, pero cuando me buscan, yo salto. (E4)

Aquí los entrevistados, justifican sus violencias manifestando el mandato masculino de tener que reaccionar ante una agresión: “Yo soy muy correcto, pero cuando me pasa algo que me molesta me saca” (E7). Así también, el no poder justificarse ante el grupo, es algo que irrita a algunos de los entrevistados, siendo un factor de molestia con el programa: “lo que no entendía que fuese lo que fuese que hubiera pasado el culpable era yo, en cualquier hecho, el violento era yo, eso no lo entendía” (E3).

Por otra parte, se ha identificado en los discursos, una tendencia a victimizar la situación judicial de los hombres ante las mujeres en el tema de la violencia doméstica: “Creo yo que se están yendo hacia el otro lado y creo que las leyes están marcadas hacia que el hombre hace esto que a la mujer no le gustó y chau fuiste” (E6). Estos discursos victimizantes, fomentan una “sororidad masculina”, que se siente víctima de un sistema que está en contra de ellos, al mismo tiempo los colocan a la defensiva de género, remarcando las culpas y violencias que también ejercen las mujeres: “Hay mujeres que ejercen violencia hablándote bien, porque es el método que ellas tienen y aprendieron a defenderse de los hombres” (E9). A partir de esta alusión a la violencia que ejercen las mujeres, varios de los entrevistados coinciden en que éstas también deberían de hacer el programa: “Para mí se tendría que trabajar también con las mujeres en este tema” (E4). Pero en general, los entrevistados externalizan culpas a sus (ex)parejas receptoras de sus violencias y generan un sentimiento de martirización de los hombres ante el sistema judicial:

A mí me sacaron de mi casa, me echaron a la calle, mi casa que yo la estoy pagando, con mi auto que lo pagué yo desde mi bolsillo, que había hecho un acuerdo personal con la contraparte, yo pagaba todo en la casa y que ella pagase la patente y ella no lo pagaba. (E3).

La dinámica del programa

Los participantes llegan al programa necesitados de inmediatez, buscando soluciones inmediatas a sus problemas contractuales que los han llevado al programa. Esto en combinación con el estado de angustia antes comentado, fomenta que los participantes lleguen con un gran estado de ansiedad. Este estado, se manifiesta también en la necesidad de desahogo que tienen los participantes, principalmente dirigida a justificar su acto de violencia: “yo quería hablar de lo que me había pasado y no me dejaban hablar de eso, te bajaban los decibeles, te frenaban y te frenaban y yo al principio me recontra enfurecía” (E6). Asimismo, en las entrevistas, se denota la necesidad que tienen los participantes de hablar con alguien del hecho de violencia, debido a que no se les es posible hablarlo en otros ámbitos o con personas cercanas, siendo el programa un refugio para poder reflexionar abiertamente sobre lo sucedido: “Yo me sentía como en familia y eso me motivaba a participar” (E11). Pero, pese a que el programa sí les otorga ese espacio de resguardo, éste no se colude con sus violencias, sino que las confronta fuertemente, no permitiendo la justificación de las mismas, con el fin de que puedan ser capaces de identificar sus violencias, generando la frustración de los entrevistados:

El programa se me fue haciendo tedioso, el no poder expresar, no tener el tiempo suficiente para sacar todo lo que tenía dentro, que era lo que necesitaba en ese momento, porque es difícil en ese momento poder contar lo que sentís. (E7).

Por otra parte, como se comentó previamente, el programa funciona a través de la identificación de unos ciertos conceptos que el sujeto debe de relacionar con su acto de violencia. Estos conceptos presentan cierta dificultad de comprensión para algunos de los participantes: “Al principio como que me confundía, no asociaba el concepto con la causa. Ese momento era lo que más me costaba, asociar el concepto con el hecho” (E2). La dificultad de aprehensión se encuentra relacionada con el bajo nivel socioeducativo de muchos de los participantes, donde muchos de éstos

apenas han terminado la primaria y han reflejado cierta complicación para poder relacionar los conceptos con la violencia: “Vos ves que hay tipos que apenas saben leer, vos te das cuenta de que esos tipos al poco tiempo no siguen, porque es difícil digerir los conceptos” (E8). La diferencia de niveles socioeducativos fomenta que muchas veces algunos participantes se queden un par de minutos trabajando su concepto debido a que no logran comprenderlo, mientras que aquellos que sí logran entender el concepto, pasan rápidamente por el mismo, teniendo menor tiempo de participación. Pero este hecho parece ser un mayor motivador de deserción para las personas de menor nivel educativo que para quienes tienen mayor capacidad comprensiva, debido a que pese a las molestias que les ocasiona por la pérdida de tiempo, estos se motivan ayudando a los otros y a su vez, sintiéndose por superiores a éstos: “un poco sentía que perdía el tiempo ahí, pero también era como que también pensaba que había que ayudarlos a salir dentro de ese limbo en que no pueden expresarse” (E10).

La comparación

Otro importante elemento por el cual logran interpretar e identificar su violencia es a través de los relatos de violencia de los otros compañeros participantes:

He encontrado varios puntos en común con el resto de participantes, lo cual te motiva para seguir participando y para trabajar vos mismo en muchas cosas. Ver reflejado en otras personas lo que haces vos te motiva a ponerte un freno. (E1).

El ver a otros compañeros con violencias similares, es un elemento que fortalece al participante, al sentir que no está solo y que se encuentra en el lugar correcto: “Cuando llegué me sentí raro. Fue bueno llegar y ver que había otros con el mismo problema que yo. No era la única persona con ese problema”. (E12).

Al mismo tiempo que el poder estar con personas con las cuales se siente cierta empatía motiva al participante y apoya el proceso de reflexión, el encontrar otro tipo de casos genera diversas molestias en los participantes, que pueden fomentar el posterior abandono. En primer lugar, algunos entrevistados no se sienten identificados con el resto de los casos, lo cual fomenta aburrimiento e incomodidad en éstos: “No sentía mucha empatía

con el resto, solo con un par, no me sentía cómodo a veces con lo que se hablaba y con las formas, sus casos no me hacían sentir cómodo” (E5). En este sentido, los participantes realizan comparaciones constantes de sus violencias con la de los demás, juzgando los actos de violencia de éstos: “Yo pensaba este tipo debería estar preso, a mí nunca se me hubiese pasado por la cabeza hacer lo que él hizo” (E6). Por otra parte, este proceso de comparar y juzgar al compañero fomenta que los participantes generen estrategias de minimización y justificación de sus violencias: “Hubo casos muy graves, yo pegué, pero no pegué para matar a palos, sino fue un cachetazo para decir “hasta acá” pero había casos muy fuertes por razones no muy importante” (E4). Es así que, a partir de la comparación, algunos entrevistados refuerzan su inclinación a justificar y minimizar sus actos de violencia, aunque también puede que la comparación genere un sentimiento de angustia en el sujeto, al sentir que su violencia fue más grave que la de otros:

Los casos que llevaban el resto de la gente eran bebe de pecho al lado de lo que yo hice. Había uno que contó que insultó a la hermana y eso me hacía sentir que yo soy un hijo de las mil putas. (E7).

Esto último, puede reforzar el sentimiento de depresión con el que muchos participantes llegan al programa, lo que puede fomentar el abandono del mismo.

Lo aprendido

Un descubrimiento surgido a partir de las entrevistas es que los participantes, pese a la deserción prematura, aprenden y asimilan varios aspectos del programa. Probablemente el elemento que más afirman haber aprendido, es todo lo vinculado a las diferentes formas en que se puede ejercer violencia:

Para mí los casos de violencia en general hoy por hoy los comprendo, aprendí que levantar la voz es violencia, el tema económico, antes quizás que no me daba cuenta de eso (...) eran golpes y cosas si me doy cuenta de eso así, nunca pensé que la violencia fuera hablar mal y cosas así. (E12).

El conocimiento de los distintos tipos de violencias se ve como un elemento revelador para los entrevistados, que afirman tener un alto desconocimiento de las mismas, aspecto que traspasa los niveles educativos

y/o económicos de éstos. A partir de este aprendizaje, los participantes se percatan de las violencias que han ejercido a sus parejas: “cosas que a veces no te das cuenta, como por ejemplo la violencia sexual, yo por la noche montón de veces le insistía y todo eso” (E7). Al mismo tiempo, identifican otros actos de violencias que cometían en sus vidas cotidianas: “Yo era muy explosivo andando en la calle, y hoy en día voy viendo los errores que cometen los demás en lo de la violencia. Asumí que cometía violencia y he aprendido a manejarlo” (E11). Así igual, los entrevistados afirman que, tras el aprendizaje de los distintos tipos de violencia, han ido modificando sus comportamientos violentos: “A partir del programa voy como analizando y pensando cada movimiento que voy haciendo en la vida. Me enoja, no me enoja, que es lo que estoy sintiendo y que no” (E1).

Los entrevistados manifiestan que lo aprendido en el programa, les ha fomentado a llevar nuevas prácticas de convivencia más respetuosas con las parejas: “El programa en mi nueva relación me influyó en el día a día, aprendí que vos en la relación tenés que ir hasta un punto determinado que no podés pasar sino se pudre todo. Estoy aplicando respeto” (E9). Este nuevo relacionamiento, se suma a la técnica del “time out” enseñada en el programa, que promueve la resolución de conflictos no violentamente. Dicha técnica es entendida de diversas maneras por los entrevistados y no siempre es aplicada de la forma correcta o ideal, pero sí es utilizada por estos como una estrategia para no ejercer violencia física hacia su pareja: “aprendí a callarme la boca a tiempo antes de que el problema se haga mayor, a darme media vuelta y antes de explotar, decir yo llego hasta acá” (E6).

Discusión y conclusiones

Los resultados de las entrevistas, junto con la parte cuantitativa brevemente presentada, presentan varias características importantes que se suscitan en el trabajo con HQVI y que en términos generales coinciden con las distintas investigaciones vistas en el apartado teórico.

No cabe duda de que una de las mayores dificultades que encuentra el trabajo con HQVI es la baja motivación y la resistencia al trabajo, así como el alto grado de victimización ante el sistema judicial. En las entrevistas se ha podido observar, que muchos participantes acuden por la denuncia recibida con cierto nivel de reticencia hacia el programa. Así también, los

participantes desconocen las características del programa y qué se busca conseguir en el mismo, existiendo al mismo tiempo, una baja aceptación del comportamiento violento ejercido. Estos factores fomentan una baja predisposición a participar en el programa, fomentando los elevados niveles de deserción en las primeras sesiones. También, se ha visto que muchos de los participantes acuden en estados emocionales críticos, donde se unen estados depresivos con la marginación de su entorno y paranoia ante la denuncia. Esta resistencia inicial, se puede relacionar con el creciente discurso de victimización que los participantes hacen de su propia situación, como también de la situación general de los hombres ante el sistema judicial (Taylor & Barker, 2013). Este punto es más que importante, debido a que hay que tener cuidado de que estos programas no generen, en algunos participantes, el efecto contrario al que buscan conseguir, reforzando la martirización de los hombres ante el discurso feminista.

Por otra parte, en las entrevistas se observa una gran necesidad de desahogo, de hablar de lo sucedido y de expresar distintos sentimientos. En este sentido, los resultados encontrados se contradicen con aquellos sectores que son escépticos ante la posibilidad de trabajo con los hombres en términos de violencia doméstica. Los entrevistados manifiestan un gran requerimiento de hablar de lo sucedido y de lo que sienten, por lo que se entiende que es de suma importancia que dicha necesidad sea reconducida a conceptualizaciones no violentas y reflexivas, evitando así que no recaiga en un mayor sentimiento de victimización, que pueda fomentar nuevas olas de violencia que pongan en un mayor riesgo la vida de su (ex) parejas.

A su vez, como se ha visto, otro elemento que fomenta la deserción o permanencia en el grupo es la relación que el participante tiene con el resto del grupo y con las violencias de los otros. Los participantes miden y comparan sus violencias con las de los demás, así como aprenden de sí mismos mediante los otros casos, al mismo tiempo que dicha comparación fomenta que los entrevistados generen estrategias de minimización y justificación de sus violencias, siendo la heterogeneidad de perfiles de participantes, un problema importante al que debe afrontar el programa y que debe plantearse como un posible factor de los niveles de abandono.

Esta falta de homogeneidad, también se manifiesta en los niveles educativos, económicos, culturales y también de edades de los participantes, fomentando aún más la heterogeneidad de éstos. Se ha visto al igual Saunders (2008), que poseer bajos niveles económicos y educativos,

fomenta el no terminar y abandonar más prematuramente el programa. En este sentido, la presente investigación no resuelve la pregunta del “por qué” sucede este fenómeno. Podemos quizás interpretar por los resultados obtenidos, que el programa posee una cierta complejidad intelectual, que genera en algunos participantes desmotivación a continuar en él al no entenderlo y al sentirse menos que los otros compañeros. También podemos interpretar por el propio relato de los entrevistados, que los participantes de menor nivel sociocultural, tienen mayores dificultades para acceder al programa, tanto por temas de vivir en zonas alejadas a donde se realiza el mismo o debido al estar en situaciones complejas de inestabilidad económica, que fomente que éstos tengan que valorar entre acudir al programa o solucionar su situación socioeconómica. Es posible que exista una concatenación de motivos, así como que el abandono no responda a unas mismas causas en todos los participantes, aunque sí podemos afirmar que todos estos factores mencionados intervienen en el elevado nivel de no-finalización del programa.

Pero pese a estos elementos que pueden motivar la deserción, se debe reflexionar hasta qué punto la tasa de finalización de un programa de estas características, debe ser el baremo principal de evaluación. Por ejemplo, en el caso de la presente evaluación, los entrevistados, más allá de haber o no terminado, expresan haber aprendido sobre las distintas formas que existen de ejercer violencia y también algunas herramientas para no ejercerla en momentos de conflicto. Resulta más que interesante e importante, que los participantes aprendan a identificar que la violencia no es solamente física, existiendo otras formas de ejercerla y que a partir de este aprendizaje aprendan a reconocer las violencias que han ejercido a sus (ex)parejas en el pasado. Y aunque luego este aprendizaje se traslade o no a la práctica cotidiana, el ya reconocimiento de la violencia es un primer paso importante para no ejercerla en el futuro.

En este sentido, se debe de ser extremadamente preciso en cuál es el objetivo principal de estos programas: priorizar la seguridad de la(s) receptoras de violencia y las(os) hijas(os). Se debe de tener en cuenta, que en la intervención con HEVI no se trata de curar una enfermedad la cual se trata en un determinado número de sesiones, sino que es un problema social más importante, que tampoco se soluciona solamente con trabajo sobre los agresores, sino que requiere de un cambio cultural más importante y difícil

de conseguir a corto plazo, y entender que la eliminación del riesgo de violencia en la actualidad es un fin difícil de alcanzar. Así también, no podemos dejar de lado las dinámicas sociales contemporáneas, marcadas por una sociedad que vive en la inmediatez y el presentismo (Auge, 1994), junto a contextos de desigualdad y crisis económica, que ponen en jaque los valores tradicionales de la identidad masculina (Rodríguez-del-Pinto & Marín-Traura, 2011), que tienen también su peso en las dinámicas que propician el elevado abandono existente.

Tener en cuenta las limitaciones que se tienen, no significa resignarse a la posibilidad de poder reducir la violencia hacia las mujeres, sino tener claro los objetivos que se tienen en los programas para poder alcanzarlos con mayor eficiencia. Se debe buscar que el sujeto pueda reflexionar sobre su violencia con el fin de reducir el riesgo que vive la mujer denunciante y receptora de la violencia, y para ello se deben buscar estrategias de intervención que fomenten la motivación a acudir al programa, buscando que se aprenda a aceptar la violencia cometida sin minimizarla ni justificarla. En este sentido, el PHQDDEV consigue que los participantes interioricen conceptos y técnicas que les pueden ayudar a tener herramientas para no ejercer violencia hacia sus parejas, teniendo que afrontar la dura tarea de retener a un conjunto heterogéneo de hombres, que niega sus actos de violencia y que se siente víctima de un contexto que creen que está en su contra.

Queda pendiente, en esta línea de revisión, sistematización y evaluación de los programas programa de intervención con HEVI, el trabajar el problema de la deserción desde otras perspectivas, como, por ejemplo, enfocarse en aquellos que sí logran adherirse al programa y realizar trabajos comparativos entre quienes se adhieren y quienes desertan a los programas.

El presente trabajo solamente presenta algunas características de caso, que espera que puedan ayudar al trabajo de reducción de violencia contra las mujeres, con el fin de seguir en el camino de su definitiva erradicación.

Notas

1 Estos datos surgen del apartado cuantitativo de la investigación de carácter interno, que no son presentados en el presente artículo. A modo de resumen, se puede decir que tras el análisis de tablas de contingencia con el programa estadístico SPSS 23, se pudo determinar que únicamente las variables: nivel de ingresos, nivel de estudios y edad del participante, poseen una relación significativa de baja intensidad con la deserción al programa y el número de sesiones que acuden los distintos participantes del programa.

2 Medida cautelar penal por denuncia de violencia doméstica

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Los excesos del género: Concepto, imagen, desnudez.

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Review

Fraisse, G. (2016). *Los excesos del género: Concepto, imagen, desnudez*. Madrid: Cátedra. ISBN: 978-84-376-3578-1

La autora Geneviève Fraisse, una de las pioneras en los estudios de género, ofrece una investigación crítica acerca del debate epistemológico actualmente presente en los estudios feministas. Bajo una perspectiva histórica, profundiza sobre la aparición del concepto género y el campo de pensamiento que éste produce.

Al inicio del libro analiza la llegada de la categoría género a la sociedad. Dicho comienzo fue forjado como “género humano” para definir lo universal de la especie, lo neutro. Este término nació en el lenguaje médico antes de que se empezara a utilizar en otras áreas.

Del mismo modo, el exceso es para la autora un desbordamiento positivo o negativo que se produce cuando un conocimiento puede salirse de los marcos del saber determinado. En el caso del género, tratándose de un campo de conocimiento que está en continua y rápida evolución, puede plantear diferentes cambios para los que quizá la sociedad aun no esté preparada.

El primer exceso que incita a la reflexión trata de aprovechar la teoría del género como una contribución empírica. Sin embargo, parece un camino arriesgado. Puede que el conocimiento que interesa producir sobre las mujeres, el género o la sexualidad termine siendo entorpecido por conocimientos estériles sobre la confusión de sexos por tratar el término como algo neutral.

Por tanto, el segundo exceso sería caer en la reducción del término género a un enfoque neutro que oculta la realidad. Es decir, provocar que las diferencias, en lugar de ser enriquecedoras para la sociedad, multipliquen las desigualdades de las mujeres. Geneviève Fraisse lo explica como un falso universal, poniendo de ejemplo el sufragio universal y el sufragio masculino.

También pone en coalición el sexo y el género. Cuando estos términos se usan como dualidad empírica se está frenando el conocimiento en las investigaciones científicas. La lucha entre lo natural y lo cultural, así como lo biológico y lo social restaura el engaño de la representación binaria. Solo hombre y mujer. Por el contrario, el análisis de los conceptos que aporta la autora sugiere ir a términos pluralizados: Los géneros, incitando a que las mentes de la sociedad empiecen a pensar en más de dos géneros normativos.

Así, el género puede tratarse de una abstracción que contribuya a reflexionar con mayor precisión holística o a ser un concepto universal que introduce a las mujeres en la invisibilidad. Éste sería el tercer exceso.

El segundo tema que trata el libro viene dado de la mano de la crítica al estereotipo. Se describe cómo las imágenes estereotipadas se han convertido hoy en día en una finalidad para la lucha feminista. Sin embargo, la autora se pregunta si este largo trabajo suma o es un debate débil para el camino hacia la igualdad. En su estudio, se destaca que los estereotipos de género aumentan cada día, pareciendo más bien un objetivo agotador ya que se plantea la cuestión de que esta no es la lucha que debemos librar.

No obstante, sí que resulta interesante incidir más en quiénes son las personas que reciben las imágenes. Las interacciones son parte de la transformación del pensamiento filosófico y político en cuanto a la construcción de nuevos modelos mentales de socializarnos y de la creación de las propias identidades. La autora propone reflexionar sobre las imágenes estereotipadas que puede recibir un niño en los libros que lee, junto con la vivencia que tiene en su casa, la escuela, la calle, etc. En la sociedad se muestran muchos otros casos reales, mujeres que se salen de lo normativo y que tienen éxito en sus vidas. Bajo estas reflexiones, Geneviève Fraisse, plantea explorar más por los efectos que produce en los niños las familias y su entorno social, más que en afirmar que el juego con muñecas sea determinante.

En la última parte de la investigación, se trae en cuestión las nuevas formas de protesta feminista donde la desnudez del cuerpo es el lenguaje portador de un mensaje político. Para ello, la autora analiza exhaustivamente las acciones reivindicativas de las Femen, provocando la reflexión sobre si esta acción real puede ser una estrategia eficaz de cambio.

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