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Prevention of Gender-based violence through coeducation. An educational proposal aimed at Secondary School

Máster en Profesor de Educación Secundaria Obligatoria y Bachillearto, Formación Profesional y Enseñanza de Idiomas

Trabajo de Fin de Máster

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Abstract

The present dissertation discusses the education of teenagers in gender-based violence issues through coeducational strategies and the implementation of tasks in which a natural learning of English as a Second Language is put forward. This is fulfilled by designing lesson plans that use certain media content, specially if the students are familiar with it, and make them question broader social issues by analysing a well-known-among-teenagers TV show and the most popular sport in the world. By means of analysing and evaluating closely the content they are constantly exposed to on the media, the students will develop their critical thinking and awareness on social matters, sexism, misogyny and gender-based violence particularly

Keywords: Gender-based violence, coeducation, media, The Big Bang Theory, Soccer, critical thinking.

Resumen

El siguiente Trabajo de Fin de Máster reflexiona sobre temas de violencia de género y cómo éstos son percibidos por los adolescentes, especialmente cuando están tan expuestos a contenido en redes sociales y cualquier otro medio de comunicación que no dispone de mecanismos de detección y prevención de la violencia de género, y que fomentan una visión negativa de la mujer. Mediante la puesta en práctica de actividades en las que los y las estudiantes desarrollan su capacidad para pensar críticamente y analizar el contenido que consumen diariamente. Se han escogido los temas de The Big Bang Theory y el fútbol para aplicar estrategias de coeducación a contenidos con los que están familiarizados y de los que no tienen una visión en la que la mujer esté correctamente representada. Mediante la implementación de estas actividades, se intenta educar a chicos y chicas adolescentes en respeto e igualdad con el propósito de educar en materia de género para evitar que la violencia contra las mujeres siga desarrollándose en el futuro.

Palabras clave: violencia de género, redes sociales, medio de comunicación, The Big Band Theory, fútbol, coeducación, respeto, igualdad.

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Introduction

The Feminist movement has existed for as long as women have revolved against the oppressing system that ruled their lives, but it is only during the past couple of centuries that its existence has publicly come to light, sparking a revolution that has been spreading with steady build-up. Gender-based violence is a problem that is embedded in society and our way of thinking and vision of the world. It is through the power of education that we can change the perspective on gender, sex and the existing detrimental relation between them. So far, since the count of deaths by gender-based violence started, 1,001 women have been killed by their partners and ex-partners because of misogynistic reasons. Unfortunately for us, the number will go on growing unless we start changing people's minds on equality and Feminism, especially at the earliest stages of life.

This is the best way to prevent gender-based violence, specially in the long term, thanks to the awareness on equality that is aimed to achieve through the implementation of activities that spark critical thinking. If we show teenagers how to treat each other with respect and we help them detect abusive conducts, equality and progress will defeat sexism and gender-based violence.

The approach taken in these activities is based on cooperation, the natural acquisition of the language, and deductive processes of reasoning, which will help the students follow their own pace of acquisition and learn coeducational values. Coeducation does not only contribute to the students' mastership of social skills, which prepares them for the workforce and environments in which they will have to reach common agreements to solve a problem or carry forward a project. But the main reason why coeducational guidelines are followed during these sessions is that if we want to root out sexism and gender-based violence of society, the first step is to show the students that whether they are boys or girls or neither of them, they have to work together and respect each other, since they all have the same value for the group, and their ideas and strengths are all equally correct and eligible. Coeducational environments are the most accurate representation of the real world, in which (although predominantly ruled by men) half of the population is female and the other half is male (if we do not take into account intersexual self-designations or the like).

Justification

The two main laws in force within the Spanish legislative framework on Education (Ley Orgánica 2/2006 de Educación – LOE-; Ley Orgánica 8/2013 para la mejora de la calidad educativa – LOMCE-.) promote and defend the need to work on this subject in the interest of the social change that we want to bolster. Moreover, the Real Decreto 1105/2014, de 26 de diciembre, por el que se establece el currículo básico de la Educación Secundaria Obligatoria y del Bachillerato includes as a cross-curricular element to all subjects the theme of "igualdad efectiva entre hombres y mujeres" by means of fomenting the learning of prevention and resolution of conflicts in every aspect of life in a peaceful way, as well as the values on which equality and mutual respect between men and women are based.

The lesson plans that are put forward in this paper aim to show students the real applicability of the knowledge acquired in them and the skills that they improve. This proposal helps ESL learners improve their performance in communicative processes from a global perspective by focusing specially on oral comprehension and expression at the same time cross curricular elements are used as the central topic of discussion. The activities suggested are an especially attractive way of working on social issues and helping the students develop critical thinking while using content they can relate to and enjoy. Furthermore, the students learn that what is taught in school has a real application inside and outside of it, and serve them to solve problems, make decisions and understand better the environment they live in. Finally, their competence on the language and the resolution of conflicts while working with peers will make them more competent in the environment in which he lives later in life.

Objectives

This proposal is designed with the objective of raising awareness on gender-based violence within teenagers who consume media in a massive way and do not have a control of what they watch; while encouraging a natural learning of the English language. Students will learn about cultural items of the English culture (The Big Bang Theory) and learn to recognised patterns of violence and sexualisation of women in the media. The objective of this proposal is to give an answer to this problematic, which can be

implemented in class in order to help students grow personally and develop gender awareness while making use of the English language and the four main language skills. The lesson plans proposed in this research paper are aimed to educate students on gender equality values and to give them tools that help them detect abusive conducts and prevent or solve them at the same time they use the language to communicate and make themselves understood.

Syntactic-discursive structures: since the proposal is aimed at a 3rd E.S.O. class (with students between the ages of 14 and 15), the activities aim at: improving the initiation and continuation of personal and social relations; the description of physical and abstract qualities about a person using the present simple and the present continuous; and the narration of past and regular events using the past simple and past continuous and expressions of time. Furthermore, the coeducational factor implemented in the tasks helps the students understand and make use of expressions of will, wish, conditions or hypothesis, the expression of knowledge, certainty, doubt and assumption.

Theoretical Foundation

1. Issues of gender violence

1.1 Gender-based violence according to the UN

Despite the prevalent existence of gender-based violence, the UN has not considered it as a violation of human rights until 1975, when it started to be contemplated as a societal matter rather than a women's problem. When the UN's Fourth World Conference of Women (Beijing, China) recognised in 1995 the Declaration and Platform for Action, a great stepping stone was achieved, since the document was designed to empower women, remove the obstacles to their active participation in all spheres of life and to ensure that women have equal rights and share in the economic, cultural, political and economic spheres. Twelve main areas of concern where identified to focus on. However, all these problematic areas of inequality share a same root, which is the construction of marriage, family and society. Gender-based violence takes place in every domain of life, with special prominence in the private

context, in which men exert violence against women without being exposed to blame or reprobation of any type.

In 1993, a final definition of gender-based violence was accepted at the UN Conference of Human Rights (Viena), which shall be used in this research paper for reference purposes:

> "Gender-based violence is any type of act against women that conveys/means the use of force or coartion with the intention of promoting or perpetuating hierarchical relations between men and women. "(Nuño and Antón, 2009, p.25)

It was from that moment that sexual and gender-based violence were considered a violation of basic rights, and light was shed into this issue of global proportions as a problem that must be eradicated promptly by means of educating in order to prevent this violence from happening and intervening in those areas in which prevention is not enough. It is necessary to consider the fact that passing laws that defend basic human rights does not necessarily match with a real application of them. As long as gender-based violence is not directly addressed and palliated by means of a material implementation, said laws and measures will only be a drill, a simulation of a mere discourse that has no real application, and the transformation of the system on which it relays will not be effective.

1.2 Distinction between gender-based violence and domestic violence

There are two different perspectives on which our understanding and explanation of domestic violence and gender-based violence rely: while feminist discourses consider that our perspective of gender (relations) is built and defined by society, Essentialism affirms that it is determined by biology. However, essentialism "often seems to have dominance when considering the 'hows' and 'whys' of DV." (p. 3) For instance, domestic abuse has been historically believed to be natural expression of masculinity in response to femininity, the unquestioned manifestation of the superiority of men over women. As a consequence, domestic violence has been naturalised and articulated on patriarchal norms that validate sexist attitudes and the dominance of one group (men) over the other (women).

It is in moments of ideological collision that we examine and question the beliefs we have inherited from our societal predecessors. During the last few years, a new debate on Feminism and gender-based violence has sprouted in Spain; in spite of the growth in

the number of advocates who fight for women's rights, detractors have been fighting for their own place within the public opinion, attracting supporters whose ideology is based on a set of beliefs that assert GBV does not exist as such and it should rather be considered DV. This is the case of "Vox", a political party that has recently managed to make their radical, misogynistic and ultra-rightist discourse be part of the general debate. Although ignored in the political sphere during the past decades, it has gained popularity, specially among the youngest population. They have managed to get to positions of power and decision making in the politics of the country. The party is openly against the term "Gender-based violence" and has already passed a series of measures in some territories that not only deny its existence but rename it as "Family violence." Their long-term goal in this regard would be to ultimately repeal the present law against GBV.[1] By doing so, women's legal safeguard from violence and discrimination disappears, and our efforts to distinguish our fight from the rest are in vain. Consequently, the following section aims to spark light and deepen the level of comprehension on the topic and to provide with a properly academic definition of both concepts.

Domestic violence and gender-based violence are two terms that are often used indistinctively, since it is difficult to distinguish between them. As a general rule, GBV (gender-based violence) can take place in the domestic field, but DV (domestic violence) does not always convey a violence exerted for gender reasons. Although scholars differ on the definition of domestic violence, some human rights activists tend to agree on a definition based on a broader approach, which includes structural violence; that is, ways in which social structures systematically harm or put people in situations of risk or disadvantage. "The arrangements are structural because they are embedded in the political and economic organisation of our world. "(Burtle, n.d.) The fact that this kind of violence is hard to see makes solving this scourge more difficult. A consequence of this invisibility of the violence is that it is even more difficult to identify the guilty part in this process. This is, at the same time, the biggest advantage for those who endeavour to continue exerting violence against any kind of collective that suffers continuous and systematic oppression. However different the perspectives on the subject may be, there is a need to

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[1]Vox España (2017, July 31). *Comunicado de VOX sobre el Pacto de Estado contra la Violencia de Género.* Retrieved from website: https://www.voxespana.es/noticias/comunicado-de-vox-sobre-el-pacto-de-estado-contra-la-violencia-de-genero-20170731

define the concept of gender-based violence in order for it to be acknowledged and ultimately eradicated with the help of research and monitoring.

DV (domestic violence) is defined by the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence as the act of omission committed by a person against another person with whom he or she is or has been in a domestic relationship. (Dragash and Djakovica, 2013, p. 26) According to the UN, domestic violence includes violence perpetrated by intimate partners and other family members, and its manifestation can be physical, sexual, psychological and economic. The types of domestic violence listed above are not mutually exclusive, and often result at the same time. Acts of omission are also included in this list of forms of domestic violence, although it is displayed more indirectly, since it is the consequence of a gender bias, which discriminates women in any aspect of their daily life (e.g.: malnutrition, inaccessibility to health care or education, etc.).

1.3 Statistics on gender violence and number of casualties in Spain

There are many types of GVB, and more data are known each year about this scourge. However, the image of violence, almost daily, that women suffer is blurry. The Instituto de la Mujer y para la Igualdad de Oportunidades of Spain publishes periodical reports and statistics on the number of victims of GBV in Spain and tries to tackle the profile of the women who suffer it. The number of complaints can also help analyse this problematic, but, since many women still do not report their abusers, it is still very difficult to interpret the data obtained and use it to interpret the reality.

Two different profiles of victims are distinguished by the Instituto de la Mujer. The first category corresponds to those women who have been technically reported to be victims of GVB but who are not recognised as such formally. The proportion of technically abused women represents a 9.6% of the total of women who reside in Spain (i.e., 1,786,978 women in absolute terms.) (Nuño, Antón, Brunel, Silván & Urbano, 2009, p. 59) The second group of women was that of women who reported some kind of GBV had been exerted towards them by any person they lived with during the year previous to the survey. This group is formed by a 3.6% of the women who live in Spain (i.e., 677,352 women in total.) The following paragraphs show a more in-depth analysis of the data obtained, considering age groups, types of abusers and the number of casualties in Spain.

Percentage of women who have suffered physical violence from any partner throughout their lives according to age groups: women are more prone to suffer "moderate" physical violence by any of their partner throughout their lives when they are between the ages of 16 and 24, and "severe" physical violence when they are 25 to 34. Of the total of women who were surveyed, the percentage of women who answered that they suffered severe violence was higher than the results obtained when answering they (had) suffered moderate physical violence. The results lead to think that gender-based violence, when physical, is difficultly controllable, and it reasserts the statement that abusers exert an irrational violence towards their victims.

Percentage of abused women by age group: the samples taken correspond to the years 1999, 2002 and 2006 respectively. There is a visible decrease both in the number of women who where technically considered as victims and those who self-classified as victims. The age group that reported to be abused the most was that of women aged between 45 and 64. It is important to remark the fact that the number of women who are technically considered to have been abused is notably higher than the number of them who classify themselves as such. Surveys do not match reality perfectly, and the data that can be interpreted as positive can have a hidden backside. In the case of these results, a notably important question must be asked: would a low number of reports mean there are many more women who are not recognised as victims or who do not know about the abusive relationship they are in? If more women had access to resources to palliate the violence they suffer, the number of reports would be accordingly higher, but not necessarily as negative as it seems at first. There is an urge to finish gender-based violence, but the solution involves the existence of a problem, which cannot be eradicated abruptly, but rather taking down stakes.

Percentage of women who have suffered physical violence by their current partner or their ex-partners by age group: the group that reported to have suffered physical violence was that found between the ages of 45 and 54. In this macro survey, women could report whether they had suffered GVB from their partner at that time, from ex-partners or from any partner. The results are contrastively different among the types of abusers registered. Taking as reference the age group previously mentioned, 25.5% of them affirmed to have suffered GVB from past partners, while a 1.8% said to have suffered violence from the partner they had at that time. The highest percentages correspond to the categories of "ex-partners" and "other partners" (25% and 13.5% respectively.)

Main conclusions drawn from the macro survey on Violence:

❖ Both "technical" and "declared" abuse have decreased during the past years.

❖ The most common abuser is the partner or ex-partner, but it is more frequent among women "technically" abused.

❖ Gender-based violence exerted by a partner or ex-partner is not sudden, but rather follows a cycle in time. Accordingly, most victims reveal that the context of violence has an average length of at least 5 years.

❖ The highest proportion of abuse takes place between separated and divorced women (14.9% of technically abused women and 16.6% of self-classified abused women).

❖ The proportion of married women is much higher between those women who do not have conscience of the abuse they suffer.

❖ The highest proportion of abuse takes place among women in intermediate levels of education and women who are self-employed, being the latter the largest group.

❖ There is decrease in the number of incidents reported among the denominated "homemakers."

❖ The proportion of women who do not have a partner is higher among women who declare themselves as victims of GBV than within the state total, and even higher among those who are "technically" abused.

In some cases, this situation of abuse ends with the murder of the victims. Femicides represent the most brutal and wrenching consequence of the outrageous figures that underly GBV. Unfortunately, the number of women who die at hands of their abusers does not drop. In most cases, the murder of the woman takes place when the victim separates from the abuser and, consequently, he losses the control he had over "her woman". According to Nuño & Antón, (2009, p. 66) the proportion of police reports is still low in comparison to the total number of deaths reported each year, which do not stop growing. While a total of 54 women were reportedly killed in 1999, the number rose to 71 in 2003, and even 99 in 2017.[2] More than half of the murders took place at the victim's home, and in 1 of 10 of them, their children were present at the moment of the crime.

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[2] Redacción Ameco Press. (2018). Feminicidios y otros asesinatos de mujeres en España: 99 mujeres asesinadas en 2017. Ameco Press – Información para la Igualdad. Retrieved from: http://www.amecopress.net/spip.php?article17283

The data obtained shed light into a macabre account, and they are necessary for a dimensioned intervention of GBV. These murders represent the tip of the iceberg that are gender-based violence, misogyny and sexism.

1.4 Consequences of Gender-Based Violence on Women and their Children

The problematic we face in relation to this scourge has transversal effects on every strand of life and sphere of society, and consequences in the short, medium and long term. The side-effects are devastating and not visible in many occasions. However, the following section focuses on the more direct consequences of GBV not only on *primary* victims themselves but on the on-lookers who witness this kind of violence and have to cope with it, especially in the familiar environment.

There are different mental-health-related consequences derived from the experiences that the victims suffer, which include dissociative disorder, depressive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, personality disorder, eating disorders, self-harm and suicidal tendencies. In the long run, these disorders do not only affect the way in which victims view their self-concept, experience life, interact with other people and react to everyday problems that may arise in the future. These mental-health disorders are the medical reflection of how the victims feel and perceive themselves. Women who suffer GBV withdraw themselves from reality, since offenders, by means of different strategies of abuse which isolate the victims and make them lack social support. In broad terms, victims have a high degree of tolerance for abuse and a distorted perception of reality and themselves, which helps the abusers in their purpose of putting women in a lower position from which they can be dominated.

The consequences of gender violence affect children and teenagers as well as adults, since age is not a determining factor in this problematic, but rather a catalyst for different types of violence, which take place at different moments in life. (Dragash and Djakovica, 2013, p.87) Children who witness GBV or DV are not simply onlookers of the cruelty and brutality that is put forth, and the consequences of childhood GBV have been reflected in many investigations. The author of the psychosocial theory, Erik Erikson stablished a series of essential characteristics that every human being holds and that help to one's well-being with oneself.

Being the experience of violence during the early stages of life so fundamental for the development of an individual, it is important to implement changes in the way sex-gender relations are shown at school. The unleashing of distrust, identity disorientation, apathy and despair (p. 87) marks a child's life in the long run, and it can only be prevented by addressing the issue as a necessity of psychological order, being as important as the physiological ones. Contrarily, not much attention is brought to them due to their *abstract* nature. It is fundamental to develop a safe atmosphere in class that lets victims of GBV feel valued, secure and loved.

Gender-based violence is not inherent to the human species, it is seen and learnt, especially in the domestic sphere. Violent and sexist patterns of behaviour are seen, interiorised and reproduced further on in life. According to paediatrician Lola Aguilar, violent conducts are perceived by children as the most effective and appropriate in interpersonal interactions, because they are developed under the perception that the use of violence is the way of expression that corresponds to the role of the father of the family. Likewise, the role of the mother and, by extension, the role assigned to women in society are devalued. In the long-term period, survivors have problems with basic confidence, autonomy and initiative, and they feel they are faced with duties that are more adult-like (e.g., stablishing independence and intimacy) and feel they have to face the deterioration of functions as basic as self-care, cognition, memory, identity and the capacity to set close boundaries with other people. They continue to be prisoners of their past experiences even when they try to move on and find themselves trapped in their trauma. (p. 90)

The long-term consequences for children of abused women include, for instance, the justification of the violent conduct of the father due to the apparent triumph that it represents, which makes their children reproduce this model in their own conduct. As mentioned before, children and teenagers who are victims of GBV remain distraught and, consequently, present a series of characteristics that do not fade away with time, but must rather be treated by specialised therapeutic means. Attachment disorder is one of the greatest consequences, since it causes damage to the capacity of understanding oneself and form healthy and constructive relationships with the other individuals. In many cases, a solution is more easily found by means of specialised therapeutic treatment. (p. 89)

1.5 The Sex-gender-based System

As Nuño and Antón discuss, violence against women can only be understood as the consequence of the *gender power order* that is stablished in society, and which sets a hierarchy and power different for both sexes. As a result of this order, violence becomes structural, and starts being directly linked to every layer of the social tissue. (2009, p. 29) Therefore, if we are to understand gender-based violence, we shall briefly address the basis of this system in which human interaction is based, and which enables this kind of violence to occur constantly and worldwide. The social constructions born from these relationships have been naturalised and internalised in such way that they are now broadly accepted. Moreover, as Nuño and Antón remark, since most of gender-based violence takes place in a private environment as the family, it was not recognised as a social phenomenon, but a personal one. Therefore, in the past, the general conception was that neither the Government nor Society should intervene in situations of violence. (2009, p.23)

"Gender attribution or sex categorisation is theorised as an inescapable but typically unremarkable hallmark of everyday social interactions." (Westbrook and Schilt, 2014, p. 35) On the basis of this affirmation, it is logical to consider the fact that here are two general conceptions of how the relation between sex and gender should be envisioned. The general view distinguishes between two different sexes (male and female) and two genres (masculine and feminine) and links the male sex to typically masculine attitudes and the female to typically feminine attitudes and behaviours. Genitalia (according to a biological criteria) are typically used to determine the gender of another person in (hetero)sexual and sexualised interactions. However, a cultural turn in the last fifty years towards values of equality has helped to the acceptance of the gender self-identity that each individual wants to give themselves in spaces defined as nonsexual. However, there is still conflict and clash when questions of access to gender-segregated locations arise, and identity-based and biology-based determinations do not match. (p.34) We can take the instance of modern athletic competition to illustrate the reality upon which this affirmation relies. As all gender-segregated spaces, it rests on the idea that there are two opposite genders. Almost all events are gender-segregated, although new ways of coping with athletes who do not fin in any of these two categories have been enforced, the hows have been controversial.

The categorisation of people in their birth as male or female is, however, assumed by many only taking into account visible biological characteristics, and ignoring others that are conventionally unimportant. In the case, for example, of transgender athletes, their DNA is scientific "proof" that they are either male or female, and it does not matter "what changes you have made to your sexual organs". (p. 44) As we can see, genitalia are the primary determiner of gender in all of our cases.

1.6 The cycle of violence in abusive relationships

Violence within the relationship starts during its very beginning, during the engagement, and it continues and increases during marriage. A great proportion of this violence keeps manifesting even when the relationship is finished.[3] The perception of gender roles and the stereotypes of how men and women should act accordingly is directly linked to the prevalence of violence. Violence in the relationship is not only difficult to detect, but hard to end as well. Many victims do not denounce their abuser openly because of their fear to reprisal or the worsening of the situation, specially the victim depends on the abuser (e.g.: economically) or because there are other family members involved, children in the majority of the cases. Other victims, such as elders or people with special needs may simply not be able to denounce the abuse.

However difficult to detect or denounce violence in the relationship may be, there is a pattern that is repeatedly followed in abusive relationships, and it is based on constant periods of tension and distension. There are three main stages in this process, which I shall discuss below.

❖ Build-up phase: since it is the first phase of the cycle of violence, it is not as visible as it is in the following ones. It is characterised by a gradual escalation of the tension, which starts creating a climate of fear and insecurity in the victim due to spontaneous and unjustified outbursts during which the abuser yells and threats the victim. Therefore, most of the violence exerted during this period of time is verbal. The woman tries to justify the man's attitude, adapt to the circumstances

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[3] *Violencia en las Relaciones de Pareja. Resultados de la Encuesta Nacional sobre la dinámica de las Relaciones en los Hogares, 2006.* (September, 2008) Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres. Retrieved from: http://cedoc.inmujeres.gob.mx/documentos_download/100924.pdf

and blame herself for having failed her partner's expectation. Since the victim does not fully understand the situation or the reason for the violence she suffers, she tries to downplay the acts of violence by looking for a justification in external factors. Victims tend to think that they can control the aggressor's outbursts or that they will eventually fade away and stop happening. Because most of the violence exerted during this phase is verbal, the victim does not fully understand what she is going through, and the relationship can be in this tension phase for long periods of time. Similarly, since the ill-treatment takes place within the emotional bond of the relationship, without the presence of other individuals, it is invisible and silent, and, therefore, more difficult to identify.

❖ Violent phase: the moments of tension that took place during the previous phase are increasingly frequent, until they lead to violent behaviours which leave physical and/or psychological and/ or sexual damage. It is a phase of punishment, submission and isolation that emotionally paraslises the woman, who views herself powerless and uncapable of predicting the consequences of her actions. They live in fear of "wrongdoing" and causing the man to punish her for any reason he unjustifiably may find. Even the smallest act can trigger the aggressor's violence, which can manifest anyhow, anytime.

❖ Honeymoon phase: the abuser repents, asks for forgiveness and promises it will not happen again, so the woman recovers excitement for the relationship and the change, so she does not end it or denounce the violence suffered. However, as these violent conducts consolidate, the honeymoon phase fades away, and violence is more frequent.

The main reason why the victim does not break with the situation of abuse is the hook between the two parts of the relationship, which will go on not because of the victim's personality, but rather the configuration of the relationship in itself. In this sense, the woman undergoes a period of negation developed after many years, during which she has learnt mechanisms of defencelessness before she is capable of recognising the abuse. Physical aggressions do not take place spontaneously, but rather in a build-up progression that ends with a sudden burst of violence for apparently no reason.

2. **Coeducational vs. single-sex schooling.** *Shaking the foundations: How Schools Shortchange Girls*

Marina Subirat, a studious on Gender-based violence and, especially on coeducation. She is an advocate of coeducation as a subject, and she states that it is necessary to have an entire subject on coeducation at schools and high schools. Furthermore, she affirms that there is a need to take further action. Coeducation is the first step to take when tackling sexism and gender-based violence, but further measures should be taken as to how the content and the subjects are presented to the students. Since most schools have started to be mixed in the 80s, women have stepped up and shown their capability to study and develop knowledge. For her, coeducation is the tool that helps prevent have "faulty pieces" in the process of education, which are more difficult to correct later. From using inclusive language to making visible that girls and women are present in class, the students learn how to communicate with both men and women and to have respect for each other, especially towards women.

In 1892, educator Anna Julia Cooper offered her critical view on gender inequality in public coeducation. She observed that while a girl was treated merely as an amiable "onlooker" in the classroom, a boy "could get all the support, couragement and stimulus as he needed" (328). The result was the suppression of the talents of "half of the human family" (326).[4]

How Schools Short-change Girls represents the collaboration of fourteen scholars who have paused to take stock of over two decades of detailed and rigorous studies on gender and American schooling. However, as author A. J. Cooper affirms, researches that have been done in U.S. schools come mostly from Catholic single-sex and coeducational high schools, which lead to inconsistent findings. Its purpose is to synthesize "all available research on the subject of girls in school," and make the argument that "gender bias in our schools is short-changing girls – and compromising our country" (v). The work was written with the intention of serving as a corrective to the growingly generalised tendency in educational discussions dealing with the reformation of the system to ignore the issue of gender. There has been Little consideration of the circumstances of girls, and

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[4] Cooper, A. J. (1976). *The Higher Education of Women. Black Women in Nine- teenth-Century American Life: Their Words, Their Thoughts, Their Feelings.* Ed. Bert James Loewenberg and Ruth Bogin. Philadelphia: Pennsylvania State University Press.

although this tendency is changing (especially during the last decades of this century) their experiences, needs and aspirations are not taken into account as they should be when it comes to the reformation of the educational system as we know it nowadays. "Nor have the implications of gender differences […] been considered relevant to proposals for educational change." (Reinking and Martin, 2018, p. 152) The view that is commonly held when dealing with education is one-dimensional, and the general stream of thought is led by the absence of gender as a topic of discussion. (6-9)

"The authors, in conducting their review, asked the following questions:

- ❖ To what degree did women participate as members or hold leadership positions on the special task forces or commissions?

- ❖ Did the issues or concerns that prompted a particular report include gender or sex equity?

- ❖ Did the data, the rationale, or background information presented include sex or gender as a separate category?

- ❖ Did the recommendations specifically address gender issues? (6)

Perhaps it shouldn't be surprising that only four of the 35 reports were found to include any reference to gender or make specific recommendations concerning girls. The research showed that girls fall behind when they enter school in comparison to boys, and with comparingly similar abilities, which were measured beforehand for such purpose. They suffered (and still do) continuous manifestations of discrimination at every level of their schooling:

- ❖ Interactional discrimination

- ❖ Curricular exclusion

- ❖ Testing bias

- ❖ Competitive classroom formats

All these forms of discrimination combined Foster the erosion of their self-steem, participation and achievement. Classroom interactions position them as insignificant, invisible, or helpless. Observational studies consistently show that:

- ❖ They receive considerably less attention than boys do

- ❖ Their questions and comments during discussion are often ignored

- ❖ They are asked fewer questions

- ❖ They are interrupted more frequently

Researchers concluded that these factors contribute to the fact that, while girls increasingly take the same courses as boys and receive better grades thorough their schooling, they are more ambivalent about their futures, have a diminished sense of personal-efficacy and do less well on the standardized SAT test, which serves as a filter for college entrance and the award of scholarships.

Although there are increasingly more vocational education programs which encourage girls to follow the academic and occupational path they feel more inclined to, students continue to select courses following sex-stereotyped occupational roles, and boys tend to engage in a narrower range of training options. Girls tend to receive higher grades than their male counterparts, which has been linked to their acquiescent behaviour.

"Evaded curriculum" is the term coined for matters central to the lives of students and teachers but touched upon only briefly, in at all, in most schools. These matters include the functioning of bodies, the expression and valuing of feelings, and the dynamics of power. In both formal course work and in the informal exchanges among teachers and students, serious consideration of these areas is avoided. The first step in ensuring boys and girls receive an equal education is addressing gender equity as a meaningful subject in the curriculum and not avoiding it. Challenging the formal curriculum is a tough battle, and it is likely to meet with stiff resistance from administrators, teachers, parents and the schools. Since gender bias is not a noisy problem, most people are unaware of the secret sexist lessons and the quiet losses which both girls and boys engender. In general, females are less likely to be studied in history and read about in literature, mathematics and science problems are more likely to be framed 'n male stereotypic terms, and illustrations in most texts depict a world populated and shaped mostly by males. Women are rarely found in schools curricula, and when they are, teachers are not provided with the necessary tools to distinguish the extent to which the content helps to perpetuate discriminating roles (i.e., when the characters of the text book

story embody sexual stereotypes that influence students to follow certain conducts related to their assigned gender).

In another note and referring back to the sex-gender system discussed below in this bachelor thesis, we shall consider the consequences that have been seen to take place when reproducing gender inequality in gender-segregated spaces, such as the classroom. The rationale of most single-sex school programs has always been that coeducative environments distract students from learning, and supporters emphasise that the latter impedes their academic achievement and personal development. However, the potential pedagogical benefits of single-sex education have not been empirically proven. (Singh and Vaught, 1998, p. 158) According to Westbrook and Schilt (2014), separate spaces for female and male students generate great concern "in these moments of gender ideology collision." (p. 46) Ideas about what is "fair" and "safe" help naturalise gender difference. There are two persistent concepts about womanhood that are used by the two-sexes discourse: the first one is that women are weaker than men and, as a result, "at constant heterosexual risk. This construction produces 'woman' as a 'vulnerable subjecthood' (Westbrook 2008)." (p. 46) Contrarily, men are imagined as a constant threat to women and children, "a construction of heterosexual male desire as natural and uncontrollable.) (p. 46)

2.1 Gender perspective on the media

"If she can see it, she can be it." (Gena Davis Intsitute on Gender in Media)

Ever since the media have existed, gender stereotypes have been perpetuated and reinforced, undermining gender equality and promoting a sexualised and objectified vision of women. It is present in every single medium of communication: films, TV programmes, radio, magazines, advertisements, the Internet, etc. The list is infinite, but the data that support this is very specific: according to the Geena Davis Institute, fictional females aged 13 to 39 are equally sexualised.

Women are five times more likely to receive appearance-based comments than men, and they are twice as often shown in sexually revealing clothing or with some nudity.

❖ Age: when the age of fictional characters was analysed, it was seen that males were more likely to be 40-64 years of age (34%) than women (19%). (Smith, p. 7) It is striking to see how often young female characters are portrayed to be in a romantic or sexual relationship with men who are generally far older than them. While men can be old and still be shown as "attractive", women are often characterised not only as younger than they actually are, but also younger than their male counterparts. This helps to reinforce two main stereotypes: fist, the idea that women have to be young in order to be attractive or to be in a relationship with a man they are "worthy of"; second, the perception that, while men can be old, have grey hair, have a "low-profile" physique and still be attractive for women, the latter must be young, in good shape, have stereotypically attractive bodies, be measured, quiet and so on forth in order to be viewed as attractive or worthy of being in a relationship with a man. In terms of age, the findings suggest that films worldwide show less gender bias when the characters are children and young adults. (p.7)

❖ Race: but not only age is stereotyped in films, when the characters' race/ethnicity (without taking into account their gender) was studied, researchers found that around 60% of the characters are White, and over 33% are Asian. The lowest samples were the ones corresponding to Black and Hispanic/Latino/Spanish characters. (p. 7)

❖ Sexualisation: The objectification and sexualisation of individuals is an increasingly common phenomenon. "Much of the attention has focused on girls and women and the degree to which the media shows them in a sexy and potentially demeaning light." (Smith, p. 8) The exposure to these stereotypes reinforces body shame, anxiety over one's appearance or the internalisation of body images which are fake and unreachable unless recurring to plastic surgery and other ways of body modification. The research *Gender Bias without Borders* analysed four key attributes in which the sexualisation of women in films rely:

  ❖ Sexually revealing clothing: tight, alluring, revealing apparel. (24% vs. 9.4%)

- ❖ Nudity: part or full exposure from mid chest to high upper thigh region. (24.2% vs. 11.5%)
- ❖ Thinness: minimal amount of body fat and/or muscle (38.5% vs. 15.7%)
- ❖ Attractiveness: verbal/nonverbal utterances that communicate the physical desirousness of another character.

Sexualisation of fictional characters is more likely to happen when the target audience is young. While female characters in films aimed at younger audiences are not portrayed dressed in sexy attire and with exposed skin (16.9% in contrast with the 26.5% in all other films), they are generally depicted thin (45.1% vs 37%). In other words, although female characters between the ages of 13 and 39 years are equally likely to "be shown in a sexy attire, partially of fully naked and referred to as beautiful", teens are more prone to be depicted thin, feeding stereotypes of body image which are responsible for most the majority of eating disorders that teenagers suffer globally.

Occupation: the need for a vital STEM (i.e., Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) workforce is more important than ever. The stereotypical nature of this jobs is reinforced in every form of media, affecting the perception about them and "reducing their appeal to women." (p. 21) By analysing, again, female characters and their professions in films, it is shocking to see that only 3.5% of them are shown working in a STEM career, and men are 10 times more likely to be engineers or fit in the stereotype that men are more intelligent and wittier than women.

Relationship between content creator gender and on-screen prevalence: In general, researches show that there is a direct correlation between the gender of the content creator in media and the gender prevalence within them. Films with a female director are likely to have more girls and women on screen than those without a "female sensitivity behind camera." (Smith, p. 23) The explanation is easily given by the adage "write what you know." Taking the UK as an example, we can see that around 73% of directors are male (Smith, p.5), which inherently leads to the representation of a "male", biased and sexist perspective of the world. This perspective is in many occasions understood literally by the audience, specially the younger, and the misogynist tropes that are presented are not analysed critically.

The characters that appear on the media influences how people and teenagers in particular perceive sex and gender. They view how the role models they are shown interact with the

opposite sex, they form ideas around how they are expected to behave, what to think and how to think about it.

The Geena Davis Institute researched further into the topic and analysed the impact of gender representation in films from the United Kingdom and how British people of different ages perceive gender representations in contemporary entertainment media. Research indicates that "while media does not tell people what to think, it does tell them what to think about and how to think about it." (Geena Davis Institute, 2015, p. 4) The findings of the report that the Institute elaborated is organised around five key themes, from which I will develop the following: gender equality in society, accelerating media consumption, gender bias in media and social injustice in media.

❖ Gender Equality in Society is still elusive. Participants where asked whether gender roles have changed compared to the past. Most of them believed that girl's and women's professional aspirations are not so limited by their gender as in the past, and that gender is no longer significant in educational opportunities in the U.K. In addition, participants stated that family roles and relationships are changing. However, some of the male participants think "gender gaps in the workforce and family are natural or desirable." (p. 9) Young Britons have gendered aspirations, and when asked what they wanted to be when they are older, their answers fell into the two stereotypical groups of professions that are typically associated to men and women. The findings did not support the broadly held perception that youngsters are more egalitarian in terms of gender and are still influenced by old gender stereotypes when it comes to aspirations.

❖ Accelerating Media Consumption: all participants agreed that the way media is consumed has completely changed. While television was once a "family experience", it is now available to be consumed at any time and any moment, and the content choices that viewers can make are unlimited. Parents are specially concerned about the trend of "solo viewing", because they find that media (of all forms) is more vulgar, sexual and violent in the past years. Female participants reported less media consumption than their male counterparts, but they consume the same content they used to do when they were younger over and over again until they memorise it an internalise biased patterns of behaviour, because the industry has managed to create spin-off products that "capitalise on 'princess

culture'." (p. 14) Because new technologies make it more accessible than ever, content is even more important. Social media shapes children's lives hugely, and parents cannot actively monitor what their children consume.

❖ Gender Bias in Media: both male and female participants were aware of the bias that is present in film and television and know that women are underrepresented in them. They are represented either as a supporting character, "damsels in distress" or (if at all) in positions of power as professionals who are framed as "damaged and in need of improvement". (p. 35) In many occasions, female characters' only purpose in a film is to serve as a facilitator through the sentence "What do we do know?", meaning that women take part in the plot when there is a problem, which is typically solved by their male counterparts. The findings show that young Britons (and millennials in general) are still constrained by gender stereotypes, and although most male participants are bothered by misrepresented women in film, "they see this gender inequality as natural and desirable." (p. 36)

❖ Social Injustice in Media: British female film characters are often hyper-sexualised. Women are three times more likely to appear in sexually revealing clothing or be nude on-screen. Fewer than 15% of all female roles depict business executives, political figures or other professionals that are not traditionally feminine (e.g., teaching, nursing). However, when women are portrayed in positions of power, they are still vulnerable to injustice and inequity because of the representation that directors choose to show of them. Although there is a percentage of men who appear with some degree of nudity, the way nudity is envisioned in men and women is different and unequal.

2.2 Misogyny in *The Bing Bang Theory*

The Bing Bang Theory is one of the most popular shows on Television. It is starred by a group of male friends who lack most of the traits typically associated with masculinity. They are not stereotypically attractive and self-doubting, and they embody a wide variety of insecurities, and awkward personality quirks. Television shows typically use a series of plot conventions and devices that represent stereotypes broadly known by the target audience. These conventions are also known as tropes. They are specially

played for laughs and used to make them comedic. This show is no less than the others, and clichés are often used to make the audience laugh.

The most predominant trope in this series is that of the stereotypically unattractive man who is comically pathetic and endearing at the same time. This trope can be named "The Adorkable Misogynist." (McIntosh 2017) It we take this creative name as a formal way of designation of this typical trope, we shall describe the characteristics that this kind of character abides by. It is typically a man who is bullied and made fun of by his schoolmates. He represents as "the clear underdog in the manhood competition." (McIntosh 2017) However, when assessed critically, his behaviours match that of an abuser whose entitled and sexist conduct concerns women. They can stalk, spy on, manipulate and lie to in order to achieve their aim, to the point of sexual harassment and even sexual assault ignoring the basic principles of consent.

There are four male misogynistic characters in this series. Howard in depicted as the stereotypical "wannabe." He stalks, objectifies and tries to trick women into sleeping with him, and his way of addressing them is denigrating, "the same way a zookeeper might talk about trapping ad taming wild animals." (McIntosh 2017) Contrarily, Raj is shown as a sensitive young man whose token is to be mocked and discriminated against by his ethnicity. It is only under the effect of alcohol or other drugs that he manages to talk to women with an underlying misogynistic discourse that is used in order to make the audience laugh. The third character, Leonard, is the nice and enabler character who excuses his friends' behaviour. He does not challenge his friends, and he even engages in abusive behaviours by refusing to take a "no" for an answer. The last main character, Sheldon (the "innocent bigot" character), is repulsed by the idea of women, and only stands them when he considers they are intelligent enough to socially interact with him at the same level. He devalues women and is dismissive of everyone except himself. Because of his intellectual "superiority", he does not care to understand what is socially acceptable or not; he is above the others, especially if they are women (e.g., Sheldon: "My father used to say that a woman is like an egg salad sandwich on a warm Texas day. Full of eggs and only appealing for a short time"; "thanks to you I know better than to ask if you're menstruating. And based on your behaviour, I don't have to.") (McIntosh, 2017)

The rationality of these four characters making millions of people laugh daily in front of their televisions or computers is due to the fact that none of them fit in the typical understanding that the audience has of what characteristics attractive and acceptable men are. This retrograde-like bigotry is still used by most comedy writers in order to get cheap laughs. This TV show is especially sexist in the way it represents men, women and what normal relationships between both should be like; instead of critiquing or challenging sexism, it "simply acknowledges it in a humorous way," for example, by ending the punchlines with comments on serious social issues like sexual harassment." (McIntosh 2017) The only argument that is used to sustain this content is the broadly known sentence "boys will be boys." On the rare occasion that a character is addressed for his abusive behaviour, the audience is meant to feel bad for him because his feelings got "hurt."

However, this trope has been around for at least forty years since the release of the film *Revenge of the Nerds* (1982). It helped popularise this type of character, that quickly gained attraction in the nineties, for instance, with the appearance of Steve Urkel from Family Matters (1989-1998). In general, the character of the nerd has inspired many films and sitcoms, which take advantage of the typical representation of a "nerd" to make something funny of it. In fact, in many occasions canned laughter is introduced in a scene when a typically "freak" characteristic or element shows up on screen. These films and shows are "one long joke at their expense."[5] Laughs are caused every time the creative directors decide to mock any kind of behaviour or men who do not live up to the expectations of how they should be according to society's traditional expectations of men.

Although this kind of characters do not follow typical rules of masculinity, they endorse profound sexism, for instance, when Leonard tells Sheldon that, in this age of information, they are the alpha males, who should not back down from more stereotypically "attractive" men. It is important, therefore, to think as viewers who we are meant to laugh with and who we are meant to laugh at (McIntosh, 2017). Punchlines can be a great way to criticise sexism, but not if canned laughs are included in the background when a sexist joke is made. There are TV shows that manage to laugh at abusive attitudes, such as The Simpsons. In the show, all the characters except Lisa have troubling ideologies. Whether they are alcoholics, criminals, abusers, etc. there is always the

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[5] Jonathan McIntosh, (September 29, 2017). *Complicit Geek Masculinity and The Big Bang Theory*. The Pop Culture Detective Agency website. Retrieved from:
http://popculturedetective.agency/2017/complicit-geek-masculinity

character of Lisa plays the role of the voice of human conscience, criticising destructive conducts and always striving to be as good and considerate with the rest of the people and the environment as possible. What is more, characters who represent negative conducts and ideologies are portrayed as pathetic, and the jokes are directed towards them.

This kind of media content compares men to an unachievable standard. The social expectations created and pressures on men to try to achieve some version of it is real. Hypermasculine behaviours are how men are taught to perform their manhood, to prove how close they are to that masculine ideal. This generates a great pressure on the boys who watch these shows, who think manhood is all about being strong, aggressive, having sexual "conquests" and the exertion of power over others, specially if they are women. Therefore, sexist media content does not only affect women, but men as well, pressuring them to try to achieve the unachievable, and making them make theirs behavioural patters that endorse violence against others.

The bottom argument that underlines this discussion is that there is nothing acceptable or forgivable in misogyny, even if it comes from "pathetic" characters who endure it or friendly-looking sitcoms and films that undertake women's rights. It is time for Hollywood to retire this trope and start representing characters as equals without considering matters such as sex and gender.

Methodological aspects

3. Decision-making and rationale

3.1 Context

This intervention proposal is aimed at a 3rd E.S.O. class of a public school in which we can find students from multiple cultural backgrounds. The reason behind this choice is that it is in public schools in which we find a great variety of cultures that we can also find greater ideological clashes, specially in terms of gender awareness and equality between men and women. During the past years, the massive consumption of media and the Internet have helped teenagers be exposed to violent and retrograde content without restrictions. Therefore, it is precisely important to tackle sexist conducts at this stage of the learning process. Although younger students can be introduced to the topic and be taught how to detect and reject sexist behaviours, this age gap (14 to 15) that teenagers

start developing critical thinking and are interested in learning about topics that are broadly discussed by society. By addressing GBV at an early stage of youth, we ensure that the knowledge acquired prevents teenagers from having destructive conducts further in life.

The learning paces of the students can vary, since the coeducational character of the activities developed encourages students to follow their own pace and rely on the help of their classmates when they need it. The topics chosen for the tasks have been chosen taking into account the general likings of teenagers in terms of media consumption. On the one hand, *The Big Bang Theory* is a broadly known TV show that is played every day in Spanish television and attracts a mainly young audience. On the other hand, football is a sport that appeals youngsters, and, unfortunately, in most cases, they happen to be chiefly boys. The purpose of the activities on soccer is to show boys how "little" they know about football when women's soccer is brought to light, and to show students who dislike the sport (girls in particular) that it can be fun, specially when they see themselves represented in it.

4. Proposal design

The lesson plans described bellow revolve around two different topics: the TV show *The Big Bang Theory* and Soccer. The idea is to use two topics that the target students know very well either because they are fans of the series or the sport or because they have seen in on TV. *The Big Bang Theory* is broadcasted every day in Spanish television, specially at those time gaps in which adolescents are at home watching TV (after class). Around the same time gap, many channels retransmit news on sports, in which women are barely present. Although they are different topics, they can both engage the students in the activities due to its cultural proximity to them and are sure to make every student feel engaged in the tasks, the group discussions and the sharing of their ideas on sexism and gender-based violence. If the proposal was developed furthermore, other media resources would be used as content resources, such as, for instance, music.

4.1 The Big Bang Theory

As the title of the lesson indicates, the topic that the students will work on is the TV series named *The Big Bang Theory*. The language and phonetics in the show are typically American, which can help those students who have a lower comprehension of it (since American pronunciation is heavier and, can be consequently easier to understand for the learners.)

4.1.1   Introductory Task

The first task is aimed at presenting the series to the students, in particular, to those who do not know the show or are not familiar with it. The teacher will ask the learners whether they know the series or not and what their opinion on it is.

The main purpose of this task is to introduce the plot of the series. For this purpose, the introductory song of the show is played by the teacher, who will hand the students a copy of the lyrics with the meaning of those words that may not be known by the students (i.e., "cool", "drool", "unravelling"):

"Our whole universe was in a hot dense state

Then nearly fourteen billion years ago expansion started

Wait

The Earth began to cool

The autotrophs began to drool

Neanderthals developed tools

We built a wall (we built the pyramids)

Math, science, history, unraveling the mysteries

That all started with the big bang!" [6]

The teacher will ask them to read it aloud and then show they have comprehended the text by re-telling to their partner what the lyrics are about and how they explain the Big Bang Theory (sitting next to them) before actually listening to it (or viewing the short

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[6] *The Big Bang Theory Theme Song*. (2017). Taken from: https://www.letras.com/barenaked-ladies/1185684/

video). This way, the students get to have a better comprehension of the lyrics and get into the context of the series (i.e., the series *The Big Bang Theory* and the "geekiness" of the characters). After the students have been introduced to the topic, it is the turn of the characters. There will be pictures of each one of them projected on the white screen available in class, and before showing the basic information about them (i.e., their age, nationality, relationship with the other characters, etc.)

4.1.2 Pre-task

Then, the same pictures will be shown, only this time, stereotypical statements about each of them will appear at the bottom. For instance, if the character is Leonard, we would choose a sentence that explicitly depicts him as the series does: "A nerd who is passionate about comics and videogames. He is blind as a mole and tries to fit in without success." The intention behind this is to spark a reaction on the students and make them think why the teacher would write so bluntly about someone. Then, the same pictures will be handed to the students, who, in pairs, will have to come up with a better way of explaining how the characters are. The results will be shared among the students who want to voluntarily participate.

4.1.3 Task

For this main task, the students will read first-hand the script of the series, and they will have to spot sexist comments, or affirmations.

Howard: Hello.

Penny: I'm sorry?

Howard: Haven't you ever been told how beautiful you are in flawless Russian?

Penny: No, I haven't.

Howard: Get used to it.

Penny: Yeah, I probably won't. Hey, Sheldon.

Sheldon: Hi.

Penny: Hey, Raj. Still not talking to me, huh?

Raj stays silent

Leonard: Don't take it personally, it's his pathology. He can't talk to women.

Howard: He can't talk to attractive women. Or in your case, a cheesecake-scented goddess.

In the case of this script excerpt, they will have to, in pairs, underline the instances they think are disrespectful towards women and develop more their answer justifying it. Each pair will then think of an alternative script that does not encourage any sexualisation of women or gender-based violence towards them. Then, the results will be put forward by having the students share their answers and thoughts on the topic. The most original script will be chosen to work on during the next activity.

4.1.4   Post-Task

The last task is created to engage students into the representation of the script chosen in the previous task. They will form groups of five, and each of them will play a character. They will have to record themselves reading and acting out the brief script they have designed, and they will have to characterise themselves as the series characters. The short clips will be recorded with the mobile phones available in class or a camera that the teacher makes available for the students to record themselves. In case there is any student who is shy or embarrassed to appear on camera and perform will be responsible for the direction of the clip and the linguistic correctness of the text.

4.1.5   Timing

The activities are designed to fit a 50 minute class, from which 15 minutes will be dedicated to the introductory task, the next 10 minutes will focus on the pre-task; the main task is designed to last 15 minutes, and the post-task will take the rest of the time available due to technical reasons.

4.1.6   Cross curricular considerations

These activities are designed to make the students aware of how exposed they are to sexist content on the media and help them question critically what they consume on TV. Also, by helping them design their own script and making it revolve around gender equality, they are taught how to sport sexualisation and gender-abuse in the rest

of the episodes they watch at home and, hopefully, in the rest of the films, shows, etc. that they watch later on in life.

4.2 Comunio

"Comunio" is the third of the four lessons that this intervention plan consists of. It is also the name of a phone app that football fans use to play against friends by trying to buy players with fictional money, with the final purpose of leading the ranking of teams and getting the top scorers, who also happen to be the most expensive players. The topic of discussion is changed from a TV show to a sport that is worldwide known, especially when it comes to men's teams. However, women find it considerably harder to engage in soccer and earn a salary from it due to factors of inequality (such as the lack of equipment, the low economical investment, the difficulty to reconcile the sport with a job, etc.), which force female players to train at the same time they work or take a college degree.

The students are introduced to the topic. Some students may be devoted soccer fans, while others might not care less about what team won the last Champions League or who was the top scorer of the year. The aim is to bring the topic closer to both target students and involve all of them in the activities that will follow. Coeducational groupings will be necessary to carry out this lesson plan. Students will be able to collaborate with each other when one of them interaction in the English language will be necessary, they will enjoy more the activities and their confidence as speakers of a second language will increase. But the fundamental aim of this lesson is to prepare them to interact with other people in real-life conversations when they need it, and their sense of equality, critical thinking on social matters, a greater sense of respect and awareness in society.

4.2.1 Introductory task

The first activity is an introduction to the topic of soccer. The teacher will ask them to voluntarily share their thoughts on the theme of discussion and talk about their personal experience with the sport. They will also give their opinion on the sport, its popularity and why they like it or not. Speaking time will be minimal in order to encourage a way of communication that impels students to condense all the information in three to five sentences using structures of opinion and argumentation (e.g., "I dislike soccer because…", "I find the sport interesting because…") taking turns to speak.

4.2.2   Pre-task

In this activity, the students are ensembled in groups of three or four people and will have to "buy" players from a fictional market that the teacher will project on the whiteboard, while taking into account the budget that the teacher will give to each group. When assigning the students to a group, two ways of grouping can be implemented. The first one would require to group together (as much as the number of students allows it) boys and girls, so that the main activity, which is explained below, can be directed in such way that boys have to reflect critically on the "struggles" they will be faced with in the next activity. The second way of grouping them would be taking simply into account the communicative skills that can help the group progress adequately in the main task.

4.2.3   Task

Next, the teacher will hand each student a sheet of paper with a soccer field on it. Within the field, they will find the main eleven positions that the game allows to be filled, but with no players. The four main positions will be explained next (or translated if required): "forwards" (delanteros), "mid-fields" (mediocentros), "backs" (defensas), and "goalkeeper" (portero). These positions are key, because the students will need to create their own team by buying players that the teacher will project different lists with players and their fictional market value. Depending on the groups and how they are formed, the teacher will give them a higher or lower budget. In the case, for instance, of a group formed by boys, they will have to choose female players from the market that is on the screen, and their budget will be significantly lower. On the contrary, those groups that are formed by girls will be assigned a much higher budget, that will allow them to "buy" top scoring players. This way, we start making them question the why of the activity and the reasons behind the grouping that the teacher arranged. The questions they ask themselves or to each other will be used in the next activities to spark a conversation on the difficulties that women's football clubs face if they want to make a living of their "hobbie" (e.g., financially).

The group will be responsible for their budget, and of calculating accurately how much fictional money they decide to spend on each position. The activity, therefore can be equally enjoyed by the two types of target students: those who enjoy football might want to play with a strategy and acquire the best players for the lowest price (e.g., Hitomi,

Jan Oblak, etc.); those students who do not specially like the sport can simply decide to buy more "expensive" top scorers (e.g., Amanda Sampedro, Lionel Messi, etc.). When a group spends too much of their budget in the activity, they are "in the red", which means that the points they score thanks to their players will not count for the final classification. In this way, as the activity gets to its end, it is expectable to observe how some students will try to revolve against the criteria chosen, and how for some others there is not any problem (especially those who could buy male players and had less financial difficulties).

Because oral and listening skills are a focus of the methodology aimed to be used alongside the four sessions, the speaking ability is predominantly more present in the communicative process between the groupmates than other skills, and necessary to interact effectively with each other. Vocabulary related to sports, such as the different positions and expressions used in transactional activities, such deciding whether they can buy a player or not, and comparing budgets (e.g., deciding if it could be profitable or not to follow certain tactics) will be the backbone of the activity. Since the task requires a great communication and organisation from the participants, the teacher is responsible for the correct development of each group, making sure they make use of the second language and implement communicative strategies to solve conflicts and make decisions.

4.2.4   Post-task

After the previous activity, the groups who are "in the red" will automatically occupy the last positions in the classification, since they will not score any points. Contrarily, the groups who have managed to have a balance on the money they spent and have communicated more effectively will not only be at the top of the ranking, but will also will score many more points than those groups who had to buy female players and had a less money available but managed to stay within the budget.

To finish with, the different groups will design their own shield, using creativity and deciding how to fit the likings of each group member into the final design. They will also have to decide what the team's name will be. It is during this activity that the teacher or monitor can try to solve some of the student's questions about the players, what teams they play at, what their function within the pitch is and what their athletic characteristics are. It is a good moment as well to try to monitor closely those students who participate less, have struggles when speaking in public or just do not like the sport enough to actively

participate in class. In this way, the monitor is available for every student and can dedicate some time to solve major problems, and even conflicts within the groups lead by disagreements.

After the students have finished with the activity, the teacher will collect the paper sheets with the different line-ups, shields and team names for assessment. The groups whose members manage to make the best creative decisions and get to create the best teams will be graded with a higher score and will lead the rank list.

4.2.5 Timing and class management

The session is organised to fit a 50' class, and although it might seem like there are few activities, much of the time will be dedicated to group work. Therefore, the students will be continuously interacting and applying communicative structures to make sure the decisions they take benefit the group.

The pre-task is designed to be as flexible as the students allow it to be, being their answers and participation to the questions proposed by the teacher the key of the exercise. The presentation of the topic fits it the first ten-minute gap of the class. The topic of "soccer" is introduced, the groups are fixed, the tables are arranged and then the teacher makes some questions about the sport so that those students who are big fans of football can explain the basics of how it works to their classmates. Therefore, the teacher plays an enabling role, and allows for oral production to happen spontaneously and naturally.

Regarding the physical organisation of the class, the tables are put together in groups of three or four forming a "round table", suitable for the communicative requirements of the activity. In case the tales cannot be changed. The criterion used for the creation of the teams is based on a coeducational ground, that allows the teacher to group the students taking into account the different capacities and learning rhythms. For instance, those members of the group who are better at speaking will benefit the interaction between themselves and the rest, those who know more about sports will help the rest understand better the mechanics of the activity, and those who are more shy and have it more difficult to engage in a conversation will be able to design the creative materials (e.g., the team's shield) while paying attention to the oral production of their counterparts and being able to learn from them or their mistakes.

4.2.6   Cross curricular considerations

Gender-based violence affects women in every scope of life, and sport, specially when played professional, is not an exception. The students are asked to reflect on the reasons that lead to the lack of knowledge about women's capacity to compete in highly professional sport environments. They get to experience first-hand in a somewhat edulcorated way how difficult it is for women to be noticed and awarded for their accomplishments (i.e., they are significantly less present in TV News than their male counterparts, and when they are, they are referred to inappropriately, for instance, as "girls" instead of "players".) Also, they will start noticing how little they might probably know about football when they find that they recognise more men's names than women's names when buying players.

4.3 Ultimate Champion

This session follows the previous one in content, methodological approach and topic. After the students have had time to think about the last session, the end of the competition takes place during the next tutorship hour. After the teacher has had time to evaluate the soccer teams that the groups arranged and to rank them according to their scoring, creativity and budget management, a final classification is shown to the students, leading to the main tasks of the session, in which they will be able to reflect more deeply into GBV and gain knowledge from it, which will help them to recognise this kind of violence in every sphere of their lives, but specially when they consume media content.

4.3.1. Introductory task

The teacher will start by asking the students how they think they did in the competition, what players they have bought and what distinguishes their teams from the rest in terms of creativity and tactics when signing players. After, when the different groups have had the opportunity to present their team to their classmates and to briefly comment on the decisions they have taken to reach to the final line-up, the ranking of the competition will be projected on the whiteboard. They will see how many points they have scored or whether they have even scored any points at all (i.e., if they are "in the red"). Because the previous activities have been planned so as to make the students undergo in a controlled environment some of the inequalities that women face every day,

it is not only expectable but also desirable that those of them who had to buy lower-budget players or players they did not know (women in particular) complain about the criterion used to assign a market with female or male players to each group, for it is in this way the teacher can really know if the students have fulfilled the purpose of the two lesson plans.

If the groups are made taking into account the gender of the members, it is expectable that the classification is led by the groups consisting of female members (who have been given a much higher budget in the previous session and have been able to sign more well-known male players, such as Lionel Messi). After observing the student's reaction to the ranking, they will be asked whether they think their scores are fair or not and offered to score extra points by participating in a football contest.

4.3.2. Pre-task

This task consists of a contest in which the different groups can have the opportunity to get some extra points and take the advantage to pass the other competing groups or compete for the first position. However, this last option will be available only for those teams who got to score points in the main task of the previous lesson, because the score given in the previous main task will be more significant that the total score they can get in this contest, in which each question grants just two points (e.g., a team that is not "in the red" could have a score of 260, while a team that went bankrupt would have 0 points). In the beginning of the task, some basic rules will be explained. During the contest, the first member of a group to raise their hand gets to answer the question. If their answer is incorrect, the second fastest team to raise their hand will have the opportunity to answer the question. Each correct answer gives two extra point to the soundest groups, and each incorrect answer is worth -1 point. By including a negative score within the rules, we make sure that the students think better their answer and take the time to decide whether answering outweighs the disadvantages of getting an incorrect answer or not.

Sets of two questions will be presented to the students on the whiteboard. Half of them will be about male football players, teams, leagues, etc.; and the other half will be about women's football and some of the most well-known players. The number of questions has to be as inclusive as possible. At least half of them must be on women's football, but if we want to increase the difficulty of the contest and ask less questions on men's football, the chances that the students guess the answer is lower. This will benefit the outcome of the main task in this lesson, as explained below in the section titled "cross

curricular considerations." An example of the questions included in the contest are the following:

- ❖ Is there a female Real Valladolid Football team?
- ❖ Who won the last men's Champions League?
- ❖ Are there any technical differences between women's football and men's football?
- ❖ Who won the last women's Champions League?
- ❖ Who is the trainer of the men's National Football team?
- ❖ Is there a women's Real Madrid team?
- ❖ Who is the trainer of the women's National Football team?
- ❖ Who was the top scorer of the last La Liga (Spain)?
- ❖ Who's the top scoring football player of the last Iberdronal League (Spain)?
- ❖ Who's the top scoring player at the European men's League?
- ❖ Who's the top scoring player at the European women's League?

When the contest finishes, the points scored are added to those already scored in the previous tasks, and a final champion will be announced.

4.3.3. Task

This is the main task of this session as well as the previous one. All the information gathered by the group members, the opinions they will have developed and the structures used to talk about soccer, buy players, keep track of the money spent, etc. will serve them to express their own personal opinion to the rest of the class, and defend their ideas. The neutral figure of the teacher is more important than ever in the activities before this one, since the students will have had two different experiences of the activities. Those of them who experienced the disadvantages of having a lower budget, for instance, will try to defend their opinion that the competition was not equal, while those teams who had more facilities might answer with indifference to their peers' criticism.

During the debate, the speakers will have totem that will be handed to them in order to participate. Although there might be a moment in which discrepancies might be more frequent and difficult to regulate, it is important to give them a physical object that reminds them they must not interrupt their classmates and that they must take turns to share their opinions. Although there might not be an accurate materialisation of the respect between peers that we want to encourage in this activity and the students might not always respect their peers' turn to talk, there will always be the reminding element of

the totem, which will help them realise they are interrupting or disrupting the class dynamic. The teacher will direct the debate by asking certain general questions that the students will develop further by adding their personal experience to the answer or by disagreeing with the arguments that the others give. The following are some of the questions that ought to be asked during the activity:

- ❖ Did you enjoy the activities or the topic?
- ❖ Do you think you know more about football than before?
- ❖ Have you learned something from this activity? If so, what did you learn?
- ❖ How did you feel during the activity?
- ❖ Have you felt discriminated or uncomfortable during the activities?
- ❖ Have these activities helped you understand better how inequality affects women (in soccer in particular)?
- ❖ Did you know the female players that where available in the market? Why not?
- ❖ Why do you think you know less about female athletes?
- ❖ How frequent do you think women suffer inequality daily?
- ❖ Can you remember any case of inequality you have witnessed in the media or suffered in your daily life?
- ❖ Is there any reason why women suffer inequality?
- ❖ Do you think there is a solution to inequality and gender-based violence?
- ❖ How do you think this problem could be solved?
- ❖ How much of the media content you consume daily do you think is abusive towards women?
- ❖ Present a solution/idea that could contribute to help women be more acknowledged in soccer or the media in general?

The order of the questions is fixed, meaning that they are more general in the beginning and turn to be more specific as the debate unravels. The activity promotes a deductive learning approach, which encourages students to deepen their knowledge on a topic and their understanding of the content that is presented to them. This strategy is especially suitable for students with a lower level of expertise in the target language, and the versatility of the tasks suits the learning process of those who want to research further into the topic. This way, a clear base is set in the beginning of the reasoning process, and everyone can progress at their own pace. Also, those students who have more difficulties

to follow unconventional guidelines or to find rules for themselves will find it easier to answer the questions or understand the thread of the discussion.

As the students will come up with questions for the teacher on women's soccer, why inequality exists, how we can end it, etc. it is the perfect time to introduce to them some of the top scoring female players, and play any highlights video that is available on the internet. It could be the case that some students are not aware enough of what GBV is and This way, those of them who do not agree with their peers and think that women

4.3.4. Post-task

Finally, the last task consists on having the students hang their line-ups and shields on the wall so that everyone can look at them, compare them with theirs and take ideas from the other groups. Then, each group explains how their team works, what reasons they had to buy the players, etc. However, the students can take some more minutes to talk more in-depth about the struggles they have undergone during the two lessons on soccer and go further into the gender-based violence field by giving account of a personal experience on the subject. They are encouraged to reflect furtherer and get to question the base on which patriarchy is based.

A final peer evaluation can be added within this task, asking each group to decide which team was the most original and which one managed to sign the best players, only this time the budget will not be important, and the price of the players or the team's budget will not be taken into account in the voting. In so doing, all the groups have, finally, the same opportunities to win the competition.

4.3.5. Timing and class management

This session is planned for a tutorship class with a duration of 50 minutes, from which:

❖ 10 minutes will be dedicated to the introduction of the lesson plan, the presentation of the ranking and solving some of the "expected" complaints about the scores.

❖ 20 minutes will be focused on introducing the contest by asking the students whether they want to score some extra points, explaining the rules and asking the questions.

❖ 20 minutes will be aimed to discuss, develop ideas and talking the students more into the sphere of women's soccer.

❖ The last 10 minutes will be used to hang the line-ups on the wall and have each group give a further explanation on their team and give their conclusion on the topic.

4.3.6. Cross curricular considerations

The most challenging activity in this session, and probably within the two lesson plans dedicated to soccer, is the debate, since it demands a great deal of control from the teacher. Not every student is going to understand or agree with the explanation on GBV and soccer given in the activities, and they might completely disagree with their counterparts. Since the topic demands a great sense of sympathy and understanding of the subject discussed, it is important to moderate any kind of aggressiveness that may appear during the debate, and let all students speak their minds, even if their opinion is unpopular. It is by sharing ideas and reaching to common conclusions that those learners who disagree with the task or the content presented will realise that their point of view is not as moderate, reasonable and empathetic as they might think.

Under no means should the teacher try to directly talk to the students about her or his opinion on gender-based violence and sexism. The topic should be approached to from an objective point of view, with the purpose of making it truly educative and instructive.

Concluding remarks

If we watch a sexist advertisement in which women are hypersexualised and represented as a trade object, we might not stop to think that the image is dangerous. We might find a criticism to it, but it is difficult to picture straight up how harmful it can be to the millions of women who watch them daily and feel the need to compare themselves to the unachievable (even to the same models that appear on TV, whose appearance in planned in detail and photoshopped, being completely artificial and unattainable unless resorting to ways to modify the body artificially.) Researches from many countries differ on the percentage of women who are able to make decisions for themselves and the number of women who feel represented on the media. Statistics do not seem to match many times, and although investigations are made on the topic, the subjective meaning behind the issue of GBV makes it difficult to include subjective interpretations into the results. By researching further into the topic and coming up with the ideas proposed before in this paper I have come to the realisation that statistics do not show the whole spectrum of sexist conducts women face daily. For instance, when the percentages on how many British films show nakedness in male bodies is just five points lower than the percentages scored by women in the industry. Although both men and women can appear naked on screen, the subjective interpretations that directors want to engage us in lead viewers to relate certain sexist ideas with women, for a man being shirtless is not viewed as sexual or provocative, but the case does not apply for women. Although gender-based violence can be addressed in earlier stages of education, I have discovered it is better to introduce this topic in later stages, such as 3rd E.S.O., a course in which teenagers start to consume media content more than ever, and sexism manages to filter through their televisions, computers and phones particularly. Young girls learn at a very young age who they are allowed to be or not, and what their aspirations in life fulfil society's expectations. The levels of sexism are more difficult to spot, but ultimately lead to the last level of sexualisation and gender-based violence, in which a woman directly suffers sexual harassment or is killed.

The use that teenagers make of social media nowadays is not regulated, and they develop dynamics of interaction based on the fulfilment of the standards that the sex-gender system imposes on women and young girls. As a society, we have a lack of conviction on understanding when there is a sexist conduct going on, and this is a

manifestation of our struggle to hold ourselves and each other accountable. The proposal developed in this paper aims to make students be accountable of their actions, learn to work together through cooperation and develop awareness on GBV so that the negative behavioural patters we have socially inherited do not repeat again and the cycle finally ends.

I had the opportunity to implement some of the activities expounded in this proposal during my internship at a public high school. However, I came to the realisation they were not completely adequate for the students' level of critical and abstract thinking. I implemented the tasks with a 1st E.S.O. group, and although the response was surprisingly positive, it was very easy for the students to go by their instinct and confront directly those classmates whose opinion threatens their own ideological set.

It was interesting to see how they came to the realisation that the groups were not made freely without a criterion behind, and how they were purposely thought to create inequalities between the students. Within the group I worked with, nine of the twenty students were boys, and eight of them were football fans, whereas only one of the girls actually liked the sport and enjoyed practising it. The eight boys claimed to have a deep knowledge on soccer, an idea they soon ruled out when, during the contest, they realised they did not know anything about women's football, and how underrepresented they are. Girls, on the contrary, seemed to have a higher awareness on the topic, and were able to reason the arguments they proposed during the debate with a deep perspective into gender issues. A special reason why they were able to talk more in depth about the topic than their male counterparts is that, as they reported during the debate, they had suffered discrimination before or had felt misrepresented by an advertisement, a film or a TV show.

During the debate on soccer, it was interesting to see how one of the boys considered girls were worse at football, since he had "watched ten minutes of a women's football match and had not liked it at all." One of the girls, however, was quick to respond to his statement by saying that his argument was invalid if he had only had the opportunity to watch women play for ten minutes in comparison with the number of men's matches that he reportedly watched every week. The aggressiveness in the discussion escalated quickly, and there was even a student who, moved by the topic, had to take a break from the activity and let go of the debate. Class management was key to control the situation, but it served to me realise that the activities suited better older students. In the future, I

would like to have the opportunity to implement them again, only this time I would change the target class it would be aimed at.

I have the hope that the ideas proposed in this paper have a real impact on the students and an indirect consequence in society, helping to the final materialisation of gender equality. This proposal has introduced me into the investigation of how gender-based violence affects society and women, and how important the implementation of activities like these are for the eradication of Sexism and violence against women.

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