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Social Representations of Gender: A Contextual Construction in Schools

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Abstract

Social representations of gender (SR), namely, beliefs, values, attitudes, and symbolic content about gender affect people's behavior and relations to others in social life. Gender representations help explain gender violence among the adolescent population. A qualitative study was conducted to explore the gender SR of teachers and students from two cities in Colombia: Bogotá and Ibagué. Multimethod data collection was performed using a word-association task with 37 teachers and a collaborative cartoon construction task with 284 students from both cities. Thematic analysis and triangulation were performed on this data. Knowledge and informational sources were explored in-depth among students and teachers. The analysis of gender representations revealed rather traditional views: binary representations of gender roles, gender relations, physical characteristics, and behavioral expectations for men and women. The study also found differences between the two educational contexts, scarce references to sexual diversity, and a nuance of tragedy in female gender roles and relations.

Keywords: gender representations, gender violence, peacebuilding at schools, social representations, thematic analysis.

Representaciones Sociales de Género: Una Construcción Contextual en la Escuela

Resumen

Las Representaciones Sociales (RS) del género: creencias, valores, actitudes y contenido simbólico, afectan comportamiento y relaciones de las personas en la vida social. Las representaciones de género ayudan a explicar la violencia de género en los adolescentes. Este estudio cualitativo exploró las RS de género de docentes y estudiantes de ciudades de Colombia: Bogotá e Ibagué. Mediante una recolección de datos multimétodo, 37 profesores realizaron una tarea de asociación de palabras y 284 estudiantes una tarea colaborativa de construcción de comics en ambas ciudades. Se realizaron análisis temático y de triangulación. Conocimiento y fuentes de información fueron explorados en profundidad entre los participantes. Emergieron puntos de vista tradicionales: representaciones binarias de los roles y las relaciones de género, características físicas, expectativas de comportamiento para hombres y mujeres, con diferencias entre ambos contextos educativos. Hubo escasas referencias a la diversidad sexual. Roles y relaciones de género matizados de tragedia para el género femenino.

Palabras clave: análisis temático, construcción de paz en las escuelas, representaciones de género, representaciones sociales, violencia de género.

Social representations (SR) are social products. They originate in interactions, from consensus and dissensus, and emerge as much from common sense as from scientific knowledge. Every representation emerges in relation to other representations and relies on mechanisms of anchoring and objectification (Flores & Serrano, 2019). SR bring up a sense of coherence that comes out of social consensus but also of the continuous negotiation and coexistence with other representations within the same or different cultural groups. Nevertheless, to the extent that they are shared by most members of a social group, certain aspects of social life, like collectively accepted perspectives on things and standards for living, are experienced as objective aspects of reality and serve a fundamental purpose in social coordination (Flick & Foster, 2008; Tomasello, 2003). Nowadays, modern SR are equivalent to the myths and beliefs of tribal societies.

Social representations are activities rather than crystalized objects. They involve affective, cognitive, and symbolic content that guides people's behavior individually and collectively. They rely on cognitive operations like classifying, describing, and explaining, according to shared views, norms, codes, and ultimately ways of making sense of the world that are communicated between people at one time and intergenerationally (Flick & Foster, 2008).

SR of gender are "the constituent and socially constituted thoughts that explain the social behavior of women and men" (Cortés, 2011, p. 96). Gender representations synthesize implicit and explicit social norms that act as informational assumptions (Wainryb, 1991) allowing for the social organization and coordination of individuals around a common notion of "gender" (Flores & Serrano, 2019).

While gender is socially construed, "sex" refers to the biologically defined characteristics of human beings (Ifegbesan, 2010). Nevertheless, for the most part, people experience gender as an objective reality and use sex and gender as interchangeable concepts. Consequently, both men and women create symbolic universes where the

feminine and the masculine are linked to their notions of gender, affecting the way in which they interact with each other and with the world (Bruel dos Santos et al., 2013). Beliefs about what men and women are like and lay beliefs about gender help coordinate social behavior between men and women and define social expectations about what it means to behave in feminine or in masculine ways (Ifegbesan, 2010). In all, these sociocultural norms comprise power differences and have consequences on those involved such as social prejudice and discrimination (Lagarde, 1990).

Social Representations of Gender Among Youth

The formation of beliefs and attitudes about gender roles and behavior begins in early childhood, first within the realm of the family (Alan et al., 2018; Endendijk et al., 2013; van Hek & Kraaykamp, 2015; Vollebergh et al., 2001). Subsequently, in modern societies, school and other scenarios of formal education constitute an important setting for the transmission of social knowledge in general (Bermúdez, 2012) and gender knowledge in particular (Bruel dos Santos et al., 2013). Schools can help transform this knowledge to promote gender equality, but evidence suggests that this is not always the case.

Schools are not strange to the presence of gender bias imposed by society (Alan et al., 2018; van Hek et al., 2018). In fact, they may promote the reproduction and validation of existing bias—explicitly or implicitly—through learning; debates about equality, love relationships, or gender roles (González et al., 2019); through discourse and social practice (Díaz et al., 2017); or by endorsing gender stereotypes (e.g., math and sports are easier for boys than for girls, whereas girls perform better in languages and social sciences) and prejudice (e.g., ignoring girls to call on boys) (Bigler et al., 2013).

Cross-culturally, young populations seem to be subjected to the same social expectations regarding gender roles that apply for adults (Fiske, 2017; Koenig, 2018). Consistently, biological

distinctions between sexes have been found to be associated with the perception of gender-specific behavioral patterns and status among the young population reflecting those of adults, such that gender (a perceivable difference among children) may act as a source of asymmetry in terms of power and argumentative force (a hint of social status) (Zapiti & Psaltis, 2012). Also, there is evidence that representations of gender among teenagers organize around two semantic fields—masculinity/femininity and asymmetries and violence (Bruel dos Santos et al., 2013)—that closely map onto similar underlying dimensions of gender constructions found among adults (Connell & Pearse, 2015). To illustrate, views about women describe them as beautiful, flirtatious, conceited, sensitive, and caring (motivated and responsive to other's desires). In contrast, male stereotypes are associated with work, independence, power, and strength (active, daring, and brave) (Bruel dos Santos et al., 2013).

There is ample evidence that traditional masculinity being taught in socialization contexts—like school—is most of the times built from traditional SR of gender (Bigler et al., 2013), characterized by a pro-male bias (Connell & Pearse, 2015; Islam & Asadullah, 2018), where masculinity requires the domination and sometimes repudiation of (allegedly) feminine characteristics. This also includes emotional withdrawal and exacerbated virility, which produces a rigid man, intolerant of other forms of masculinity (Monteiro Silva & Lincoln Barreira, 2021). These SR of gender may inform young people's gender representations, offering a stand from which to interpret social beliefs, values, and behavior in the light of social roles (Arias & Molano, 2010; Bruel dos Santos et al., 2013) (Ramírez et al. 2022).

Similarly, empirical evidence of the SR of gender collected from students' stories and teachers from rural areas in Colombia suggests that relationships between men and women are construed as strongly hierarchical (Arias & Molano, 2010). Accordingly, men are associated with dominance, control, and power, whereas women are expected

to act submissively, putting men's needs first and taking on family care responsibilities. Student stories collected by Arias and Molano (2010) suggest a traditional conception of a nuclear family, where each member has a socially assigned role and function. Men are expected to assume leadership, take on the heavy work, and be responsible for the security of their family. Instead, women are considered to be more capable of providing support and thus are expected to be more understanding and sensitive (Arias & Molano, 2010).

The above-mentioned SR of gender contribute to legitimize a belief system where men hold a dominant position over women throughout socialization, which is problematic for both. However, it is possible that intergenerational transmission of gender SR is not homogeneous across all contexts and identities. To illustrate, some empirical evidence suggests that male and female adolescents experience society's pressure to conform to gender roles differently: girls tend to be more concerned with what people think about them than boys (Azaola, 2009). Other evidence suggests that adolescents may get in trouble when pressure to conform to gender stereotypes is high (Heyner et al., 2021). Thus, while gender conformity pressure is high for young men and women, male students exhibit more school misconduct than their female peers, suggesting that some misconduct is bound with male identity formation and enactment of masculinity in adolescence. Consistent evidence collected among young inmates and manager population from an educational center in Colombia suggests the presence of beliefs that reinforce stereotyped ideals of masculinity and femininity, prejudices in relation to sex, prioritizing sexist and homophobic notions of gender roles and beliefs among this population (Orozco et al., 2021). Unfortunately, we found no further evidence of empirical studies on gender representations among the teenage population in Colombia.

Evidence also suggests that SR of gender can be malleable and that socialization agents may play a role in modifying traditional views

(Masullo & Iovine, 2016; Idoiaga & Belasko, 2019). A qualitative study conducted by Idoiaga and Belasko (2019) using a free association technique among Spanish youth suggests that traditional SRS of menstruation are characterized by a stigmatizing, negative, and persistent discourse that portrays it as a dirty and disgusting event. On the other hand, more progressive SRS associate menstruation with the affirmation of femininity and womanhood. Negative SRS were associated with more negative emotions while progressive representations provided a more empowered and emotionally positive representation. Idoiaga and Belasko (2019) thus concluded that the SRS of menstruation are to be situated within a social, ideological, and emotional context.

To synthesize, the above reviewed evidence suggests the importance of studying the role of societal mechanisms designed for the intergenerational transmission of information in understanding the prevalence or the transformation of traditional (and problematic) SR of gender from a critical stance. In addition to this, evidence suggests the importance of identification dimensions like sex and sociocultural context on pressure to conform experienced by younger generations. SR theorizing on objectification and anchoring may help understand the pressure experienced by younger generations to adopt, conform, and endorse gender SR depending on identifying and contextual aspects. Nowadays, social knowledge regarding gender roles is at the core of social debate and young people are playing an important role in that debate, suggesting the importance of their own agency in negotiating and constructing gender representations (Connell & Pearse, 2015). Consequently, it is important to analyze how gender roles and their social implications are culturally transmitted from one generation to the next and how the youth from different sociocultural contexts experience this pressure. While there are some studies in Colombia that suggest the endorsement of highly traditional SR of gender among rural and institutionalized young men, there are not enough

studies on the SR of gender among typical young population from different sociocultural contexts.

Like other Latin American countries, Colombia has important regional gaps in terms of modernization and development (Acosta, 2013). Accordingly, while we foresee an important degree of consensus between SR of teachers and students from both cities, we also expect some dissensus (Wachelke, 2012). For instance, that SR of gender from Ibagué (provincial capital) will be more traditional, while those of Bogotá (a city with greater exposure to global social debates and cultural diversity) will reflect its longer trajectory in the modernization process.

This study builds on previous evidence by focusing on the formation of SR of gender among Colombian younger generations within educational contexts, comparing urban and provincial capital-cities, and identifying both consensus and dissensus in SR by virtue of their sociocultural context.

Method

To explore the SR of gender we performed a qualitative investigation, with the participation of teachers and students from two schools in two capital cities (urban and provincial) in Colombia, a geographically, culturally, and ethnically diverse country. Economically it is considered a middle-income country although it remains the one with the greatest inequality in the region. Bogotá is the capital city of Colombia. It has 7,181,469 inhabitants (data from 2018), of which 52% are women. Almost all the population lives in the urban area. It is a city of great cultural diversity, among other reasons, because it incorporates most of the migration from other regions of the country. Ibagué, on the other hand, is the provincial capital of the Tolima region, with 569,336 inhabitants, 95% of which live in the urban area. Like other intermediate cities it connects the rural and the urban worlds in Colombia and is an epicenter of economic and cultural development.

The schools selected for this study were public, gender-mixed, and of comparable size

in terms of number of students (approximately 3,000). Both had morning and afternoon student groups of similar socioeconomic status located in stratification areas “2” and “3” (low to middle-low income) according to the Colombian socioeconomical stratification system. In Colombia, school completion includes 11 grades. This study only included students from 8th to 10th grade (approximately middle school and high school).

Participants

Participants were included according to a convenience criterion. This study benefited from the voluntary participation of 37 teachers, 25 from Ibagué (8 men and 17 women) and 12 from Bogotá (3 men and 9 women); and 275 Students, 126 from Ibagué and 149 from Bogotá,

(Table 1). Data from 9 participants was excluded from the analysis because they didn't follow instructions.

Table 1
Student Participants Sex, Age, and Groups

Grade	8th				9th				10th*			
	n	Groups	Age mean	SD	n	Groups	Age mean	SD	n	Groups	Age mean	SD
Bogotá												
Women	22	6	13,68	0,65	20	5	15,44	1,30	27	8	15,74	1,13
Men	23	6	14,04	1,07	27	8	14,74	1,46	23	6	16,43	1,44
Undefined	2		0						1			
Total	47	12	13,86	0,86	47	13	15,09	1,38	51	14	16,09	1,29
Ibagué												
Women	34	9	12,97	0,91	18	4	15,09	1,16	21	7	15,15	0,93
Men	33	8	13,38	1,17	15	5	14,53	1,36	5	2	16,75	1,26
Undefined	0				0				0			
Excluded					4	2			5	2		
Total	67	17	13,17	1,04	33	9	14,81	1,26	26	9	15,95	1,10

Note. * Four female participants from 10th grade did not report their age and are excluded from the table—although not from the analysis—.

Instruments

This study was conducted within the frame of a wider research project. Consistently, we will analyze and discuss findings concerning the application of two instruments: first, a word-association task performed by teachers from both schools. Specifically, we asked participants to generate 3 positive and 3 negative words that they associated with two stimulus-words: “men” and “women”; second, a cartoon story created by students that reflected situations relevant to *gender relations*. Students were asked to draw and write a brief story describing what happened in the drawing.

Procedure

Before any data collection, the research team met with each school team and introduced the research project. At this point, teachers were invited to participate and were offered an informed consent form. Before the development of the activity, teachers were also offered a specific form to confirm their willingness to participate. Regarding student participation, parental consent was obtained by school mail or Parent School meetings. All participant students assented to their participation as well.

Most of the data collection procedures were performed in the field, directly with students and teachers. However, some data from teachers was

collected using an online data collection software (Typeform) due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. During the word-association task, teachers were given an envelope that contained separate index cards labeled “man” and “woman”, with another label for “positive words” and “negative words” on each side of the cards. They were then instructed to fill each card with 3 positive and 3 negative words that came to mind when they thought of “men” and “women”. Teachers chose freely which to fill first. The rest of the teachers did the same online. In both cases, we protected the anonymity and confidentiality of the information. The data were collected in individual envelopes marked with a code created by participants (instead of identifying information) that allowed us to keep track of other instruments used during the research process. In the online activity, participants were also asked to create codes to protect their identities.

For the cartoon task, we handed a sheet of paper to the participants, with space to write their names and select either a sad or a happy face depending on their willingness to participate in the study and allow us to collect and analyze the results from their work. Those students that didn't have parental consent or didn't assent to their participation were placed together in the same groups and participated in the activity just like the rest of the class, but the research team was instructed not to collect their cartoons. Next, we asked students to organize in collaborative groups (same-sex) of 4 to 5 people. Each group draw one cartoon and attached its corresponding text-story. Once they were ready, we instructed them about the task. We offered some explanations regarding cartoons and types of cartoons to help reduce their anxiety regarding the task, which consisted of creating a social cartoon on gender relations, a dimension (along with other two) identified by the Colombian's Law on School Coexistence (Ley 1620 de 2013) as critical for peacebuilding in the country.

For the most part, students agreed on the story and subsequently collaborated to create the illustrations, the story lines, and the brief

text-story that explained the cartoon. In most cases they distributed the different tasks: they selected someone to draw the comic, someone else to write the accompanying text, and the rest of the team focused on discussing the script of the story. They were entirely free to organize their contribution to the task as they saw fit. For this purpose, we offered students white sheets of paper for the cartoon and the text-story, pencils, and a small box of color-pencils that they could keep for themselves. Together with these materials, we provided them a separate sheet where they reported sex and age of group participants.

Data Analysis

The collective elaboration of SR gives meaning to the world and allows the communication of that meaning with others (Vergara, 2008). SR of gender allow participants to know, understand, and communicate reality; to guide and justify their behavior through the endorsement of, in this case, gender related beliefs and social practices (Abric, 1994). In addition to this, SRs mark off identity and group specificity function (Abric, 1994; Banchs, 2000; Jodelet, 1989).

Objectification and anchoring are two processes at the base of SR (Calvo, 2021) that explain their emergence and transformation (Moscovici, 1984). Objectification involves conceptualizing an abstract phenomenon, whereas anchoring involves classification and linking that concept with an already existing collectively shared concept, with which the new concept acquires meaning for the group and spreads among the collectivity (Calvo, 2021). It is thanks to SR that people relate to the social world and that events and social actions are interpreted. Thus, we used the SR approach to understand the meaning of gender among participants in the study.

To analyze how gender roles and their social implications are culturally transmitted from one generation to the next we explored the SR of gender with a focus on the educational communities of two public schools, their collective practices, and the

institutionalization of social knowledge about gender (Bidjari, 2011), and triangulated this information. Specifically, we used a thematic analysis technique as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) to analyze and interpret information collected from students and teachers from both educational communities. This meant identifying, organizing, analyzing in detail, and reporting patterns or themes based on the information collected (Mieles et al., 2012).

During the familiarization phase of the analysis, information collected from teachers was examined, organized according to participants' groups, and transcribed into a database using Excel software. After several trials of data exploration, we identified emerging ideas and subsequently generated initial codes in a continuously reflective process. This was followed by a search for common themes that were analyzed in detail identifying patterns (see Figures 1 to 8). Once we agreed on a final version of higher order themes, we defined the content and the scope of the themes that constituted the base for a meaningful story. For the younger participants, the thematic analysis of the cartoons was performed using N-vivo 12 pro. Cartoons were organized, classified, and inputted into the N-vivo software. Subsequently, we followed the same procedure that we used to analyze the information from teachers. During

all stages of the analysis, there were at least three judges. Disagreement between them was resolved by debating until an agreement was reached.

Results

The thematic analysis included the free positive and negative associations for the stimulus words "men" and "women" of 37 teachers (25 from Ibagué and 12 from Bogotá) and 72 cartoons and their accompanying stories (35 from Ibagué and 39 from Bogotá).

Information and Attitudes

Socially representing involves information (knowledge and beliefs) that is spontaneously produced among students and teachers; supported on tradition and consensus; orally transmitted in conversation and rumor; within a specific sociocultural context. Social networks, massive means of communication, and daily activity and communication are a source of information about gender for teachers and students regardless of their location.

Beliefs add to and strengthen the existing structured system of beliefs that will result in SR (Fraser, 1994) of gender. Altogether, the interpretative analysis of information revealed a set of underlying beliefs for the SR of gender of participants from both cities (see Table 2).

Table 2
Beliefs about Men and Women's Gender Roles from Ibagué and Bogotá

Women	Men
Ibagué	
Women are unconditional. Women are accommodating. Women should be soft. Women are Mamma bears. Women value other people more than themselves. Women shouldn't be irreverent. Women get carried away by emotions. The woman that exposes herself loses.	Men are transgressors. Authoritarianism is natural to men. Men act by instinct. Men are selfish. Male audacity/boldness has two faces. Men are naturally strong and intelligent. Men love. Men offer support. Men are wolves in sheep's clothing. Men do harm.
Bogotá and Ibagué	
Men propose, women dispose. The biology of the feminine body is a life-sentence/tragedy. Women should keep their emotions under control. Women are caretakers.	Men propose, women dispose. Men must be smart (know how to hide their intentions). Men don't control themselves.

Women	Men
Bogotá	
Women should control their own behavior. Women can be run over. Women are objectified. Infantile women are pretty. Women offer tender and maternal love. Vindicating women's rights is a public activity. In private, dissatisfied women are crazy.	Men should exhibit physical and emotional strength. Men are partners. Men provide security. Men can be stigmatized and victimized too. Men are aggressive and dominant. Men cannot lose control over things. Men can't wait, they don't control themselves.

Attitudes of favorability or unfavorability are fundamental and primary elements in the formation of SR (Parales & Vizcaíno, 2007). They are simultaneously based on shared knowledge systems (Fraser, 1994) and modeled within the framework of a classified system (Rateau, 1995). Participants' attitudes regarding social roles of men and women in Colombian society appear to be old fashioned, conservative, and traditional, consistent with a Christian religious interpretative system and a male dominated society. The transcendentalization of concrete events turns the beginning of sexual life and female sexual behavior into damnable acts disqualifying and devaluing women. Similarly, the notion prevails that men are naturally —instinctively—abusive, aggressive, and even violent. There were positive attitudes toward beautiful, affectionate, and politically correct men and women, and even more so toward caretakers and paternal/maternal roles. Meanwhile, negative attitudes were reported against characteristics and behaviors that contradict the standards of beauty and self-control, like aggression and violence. Overall, men and women's SRs of their roles seem widely stigmatized, anchored in traditional gender stereotypes, and objectified by metaphors and meanings of wicked macho men and gullible, afflicted, and martyred women.

Figurative Core

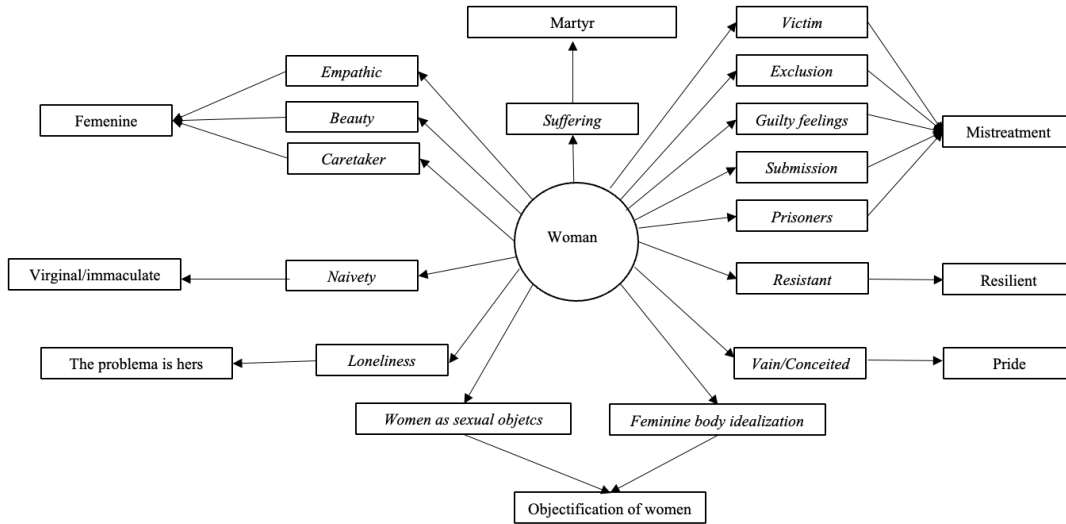
The figurative core is the interpretive dimension of SR (Moscovici, 1979). It is about the materialization of the meaning of gender for students and teachers. Accordingly, it articulates the information and attitude-dimensions with categories and themes that emerged during the thematic analysis (Perera, 2003) presented in Figures 1 to 8.

SR of "women" among students from Bogotá and Ibagué

Students from Bogotá represented women as feminine and highlighted their physical beauty, empathy, and caretaking role as essential attributes of their femininity. Nevertheless, there were negative representations of women, objectified as sexual objects whose value lies on idealized bodies that meet socially imposed beauty standards: "if a woman doesn't have a good body, she is not considered a woman" and rejected when judged to be bad looking by the consumer. There is ambivalence whereby women who find joy in beauty are interpreted to be vain, arrogant and unpleasant.

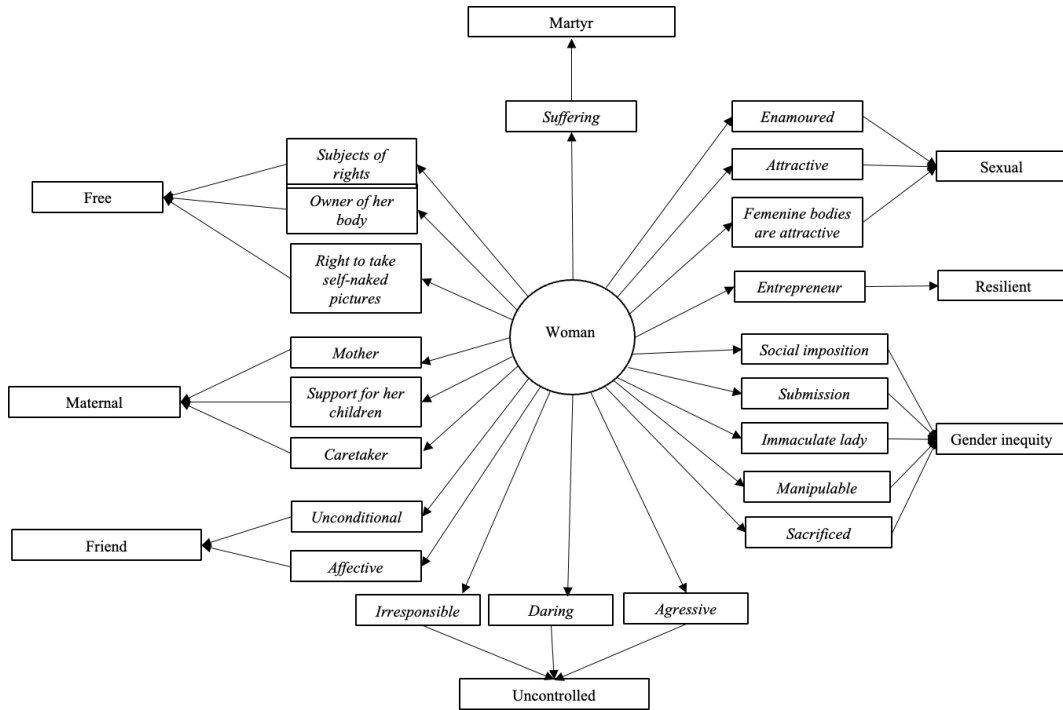
To these young students, women suffer, they are martyrs, thought to accept mistreatment and abandonment as inherent to the female gender. There were numerous references to the exclusion, submission, and victimization of women that end up feeling prisoners in a deceiving world that ignores them and blames them for their "mistakes", leaving them to deal with pregnancy, abortion, mistreatment, violence, and extortion by themselves as if these situations were their sole responsibility to deal with; this, in contradiction with an attribute that appeared in several comics where women's naivety seemed to be praised. Naivety makes them vulnerable, easily subjectable, and socially immaculate, virginal, which in contexts of machismo makes them particularly attractive: women that don't understand, don't know, don't demand, and accommodate. When victimized, women endure, are resilient, and successfully deal with adversity. Successful women play the naive girl role but don't get entrapped.

Figure 1
Emergent Categories and Themes Regarding "Woman" among Students from Bogotá



Note. Emergent categories (*italic*) and themes are represented in rectangles.

Figure 2
Emergent Categories and Themes Regarding "Woman" among Students from Ibagué



Note. Emergent categories (*italic*) and themes are represented in rectangles.

Students from Ibagué, on the other hand, represented women as sexual, enamored, and gifted with body characteristics that are of special attractiveness to men. While in both cities female bodies were an issue of concern, SR among students from Ibagué represented women as free, holders of rights, owners of their own bodies. However, sexually empowered and sexually active girls who openly expressed their interests or decisions on sexuality appeared to be associated with negative outcomes: STDs, mistaken pregnancies, and the perception that having a child when young ruins a woman's life.

Students also highlighted their resilience, tied to their entrepreneurship ability. Maternal

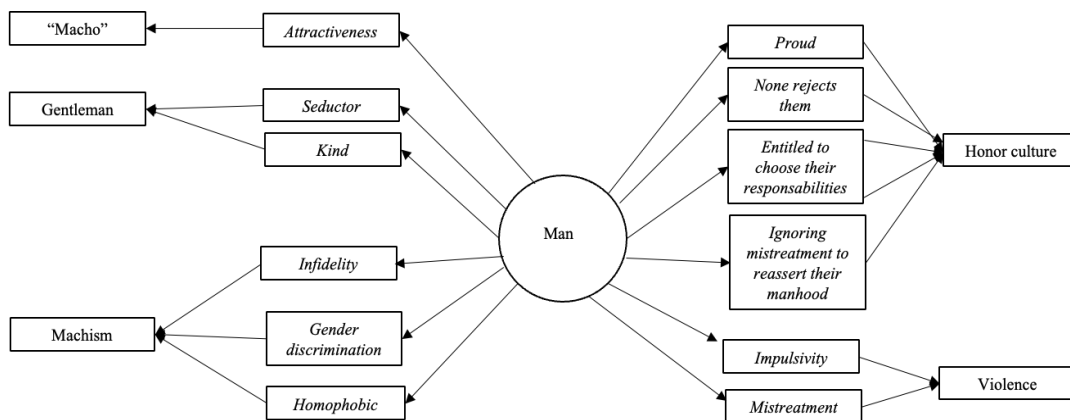
qualities and friendship emerged as topics with positive affective and relational content. Women were represented as mothers, supportive of their children, natural caretakers, unconditional friends, and affective beyond their role as mothers.

Finally, women were also represented as lacking self-control, irresponsible, daring, and aggressive. They were thought of as living in a world of gender inequity subjected to the imposition of their role and the expectation that they will care for others, be submissive, be impeccable in terms of sexual behavior, projecting themselves as immaculate, docile, naive and self-sacrificed.

SR of "men" among students from Bogotá and Ibagué

Figure 3

Emergent Categories and Themes Regarding "Man" among Students from Bogotá



Note. Emergent categories (*italic*) and themes are represented in rectangles.

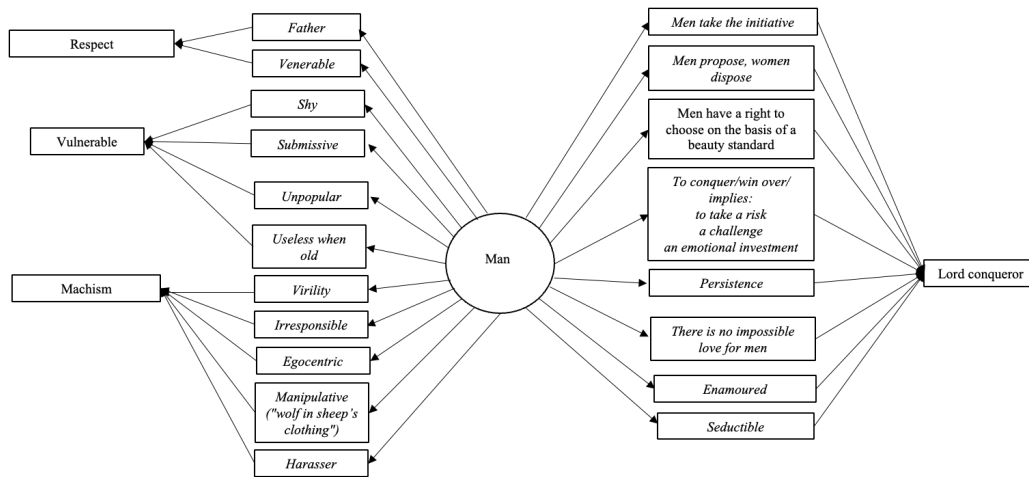
Students from Bogotá represented men as machos in relation to their physical attributes, a notion that approximates the evolutionary vision of males displaying their beauty to attract potential mates. Men were portrayed as gallant, seductive, and attractive, not only by virtue of their physical appearance but for their charm, which no one (especially women) can reject.

To these students, gallantry seems to open the door to machismo when it connects with violence

through the belief in male's apparent inability to control impulses, which excuses maltreatment, unfaithfulness, homophobia, and gender discrimination. This in turn reaffirms a man's manhood, of which he feels proud, ignoring the abuse exerted on others, choosing what he wants, and how or when he wants to take responsibility for his actions. The social representation of an "evil", opportunist, and capable of harm man also predominates in these students.

Figure 4

Emergent Categories and Themes Regarding "Man" among Students from Ibagué



Note. Emergent categories (*italic*) and themes are represented in rectangles.

Among students from Ibagué, men are thought to be respectable. This is evident in their allusions to the father figure, venerable and cultured, and to men as conquerors, seducers and seducible, who fall in love but do not suffer like women because “love is never impossible for a man”. Men seem to have social permission to choose their partners based on beauty standards. They also take risks and strive to conquer their goal (the woman) by taking the initiative, persisting, and making a frank emotional investment, since the final decision rests with her. It is she who accepts or rejects a man’s proposal.

Students from Ibagué reject male vulnerability. Shy, submissive, and unpopular men are seen as losers, and older men are thought of as unproductive and useless. Men are expected to be virile, courageous, energetic, sexually capable, and have very masculine physical attributes. However, they also identified men as egocentric machos, entitled to violence, irresponsible behavior (abandonment, absence, avoidance), harassment in multiple scenarios (sexual, parental, etc.) and manipulative behavior (lying, cheating); a wolf in a sheep’s skin.

SR of women among teachers from Bogotá and Ibagué

Among high school teachers from Bogotá, SR of gender appear to be construed in a context of

social and gender inequity. This is represented in several forms of discrimination (stigmatization, machismo) that validate and reproduce viewing women as servants, weak, and submissive.

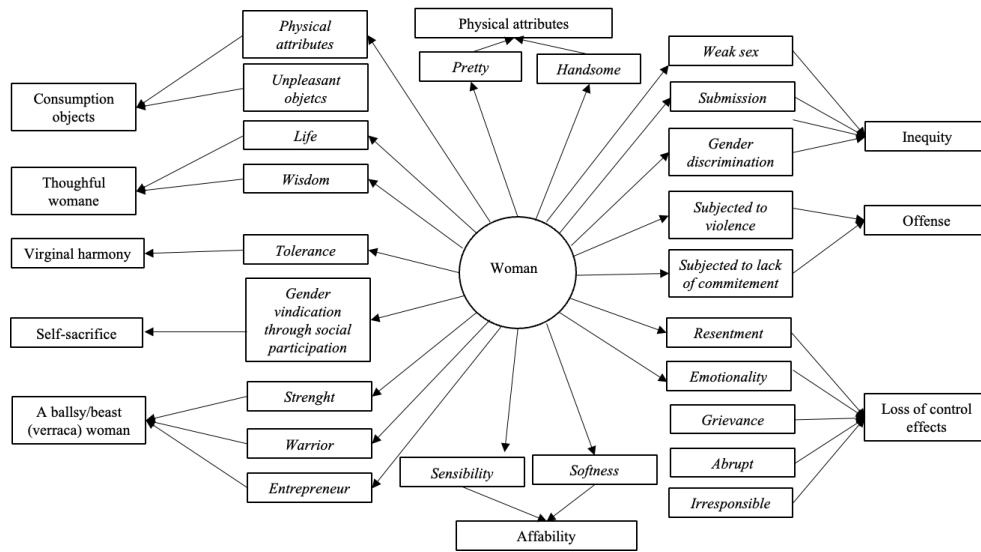
Here women are seen as emotional, and their sensibility, endearment, and loving disposition are legitimized as maternal attributes. However, they are attributed a tendency to lose control both emotionally and behaviorally. Trapped in an unequal world, they are stripped from their ability to act assertively and, when angry or in pain, they are seen as resented, melancholic, negative, and conflicting. In a few words, their desperate and forever unresolved claims are dismissed as *cantaletas* (constant unconformity and complaining).

An idealized social representation of women symbolized them as “the” beautiful sex, highlighting beauty and sexual attractiveness as mainly feminine attributes. Submission is expected from women, particularly in the context of sexuality, where they are thought of as subordinated, and either unable or hardly capable of making decisions for themselves concerning their own bodies.

Given their status as objects, there is no social commitment to them. Offensive behavior and transgressions against them are accepted and thus women are subjected to disrespect, mistreatment,

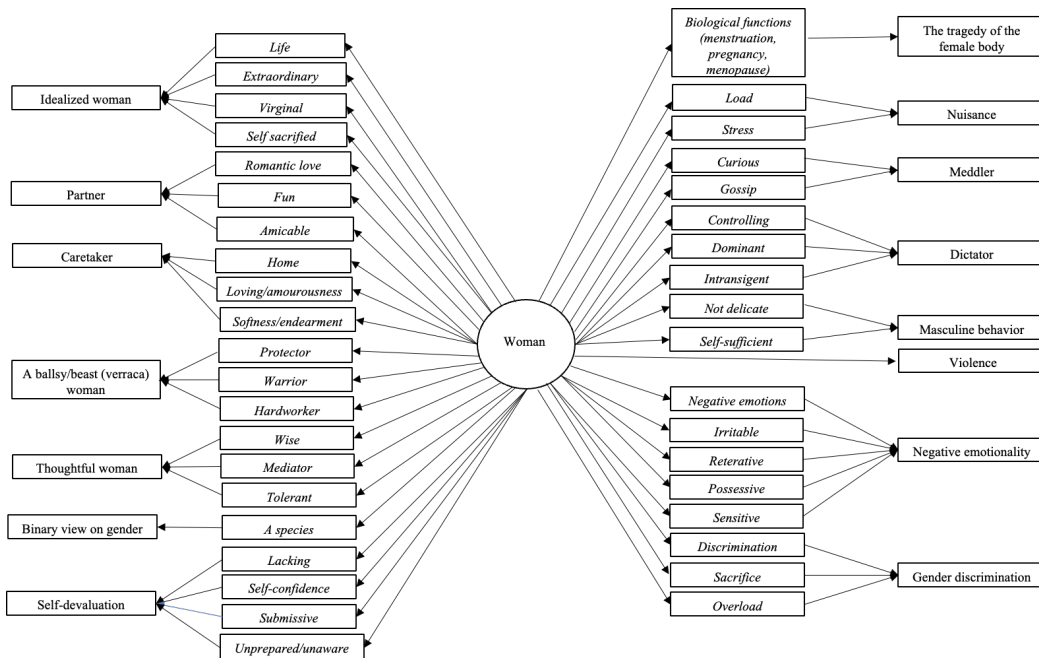
abuse, and even lethal violence as in femicide. Nevertheless, within the frame of abuse, women are thought to vindicate themselves on their strength, their struggle, and ability to pull themselves up from hardship. Women rebel and free themselves by being *verracas*, taking responsibility and finding their own creative solutions to their plight.

Figure 5
Emergent Categories and Themes Regarding "Woman" among High School Teachers from Bogotá



Note. Emergent categories (*italic*) and themes are represented in rectangles.

Figure 6
Emergent Categories and Themes Regarding "Woman" among High School Teachers from Ibagué



Note. Emergent categories (*italic*) and themes are represented in rectangles.

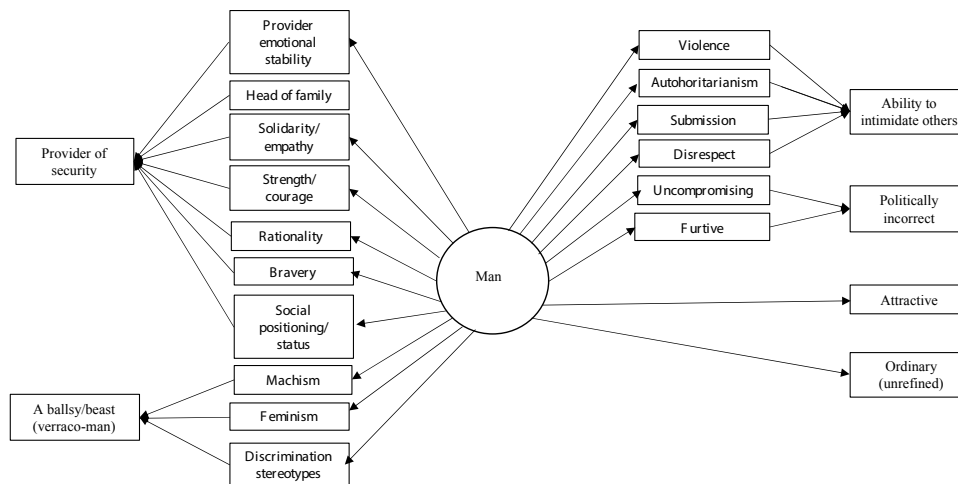
Teachers from Ibagué represent women as synonyms of life, beautiful sex, gifted with desirable physical attributes. They are also portrayed as holistic beings, harmonic, example of reflection, impetuous, and attentive. Their thoughtful attitude translates into wisdom, intuition, intelligence, tolerance, and virtuous patience. Teachers from Ibagué see women as peacebuilders and mediators, while those from Bogotá think of them as haughty and vindicators of their rights that mobilize to conquer their collective goals. This goes along the lines of the representation of women as *verracas*: strong, warriors, entrepreneurs, and hard workers. A determined woman does not give up, yet her struggle doesn't drive her apart from affection, which turns them into a template of sensibility, devotion, endearment, and kindness.

Teachers from Ibagué hold representations where feminine emotional attributes complement caring and protection. It is within this frame that women become natural caretakers and come to symbolize home. This group of teachers' ideal woman is described as extraordinary, virginal yet sensual and romantic, loyal, devoted partner, capable of bringing harmony, supportive, understanding, and a good friend.

srs identified in this study among teachers from Ibagué also suggest that women are seen as unbearable, meddlers (gossipy), dictators, possessive, restless, jealous, controlling, manipulative, dominant, intransigent, stubborn, and able to impose their will upon others.

Figure 7

Emergent Categories and Themes Regarding "Man" among High-School Teachers from Bogotá



Note. Emergent categories (*italic*) and themes are represented in rectangles.

Teachers from Bogotá represented men as providers of emotional, economic, and physical security. As heads of the family, their role involves protecting their relatives and being responsible and hard working fathers. They are seen as the “stronger” sex: courageous, fighters, with capacity to work. Men are also thought to provide economic security, the family’s livelihood, and emotional security

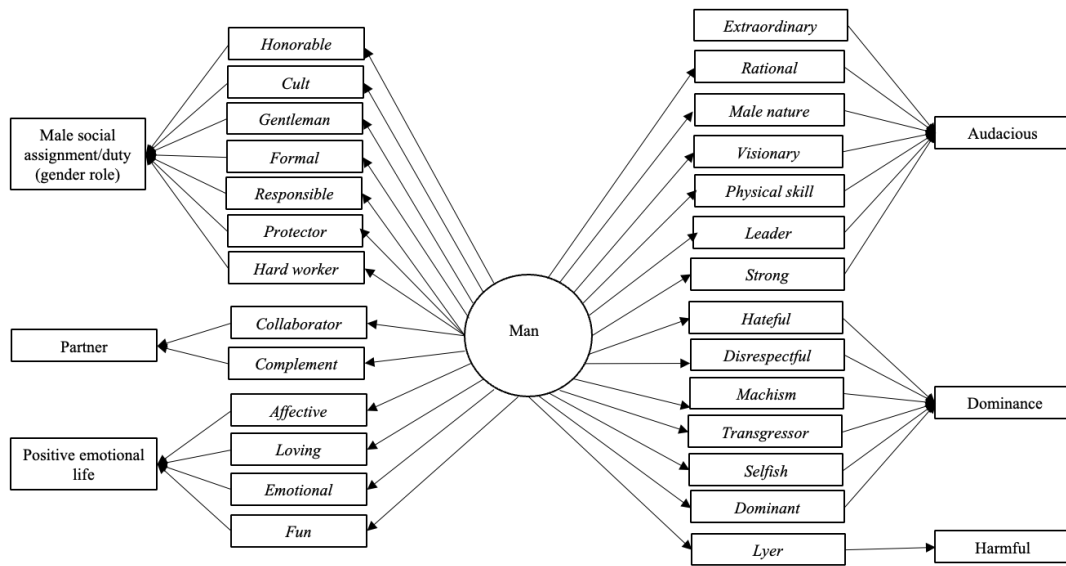
as purveyors of love and endearment. The mix of instrumentality and affection contributes to their representation as solitary, empathic, collaborative, companionable, and complementary. To this group of teachers, men enjoy social status and recognition. Men enjoy physical attractiveness, linked to their masculinity and strength, which translates into their recognition as “machos”, an expression that

conveys negative and positive meanings of the male gender. Unlike women, that tend to lose control of their emotions, men are characterized as rational, smart, master minders, audacious, risk takers, creative, enthusiastic, and brave.

Machismo and inequity are prevalent in Latin America. Within this frame, men are also represented as capable of intimidating and subduing

others using their strength, rudeness, and power. This also includes behaviors such as disrespect, authoritarianism, aggression, abuse, bad treatment, and even crime. Men are seen as disobliging, entitled to be unfaithful, advantageous, irresponsible, unconcerned, rough, and rude. Like women, men may be stigmatized and discriminated against for being violent.

Figure 8
Emergent Categories and Themes Regarding "Man" among High-School Teachers from Ibagué



Note. Emergent categories (*italic*) and themes are represented in rectangles.

Teachers from Ibagué also represented men as capable of doing harm through the means of lies, hate, and disrespect. Dominance stands out as a strong image. It represents macho men that transgress and abuse others. Being dominant sanctions being impostors, authoritarian, stubborn, intolerant, angry, controlling, smashing, and powerful. Dominance justifies machismo, selfishness, and brutality. Men are allowed to be impatient, impulsive, destructive, violent, harsh, an uncontrolled force, and frankly elemental, instinctive, unreflective, and unaware. Like SR of students from Ibagué, men are forbidden to

be submissive, weak, cowardly, fearful, insecure, shy, or whining.

Nevertheless, men are audacious, rational, natural leaders, crafty, strong, skillful, and visionary. They take risks to fulfill their dreams. They undertake, create, and choose. Their duties, by virtue of their gender roles, include protecting others by means of work, responsibility, and by being gallant, gentlemanly, honorable, noble, cultivated,. Also, formal, elegant, sober, and dignified. Affectively, men are partners, collaborators, offer support, help, and are capable of positive emotional lives whereby they come up as fun, affectionate, and loving.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study's goal was to analyze the SR of gender of teachers and high school students from two public schools located in Bogotá (metropolitan city) and Ibagué (intermediate city), while exploring intergenerational commonalities and differences between them and considering different trajectories on the modernization process. Our analysis revealed that participants' own and socially constituted thoughts (Cortés, 2011) contribute to explain their social behavior in relation to gender roles and relations and, simultaneously, offer valuable information regarding social implicit and explicit norms (Wainryb, 1991) about gender in the Colombian context. Consistent with previous evidence, our findings suggest that traditional norms reinforce ambivalent sexism: hostile and benevolent (Glick & Fiske, 1999), which combines status differences with intimate interdependence (Fiske, 2017), still legitimizing macho interaction styles where social prejudice and discrimination remain prevalent (Bigler et al., 2013; Lagarde, 1990).

Even in the 21st century, in which feminist movements proclaiming gender equality have become visible in Colombia and everywhere in the world, machismo and sexism remain as defining features of the developmental environment of both teachers and students. This confirms that school is not free from gender bias (Alan et al., 2018; Heyner et al., 2020). In fact, it may be an important scenario for the transmission of information that reproduces and strengthens traditional SR of gender and prejudice, be it implicitly (Díaz et al., 2017) or explicitly (González et al., 2019).

Our findings also suggest that, just like teachers, students have anchored gender roles in hierarchical relations, as proposed by Arias and Molano (2010). Men are visualized as controlling, dominant, authoritarian, powerful, leaders, strong, and protective. In contrast, women are represented as feminine beings whose attributes revolve around beauty, nurturing, docility, and submission. Again, these findings are similar those of Arias and Molano

(2010) in which women were also represented as supportive, understanding, sensible; and also (partially) to those of Fiske (2017) and Koenig (2018), who identify agency and strength as the behavioral norm for men, and nurture and submission as the social norm for women cross-culturally. In line with the arguments of Fiske (2017), our findings support the idea that gender stereotypes share common features despite the cultural variability between Bogotá and Ibagué in relation to level of modernization and age difference (Koenig, 2018).

Nevertheless, similar to Orozco et al. (2021), we also found some elements that could suggest important and definitory aspects of gender SR in the Colombian culture. Specifically, in SR of Colombian women, endurance and hard work appear to be at the core of the representation conveyed by the word *verracas*. Our analysis suggests that this word has two associated meanings. On the one hand, *verracas* means being hard working, which is positively evaluated. On the other hand, the meaning of this word can be bended to become a justification for the continuous abuse, abandonment, and mistreatment that women are often subjected to. This indicates that conformity, endurance, and creativity to deal with adversity by themselves is a good thing, almost like a Christian martyr. Feminine endurance, congruent with the role of a resigned victim, a martyr by nature, is rewarded with social approval and consideration, reinforcing the adoption of this aspect of the feminine role.

Consistent with Bruel dos Santos et al. (2013), our findings show that gender SR entails asymmetries and violence. In fact, violence and discrimination against women represent continuous threats that may precipitate defensive behavior expressed as anger, resentment, hard feelings, and bitterness—in short, *cantaleta*—that, rather than being understood as self-protective mechanisms, are judged as disgusting, mocking, or despicable. Behind a continuous *cantaleta* there is despair, a cry for help, a woman's channeling exhaustion

from living on the edge. This is, however, socially understood as a sign of fragility and lack of restraint.

Even beliefs and stereotypes evaluated by teachers and students positively (e.g., women are beautiful, men are strong, women are nurturing, men are protective) seem to reinforce sexism as suggested by González and Díaz (2018), who point out that sexism toward women is a predictor of sexism toward men as well.

Our findings call attention to the fact that younger generations continue to endorse beliefs that reinforce stereotyped ideals of femininity, masculinity, sexism, and discrimination between gender roles. To illustrate, cosified, virginal, resilient, submissive, mistreated, and martyred women versus macho, violent, and yet chivalrous men. This is in line with findings from Orozco et al. (2021).

Another relevant aspect that we bring forth with this study is the negative representation of the feminine body. Having one, with all its associated physiological implications (e.g., menstruation, pregnancy, menopause) is seen like a tragedy, a disgrace. This contradicts the idealization of motherhood, nurturing, and caring implied in procreation. Once again, it seems there are two opposing implications in feminine biology: one virtuous, one regretful. In the end the social norm dictates that: for women virtuosity comes with the acceptance of pain. This notion that appeared to be stronger in Ibagué than in Bogotá, aligns with Idoiaga and Belasko's (2019) evidence of a traditional social representation that conceives menstruation as dirty, disgusting, and stigmatizing. Yet, in contrast with Idoiaga and Belasko (2019), we found no evidence of another distinctive way of representing menstruation among our participants.

In addition to this, having a feminine body becomes problematic to the extent that it appears to inherently expose women to other risks such as sexual abuse and extortion in association with their attempts to actively, but naively, own their bodies and their sexuality, while submissively conforming to their role (Azaola, 2009). In contrast,

there seemed to be no reflection or questioning of the masculine role, which includes actively deceiving, betraying their partners' trust, and being capable of symbolic and physical violence, among both teachers and students. Our findings support Heyder et al.'s (2021) intuition that conforming to existing male stereotypes has the potential to get young men in trouble. This view of men directly opposes that of men as providers of care and security mostly seen in Bogotá, and honorable and respected mostly evident in Ibagué.

Considering the teachers' fundamental role in the intergenerational transmission, reproduction, and transformation of social knowledge (González et al., 2019, Masullo & Iovine; 2016; Idoiaga & Belasko, 2019), they have an important degree of influence on their pupils' understanding of their social world. It is important that teachers become aware of this and learn to question implicit informational assumptions that lie at the bottom of meaning construction and negotiation, since. This is important because it is a socio-pedagogical opportunity to educate, within the frame of interactions in and outside of the classroom about younger generations' construction of sexual orientation, gender identity, and the interaction with their peers (González et al., 2019).

Finally, a fundamental limitation of this study was that it didn't include—and thus didn't triangulate—information from parents, which are another important actor in the process of transmission and negotiation of social knowledge and SR of gender among younger generations. Future research should also explore the implications of SR of gender on relationships with others—of the same and opposite sex—and potential asymmetries in power, social status, and relationship dynamics, as suggested by previous evidence from Zapiti and Psaltis (2012).

While the nature of our study keeps us from making generalizations, it contributes to a better understanding of gender relations through the identification of implicit information underlying young people's understandings of gender roles.

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