

# Symbolic violence of women's sexual exploitation at a student party

Rafael Gutiérrez,<sup>1</sup> Leticia Vega<sup>1</sup>

Original article

## SUMMARY

The article analyzes a wild students' party that is part of a twenty-five-year old tradition of helping to finance students' graduation and other activities, in which young men and women participate in a theatrical re-enactment of sexual exploitation. The aim is to describe how symbolic violence can reproduce sexual exploitation in an emotionally gratifying way and how this transmutation is experienced by victims. The information reported is based on field work conducted in a student community at a higher education school in the conurbated area of Mexico City. Observations of the preparation, implementation and wild post-celebration were carried out in this community. In this context, several students between the ages of 17 and 23, including five women, participated in a focus group (two sessions) and in-depth interviews (three sessions) to describe the most significant dimensions of the celebration. The five students were invited to participate through an explanatory letter requesting their voluntary consent. A content analysis of the observation records was conducted, as well as a literal transcription of the focus groups and interviews. The results indicate that the celebration, which includes a theatrical representation of sexual exploitation, includes some real components: concealment, abduction, auction, erotic dancing and sexual harassment. These elements are experienced with displeasure but relived by the informants and other participants as an exciting, rewarding moment. These results are explained by Bourdieu's theory of symbolic violence. We conclude that the celebration is a gratifying affirmation of the sexist beliefs and practices that legitimize the sexual exploitation of women and the tacit acceptance of that abuse, which is often concealed, but recognized as a venerable tradition.

**Key words:** Symbolic violence, sexual exploitation, youth society.

## RESUMEN

Se analiza una celebración estudiantil "desmadrosa" que es parte de una tradición desde hace un cuarto de siglo, que ayuda a financiar la titulación y otras actividades de los estudiantes y en la que las y los jóvenes participan en una representación histriónica de la explotación sexual. Los objetivos son describir cómo la violencia simbólica puede revivir de manera emotiva y gratificante a la explotación sexual y cómo esta transmutación es experimentada por las víctimas. La información reportada se basa en el trabajo de campo desarrollado en una comunidad estudiantil de una Escuela de Educación Superior de la zona conurbada del Valle de México. En esta comunidad se realizaron observaciones de la preparación, realización y post celebración "desmadrosa". En este contexto se conoció a varios estudiantes entre los 17 y 23 años, de ellos cinco mujeres, que participaron en un grupo focal (de dos sesiones) y en entrevistas en profundidad (de tres sesiones) para dar cuenta de las dimensiones más significativas de la celebración. Las cinco estudiantes fueron invitadas a participar mediante una carta explicativa, solicitándoles su consentimiento voluntario. Se realizó un análisis de contenido de los registros de observación y de la transcripción literal de los grupos focales y de las entrevistas. Los resultados indican que la celebración, que tiene una representación histriónica de la explotación sexual, incluye algunos componentes reales: ocultamiento, raptó, subasta, baile erótico y acoso sexual. Estos elementos son experimentados con disgusto por las informantes pero son revividos por los demás participantes como un momento emotivo y gratificante. Estos resultados son explicados conforme a la teoría de Bourdieu acerca de la violencia simbólica. Se concluye que la celebración es una afirmación complaciente de las creencias y prácticas machistas que legitiman la explotación sexual de las mujeres y una aceptación tácita de sus abusos, los cuales, aunque suelen ser ocultados, sí son reconocidos como una tradición venerable.

**Palabras clave:** Violencia simbólica, explotación sexual, socialidad juvenil.

## INTRODUCTION

Social research into the crime of human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation in Mexico reveals that the

majority of the victims are young women, girls, boys, and adolescents.<sup>1,2</sup> These people were captured, tied up, transported, transferred, retained, delivered, received, or kept for purposes of sexual exploitation by criminals in bars, broth-

<sup>1</sup> Directorate of Epidemiological and Psychosocial Research. National Institute of Psychiatry Ramón de la Fuente Muñiz.

Correspondence: Mtra. Leticia Vega. Directorate of Epidemiological and Psychosocial Research. INPRFM. Calz. México-Xochimilco 101, San Lorenzo Huipulco, Tlalpan, 14370 Mexico City. Tel: 4160 - 5149. E-mail: vegahl@imp.edu.mx

els, hotels, tolerance zones, or by means of child pornography and sexual tourism, among other businesses in the sex industry. In any case, the pimps force their victims to remain in the sex industry through deception, deprivation of freedom, threats, beating, or the forced consumption of alcohol or other addictive substances.<sup>1-3</sup>

To date, the information about the health and trafficking of people at a global level is limited. A review in 2012 identifies 16 studies, nearly all of which are centered on violence and the health problems suffered by women and child victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation;<sup>4</sup> the data is generally centered on sexual health (especially in relation to HIV), and to a lesser extent, mental health problems<sup>5,6</sup> such as depression, addiction, low self-esteem, anxiety disorders, agoraphobia, obsessive compulsive disorder, and eating disorders, among others.

The results also indicate that human trafficking for sexual exploitation is embodied in scenarios of the sex industry, but can also culminate in other community contexts.<sup>7</sup> For example, in some homes it is possible to find girls and boys transferred or delivered by their father or mother to a lender, who receives and keeps them for the purposes of sexually abusing them in exchange for writing off their parents' debts such as renting family accommodation. Another case is that of young women or adolescents kidnapped in their community and kept by force in their captors' accommodation to be sexually abused for an indefinite period of time (days, weeks, or months); almost always until the victims are murdered, escape, or are set free by police, neighbors, or the abuser themselves.

In human trafficking for sexual exploitation, exploiters—often men—have almost total freedom to treat their female or underage victims cruelly and inhumanely, bulldozing their human rights to dignity, freedom, and equality. Various types of exploiters are present in the process of trafficking for sexual exploitation: pimps, pornographers, clients of the sex industry, sex tourists, and pederasts, among others. In relationships of exploitation there is an element of personal fear, which varies between exploiters, and which may take the form of savage beatings, all kinds of sexual abuse, or other insults and humiliations.

All of the above is considered gender violence in its form of human trafficking for sexual exploitation, which has at least three facets: direct violence (beatings, rapes, threats, etc.), structural violence (kidnapping, restraint, trafficking, retention, etc.), and cultural violence (tolerance, normalization, and legitimization of direct and structural violence). The primary characteristics of structural and direct violence in human trafficking for sexual exploitation have been documented by various investigations.<sup>1-6</sup> However, cultural violence has not been as characterized as symbolic violence;<sup>8</sup> in other words, as the practices of 'invisibilization' and naturalization of direct and structural violence of trafficking. Symbolic violence<sup>8</sup> legitimizes both

types of violence through two simultaneous operations: first, it hides the "objective" truth, then it constructs the "subjective truth", leading structural and direct violence to be perceived as natural and normal attributes. As such, it is possible that the symbolic violence of trafficking transforms violence such that the clientele of the sex industry, mostly male, can view the humiliating behavior of a victim as an expression of love, sexual abuse as a form of passion, or sexual exploitation as a lucrative business.

With the aims of describing how symbolic violence can revive sexual exploitation in an emotive and gratifying way, and how this transmutation is experienced by the victims, an investigation into a wild\* student celebration is reported. A type of theatrical performance is organized at this party with the aim of sexual exploitation by the students, dramatizing the capture, restraint, transportation, transfer, and auction of students with the aim of making a sexual public display; an erotic dance, paid for by third parties.

This type of celebration is part of young people's socialization. The notion is a proposal by Maffesoli<sup>9</sup> to synthesize Simmel's<sup>10</sup> concept of "sociability", which emphasizes pleasure and the fun aspect of meeting with others, and the Nietzschean concept of the excesses of Dionysian pleasure and the predominance of aesthetics over ethics. In this way, Maffesoli<sup>9</sup> characterizes socialization as a tribal form of sharing emotion, play, adventure, and Dionysian pleasure.

Studies carried out in Mexico<sup>12,13</sup> report that parallel to youth socialization, a process of subjectivation occurs which abstracts young people from the *wild* behavior, forcing them to critically reflect on themselves, their behavior, and their responsibilities. However, there are also reports that this "reflexive abstraction" seems to be reduced in contexts of socialization where drunkenness<sup>12</sup> and collective sexual aggression against women<sup>15</sup> prevail.

## METHOD

This investigation was carried out in a student community of a Higher Education Institute (HEI) located in the conurbation zone of the Valle de México (CZVM), where various municipalities of Mexico State join with Delegations of the Federal District. It is one of the most populous and insecure areas of the country. In the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the zone reached more than 22 million inhabitants, and had

\* In Mexico, the word for 'wild' in this context (*'desmadre'*) is polysemic, its meaning depending on the context in which it is used. Literally, it means "motherless", but it is commonly used to refer to chaos, lack of discipline, and lack of morals. The expression is also used to refer to a fun social mess or entanglement. It is very often used to refer to a collective action that while both unruly or violent, is fun for those doing it. This last meaning acquires the expression "*desmadrosa*", used here to describe the student celebration and translated as 'wild'.

one of the highest rates of infanticide, female homicide, and robbery in the country.<sup>7</sup>

### Participants

In the context of the HEI, various men and women students were met between the ages of 17 and 23, but only five women participated in a focus group (of two sessions) and three of them in the in-depth interviews (of three sessions), to give an account of the most significant aspects of the celebration. Two of these were between 22 and 23 years of age and knew about the phenomenon in detail, and the other three students (17, 18, and 19 years old) had participated as "slaves" in the celebration. The five students were invited to participate via an explanatory letter requesting their voluntary consent.

### Instruments

This qualitative investigation used observation, in-depth interviews, and focus group techniques. Observations were made before, during, and after the celebration. The *YouTube* and *Facebook* social networks of the student organizing committees were also observed between 2011 and 2012. Observations were recorded in a field journal, which included photos, student comments around the celebration and the researchers' own interpretations.

### Procedure

First, a focus group was formed for two 50-minute sessions, each with five participants, until data saturation was reached. After analyzing the two focus group sessions, three key informants were identified to participate in individual interviews about the dimensions of the phenomenon they knew most about. Three 50-minute interview sessions were conducted for each one of the selected participants. Different question guides were designed for conducting the focus groups and interviews. Subject to participants' authorization, the recording techniques were digital recordings and field notes.

From the observation records and literal transcription of the information obtained in the focus groups and interviews, a content analysis was made of the information obtained with each technique, in which the textual references were identified and organized into categories and families of categories.

## RESULTS

The primary results were grouped into the following order: organization, celebration, socialization, and the sexual exploitation of slaves.

## Organization

For 25 years, the Student Committee of the Escuela Superior has organized a *wild* celebration to commemorate the long journeys made by the first generations of students to get to school, in a time when there was no direct public transport, nor anywhere to get a cold drink in the surrounding areas. This situation is remembered with a *wild* celebration and a dance. The former happens during the day and the latter at night. The Committee organizes these events because they are considered part of student tradition and also in order to finance degrees and other student activities.

The celebration is held a couple of weeks before the end of the year, but organization starts months beforehand. From that point, the Committee makes known to the school authorities where the organization and the dates of the celebration and dance are anticipated to take place. The Committee then asks the authorities if they can occupy the areas where events such as the *lucha libre*, "slave" auction, and dance will take place.

Another Committee activity consists of negotiating with the Delegation's political and public transport authorities for permission and support to safely take to the streets (police vigilance and ambulances) and facilitate access and transfer by public transport. The Committee is also responsible for arranging radio broadcasters, *DJs*, and live music groups to help the celebration, as well as food and drink, organizing the sale of tickets for the dance and all logistics for protecting school property and ensuring the safety of the participants.

The Committee also promotes the celebration among the student community, which gradually increases approaching the event. Committee representatives visit classrooms to motive student participation. Convincing them is not an easy task, as one woman commented: "...at first, the whole class was reluctant, saying 'why should we run? Why do we have to dress up and walk through the streets? They'll laugh at us!' The Committee explain it to you, saying 'we all do it and it's a tradition.'"

## Celebration

The announcement manages to get hundreds of students on the day of the celebration. Most participants are from the first and second years, with a smaller proportion from the third, and fewer still from the fourth (these students are about to finish). Groups of students could be observed dressed as narco-traffickers, masked wrestlers, and in the case of women, superheroes, *Playboy* bunnies, and soldiers. There were also students in character costumes, and others with no costume at all. As groups of students got to the school, they were ordered behind a truck occupied by Committee members, most of them men.

The Committee truck leads the *wild* walk [caminata desmadrosa] in a pattern: it moves forward, stops, goes slowly, accelerates; while its followers go behind it, lead cheers, whistle, sing, run, walk, jostle, etc. During the journey, certain events stand out, such as:

- A reminder of the origin of the celebration and acknowledgement in a restaurant where food is given to the students to thank them for their custom.
- Women participate in a mud fight/lucha libre in paddling pools filled with muddy water. This event takes place while the students are waiting for the free food.
- The food race: different teams of students are given a large plate of food which they have to carry together. The goal is to be the first to run back to the school with their plate of food the best preserved.
- The sexual exploitation of "slaves". During the celebration, "slaves" of both sexes are recruited, retained, and taken to the school. They are later sold to the highest bidder and obliged to dance for their purchaser.

The *wild* celebration is a festive moment exclusive to a student community in the CZVM, which implies the participation of young, vigorous, and healthy bodies that can run or jump from a back of a truck, with no physical limitations like tiredness etc.

This celebration transgresses the existing social roles and order. Hierarchies can be reinforced or inverted. It is a ritual that breaks the school and day-to-day routines of their surroundings. Specifically, the celebration is a ritual of inversion, as it shifts dissimilar elements and feelings from their daily context (such as with the superhero costumes and the representation of slavery). In fact, displacement is itself an inversion, as the object is not to move up to a specific place, but the movement itself. The importance of these displacements is that they join dissimilar elements in one act, generating an experience of unity and cohesion among young people.

### Socialization

Socialization of young people is a set of rituals shared by the students, and in that sharing, the subjects relate to others in a certain way. The community of young students recognizes itself by means of rites, reaffirming their imaginary social significance. For example, from the accounts of the women participants, taking part in the celebration seems to be an extraordinary and exciting moment of identifying with the school institution and community. For example, Brenda, a student participant, said:

*Even the students who don't come dressed up and don't feel part of the group or the school do cheerleading when they get to the celebration. They say the alma mater which is like an anthem they have in the school, I don't know it but they read it to you, and after that they say: 'Cheer! Whistle!' And shout: 'THAT'S IT!' And then they whistle again. They shout 'THAT'S IT' and whistle again and at the end they shout 'hard!' That part of the whistling is very exciting because*

*although not all of us know how to whistle we do it as though we did. It's like an anthem that the institution has. When you're in the celebration you feel part of the group, of the whole institution really, because you put the t-shirt on and say I am from this school, even if you're not the class clown or you keep to yourself, it's like, when you're in the stadium and they're cheerleading, you participate with the same enthusiasm that you feel, so I felt that emotion and it made me so happy, you know?*

The celebration achieves the conformation of a collective identity, a close identification with the group of students and with the school as an institution. From the women's accounts, it can be appreciated that their identification with the group is both fascinating and emotive.

In this collective expression of joy, the young men and women are exposed to self-destructive *wildness*, which is very risky, as Brenda comments:

*I was running during the celebration and then I got up to the truck, actually I threw myself up there. Later it occurred to me to jump with my hand ahead of me, like a superhero, and the truck was moving. What I did was very risky because they didn't catch me and I hurt my knee. Everyone grabbed each other, someone dressed as a chocorrol [a chocolate flavor cake bar] and another character went first, but I don't know what happened with me. They did grab me but my knee was already on the ground.*

This first approach to the public scene of the celebration as a tribal way of sharing emotion, pleasure, and the fun aspect of "hanging together"<sup>2</sup> in games, adventure, and the excesses of Dionysian pleasure, can also be read as a complacent affirmation of the 'macho' beliefs and practices that legitimize sexual exploitation and a tacit acceptance of abuse, which is not recognized as such but rather as a venerable tradition.

### The sexual exploitation of the "slaves"

The dramatizations are a key element of the celebration. In these, gender inequalities are transmuted in a fascinating and emotive tradition, even a game. Abuses of power and the role of the sexual commodification of the women are evident in the dramatization of the sexual exploitation of the slaves. This occurs in various stages: the recruitment, the transport and the delivery; the exhibition, the auction, and the erotic dance.

#### Recruitment

Although men are sought as slaves as much as women, in practice there are more women slaves. Informants said that this is because there are not any attractive men, and also argue that the tradition is for men to buy slaves and for the women to dance sexily.

According to some informants, women from the first year are chosen for their naiveté and inexperience. One informant advised: "The Committee said: you'll see various women from the first year, grab them because they don't know

what it is like". Another informant who had been a slave said: "Actually, they grab women from the first year, it's rare to see other years; they grab the ones that don't know".

Before the celebration, some naïve students are chosen and held in order to be slaves, like Rocío:

*They chose me before to be a slave in the celebration, because I was friends with one of the people on the Committee. That day I went as Wonder Woman and they told me that I would go on the truck with the other girls who had been chosen. They told me that it was to get more money for those who had graduated, and they gave one ticket to you and another one for your dance partner, which was a tradition. They told me that they chose the most attractive girls, and at that moment I felt flattered, that they thought I was one of the attractive ones.*

The recruitment can also occur through groups of friends, who work together to capture slaves from some of the friends who followed behind the truck. They chased them, caught them, and lifted them up to the truck. Berenice comments:

*I had some friends on the Committee, they chased me and grabbed me, it was very funny, because they told me 'you are going to be a slave for the celebration, come on, get up onto the truck'. I was totally unprepared and as there were a lot of them I had to get up there, hahaha.... Anyway, you know the truck where they carry all the girls who are slaves. My friend Chucho was the one who said it first, but really, choosing me as a slave was my friends' idea. Anyway... the truth is I felt really bad, they lifted me up onto the truck and then I didn't want to. I'm telling you, it was sudden, like that, and as they were my friends, they realized. The truth was it happened so fast, I hadn't imagined or planned on being a slave, so I didn't have any idea of what to expect.*

### Transport

The truck transports the captured slaves for the whole celebration, the vehicle is completely full and there are even young people outside and on the roof. Everyone is crowded onto the truck: inside there are some Committee members, captors, and female and some male slaves, and on the roof there are students, costumed characters, and slaves encouraging the crowd. In the midst of the party scene, characters and slaves throw each other off the roof of the truck, hoping that they will be caught by the students following on foot waiting below. Meanwhile, those inside the vehicle enthusiastically sing, shout, lead cheers, and jump up and down. Rocío and Berenice went inside this truck, both not knowing what it meant to be a slave. Berenice knew that she had to get into the truck; nobody told her what she had to do as a slave. As for Rocío, they flattered her by telling her that she was a slave due to being so attractive and that in doing it she would help her fellow students' graduation, winning tickets for the dance, and that it was tradition.

Once the truck had finished its journey, the slaves were delivered to the Committee members, who informed them what being a slave entailed. In this regard, Rocío commented:

*At the start of being a slave I was quite happy -flattered- but then I felt a little afraid, when they tell you that you have to dance for people*

*and then for the person who buys you. They only tell you that they bid on you and the person who wins will be with you in the dance and that it's to raise money, but they don't tell you that you have to dance all sexy, like moving your hips and your butt provocatively, reggaeton style. I didn't like it because I don't normally dance like that in the middle of the school, and it wasn't just that I didn't like it, but it is more personal and whether you feel like it. I was not happy that they didn't tell me how everything was going to be from the start, because it really surprises you.*

Rocío was surprised due to the truth that was, until that moment, hidden from her by the Committee, and which can be recognized as a form of commercial sexual exploitation. It is an abuse of power, where slaves are treated as sexual objects or commodities. They have to dance sexily in exchange for payment by third parties. Although this reality surprised Rocío, neither she nor Berenice abandoned the dramatization. They continued playing the role of slaves assigned to them by the Committee.

### Exhibition and auction

Rocío and Berenice commented that they were taken into the gymnasium to a type of runway where they were exhibited and auctioned. In this regard, Rocío commented:

*Once we arrived at the gymnasium, they put the slaves on the runway. I went with two other girls and they sold the three of us together. The Committee decided to do it like that but they sell some girls on their own depending on how good looking they are. One was Gatubela and I don't remember the other one. They told us to parade ourselves and then they got someone from the crowd to come up to dance sexily with us as a demonstration. I didn't move that much, but there's pressure from all the people watching you, so I did it, more or less.*

Rocío walked along the catwalk and danced sexily. Although she did it because she felt bad, her public actions were obedience to the wishes of the Committee. Like Berenice, Rocío experienced harassment, but took it as part of the tradition. In this respect, Berenice commented:

*Then they told me they were going to auction me. They made me dance in front of everybody, and they sat two boys in the center and the three of us danced together. I tried to do my best moves but I didn't like it, maybe the other girls liked it, but I didn't. I was very nervous, feeling really bad waiting for someone to buy me, I wanted the earth to open up and swallow me. Hahaha... so it's like saying "wow, so embarrassing, stop looking at me, hide me, hahaha..." Because regardless of whether you know the person or not, it's like saying, how much would you pay for me, like prostitution but just a game. It's like a show, they clapped, they laughed, I felt like I was on display, it was embarrassing. Sure, it's all for fun and "just banter",\* but being there in front of everybody, it's different. And they bought me -well, along with two other friends- they started saying who will pay five pesos, and when the offer was over a hundred they bought the three of us together, hahaha... I remember it and it makes me laugh.*

Berenice experienced abuse of power in the middle of a collective party atmosphere, but this reality was presented in a confusing manner; it seemed to her "something like

\* From the Spanish 'cotorreo' = joke.

prostitution, but only a game". This equates to recognizing sexual exploitation, but at the same time, this reality is cast into doubt when considering it as only a game.

### Erotic dancing

After being bought, the slaves dance erotically for their purchaser. This may be one or more friends, or the slave's boyfriend. In this regard, Rocío commented:

*They start to auction you on the runway, with us they started at \$50 pesos and went up from there, they paid \$170 pesos. My boyfriend bought us along with his classmates. I danced for my boyfriend and the others danced a little further away. When we were being auctioned I felt pretty weird, like an object, although my boyfriend bought me and that made me feel better. I didn't dance that much because we were in front of everybody, I didn't dance very provocatively like regaeton because I felt embarrassed with all the other people watching.*

There are also policies among the buyers, as in the case of Berenice, who had to dance for one of them:

*Well, the moment they told me they'd bought me, that part was over, and as there were a few of us, I felt a little better. I still remember that one policy was that they raised the bids and raised the stakes, and they bought a girl from another group. There were three of us auctioned, so we had to dance for the person who bought us, but to be honest it's kind of uncomfortable.*

Although the informants danced in the end, they did not do it sensuously, daringly, or indulgently. It seems that they intuitively decided to censor their dancing. Perhaps it was the prevalence of a moral judgment about how a young woman should behave in public, but it is also a way of making public the discomfort they felt in being exposed as a sexual commodity and their disapproval of the same.

From the perspective of the spectators, most of whom were men, the slaves' erotic dance is a game. One student spectator at the auction and dance commented:

*Well, some of them danced well, but others were more serious, calmer, and sometimes you can see that they are dumbfounded when they are asked to dance for somebody; I would say that some of the girls get touched up, but that's all. I don't think anything else happens. It's all part of the day, it's only a game.*

Another young spectator also talked about the erotic dance as a game, and found it silly to judge the dramatization as sexual exploitation, because in reality it is only a game:

*The slave sale is seen as kind of tacky. It depends on each person, because I see it as a game, but as for the guys who aren't from around here, they see the girls as tramps or something like that. They let their imaginations run wild.*

Although it seems that one of the spectators realized that the girls playing slaves were "dumbfounded" and that they could be groped, and another informant noted that "the slave sale is seen as kind of tacky", both consider it an 'inoffensive' game and do not consider that groping takes place. They consider it something that is "part of the day".

Once the celebration is over, the dance continues into the night. Students are no longer slaves and they chat, dance, and drink alcohol with their friends. Although alcohol consumption is not permitted for students during the celebration and the dance, groups of students disregard that and drink discreetly, some to the point of drunkenness. Some end up throwing punches or having accidents. One member of the school's administration service advised that the day after the dance, they found "an unconscious boy bleeding from being bottled, condoms, urine everywhere, even feces".

After the celebration and the dance, Berenice commented:

*Then they took hold of me "as a joke" for a few horrible days, it was the joke of the week. The girls criticized me as well, you know, things like 'oh that fat girl, she didn't dance very well, she looks bad', you know... whatever, the kind of things people say, but the joke went on for a few days. They just make comments and pick on you for a while, like underhanded, but not with my friends, they just said it straight away but as a joke.*

Rocío and Berenice both indicated that based on their experiences, they would not participate as slaves again. In this respect, Berenice advised:

*I still think that it was really humiliating, I wouldn't do it again, it's like exhibiting yourself and then they say things, everyone laughs, it's not cool at all, the truth is I didn't like it. I mean, I felt embarrassed, but I didn't say "hey, this is bad, I feel terrible" or anything like that, I think it was just that moment, because it's just a fun memory from school.*

For her part, Rocío commented:

*In terms of what I did, I think it's part of the tradition, but I wouldn't do it again. I don't like dancing like that, you feel like an object they are selling and you have to make an effort for them to buy you; in this case, to dance really well. The next day, or the weeks after doing it, I didn't feel bad, other people at school said to me, "hey, you were Wonder Woman, right?" But nothing else, nothing changes in the way they treat you, there was no moral hangover because of it, it's part of the tradition of the school. Even up till now my boyfriend and I haven't had problems because of it, we hardly even remember it.*

## DISCUSSION

Trading people for the purposes of sexual exploitation is found spread throughout communities. The results reported indicate that such trading may appear as a public representation and be celebrated in the context of a student community despite including the very real components of direct, structural, and symbolic violence that characterize it. For these purposes, the symbolic violence of the representation of the exchange masks the reality of direct and structural violence in the context of a "wild" celebration - a collective, fun, amusing, thoughtless, and self-destructive cultural practice. Similar to relaxed socializing,<sup>11</sup> but different due to including different types of violence, including sexual exploitation and excess alcohol, all of which accentuates its self-destructive nature.

In this context, the "slave" women experience the effects of violence as an ambiguous reality; they doubt whether what they are experiencing is exploitation or a game. Later, their shame, fear, and discomfort becomes secondary; irrelevant in terms of the collective celebration. Some men also manage to see the shame and fear expressed by the female students, but they minimize it, saying it is a game, something that is just part of the day.

As a consequence, the costs of participating in this representation are different for men and women, according to their position in the social organization. For the girls who are slaves, it generates great emotional, psychological, and social discomfort, even after the event. There are jokes and incisive comments about their "role as slaves", physically, in terms of dress, and regarding their reputation. This is not the case for the majority of male students who participate as captors, buyers, auctioneers, or organizers; nor are their actions questioned. This includes the authorities and administrators who support the student celebration.

From a sociocultural context, the representation of the trade is a chauvinist student practice, where the roles of "wild"<sup>15</sup> and "hot"<sup>14</sup> students are played out, celebrating the woman of their dreams: docile and sweet, and at the same time daring and easy; a sexual commodity, something that can be bought and then put aside without a second thought. Because of this, what the students judge is the changing of a young woman into a sexual object. As such, they are evaluating whether the body or dress of the young women doing their erotic dance meets their imagined ideal of the "feminine" woman desired in the *wild party*.

When girls like Brenda take the plunge, wrestle in mud, dress up in "Playboy" bunny ears, or dance erotically with the highest bidder, they are publically representing their adherence to chauvinist desires and practices. Perhaps what Brenda says is untrue; a mere tactic in socially pressured situations. It could even be a means of making known her discomfort and disapproval of obligatory participation in that event. In any case, the fact remains that she danced publically, thereby expressing an appearance of unanimity and consent with macho desires and practices. According to Bourdieu,<sup>8</sup> it can be supposed that this type of complicity of the victims is neither passive submission nor free adherence to chauvinist values. The emotions experienced by the enslaved students, among them shame, "nerves", "being a little afraid", strangeness, or wanting "the earth to open up and swallow" them, reveal that this obedience, submission, or adherence granted to the dominant vision does not come about due to thought-out consent; rather, it is granted in spite of themselves.

A double discourse is developed in these circumstances: on the one hand is the (mostly male) public, full of euphemisms, references to unbridled enjoyment, and unanimity with macho desires and practices. On the other hand is the darker discourse<sup>16</sup> of the enslaved women, which speaks

of shame and fear. According to Scoot,<sup>16</sup> the subordinated groups secretly develop a "darker discourse" from this suffering which represents a resistance of power, like that of Rocío and Berenice, who have their own stories and experiences accumulated with gender inequality, which allows them to anticipate their future rejection of participating as slaves in their accounts.

From the results obtained, it can be supposed that there is a darker discourse of the victims of human trafficking through organized crime, which may hide the practices and cover up rebelling voices, but also the mental health problems suffered due to the direct and structural violence of human trafficking. This also runs the risk of aggravating these problems, as they can be far from investigation and mental health services. This distance and covering up fostered by trafficking could perhaps explain, at least partially, the small number of investigations into the psychological and social consequences of human trafficking and evidence-based programs for treatment.<sup>2,17,18</sup>

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