

Animal Metaphors and University Rape Culture: A Look at Violence against Women on Campuses in Canada, Spain, Australia, Mexico, and the USA

Las metáforas animales y la cultura de la violación en la universidad: Una mirada a la violencia sobre las mujeres en los campus de Canadá, España, Australia, México y Estados Unidos

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Abstract

This article focuses on animal metaphors in real cases of rape culture in universities in the Anglophone and Hispanophone worlds. To this aim, it analyzes the animal metaphors permeating several episodes of violence against female students perpetrated on campuses in Canada, Spain, Australia, Mexico, and the USA in the last decades (2000-2024). A total of 6 cases are studied. Apart from reflecting the (ab)use of animal metaphors in cases of rape culture in the higher educational system, this selection was made considering the different types of contexts and media where the metaphors are encountered within the university setting. Some of the animal metaphors are found in the names of parties that portray female students as «bitches». Others belong to WhatsApp groups where male students self-identify as predatory animals planning a gang rape. They are also part of dorm's publications and emails that label female students as prey to be hunted. Even bathroom graffiti display metaphorical fauna that renders female students as pigs. Through the lens of

Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which underscores the pivotal role played by metaphor in both cognition and action, and Critical Discourse Analysis, which highlights how language (re)produces ideologies, social inequalities and power relations, the paper shows how college students resort to the zoomorphic scenario to promote and legitimize (sexual) violence against women. Male students describe their female peers as «cows», «seals», «pigs», «bunnies», «kittens», «bitches», and «chicks» to sexualize and deride them physically, morally, and intellectually. They also cast themselves as predatory animals— «wolves», «studs», «eagles», and «hawks» —to make sense of heterosexual relationships, explain their sexual urges and violent behaviors. These animal metaphors that permeate students' college life are ultimately part of university rape culture in the English and Spanish-speaking worlds.

Keywords: animals; metaphors; university; rape culture; English– and Spanish–speaking countries; conceptual metaphor theory; critical discourse analysis; violence against women.

Resumen

Este trabajo estudia las metáforas de animales que forman parte de casos reales de la cultura de la violación en universidades de países anglófonos e hispanófonos. Con este fin, se analizan las metáforas de animales que vertebran varios episodios de violencia sobre las mujeres perpetrados en los campus de Canadá, España, Australia, México y Estados Unidos en las últimas décadas (2000-2024). Se analiza un total de 6 casos. Además de reflejar el (ab)uso de las metáforas animales en el sistema educativo universitario, esta selección se ha hecho teniendo en cuenta los diferentes contextos y medios donde se hallan las metáforas animales dentro del panorama universitario. Algunas metáforas animales aparecen en nombres de fiestas que describen a las estudiantes como «zorras». Otras se hallan en grupos de WhatsApp donde los estudiantes se autoidentifican con animales depredadores para planear una violación grupal. La fauna figurada también forma parte de revistas universitarias y correos electrónicos que representan a las estudiantes como presas que han de ser cazadas. Incluso pintadas en los baños universitarios retratan a las estudiantes como cerdas. Adoptando el enfoque de la Teoría de la Metáfora Conceptual, que subraya el papel esencial que tiene la metáfora tanto en el conocimiento como en el comportamiento, así como el Análisis Crítico del Discurso, que señala la función que tiene la lengua en la (re)producción de ideologías, desigualdades sociales y relaciones de poder, este artículo muestra cómo los estudiantes universitarios recurren al escenario zoomórfico para promover y legitimar la violencia (sexual) sobre las mujeres. Los estudiantes describen a sus compañeras universitarias como «vacas», «focas», «cerdas», «conejas», «gatitas», «zorras» y «polluelos» para sexualizarlas y denigrarlas física, moral e intelectualmente. Además, ellos se identifican con animales depredadores y sementales—lobos, caballos, águilas y buitres—para comprender sus relaciones heterosexuales, explicar

sus instintos sexuales y sus comportamientos violentos. Estas metáforas animales que están presentes en la vida universitaria forman parte de la cultura de la violación de las universidades tanto en países de habla inglesa como hispana.

Palabras clave: animales; metáforas; universidad; cultura de la violación; países de habla inglesa y española; teoría de la metáfora conceptual; análisis crítico del discurso; violencia sobre las mujeres.

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2017, the Zeta Beta Tau fraternity at New York State's Cornell University organized «the pig roast» contest, where new members won points by sleeping with female students. The more women a man had sex with, the more points were scored. In case of a tie, the pledges who had sex with the heaviest woman would win a bonus. Those engaging in the competition were instructed to keep it secret and to track their (sexual) records on the whiteboard of the fraternity house (Reyes, 2018; Wootson, 2018). The initiation ceremony into university culture reduced women—especially overweight ones—to the category of an animal. Apart from contributing to their dehumanization, the porcine metaphor served to associate them with (moral) dirtiness, promiscuity, and fatness (Haslam et al., 2011; López-Rodríguez, 2016; Stibbe, 2003). It ultimately contributed to the sexualization, objectification and fat-shaming of female students, whose bodies were turned into meat ready for men's sexual consumption, since gastronomical terms like «roasting» are euphemisms for sexual intercourse (Chamizo & Sánchez, 2000; Crespo, 2008).

Far from being an isolated instance of misogynistic behavior within Greek life in the higher education system, animal metaphors like the one mentioned above in the Ivy League School are woven into the very fabric of university rape culture¹. They are part of the institutionalized sexism that promotes, leads to, and even justifies violence against women. In fact,

1. «Greek life» refers to the social organizations that are affiliated with fraternities and sororities at universities. These organizations, named with Greek letters of the alphabet, are known for being exclusive, having a high standard of entry, and organizing events—festive, charitable, academic, etc.—.

in 2014, at Imperial College London, in the UK, the students in an all-male college dorm named the sexual pursuit of women freshers «seal clubbing» (Bates, 2014). The identification of women with wild sea animals that are hunted materialized into a list of flirting tips that included the exertion of physical force to secure sex with female students. Similarly, in 2015 at Georgia Tech (USA), a group of male students framed the sexual assault of women in terms of fishing in a series of emails giving advice on «luring your rape bait» (McKay, 2015).

Animal metaphors are not mere linguistic devices, but cognitive mechanisms (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) that can have real-life consequences that can affect a woman's health, integrity and life. After singing the chant «Let's rape some bitches, rape them, rape them» at a party in the University of Central Florida in 2015, a male student raped his female peer (McKay, 2015). In the lyrics, the man identified women with «bitches», a canine metaphor connoting lust and promiscuity, and often applied to sex-workers (Kleinman et al., 2009; López-Rodríguez, 2025).

Animal metaphors are so entrenched in university rape culture that in 2023 Dartmouth College funded the project «the Dartmouth Animal», aimed at investigating «the institutional, social, and cultural factors that created and perpetuated rape culture at Dartmouth» (Hampton, 2023, p. 3). Although the focus of the project was not on the language of the species that so often permeates university rape culture, the explicit reference of an animal in its title already conveyed the relationship between animal metaphors and violence against women in higher education. In fact, popular culture also shows the interconnection between animal metaphors, violence against women and college campuses in movies like *Animal House* (Landis, 1978) and *The House Bunny* (Wolf, 2008), which focused on fraternities and sororities, respectively, and *The Hunting Ground* (Dick, 2015), a documentary tackling sexual assault at universities in the USA.

This paper analyzes the animal metaphors permeating several episodes of violence against women perpetrated on campuses in Canada, Spain, Australia, Mexico, and the USA in the last decades. The article begins with an overview of «rape culture» and its discursive dimension, paying special attention to how the connection between woman and violence starts with language. The next section, which provides the theoretical and

methodological framework of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis, focuses on how metaphors can provide a rationale for rape and how language (re)produces sexist ideologies that somehow can promote and justify sexual violence. Examples taken from the domains of natural forces and animals are used to illustrate the power of metaphor in understanding, promoting, naturalizing and legitimizing violence against women. Then, the article tackles some common animal metaphors pertaining to university life —mascots, forms of address, gender labels, etc.— and their role in shaping students' perceptions of gender and (sexual) relationships. This is followed by an analysis of the animal metaphors articulating the 6 cases of rape culture selected. Finally, some conclusions are drawn regarding the connection between animal metaphors and university rape culture in countries that are distant geographically and culturally speaking.

2. THE LANGUAGE OF RAPE CULTURE

Rooted in patriarchal worldviews laced with misogyny and gender inequality, «rape culture» broadly refers to a complex set of beliefs and attitudes that encourage, normalize, and justify violence against women (Buchwald et al., 2005, p. 10). The concept of «rape culture», thus, does not limit itself to sexual abuse and rape, but it also includes other daily practices that make violence against women seem normal and acceptable (Gay, 2018; Huck, 2022; Phipps et al., 2017)². Sexist jokes, music, advertising, legal jargon, catcalling, romantic ideas of stalking and relationships, traditional notions of manhood and womanhood, public scrutiny of women's clothes, unsolicited nude pictures, gratuitous gender-based violence in movies, or the glamourization of sexual violence in the pornographic industry, among others, are part of «rape culture». All these interconnected elements are listed in the so-called «pyramid of rape culture» (Chandra, 2018), a hierarchical visual representation of violence against women that goes from the

2. In this paper, «rape culture» is understood as an umbrella term that refers to a continuum of different forms of normalized violence against women where «rape» represents the most extreme behavior. In this sense, the paper aligns with scholars like bell hooks, who positions rape and sexual violence within an overarching «culture of violence» against women (hooks, 2014).

normalization of sexist words, ideologies and behaviors to sexual assault, and whose zenith is rape. This whole array of words, ideologies, and actions has contributed to the creation of «rape myths» —prejudicial, stereotyped and false beliefs that perpetuate gender stereotypes, contribute to victim-blaming attitudes and undermine efforts to combat (sexual) violence against women (Anderson & Overby, 2021; O'Connor, 2021). Some of the most popular rape myths include —but are not limited to— the woman with her sexy clothes somehow asked for the assault; if the woman had not drunk so much alcohol, she would not be sexually abused; if the woman did not resist the assault, the act cannot be classified as rape, or the perpetrator is solely driven by uncontrollable sexual impulses.

The connection between «woman» and «violence» starts with language (Ehrlich, 2003; Santaemilia & Maruenda, 2014, p. 4). A more covert and subtle form of aggression, linguistic violence often precedes, facilitates, and rationalizes other types of violence—e.g.: psychological, physical, economic, sexual, etc.— (Gay, 2007, p. 435). Women, indeed, are exposed to and suffer from all forms of verbal hatred, as regards discrimination, alienation, and, above all, strict regulation of their sex behaviors (Hopper, 2003, pp. 147-148).

Discourses of violence against women are ultimately vertebrated upon the key issues of power and control in a patriarchal world. As a matter of fact, «violence is nothing more than the most flagrant manifestation of power» (Arendt, 1970, p. 35) and it is through discourse that power is (re) produced (Van Dijk, 1996, p. 86). Discourses of violence against women, thus, reflect the power dynamics between social groups. They are part of the oppressive practices women are exposed to.

The language used to talk about and to women plays a pivotal role in the creation and consolidation of rape culture (Ehrlich, 2003; Gay, 2018). Language, indeed, is not just a means of communication, but, rather, a lens through which we view the world and a mold that shapes our identity—social, political, professional, religious, gender, etc. (Fairclough, 2015; McConnell-Ginet, 2020). People, in fact, do things with words (Austin, 1962). They are the building blocks with which we construct our reality. Words are not innocuous but have tangible consequences that can change people's lives. Some words can heal; others can hurt, activating a «lethal

semantics» (Schwarz-Friesel, 2015) that affects and influences individuals' minds and actions, for, in Bolinger's words (1980), language can be used as «a loaded weapon». Speaking of a woman in terms of «woman», «girl», «slut» or «whore» has far-reaching implications that transcend the sole semantics of the terms, since the notions held about the very same female will be radically different and so will be the attitudes and behaviors held towards her depending on the word choice (Kleinman, 2002). Whereas «woman» is the more neutral word, «girl» entails infantilization, which has been linked to the intellectual belittlement of women, the minimization of their achievements in the workplace and the belief that they are vulnerable and immature (Huolt, 2013). On the other hand, «slut» and «whore» trigger a whole network of negative connotations —i.e., immorality, promiscuity, sexual work—which tend to correlate with sexual stigmatization, slut-shaming and (sexual) violence towards women (Hackman et al., 2017; Nemesu, 2021).

Language has been proven to have fatal, real-life consequences on the promotion, exertion and legitimization of violence against women within rape culture (Bou-Franch, 2016; Caldas, 2020; Kleinman, 2002). Sexist humor and locker-room talk have been linked to the promotion of hostile attitudes towards women, rape proclivity, rape acceptance, and even (sexual) violence (Pérez & Greene, 2016; Simeone & Jeglic, 2019). Often dismissed or excused as harmless fun and just men's banter, sexist jokes (e.g.: «Why did the woman cross the road? / Who cares? What the hell is she doing out of the kitchen?») and locker-room talk (e.g.: «Grab them by the pussy. You can do anything»—as US President Donald Trump stated) promote stereotypical gender roles and worsen gender inequalities. They also increase tolerance for violence against women (Thomae & Viki, 2013). Similarly, the linguistic choices made when tackling sexual assault and rape can lead to their normalization and justification (Johnson & Johnson, 2021; Murray et al., 2023). Using passive language to discuss sexual violence (e.g. «Amber was raped» vs. «John raped Amber») shifts attention from abusers and elicits an increased perception of victim responsibility. Describing acts of sexual violence and abuse with the language of sexual consent (e.g.: «have sex», «sexual intercourse», «foreplay», etc.) minimizes the seriousness of the offense. Employing phrases that place agency for the

sexual act on the victim rather than the perpetrator (e.g.: «she performed oral sex on him») contributes to victim-blaming. Referring to the victim's statement with terms such as «story» conveys skepticism instead of factual information.

3. (ANIMAL) METAPHORS AS PART OF THE LANGUAGE OF RAPE CULTURE

In the discursive construction of womanhood and its intimate relation with violence within rape culture, metaphors have a central role. As evidenced in «The metaphorical logic of rape» (Lakoff & Johnson, 1987), a layman's language is structured upon a stock of metaphors that are shared in a particular culture and can provide a rationale for rape. This is so because metaphor is not a mere matter of language, but rather of thought and action (Kövecses, 2002; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff & Turner, 1989). Culturally motivated, ideologically charged, and value laden (Mussolf, 2012; Talebinejad & Dastejerdi, 2005), metaphor, indeed, is a cognitive mechanism whereby people talk about—and potentially think about—something in terms of something else (Semino et al., 2018). Metaphor operates simultaneously with two domains of experience, where one of the domains (the source) enables people to structure and understand another experiential domain (the target) (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). In a conceptual metaphor, then, the mapping of the two domains implies that some aspects of the source domain are brought to the forefront while others are downplayed or simply hidden. This results in a biased process of conceptualization known as «framing», a powerful rhetoric device used for the dissemination of ideologies (Semino et al., 2018, p. 628).

In «The metaphorical logic of rape», a man draws from the source domain of PHYSICAL FORCE to describe a WOMAN'S SEXY APPEARANCE as «she is giving off very feminine, sexy vibes», «they [women] have power over me just by their presence» or «they can come up to me and just melt me»³. Underlying this account—way of speaking and reasoning—is the

3. I follow the typographical conventions outlined in Cognitive Linguistics whereby conceptual metaphors are capitalized in order to distinguish them from linguistic metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

conceptual metaphor *SEXUALITY IS A PHYSICAL FORCE*, as manifested in the linguistic expressions «giving off», «sexy vibes», «power over me» and «melt me». This commonplace metaphor, which entails the understanding of appearance as a force that can produce causal effects in the world, provides the mental framework through which a woman is seen as exerting a sexual force on a man, who, in turn, reacts naturally in a sexual way. Coupled with the folk idea that a woman is responsible for her physical appearance and, therefore, for a man's sexual arousal, the metaphor *SEXUALITY IS A PHYSICAL FORCE* presents sexual activity— whether wanted or unwanted— as a physics law, that is, as inevitable.

The logical thread provided by the metaphor *SEXUALITY IS A PHYSICAL FORCE* can eventually lead to the commitment and justification of sexual violence against women, for different metaphorical framings are conducive to different ways of reasoning about and acting towards the subject presented (Flusberg et al., 2017; Semino et al., 2018; Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011). In fact, as Fairclough claims (2003, p. 67), «[w]hen we see the world with a particular metaphor, it then forms the basis of our action, our perception of the world and behavior will change according to the use of a particular metaphor».

Framing heterosexual relationships in animalistic terms may affect individuals' perceptions and behaviors regarding their interactions with the opposite sex (Bock & Burkley, 2019; Rudman & Mescher, 2012). Resorting to the conceptual metaphors *PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS* (Kövecses, 1988; Lakoff, 1987), *HUMAN BEHAVIOR IS ANIMAL BEHAVIOR* (Kövecses, 1988; Lakoff, 1987) and *A LUSTFUL PERSON IS AN ANIMAL* (Lakoff, 1987), a man can express his sexual interest in a woman as «I am an animal in heat», «she brings out the beast in me», and «I am a stud». This animalistic view, in turn, may result in men's adoption of bestial behaviors towards women, given that zoomorphic metaphors are based on the dichotomous folk belief that there is an animal inside each person that some individuals are unable to keep at bay despite humans' rational capacity (Kövecses, 1988). This zoomorphic scenario that conjures up images of males out of control can inadvertently lead to the exertion and justification of their violent (sexual) actions, for they are believed to be rooted in their inevitable, inherent animal nature (Douard, 2008; Gutmann, 2021, p. 182). As a

matter of fact, the link between men and violence against women is often couched in terms of animality (Gutmann, 2021; López-Rodríguez, 2023; O'Hara, 2012), as observed in the commonplace descriptors «sexual predator», «preying on his victim», «beast», «pounce», «stalk» and «prowl» used in legal, medical, popular, and news reports on (sexual) aggressions against women. The establishment of such animal analogies when tackling (sexual) assault and rape has been shown to minimize men's responsibility, perpetuate rape myths and naturalize violence against women, since animals are driven by their (sexual) instincts as opposed to reason (Beiras et al., 2015; Douard, 2008; López-Rodríguez, 2024; O'Hara, 2012; Rudman & Mescher, 2012).

Similarly, a man can project images of animals onto a woman to make sense of his sexual urges. Drawing from the PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS metaphor, he can describe her as «a chick», «a kitten», «a bitch», «a cougar», «a tigress», «a filly» or «a bunny». On establishing a link with her primal animal nature, the iconography of the bestial feminine brings to the fore woman's biology and sexuality, contributing, therefore, to her sexualization (Lacalle et al., 2024; López-Rodríguez, 2009; Palacios et al., 2020). It also places women and men on the same animal level, highlighting their basest unrestrainable passions. This reductionistic and naturalistic vision grounded in the oftentimes violent mating of beasts serves to understand and justify the satisfaction—whether desired or not—of man's sexual desires as well as their violent actions (Gutmann, 2021; López-Rodríguez, 2023, 2024; Sanz, 2015; Tipler & Ruscher, 2019).

The understanding of men's sexual desires towards a woman in animal terms is usually embedded in the hunting scenario that commonly informs heterosexual relationships (Bock & Burkley, 2019; López Maestre, 2020; Skaff, 2022). Replicating stereotypical gender roles, males cast themselves in the active role of predators (i.e.: «wolf», «tiger», «bull», «hawk»), endowing women with the passive role of the prey (i.e.: «chick», «bunny»). The activation of the metaphor THE PURSUIT OF SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS IS HUNTING (López Maestre, 2020; Luke, 1998), based on the aggressive yet vital activity of chasing and killing animals for survival, can materialize in man's sexual harassment, stalking, physical violence, abuse, and even rape. Extrapolated to the human world, thus, the predator and prey dynamics

can incite and legitimize (sexual) aggressions, ultimately contributing to the naturalization of rape (Bock & Burkley, 2019).

The (ab)use of metaphorical frameworks pertaining to the natural world— physics law and the animal kingdom in the abovementioned cases— to comprehend men's sexual desires and behaviors ultimately contributes to the naturalization and normalization of (sexual) violence against women. On offering iconographic references, metaphors may force people to see something through a specific lens, often leading to a distorted vision of reality that may lead people to believe in and commit certain actions (Hawkins, 2001, pp. 30-31). Metaphors, then, can provide a rationale for violence against women. In this sense, they can become an integral part of rape culture.

4. ANIMAL METAPHORS AND UNIVERSITY (RAPE) CULTURE

Animal metaphors are part and parcel of university life. Animals figure prominently in the names of sports teams (e.g.: the Huskies at the University of Connecticut or the Tigers at Clemson University) and are common nicknames for college sports players (e.g.: tiger, bear). Through personification, animals have become popular colleges' mascots (e.g.: Tim the Beaver at MIT or Roar-ee the Lion at Columbia University). Animal metaphors also inform students' learning processes, learning styles and behaviors, and even their interactions with their professors (Mellado, 2014; Valenzuela & Alarcón, 2021). They are also an integral part of college slang (Cameron, 1992; Eble, 1996; Hummon, 1994; Kilyeni & Silaški, 2015) and permeate everyday speech as forms of address (e.g.: tiger, chick) and social labels (cougar, bitch, seal) that signal a person's gender identity, sexual desirability and sexual mores (Almirabi, 2022; Bujok, 2013; López-Rodríguez, 2009; Nilsen, 1996).

College students resort to the zoomorphic scenario in the construction of gender identities (Cameron, 1992; Halupka-Rešetar & Radić, 2023; Kylieni & Silaški, 2015; Silaški, 2013), for most animal metaphors are gendered (López Maestre, 2020; Shokim et al., 2022), that is, they transmit stereotypical notions of femininity and masculinity that help sustain male dominance in society. In general terms, women are compared to small, weak, and domestic creatures —a reflection of their traditional domestic

role. Men, by contrast, are likened to big, wild, predatory beasts in accordance with their supposedly physical, intellectual, and social superiority (López-Rodríguez, 2009). A reversal in this figurative fauna takes place when applied to homosexual men and women, for these individuals are usually imagined as effeminate and masculinized, respectively (Baker, 2004). In US college jargon, for example, the figurative uses of «wolf», «chick» «pussycat» and «stud» disclose—and brand—a student as heterosexual and homosexual male and female, respectively (Munro, 1991). The same considerations are seen in the Spanish college slang «lobo» (wolf), «coneja» (bunny), «mariposa» (butterfly) and «trucha» (trout) (Fernandes, 2021). Students' exposure to these animal labels has been linked to the development and promotion of sexism as well as to the reinforcement of stereotypical gender roles (Bock & Burkley, 2018; Tipler, 2013); which constitute the backbone of rape culture.

Within university life, studies have shown how the assessment of a woman's physique, personality, and, above all, sexual (un)desirability is carried out through the bestial iconography. Serbian female and male college students use *Kрмаča* (sow), *svinja* (pig) and *krava* (cow) to refer to an overweight woman and *riba* (fish) and *mača* (cat) for a beautiful, slender one. Most of the times, however, their use of animal metaphors signals a woman who is willing to engage in sexual relations, for she is perceived as lustful or promiscuous, as attested in *tigrica* (tigress), *kuja* (bitch), or *lavica* (lioness) (Silaški, 2013)—all of which refer to sexually active or loose women. Similar considerations apply to the zoomorphic metaphors used among Romanian university students, who also add *balenă* (whale) and *vulpe* (fox) to the list of Serbian animal names deriding a heavy woman and praising her sex-appeal, respectively (Kilyeni & Silaški, 2015). In Jordanian universities, Arabic-speaking students can describe a woman as بطة (duck), وزّة (kitten) and غزال (deer) if they find her sexually attractive whereas the metaphors دب (bear) and بَقْرَة (cow) will disdain those female students who are unattractive and obese (Hamdan et al., 2023). On Costa Rican, Colombian, and Spanish campuses, *zorra* (vixen) and *perra* (bitch) are targeted at women who are considered promiscuous (Fernández-Martín, 2011; López-Rodríguez, 2009; Ramírez, 2009) whereas *caballo* (horse), *vaca* (cow), *cerda* (pig) and *foca* (seal) describe women of a big size, and even a

dirty one in the case of «cerda». In US colleges, *cow* and *coyote*—especially in the collocation *coyote date*—denote a heavy and ugly female, respectively. *Chick*, *tigress*, *foxy* and *vixen* describe sexually attractive and sexually active women (Eble, 1996; Nilsen, 1996; Sutton, 2012) whereas *bitch* is used for a lewd, promiscuous woman (Kleinman et al., 2009).

A male student's sexual disposition and prowess can be channeled through animal imagery. *Stud*, *ram*, and *wolf* denote a man of great sexual power, or a seducer in North American universities (Murphy, 2001). The same meanings are seen at work in Spanish, Italian, and French college slang, with the metaphoric *tigre* (tiger), *lobo* (wolf), *buitre* (vulture), *stallone* (stud), *lupo* (wolf), *taureau* (bull) and *étalon* (stud) (Baider & Gesuato, 2003; López-Rodríguez, 2009). What these animal metaphors reveal is a clear tendency to categorize men as unrestrainable, dangerous, sexually potent and predatory beasts. These animal images, somehow, foresee and justify men's violent (sexual) conduct.

Animal names can stand for the female and male genitalia in college parlance. Names for the penis among North American students include animal, beast, eel, and snake—and its subtypes, namely, anaconda, python, and cobra—(Cameron, 1992; Dalzell & Victor, 2016; Eble, 1996). Their Spanish peers also show a preference for reptiles—*culebra* (snake), *serpiente* (serpent), *boa* (boa constrictor), *pitón* (python)—in addition to birds and poultry (*pájaro*, *polla*), insects (*bicho*) and animals' tails (*cola*) (Buesa, 1999; Chamizo & Zawislawska, 2006; Gutiérrez Velarde, 2018). In Polish and Portuguese universities, *kón* (horse), *ptak* (bird), *pinto* (chick) and *rola* (dove), respectively, are heard in reference to the male sexual organ (Rose et al., 2010; Szczepaniak & Lew, 2011). As for the vulva, there is a common set of animal metaphors in the speech of students in the US, Spain, Poland, and Portugal, with a prevalence of small furry animals—English pussy and beaver, Spanish *conejo* (rabbit), Polish *Kot* (cat) and *cipka* (young hen), and Portuguese *rata* (rat) and *gatinho* (kitty). Besides their visual motivation, these animal metaphors seem to reveal well-worn themes and conventions related to cultural prescriptions for masculinity, especially as regards male sexuality (Cameron, 1998, p. 373). In most cases, indeed, the penis is conceptualized as a wild, ravaging beast, hinting, in this way, at man's natural instincts as well as at sexual predation and violence.

The animal metaphors articulating sexual and gender discourses of university students inform and influence their cognition, emotion, and behavior. Empirical studies have shed some light onto the direct link between the use of animal metaphors among college students and sexual and gender-based violence on campus (Orchard & Sangaraganesan, 2022). The use of «bitch», for example, has been proven to incite sexual violence against women and to alter students' perceptions of sexual violence (Greer, 2023). Research has also shown totally opposite reactions when students are exposed to the woman-as-predator or the woman-as-prey metaphor (Tipler, 2013). Whereas the representation of women as cougars led students to apply aggressive and negative characteristics to a woman's neutral behavior, the use of the kitten metaphor elicited positive responses regarding the very same female subject, namely, friendliness and kindness. In the same vein, tests and surveys have demonstrated that male students who read heterosexual relationships in terms of a male predator chasing his female prey were more likely to accept rape myths and were more prone to commit and justify sexual abuse and rape (Bock & Burkley, 2019). Such results empirically reveal the harmful outcomes derived from the bestial iconography in universities.

5. AN ANALYSIS OF ANIMAL METAPHORS IN EPISODES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN UNIVERSITIES

5.1. The «Bitches and Drinks» party during orientation week in Saint Mary's University (Canada 2013)

In 2013, during orientation week at Saint Mary's University, in Canada, a party was held to welcome first-year students to college life. Organized by one of the university associations, the party, called «Bitches and Drinks» (Lorenzi, 2013, pp. 1-7), offered free alcoholic beverages to all female students who attended. Publicly displayed on bright posters in one of the numerous booths that during the first week of school give information to students on campus, the social event was promoted with Trey Songz's song «2 Reasons» (2012), whose chorus reads «I only came for the bitches and the drinks/bitches and the drinks, bitches and the drinks».

The name of the party, juxtaposing two elements associated with rape culture, namely, women as sexually available and alcohol consumption, already identifies female students as bitches. Increasingly used among college students (Kleinman et al., 2009, p. 64), the slur usually refers to a nasty, manipulative and bossy woman; a promiscuous, lewd woman, and even to a sex worker (Pardes, 2014). The animalized portrayal of women, in turn, is reinforced through Trey Songz's song (image 1), whose lyrics not only compare women to bitches, but also to chicks—a metaphor for a young and sexually desirable woman (López-Rodríguez, 2009, p. 89). The dehumanizing and sexualizing effect of both animal images is also strengthened through the symbolic dismemberment of a woman, who is reduced to «a body», «ass» and «booty» in the song.

At the core of these animal representations is the notion of male dominance and control—as implied in the reference to «handcuffs» to physically restrain and coerce a woman in the lyrics (image 1). In fact, falling within the scope of the so-called «control metaphors» (Pérez, 2001), faunistic tropes like «bitch» are often utilized to exert power and subjugate certain social groups that do not conform to the heteronormative male, given that animals are characterized by their unrestrainable (sexual) behavior. For instance, research in penitentiaries has documented «bitch» as part of the argot of prisoners to denote the sodomized man (Sabo et al., 2001, p. 9) and inmates that have been (gang-)raped recall how prison guards would play the song «Prison Bitch» (Sabo et al., 2001, p. 9)—whose title is self-explanatory— during their incarceration (Kleinman et al., 2009, p. 53). This act of domination epitomized in the metaphoric «bitch» that permeates both popular parlance and popular music vertebrates the party held at the Canadian university, where female students were metaphorically turned into *bitches*— in college jargon and music— to be (sexually) controlled—presumably through alcohol consumption.

Image 1. Lyrics of Trey Songz' song «2 Reasons»

[Trey Songz]
 Tell the DJ turn it up
 Bet the DJ bring it back
 Tell him play that shit again
 Tell him that you like that, like that, oh

[TI]
 Trey, I ain't got but two reasons to be here man
 All the ballers poppin' bottles

[Trey Songz]
 I know it's somebody birthday
 Right now, right now, right now, right now, right now
 Catch me in the club like I own that bitch
 Shawty dancin' like she on that dick
 Bad bitches never hold back
 Send me a picture, where your phone at?

CHORUS
 I only came here for two reasons
 I came for (What you came for?)
 I only came for the bitches and the drinks
 Bitches and the drinks, bitches and the drinks
 For the bitch, ca-came for the bitches and the drinks/
 Bitches and the drinks, bitches and the drinks, what you came for?
 Baby, get your glass up, only came for bitches and the drinks
 Baby, get your ass up, that's what I came for

I see you tryin' to handcuff her on the street
 Stop trippin', you can't control that freak
 Ain't nobody got a body like hers
 Ghetto booty, but she came from the 'burbs
 Got a dark skinned girl dancin' on me
 Two white girls dancin' on me
 Bad yellow bone, yeah I'm in my zone
 Waitress keep comin' back, so you know we hella gone

CHORUS

[TI]
 I hit the club and buy the bar
 In VIP, just see my partners and a lot of broads
 And such a G' I be, just pop them bottles, party hard
 I'm done with today, I'm lookin' for tomorrow
 All I do is turn up, ain't no dough it don't concern us
 All this bubba kush I burn up, smell some regular, it ruined us
 Turning corners, fishtailin' out the parking lot yellin' (Bank head, west side, eight or nine chicks trailin'
 Right behind us, been this way since we were minors
 If it wasn't for the chicks up in this bitch, you wouldn't find us
 Even way out in China same thing when I came through the door
 Like, here you go again, where the bitches and the drink, yo

CHORUS

Hey girl, you heard what I said, get your ass up
 If you hot, you cold, you Florida, Alaska,
 Chicago, Virginia, New York City
 Houston where the girls all thick
 LA, the Bay, tell your girl 'bout this
 Matter fact tell the whole GA
 Ooh, you know they fine up and down the Carolinas
 Shout to every ten I see when I'm down in Tennessee

Source: <https://genius.com/Trey-songz-2-reasons-lyrics>

5.2. All-male college dorm Elías Ahúja sexist animal chants (Spain 2022) and sexist animal publication in the dorm's journal (Spain 2000) at the University Complutense of Madrid

On October 6th, 2022, at nighttime, at the University Complutense of Madrid campus, a student in the all-male college dorm Elías Ahúja yelled at the students in the all-female dorm Santa Mónica, «¡Putas! ¡Salid de vuestras madrigueras como conejas! ¡Sois unas putas ninfómanas! ¡Os prometo que vais a follar todas en la capea! ¡Vamos, Ahúja!» [Whores, come out of your burrows like rabbits, you're all fucking nymphomaniacs, I promise you that you are all going to fuck in the bullring. Let's go Ahuja!】 (Hedgecoe, 2022). The chant, part of a rite of passage for university newcomers to prove their manhood, ignited a mass catcalling, a choreographed move, where fellow students across the Elías Ahúja building pulled open their blinds and started shouting and making animal noises (Hedgecoe, 2002, pp. 2-5).

The scream symbolically turned female students into rabbits, and, consequently, their halls of residence into burrows. An animal known for its reproductive capacity; the rabbit symbolizes female sexuality, as it is commonly associated with the Playboy bunnies in the collective imagination. The metaphor applies to an attractive and/or sexually active woman (Hines, 1999, pp. 9-11) and is a euphemism for the female genitalia in Spanish too (Chamizo & Sánchez, 2000). The figurative rabbit, thus, metonymically reduced female students to the sexual part of their anatomies, contributing, in this way, to their objectification and sexualization. Furthermore, the animal sounds made by the male students functioned as a sort of mating call that recreated the metaphorical hunting scenario where man acts as sexual predator awaiting his female prey.

Prior to this episode of verbal violence and sexual harassment, an article titled «Lupus Ahuhus» [The Elías Ahúja wolf], representing the male residents of the Elías Ahúja as packs of wolves hunting female students, was published in the dorm's journal *El búho* [The Owl] in 2000 (Maestre, 2019)⁴. The article was written in a humorous tone and was intended to sketch the profile of the male students of the Elías Ahúja dorm. Illustrated with two

4. The article was written by Pablo Casado, who would become the leader of the right-wing party Partido Popular in Spain from 2018 to 2022.

photographs of real wolves, the text spoke of university male students in terms of different types of wolves, namely, «lupus loyolus», «lupus chaminantium», «lupus mendelius», «lupus cisnerienses» and «lupus ahujus» (Casado, 2000, p. 58) to refer to the male students of the dorms Loyola, Chaminade, Mendel, Cardenal Cisneros and Elías Ahúja, respectively. Having identified male students as predatory beasts, the article focused next on the description of the superior (sexual) capacity of the Elías Ahúja men when compared to the rest of the students: «muy superior a la de otras manadas colindantes [...] la patente superioridad pélvica y genital con respecto a otras especies rivales» [they are by far superior to other neighboring wolf-packs [...] their obvious pelvic and genital superiority when compared to other rival species] (Casado, 2000, p. 59). Their portrayal as promiscuous and lascivious predators already emphasized the danger they posed to women's (sexual) integrity: «Es una de las especies más promiscuas y lascivas de la Península Ibérica, que puede representar un auténtico peligro para la integridad de cualquier hembra del reino animal» [It is one of the most promiscuous and lascivious species of the Iberian Peninsula, which can pose a real threat to the integrity of any female within the animal kingdom] (Casado, 2000, p. 58).

Drawing from the metaphoric hunting scenario, the writer traced parallels between the predatory behavior of wolves and the male students' procurement of sexual relations with women. Terms such as «otear» [look down on], «olfatear» [sniff], «aullidos» [howling], «instintos de voraz carnívoro» [animal instincts of a voracious carnivorous], «feroz e infatigable cazador de carne fresca» [ferocious and tireless hunter of fresh meat], «manada» [wolf pack] or «cacerías» [hunting], pertaining to the semantic field of animals, described men's sexual pursuit of female students (Casado, 2000, p. 58). The acculturation of male students into university (rape) culture is transmitted through the hunting scenario too. Characterized as «lobeznos» [wolf cubs], freshmen are encouraged to compete with veteran students in the sexual chase of female students, who are presented as prey in a burrow: «Se sueltan por la madriguera numerosas piezas de caza, dando comienzo la cacería inaugural y [...] han de competir con los hambrientos veteranos» [Numerous prey are released, marking the start of

the inaugural hunting and freshmen have to compete against the hungry veterans] (Casado, 2000, p. 59).

Through the lens of animal hunting, women were seen as all sorts of prey: «Entre sus presas más codiciadas se encuentran, como es obvio, las lobas. Aunque, si existe carestía de estas, recurre de buen grado a otras especies animales como cerdas, zorras, gallinas o cualquier especie de ave que le ponga los huevos» [among their most coveted prey are, obviously, she-wolves. However, if there is a shortage of she-wolves, they are happy to resort to other animal species like pigs, vixens, hens or any other type of bird that lays eggs], «el ganado de las cercanías» [the nearby cattle], «madriguera» [burrow], «mininos» [pussycats] (Casado, 2000, p. 59). This wide repertoire of figurative fauna possesses strong sexual connotations. Despite subtle differences in their figurative meanings, all these animal metaphors are virtually synonymous with libidinous, promiscuous women and even with sex workers (López-Rodríguez, 2009). The article further exploits the sexuality transmitted through animal imagery by portraying female students as birds able to lay eggs: «cualquier especie de ave que le ponga los huevos» (Casado, 2000). Besides the sexual connotations of avian metaphors, the pun on «huevos» [eggs], a term that literally denotes eggs and metaphorically refers to the testicles in Spanish, stresses the sexual intentions of male students.

The violence characteristic of animal hunting —and sometimes mating— is extrapolated to the courtship of male students. In order to achieve the sexual goal of the metaphoric hunt, these young men would employ all sorts of tactics: from fighting against male rivals («enfrentamientos y ataques frustrados» [confrontations and frustrated attacks]) to using female students as baits trapped in a hall of residence («Se sueltan por la madriguera numerosas piezas de caza, dando comienzo la cacería inaugural» [numerous pieces of prey are released in the burrow, making the start of the inaugural hunt]) and even resorting to prostitution («siempre les queda el recurso de una conocida madriguera felina de mininos donde la caza está sobradamente asegurada para los lobos» [they can always resort to a well-known cat's den where the wolves have their hunting secured]) (Casado, 2000)— for feline imagery is a common euphemism for prostitutes (López-Rodríguez, 2009).

5.3. When male students turn into eagles, vultures and a wolf pack on talking of raping their female classmate in a WhatsApp group at the University of Castilla-La Mancha (Spain 2018)

On January 2018, at the University of Castilla-La Mancha, a female student was told by one of her friends that some of her male classmates had created a WhatsApp group called «Violadores Fitness» [Fitness Rapists] where they described themselves as predatory animals on planning to gang-rape her (Rodrigo, 2018, p. 1). Inspired by the infamous «wolf pack case» that took place in Pamplona in 2016 when 5 young males that had the WhatsApp group «La manada» [the wolf pack] ended up gang-rapeing an 18-year-old woman (López-Rodríguez, 2023, p. 82; Molpeceres & Filardo-Llamas, 2020), the students of the Albacete campus explicitly expressed their intention of «marcarse una manada» [turn into a wolf pack to gang rape] on their on-line conversations (Rodrigo, 2018, p. 1)⁵. The student whose rape was being planned reported those on-line conversations to the police, who opened an investigation for attempted rape. She also used her social media to denounce the situation and the Students' Union of the University of Castilla-La Mancha issued a press statement condemning those messages.

The students encouraged each other to commit rape — «¿Nuestro oficio? Violar» [Our job? Rape]— even promoting the use of drugs and violence— «quien trae hoy la burundanga?» [who is bringing burundanga today?] and «con más violencia» [with more violence]— and offering rape as a prize for the member who sexually assaulted more women— «El que

5. Publicly known as «la manada» (the wolf pack) case after the name of the WhatsApp group created by 5 men to chat, film, and boast about their sexual exploits, the gang-rape case of a young woman during the running of the bull celebrations of San Fermín in 2016 showed the direct link between the language of the species and (discourses of) violence against women. Besides the rapists' WhatsApp nickname framing sexual relationships in terms of animal hunting, their on-line conversations, behaviors, and even physical appearances displayed the iconography of the beast (López-Rodríguez, 2023, p. 83). The youngest man was told to use drugs and weapons to secure sex with a woman if he wanted to become a wolf —«la prueba de fuego para ser un lobo» [the manhood test to become a wolf] (Cedeira, 2017, p. 1)— whereas the group leader had a big tattoo of a wolf's pawprint on his back that he had shown on his social media along with sexist comments (Requeijo & Montero, 2016, p. 32).

más viole gana una violación gratis» [The person who rapes the most wins a free rape] («Programa especial Manada Albacete», 2018; Rodrigo, 2018, pp. 1-2) (image 2). Their exchange of messages, which included photographs taken from the Instagram account of their targeted woman, displayed animal metaphors.

Image 2. WhatsApp messages of the Albacete wolf pack

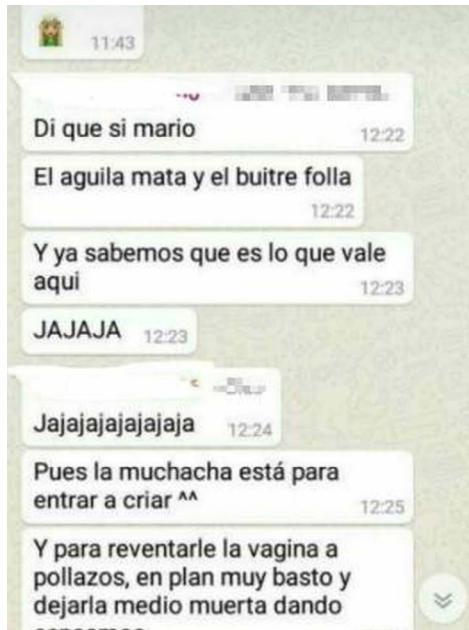


Source: <https://shorturl.at/U2mpe>

The male students self-identified as «águilas» [eagles] and «buitres» [vultures] when talking of raping their female classmate (image 3). These birds of prey, which stand out for their strength, power, keenness of vision, and, above all, rapaciousness, epitomize masculinity, (sexual) prowess and violence in the Spanish language (Herrero, 2018, pp. 297-305)— as seen on their chat with the explicit reference to the lethal killing capacity of the eagle and the sexual potency of the vulture: «el águila mata y el buitre folla» [the eagle kills and the vulture fucks] (image 3). This lethal combination of sex and violence conveyed through avian imagery materializes in one of the WhatsApp comments where one of the students incites to violently penetrate the woman till she is deadly injured and with spasms: «pues la

muchacha está para entrar a criar/y para reventarle la vagina a pollazos, en plan muy basto y dejarla medio muerta dando espasmos» [the girl is ready to be fucked/and to break her vagina with hard dick penetrations, speaking in a rough way, and to leave her half-dead with spasms]. Tellingly, within the bird icons that permeate the chat, several students conceptualize their penis as «polla», equivalent to English «cock» and whose literal referent is «chicken»: «Tú sácate la polla» [You, take out your cock].

Image 3. WhatsApp messages of The Albacete wolf pack where male students are self-represented as eagles and vultures



Source: <https://shorturl.at/krYGC>

Distancing themselves from other men, the students continued with avian metaphors to debase the woman's boyfriend to the category of a «pollo» [chicken]: «sin que se entere el pollo» [the boyfriend doesn't have to know] («La manada albaceteña», 2018), whom they describe as stupid: «el novio tiene cara tonto» [her boyfriend looks stupid]. As opposed to the

wild predatory birds used in their self-representation, the chicken is both domestic and prey. Derogatively applied to a young man, the metaphor can denote a homosexual male too (López-Rodríguez, 2009), serving, in this way, to ridicule the student's boyfriend by attacking his lack of masculinity.

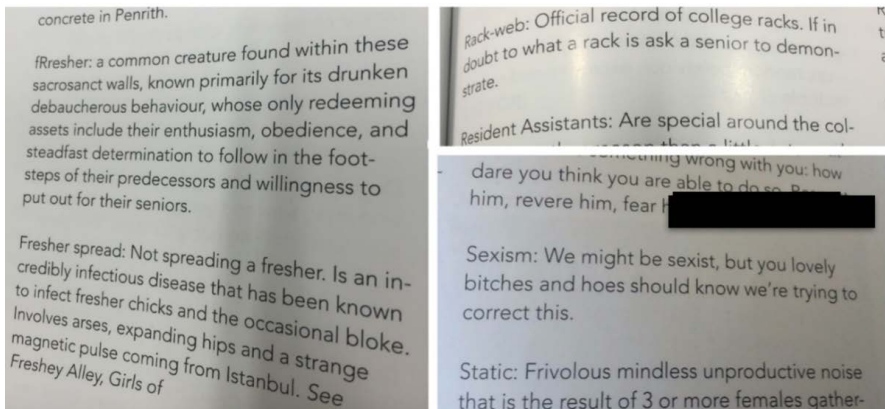
5.4. Chicks, bitches, pussies and mullets versus studs: Labels for female and male students at Sydney's University Wesley College (Australia 2014)

In 2014, in Australia, residents of Sydney's University Wesley College produced a special issue of their newsletter, *The Wesley Journal*, classifying female students into different types of animals according to their alleged sexual behavior. The publication, which contained a graph called «The RackWeb» showing a network of supposed inter-college students' relations, included awards given to women in the categories of «Best ass», «Best cleavage», and «Biggest porn star» (Balakumar, 2016). The journal also crowned the female student who apparently had had the most sex on campus with the title of «Mrs. RackWeb» (Robin, 2016). Some of the female students whose names were revealed in the publication reported sexual harassment, sexual assault, and verbal abuse after having their names printed in the newsletter. Others developed health-related conditions such as anxiety, stress, and depression derived from this printed slut-shaming act (Balakumar, 2016; Jeans et al., 2016).

Funded by a mandatory fee (Jeans et al., 2016, p. 3), the journal, which defines a woman's worth by her willingness to hook up with «pussy-hungry seniors» (Balakumar, 2016, p. 4), mirrored the unspoken mantra «women are the sluts and men are the studs» revealed by an anonymous male student at Wesley College (Jeans et al., 2016, p. 7). In addition to the play-on-words based on the acoustic and graphic similarities between «slut» and «stud», the self-identification of the male students with a wild animal—usually a horse—kept for breeding not only reveals the sexual intentions towards their female peers, but also their animalistic view of sexual relations that reduce women to the category of sexual objects—as attested in their representation as «pussy», a feline metaphor derogatively applied to the female partner in sexual intercourse and a euphemism for the vagina (López-Rodríguez, 2009).

Epitome of wilderness, virility and sexual vigor, the image of the stud radically contrasts with the domestic animal species labelling female students in the college publication. The section devoted to warning about sexually transmitted diseases depicts first-year female students as «chicks» —a metaphor for a sexually attractive, young woman (López-Rodríguez, 2014) (image 4). The extract dealing with sexism, which ironically admits and issues an apology for possible sexist behaviors on behalf of male students, renders female students as «bitches», which figuratively stands for promiscuous women (image 4).

Image 4. Representation of female students as chicks and bitches in the Wesley College journal



Source: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3593071/Sydney-University-students-claim-Wesley-College-haven-rampant-sexism.html>

The link between animal metaphors and university rape culture seen in the dorm publication similarly transpired in some of the hazing rituals many female students endured the very same year during orientation week at Wesley College. As research has shown (MacKinlay, 2024), initiation rituals revolving around sexual violence against women are not uncommon at universities and may pave the way for the promotion and legitimization of (sexual) abuse against female students. Female students recall hearing the expression «fresher mullet» to refer to the ugliest woman after being

forced to wear only their bras and underpants in their dorm in front of both female and male students (Stephens, 2016). This elongate and stout fish that fat-shames women contributed to their sexualization, for, like «pussy» before, fish imagery euphemistically denotes the female genitalia (Chamizo & Sánchez, 2000).

5.5. Those dirty pigs in the bathroom at the Universidad Autónoma de México (Mexico 2021)

In 2021 at the Universidad Autónoma de México the doors and walls of the women's bathrooms of the Faculty of Engineering were covered in graffiti calling female students «cerdas» (i.e., pigs) while promoting sexual violence against them with explicit comments such as «violar» (i.e., rape), «putas» (i.e., whores) and «sexo» (i.e., sex) (Gómez, 2021). Despite being erased by the university cleaning services once students made a complaint, the animal slur, used to insult a woman who is fat and/or is regarded as (sexually) dirty, continued re-appearing in the same public toilets in the following weeks. Furthermore, the news quickly spread across campus, leading many male students to poke fun of the situation, even making jokes with the use of «cerda» in the university washrooms—for this is the place used for personal hygiene (Gómez, 2021). Several female students also asserted that after this incident some of their male classmates started to make jokes and call them «cerdas» on their way to the toilets.

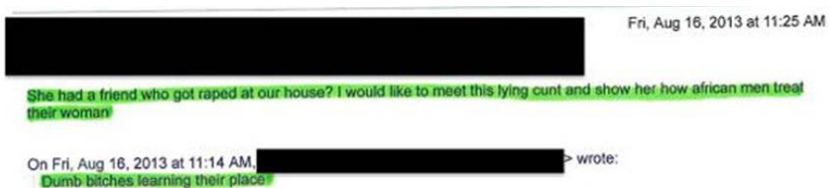
Besides being a form of verbal aggression, the use of this animal metaphor in the women's bathrooms symbolized an act of physical violence too for the slur was displayed in a space designed exclusively for the privacy of female students. This form of abuse deriding a woman to the category of an animal regarded as filthy and invading a physical space designed exclusively for females was not taken seriously among numerous members of the university community, particularly male students, who even intensified the use of this commonplace metaphor to debase and sexualize their female classmates and even justified their use as part of «lads' banter».

5.6. Bitching about the bitches: Using «bitch» as a synonym for female college student in e-mail exchanges at the American University in Washington D.C. (USA 2013-2014)

More than 70 pages of e-mails revolving around rape, drinks and drugs and almost exclusively referring to women as «bitches» were exchanged among members of the Epsilon Iota fraternity at the American University in Washington D.C. between 2013 and 2014 (Harvey-Jenner, 2014). Known as «the Fratergate Tumblr case» due to the anonymous Tumblr account where the on-line conversations were leaked (Plank, 2014), the back-and-forth of e-mail exchange contained constant descriptors of female students as «bitches»: «sexy bitches», «dumb bitches», «fucking bitches», *inter alia* (McCorkell, 2014).

Already under the radar due to allegations of previous sexual assault by a fraternity student (Gonzalez, 2014; Harvey-Jenner, 2014), several e-mails explicitly mentioned this supposed rape describing the female victim as «chick» and «bitch» —two metaphors with a strong sexual charge: «That chick with the date rape comment» and «that fucking bitch» (Harvey-Jenner, 2014). In a conversation questioning the veracity of the rape by calling the female student «a lying cunt», one of the male students called those women supporting the accusation «dumb bitches» and threatened with sexually assaulting them —«learning their place» (image 5).

Image 5. Email calling those students who talk about sexual assault «dumb bitches»



Source: <https://shorturl.at/zsrG7>

The male students' concern with their infamous reputation led them to come up with a plan to attract female students to their parties, where they would be intoxicated and sexually taken advantage of: «I just think that

more intimate pre-games where the girls would feel more relaxed and safe would be such a good idea to get the bitch into the right state of intoxication so that plows will be raining all over the place» (Harvey-Jenner, 2014, p. 8). In addition to the sexualization of women through the pejorative «bitches», the violence conveyed through the verb «plow» to refer to sexual intercourse recurs in other e-mails where the sexual pursuit of female students—called «bitches»—is understood in war-like terms: «I conquered a bitch just like France in Africa» (Plank, 2014).

Prior to the leak of e-mails, a homosexual undergraduate student had reported sexual assault by two members of the same fraternity who yelled the anti-gay slur «bitch» while kicking him and trying to run over him with their car: «you fucking bitch» (Ryan, 2014; Samsel & Carrasco, 2017). The pervasiveness of «bitch» in the speech of the Epsilon Iota fraternity had fatal consequences for both female and non-heteronormative male students at the American University.

6. CONCLUSIONS

As Claude Lévi-Strauss (1968) stated, animals are important in people's lives not only because they are good to eat but, more importantly, because they are good to think with. Certainly, as this paper has shown, the bestial iconography articulates episodes of violence against women perpetrated on campuses in English- and Spanish-speaking countries. Through the lens of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis, this article has shed some light onto how these animal metaphors used among college students transmit and perpetuate sexist beliefs and practices that can have detrimental effects on women's lives. As has been seen, animal metaphors function as forms of address and gendered labels, and often articulate misogynous discourses that promote, lead to, and even justify (sexual) violence against female students on college campuses. They are, indeed, an integral part of university rape culture.

Animal metaphors are commonplace in the university setting. Their use is not limited to private conversations among male students on WhatsApp groups that frame sexual relationships in terms of a male predator hunting his female prey or e-mail exchanges that minimize and justify sexual

violence upon female students by portraying women as «bitches», but they also penetrate the public sphere of the university. Animal metaphors, in fact, are at the core of chants that describe women as bunnies awaiting sex during hazing rituals. They also name parties held on campuses that promote alcohol consumption and easy sex by representing female students as «bitches». In official dorms' publications, they are used for the self-identification of male students as sexual predators and as social labels that sexualize and stigmatize female students based on their perceived sexual behaviors («bitches») and physical appearance («chicks», «mullets»). They even appear in graffiti on the walls and doors of the university bathrooms of female students to foster sexual and verbal abuse on categorizing women as «pigs».

Despite pertaining to different countries that are culturally and geographically distant, namely, Canada, Spain, Australia, Mexico, and The United States of America, the episodes of violence against female students within university life analyzed in this paper display a common set of animal metaphors that encourage male students to take an active and aggressive role in terms of their (sexual) interactions with their female peers and reduce female students to the category of sexual objects for males' (sexual) pleasure. These animalistic images that portray men as predators and women as prey reinforce gender stereotypes. In addition, these animal metaphors are mainly used within male groups to foster, exert and legitimize violence upon female students.

Finally, considering that, according to the World Health Organization (2024), 1 out of 5 women will experience some sort of unwanted sexual contact and abuse during their university life, the study of animal metaphors in the college environment deserves further examination given empirical research that establishes a direct link between the use of the bestial iconography and sexist attitudes and (sexual) violence against women (Bock & Burkley, 2019; Tipler & Ruscher, 2019).

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DEDICATION

This article is dedicated to my daughter, Helena. Thanks for being in my life.

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