



Preventing Teen Dating Violence

WORKSHOP: PORN AS A NORMALIZER OF VIOLENCE IN RELATIONSHIPS



Theoretical Framework¹

Violence against women is recognized as one of the most widespread social practices, promoted and reproduced within communities, being lived on a daily basis by women, attacking directly their fundamental rights.

Gender violence is related to sexist stereotypes, which can justify the violence of man instead of condemning it, by associating it with masculine attributes based on the predominance of the man over the woman, around which some men build their identity (Lawson et al, 2010; Reitzel-Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001; Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward & Tritt, 2004). This violence is often used to maintain the inequality of power between men and women and decrease, therefore, as progress is made in the construction of equality.

It is important to take into consideration that it is called gender violence because it implies hierarchical relationships and inequality, understanding that it is not biological sex that conditions women, but rather it has to do with the way in which culture builds them, with models where women have specific roles, differentiated from those of men.

Female roles are always stereotyped. As an example, women are seen or made feel obliged to be passive, tender, submissive, obedient, vulnerable and dedicated to the care of others; while the male role is associated with aggressive, competitive, high degree of demand for success, wisdom, leadership, courage and knowledge. Therefore, in the gender construction and in the processes of socialization, family is the reference with which the new members are going to identify themselves, as well as their environment and the expectations people have of them and within their communities and societies. Adults will be the ones who influence the identity processes, both of the boy and the girl, as from a very young age gender patterns are transmitted to them.

This is an indication that it is the current society itself that extends the stereotypes of inequality, submission and domination between the sexes, in the words of Barberá and Martínez (2004), "it does so through a sexist education transmitted from the different agencies of socialization". Thus, it is essential to keep young people in mind, since from early ages the manifestations of gender violence will become behavioral patterns, which will become a clear indicator of gender violence in the future adult life (Sánchez, 2016).

¹ The theoretical framework here exposed is an extract of the document *TDV – Theoretical Framework* that can be found in our website: www.love-and-respect.org

Porn as sexual educator²

Nowadays, one of the most used tools among young people to learn about sex-affective relationships is pornography.

Pornography, specifically mainstream pornography that can be found on the Internet, has 'hijacked' or, rather, has made an appropriation of our relationship with sexuality and has transformed intimacy, love and connection into a functional act of domination and abuse.

"Young people's exposure to pornography has increased, as has the violent and sexist nature of mainstream porn. Contemporary content means young people are exposed to violent porn whether they like it or not, and it is no longer a question of whether they will be exposed, but rather when" (Walker et al. 2015).

A survey of 11 to 18-year-olds in a study produced in the UK by The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), and commissioned by The Telegraph in 2013, exposed that almost a third of them believes that pornography dictates the way they should behave in relationships. "Girls think they have to look and 'perform like porn stars' in order to be liked by boys", the NSPCC study also found.

In the same year, "experts at ChildLine say that there has been a 70 per cent increase in the past 12 months in boys calling specifically to talk about pornography – about how guilty and confused it's making them feel. Last year alone, 50 girls called the service every day because they felt under pressure to have sex".

Porn presents a cultural context and standard that is then being reinforced. Today, porn plays a determining role in the development of interpersonal values: for example, the sexual double standard that women engaging in sexual relationships are considered as sluts while men are rewarded. Or the deeply rooted notion that girls and young women's bodies are somehow the property of boys and young men, playing out competition and rivalry with other boys on girls' bodies (Ringrose: 2012).

This is why we find it highly necessary to work in this topic within the framework of this project.

² More: <http://www.unimedliving.com/education/education-the-new-conversation/the-sexualisation-of-the-young-learning-a-social-script-through-pornography-and-the-rise-of-new-sexual-and-reproductive-health-issues.html>

The Workshop

This workshop was thought to be used among young adults and people in touch with teenagers.

The aim of this activity is to create a debate about porn, to listen to opinions from the participants and to analyze mainstream porn with a critical point of view.

Material

For the realization of this workshop, we have chosen two articles about porn, one about the violence in mainstream porn and another one about what appears to be a new trend on porn, the so called "feminist porn".

As we conducted the workshop in Spanish, we used articles in this language. If you want to perform this workshop, you will need to find some articles in your context. This shouldn't be difficult, though!

Aims

- To identify ideas around sexuality.
- To sensitize about normalization of violent behaviors in sex-affective relationships and how this leads to abuse situations and an escalation of violence.

Instructions

The participants are asked to put themselves in groups of 4 or 5 people.

Each group is given one of the two texts to read it. Once read there is a time of 10 to 15 minutes for them to comment among the participants of the group and draw some key conclusions from it.

Next, the groups that had the same text are asked to summarize the content to the others and talk about the conclusions they have reached, then the process is repeated with the groups that had the other text.

Finally, an open discussion is created between all the people in the workshop.

The final aim with this group discussion is to reach consensus accepted by all or most of the group so that some key ideas are drawn in the head of the participants.