ETNIA-E: CUADERNOS DE INVESTIGACIÓN ETNOGRÁFICA SOBRE INFANCIA, ADOLESCENCIA Y EDUCACIÓN DEL IMA/FMEE

Nº 17:

Positioning Gender in an Experimental Collaboration with Secondary School Students in Madrid

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses gender performances in a collaborative experience organized with a group of adolescent students in a Madrid secondary school. We draw from a variety of ethnographic techniques and data-sources to understand the displayed identities and ways of talking about gender in a school workshop centered on exploring the meaning of gender and gender inequalities. We adapt strategies from positioning analysis to examine how gender discourses and ideologies emerge in (mostly male) adolescent's identity narratives, the interactional order created during the workshop and in how adolescents react to societal sexism. The results show how adolescents are capable of engaging with gender within a collaborative setting but also confirm the pervasiveness of hegemonic views of masculinity and femininity in adolescents' discourses. We discuss these findings in relation to further intervention efforts in school settings and the role of researchers' own identity work in promoting changes in adolescent gender practices.

Keywords: Adolescence - Gender Identity - Participatory Action Research - Masculinity.

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INTRODUCTION

Discursive approaches to identity, broadly defined (e.g. Benwell and Stokoe, 2006; Bucholtz and Hall, 2005), promote a view of identity as a situated, socially constructed and multilayered dimension of personal experience and self-presentation. Research in relation to gender identity, including work that pays particular attention to adolescence and youth, has also contributed to and drawn from this dynamic view of identity; in particular, when building from Butler's performative (Butler, 1990; 1993) account of gender (e.g. Eckert, 1994, 2003; Swann, 2003; Georgakopoulou, 2005). This scholarship has provided countless examples of how identity, identity claims and identification processes emerge interactionally, are strategically designed in relation to ongoing activity and the identity projects of social actors and change across contexts and time. Yet, particularly in relation to gender, this nuanced view of identity processes co-exists with cultural discourses that define gender, sex, sexuality, masculinity and femininity as fixed categories, often defined through opposition to each other across multiple aspects of behavior and experience and which can only be inhabited by social actors in particular ways (e.g. Jociles, 2001; Connell, 1997; cf. Hyde et al; 2018). At least in Spain, this gender ideology operates as a culturally hegemonic discourse and, based on the available literature, is remarkably persistent among Spanish adolescents and youth (e.g. Ovejero et al; 2013; Martínez, Navarro and Yubero, 2009; Colás and Villaciervos, 2007; Pla, 2015; Martínez et al; 2008) - despite the dramatic changes in Spanish society over the past three decades and substantial social mobilization in favor of gender-equality and the articulation of alternative approaches to gender/sexuality.

This apparent fracture between conceptual change, changes at a macro-level and individual attitudes and discourses underpins a number educational interventions, policy guidelines and programs in Spain focused on problematizing gender, gender inequalities and heteronormative machista discourses among Spanish youth (e.g. Díaz and Parejo, 2013; Pichardo et al; 2015; Martín and Tellado, 2012). In fact, the findings we present here stem from an intervention implemented by the first author during her internship work in the counseling department of a secondary school in Madrid (Spain). Senior members of the counseling department and other teachers working with adolescents expressed their concerns about the gender ideologies and the gender-typed behaviors and interactions (i.e. machista attitudes) of their students. This issue was raised particularly in relation to the cohort of students streamed into vocational/remedial programs in secondary education, a group of adolescents that was primarily male and included several migrant origin students - see the methodology section for the demographics of the class. In this context, the first author was invited to develop an intervention broadly centered on "gender ideologies and behaviors" and was given substantial liberty in terms of the organization and methodology of this intervention. The opportunity was taken up by the intern and led to the co-construction with a group of students, within the framework and constraints of a school activity during class hours, of an experimental collaboration (Estalella and Criado, 2018; Kullman, 2013) / participatory research experience (Cammarota and Fine, 2008) with three emergent goals: (a) allow adults

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and students to co-construct an inquiry around their gendered identities and gender inequalities in their daily lives; (b) promote more horizontal relationships between adult mediators/researchers and teenage students; (c) allow students to present and share their work around gender with the school through formats often not contemplated in the school or the conventional curriculum (cf. Wargo, 2018).

The outcome of several weeks of activity during the collaborative workshop were multiple materials including photographs, visual representations, literacy artifacts, performances and continued group conversations in relation to the meaning of gender and their gendered identities (Cruz, 2018). In this article we turn to this data to explore participating adolescents situated gender identities and examine participants' unfolding engagement with gender ideologies. We do this in connection to three levels of gender experiences: (1) adolescent peer relations and the gender enactments generated during the workshop; (2) the gender discourses and gender ideologies publicly promoted in the school; (3) wider social discourses about masculinity and femininity and gender inequality. In other words, the analysis in this article is not geared towards assessing the impact of the intervention or showcasing the artistic creations generated in the workshop. Rather, it attempts to unpack the opportunities students were given during the experimental collaboration to construe, talk about and perform gender in ways that are not often available in schools. To do this we draw from positioning analysis (e.g. Bamberg, 2004; Korobov, 2001; de Fina, 2013; de Fina and Georgakopoulou, 2012), a perspective in discourse and narrative analysis that provides a methodological and conceptual framework to examine how identities and social positions are constructed at three intertwined levels: (a) in the relationships and social positions expressed in the internal organization of talk and discourse; (b) in the hierarchies and situated identities that are co-created in social interaction and; (c) in relation to how social actors engage with broader societal discourses and ideologies. Further, positioning analysis is aligned with a performative and situated perspective of (gender) identity that allows to understand sexism / machismo not as an individual-internal trait of certain type of male adolescents but as, to paraphrase Rosa and Flores (2017), a "historical and contemporary subject position that can be situationally inhabited" (p. 217) by men and women and, consequently, is enacted -and can be problematized and disrupted- in particular social settings. This theoretical and methodological shift provides an alternative perspective to current Spanish research on adolescent gender socialization dominated by survey studies and a view of gender identities and ideologies as decontextualized, stable and internalized features of adolescent subjectivity (Ovejero et al; 2013; Martínez, Navarro and Yubero, 2009; Colás and Villaciervos, 2007; Pla, 2015; Martínez et al; 2008).

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METHODOLOGY

Setting and Participants

Data for this project was collected during the 2016-17 academic school year at a 'subsidized'[1] secondary school located in a Southwestern district of the city of Madrid. This school primarily serves lower-middle class and working-class students from the surrounding neighborhoods and is well known as one school within a network of schools run by a socially progressive educational organization. The school, which we will call La Colonia, has collaborated in other research projects led by the third author of this paper and has an-ongoing collaboration with the authors' university as an internship site for undergraduate and graduate Psychology students interested in education. As part of the internship work of the first author during the 2016-17 academic year, a project focused on gender ideologies and gender relations was proposed and implemented with a group of third year secondary students enrolled in the school's PMAR program. Under current Spanish educational legislation, PMAR is an alternative provision in secondary education aimed at students who have learning difficulties and have been laid-back at least once during their schooling. This program, the latest legislative variation of similar programs implemented over the past two decades (Rujas, 2016), involves changes in methodology, the organization of the curriculum and class size. The program aims students who have had unsuccessful learning experiences in school but are seen as being capable of completing secondary education and perhaps moving on to post-compulsory studies.

The PMAR group from La Colina that participated in the experimental collaboration was formed by 15 students between 14-16 years of age - although only 12 students gave their full consent to be part of the study and will be analyzed in this paper. The demographics of the class were particularly skewed in comparison to school demographics and class group composition: it included 13 male students and 2 female students, 6 students had Latin American backgrounds and 2 students were diagnosed with different learning disabilities. To the best of our knowledge all participants were cisgender and identified as heterosexual. The group was taught by three content teachers for all curricular subjects, had the support of a learning specialist for the two diagnosed students and, during the workshop sessions, had an additional (intern) member of the counseling department as part of their teaching staff.

Experimental Collaboration and Data Sources

The heart of the project unfolded as a workshop around gender issues over the course of seven weeks in which the first author and the students meet twice a week between 2-3 hours to work on gender (see Cruz, 2018 for a detailed discussion of

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[1] In Spain, a school run by a private organization but financed with public funding and, to some degree, subjected to the same regulations as public schools.

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the program). The workshop sessions included conversations and discussions, photo-elicitation activities and drama improvisation exercises (cf. Allan and Tinkler, 2015), which eventually culminated with the group presenting their theatrical pieces to all first year secondary school students. All these class activities were video-recorded and documented through a field diary maintained by the first author. The materials and artifacts generated during the workshop were compiled for later analysis. In addition, once the workshop was completed all students in the workshop and the teachers of the group were formally interviewed. The experience was introduced as a compulsory element of the curriculum for PMAR students but it was also presented as an action-research project in collaboration with the university of the authors of the paper; thus, parents and students were informed about this research component and were asked to provide written consent to participate in the research-based analysis. As indicated above, 12 students and their legal guardians provided this consent and are part of the data corpus to be examined in this paper.

In addition, Inés (first author) completed her documentation of the school and institutional gender policies through her on-going work in the counseling department of the school and the compilation and analysis of relevant documents from the school and wider organization in relation to gender. This included attending a general strategic meeting at the home organization in relation to the development and implementation of their gender and education agenda. She also conducted interviews with members of the counseling department who work with secondary education students.

RESULTS

We highlight key aspects of participant's gender positioning, organized at the three main levels proposed by positioning analysis. We acknowledge that the three positioning levels are intertwined and constitute how gender is enacted in discourse, yet our analysis uses this tripartite approach to focus on different dimensions of how gender emerged in the course of the workshop – and which seemed to be well aligned with the analytical focus of each positioning level. To build the analysis we pay particular attention to telling cases (Bloome and Carter, 2014) as they reveal particular junctures in how participating adolescents collectively construe gender and situate themselves in relation to the wider gender order.

L1 Positioning: How Adolescents Co-construct Gender Narratives and Discourses

Level 1 (successively: L1, L2 and L3) analysis in the positioning framework focuses primarily on how social actors and other elements are internally structured in the storyworld (Young, 1987) created in discourse and narrative. One activity in which L1 positions emerge is during conversations and presentations around the photographs that participants produced and shared in the workshop. As said, this paper focuses on collective discussions during the workshop and our analysis of discourses about gender suggests that participants, even in a group setting, were able to move between two perspectives: (1) conversations in which adolescents engaged with

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general ideas about gender, identifying and enumerating gender stereotypes and gender traits – which are then broadly attributed to males and females and leave little room for variability in how gender identities are expressed; (2) conversations about personal experiences, in which nuances in relation to how gender identities are enacted might be introduced – but often have to be strategically hedged to conform to gender expectations in the group.

One of the first activities in the workshop was to have students create photo-diaries of their daily lives and routines (Mitchell, 2011). These photographs were taken to class and used in two ways. First, the photographs were discussed by adolescents who worked on grouping the photographs and identifying themes/categories relevant in the photographs and their lives. Second, particular photos were singled out by participants and then discussed collectively guided by the questions of the adult facilitator.

The discussion of the photographs, unsurprisingly, confirmed the ubiquity of photographs in adolescents' lives and the central role of sharing photographic self-portraits through social media (e.g. Wargo, 2017). This framing immediately led participants to introduce *postureo* ('posturing') as the prevalent stance in the photographs they produce and share. The conversation around what exactly postureo involves did not manage to pinpoint a clear definition but some common elements were singled out regarding postureo as a communicative act: (1) it involves particular bodily displays in the image, tied to activity and settings (in the case of males in the group most often highlighting physical strength and body-muscle); (2) the images are designed to produce a reaction/assessment when they are shared; (3) postureo is a quality the spectator-recipient attributes to an image, problematizing the intentions and naturalness of the person portrayed in the photograph (who is often the author of the photograph too).

This construction of postureo is part of the context for the discussion of the photograph shared by Fran (pseudonym, as all names in this paper) with the group (Figure 1). When Fran introduced the photograph for group discussion he stated that he selected it to show his interest in sports and exercise - which he practices in public parks rather than a gym.

When the image was shared with the group, Inés started a conversation in which she attempted to review what type of person would take a photograph like this, exploring variations in age, gender, social position, geographical location and interests. That is, the photograph was a prompt to explore what kinds of gendered identities are produced by this group of adolescents - understanding an identity kind as a relatively stable characterization across time and space developed in a particular cultural-institutional setting (Anderson, 2009). She then opens a second thread of discussion about how the image would be received by different people,

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again using sex/gender as the starting point and leading to the conversation in Excerpt 1[2]:

Figure 1: Fran in a park (cropped)

Excerpt 1: Responding to Fran's photograph

(...)

1I: Una chica si ve esta foto [¿qué opina de este deporte?
        If a girl sees this photograph [what will she think of this sport?

2PA: ["Oh Papi"*

3A: *((group laughter))

4LU: "Oh Papi este (niño)-este niño fuerte!"=
        Oh Papi this (boy) - this strong boy! =

5A: ((group laughter)) XXX

6LU: =creerá que-creerá que es muy ágil con las barras
        =she will that-she will believe that he is very agile with the bars
        (...)

7JO: XXX (no) no porque no le gustaría (.)-
        XXX (no) no because she would not like it (.)-

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[2] The transcription adopts a simplified version of common Conversation Analysis (CA) transcription conventions (e.g. ten Have, 1999). All conversations took place in Spanish, we present our translations into English below the original Spanish transcript.

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8A: -XXX

9I: no bien, esta bien
        it's okay, okay

10A: XXX-

11I: -shh

12A: XXXXX ((several students make quick comments at the same time,
        non-transcribable))

13JO: no le gustaría hacer este tipo de deporte las barras XXX practicará tenis que es un
        deporte que le gusta-
        she would not like this sport with bars XXX she would practice tennis which is a sport
        she likes
        (...) ((they wrap up discussion and review notes)) (...)

14I: (...) un chico ¿que pensaría de esto? ¿qué opinaría de esta foto?=
        a boy what would he think of this? what would he think of this photo?=

15A: =¡bah [fracasao'!
        =bah! [a failure

16A: [depende
                [*it depends*

17A: ((several students laugh)) fracasao' ((repeat))-
                        failure

18A: -no hombre diría-
        -no man he would say

19AL: -un chico diría-un chico diría "bah! eso lo hago yo hombre bfff"
                        - *a boy would say "bah! I can do that man bfff"*
        ((A4 is sitting with his back the camera, in this part he turns around and waves his
        arm and hunches his body forward))

20LU: ¡claro! diría "primo ¡para qué estás haciendo eso?"
        right! he would say "dude, what are you doing that for?"

21AL: y luego-y luego llega el tío y es un plan
        and then-and then the guy goes and it's like
        ((raises his arms as if holding a bar, trying to push up and failing))

22PA: y se cae es un fracasao este ¿este que va a hacer? ¡este hombre! ¡que se cree (too)!
        and he falls he is a failure what is he going to do? this man! what does he think!
        (...) ((the teacher supporting the group asks some more questions, overlapping fast
        speech, non-transcribable)) (...)

23LU: yo diria "¡esto es postureo!" (esto no)
        I would say "this is posturing!" (this one)

24A: pues sí

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> *that's it*
>
> 25PA: yo veo esa foto y diría ¡anda que (chu) la foto! pero (.) postuuuu (...)
>
> *I see that photo and I would say hey nice photo! but (.) postuuuu (...)*

The photographs become materials to create brief taleworlds (Young, 1987) in which gender relations and identities are imagined and recreated by participants. Inés leads the discussion presenting different scenarios and the male adolescents in the group enact, first, how a female would react to the scene (lines 1-10) and, then, how a male spectator would react to the scene (lines 14-25). In both cases the rhetorical strategy is similar as it involves styling (Rampton, 2005; Georgakopoulou, 2005) social identities that, at first glance, do not correspond to the social or ethnic background of the speakers.

A female reaction is characterized, and supported through laughter and commentary, through a personification that highlights particular intersections of race and sexuality (Rosa and Flores, 2017; Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013). Both the content and the format of the characterization set the tone: the description focuses on body strength (lines 2-4) and this is done through an exclamation mocking Dominican Spanish accent and vocabulary (repeating the expression "oh Papi!"). This reframes the generic/abstract female -but arguably imagined as Spanish and white- implied in the facilitators question (line 1) to a hypersexualized black Caribbean female in the first response provided by the adolescents. It is only later, through questions by the adult leaders, that alternative reactions are presented which drop the sexualized connotations (line 6: "he is very agile") or turn to the differences in interests between (generic) males and females when José suggests that a girl would not like the photograph as she would be interested in other sports which the speaker sees as less masculinized (line 13: "practice tennis which is a sport she likes").

A male reaction is also built in a jocular tone by constructing an alternative persona in which the strength and physical merit of the scene is dismissed (line 17). Further, in contrast to the previous micro-scene, this response to the image is progressively framed as taking place within an episode of male peer sociability. This transformation is embedded in the communicative construction of the response. First, while the female stylization almost exclusively builds on vocal qualities, the male characterization builds on vocalization and substantial embodied action (lines 17 and 19). Second, the scene is constructed much more collaboratively, with A1-A3-A4-A5 adding particular pieces of dialogue and action to the scene (lines 15-21). Third, as the co-constructed assessment progresses, participants start to talk in first person (i.e. turn themselves into the 'male commentators of the photograph') and fall back to explicitly framing the depiction as posturing (lines 23-25).

However, a shared feature of these accounts is that they present a relational view of gender identities (cf. Francis and Paechter, 2015) in which the gendered positions of both the figure in the image and the imagined viewer are depicted and co-constructed in relation to each other. The first episode centers on relations across

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genders. In this part, the very first account stresses sexualized and racialized heterosexual relations within a gender marketplace in which females are seen as subordinated (Eckert, 1994) to the appeals of masculine physical strength. The second description (lines 7-13) downgrades this intensity and puts the focus on differences between sex/genders by suggesting how males and females might be interested in different types of physical activity and sports. When male participants depict a male reaction to the image, a gendered persona also emerges dialectically through a reenactment of male peer banter. First, they present a male response in which the physical merit of the exercise in the image is denigrated (lines 15-17). Then, this initial reaction is elaborated in an additional micro-episode in which the person making the assessment is challenged to perform the physical action (lines 19-20), attempts to complete it and fails (line 21), which leads to an extended negative portrait of the character who produced the first assessment (line 22).

In short, brief micro-episodes as the above allow participants to present different narrative characters with gendered identities that, at the same time, provide analysts with some access to the relational and discursive mechanisms through which ideas about gender and gender identities are constructed. Above this level, the group sessions constitute a particular setting in which discussions about gender are facilitated.

L2 Positioning: Creating an Interactional Climate to Discuss Gender

L2 analysis pays attention to the social organization of interaction. This, undoubtedly, is very relevant to our analysis and is part of the micro-ethnographic analysis (Erickson, 2004) that we are using to examine interactional excerpts from the workshop sessions. However, in this section we extend L2 analysis to include how participants perceive and experience classroom interaction and participation. That is, on participants' retrospective reflections on the interactional order of the classroom and the opportunities it provided (or failed to provide) to engage with gender issues. More broadly, a key reason to work from a participatory/collaborative perspective was precisely to restructure the classroom order in ways that would foster involvement by a group of students who were seen as progressively disaffiliated from the academic track of La Colonia school. This perception was captured in daily conversations between teachers, as the following field-notes from the early stages of the workshop show:

> Excerpt 2: Ines' field-notes (January 2017)
>
> (...) I'm sitting in the cafeteria with Begoña and Elisa, two teachers from the PMAR group. Elisa invites me to talk about what I observed on Monday. She tells me that Quique (a student) is completely spaced-out, Luis basically the same and the rest they really do not know what to do (she says this looking up at the ceiling in desperation). The conversation is about "what can we do with them?", as "they don't do anything, they only copy". The teachers think the students are afraid about next year, their fourth year, when they will have to go back to mainstream classes. (...)

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In this context, the workshop sessions introduced changes in the physical organization of the classroom, made use of multiple dynamics drawn from drama improvisation aimed at fostering communication, involved other communicative modes such as photography, performance, group discussion, comics, etc. and worked through projects that were later shared with the rest of the school. All these modifications were aimed at increasing involvement in the activity. However, as male students became increasingly active and engaged in the workshop, the visibility in class of the two female students (and only one of attended classes regularly) was put at risk. In fact, one general observation on the development of the workshop and the 'informalization' of the classroom setting is that a somewhat relaxed masculine climate became more prevalent as the sessions progressed, with more banter between male students, jocular competition (e.g. Kontio, 2017; Kehily and Nayak, 1997) and even more physical contact with the female adults in the classroom. In this context, frequently being the only female voice in a group of active male students could be challenging:

> Excerpt 3: Interview with Mara (April 2017)
>
> (…) It's that being the only girl makes me shy. I think so, there are many boys, so what can I do? Not much (…) the group is all boys and I'm the only girl, I tend to keep quiet because they all think one way and I think another (…) for example, in comparison, if we have to decide whether to talk about football or dance everybody is going to choose football more than dance, at least in this class (…) so, yes, I've felt a bit self-conscious.

In other words, the dynamics of the workshop itself ended up reproducing some of the gender imbalances and asymmetries that the workshop itself attempted to problematize. More broadly, the scenario described in Excerpt 3 is generated by larger educational processes and structures that foster streaming students into different secondary school classrooms and creates class groupings in the Spanish educational system that research shows has visible gender (and ethnic) imbalances (Ponferrada, 2009; Poveda, 2012). In connection to the analysis of this paper, it created a male-dominated peer group, which structured how the class group engaged with more explicit discussions of gender inequality and discrimination.

L3 Positioning: Timid Engagements with Hegemonic Masculinities

L3 analysis connects participants' discourses with macro-social dynamics and ideologies, and is the part of positioning analysis that borrows more from Critical Discourse Analysis (de Fina, 2013). In the Spanish context, CDA has been used to examine gender discourses and activism in university students (Elvira, 2017) and much less often in other educational levels. Again, in our case, our reading of this level is not so much framed as a detailed 'CDA-type' examination of participants discourses and is more about a first step in which we explicitly explore how (and if at all) adolescents in the majority-male group identify and engage with key current public debates about gender and gender equality (cf. Tucker and Govender, 2017). These debates circulate in the wider context (draw much media attention, are

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present in the political arena, etc.) and have been introduced at different points in the workshop. In particular, we examine emergent ways in which participants in this experience engaged with the gender order (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003) and if it is possible to trace changes in these engagements which may be potentially connected to participation in the workshop - that is, are plausibly the result of an educational intervention. We focus on two aspects: (a) how participants explained the origin of gender identities and relations; and (b) how participants -particularly male adolescents- came to discuss gender inequality.

When explicitly asked about the origin of gender differences, the group stressed social influences and social learning, mentioning how children are raised by parents, media influences and "social" influences more diffusely. However, interestingly, adolescents also turned to their own actions and peer influences in shaping gender identities and relations. In particular, the focus on this latter aspect materialized in small stories (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou, 2008; Georgakopoulou, 2015) centered on how the members of the class recall cases in which peers and friends displayed non-conventional gender preferences and interests:

Excerpts 4: Three stories about girls and football

4a (told by Fran)

    (...)

1   que había una chica que conocí-que bueno que conozco coño que me contó

2   que antes ella jugaba al fútbol y la criticaban por eso

3   y un día se puso a llorar por eso

4   y luego la gente la apoyó y pues seguía jugando al fútbol

1   that there was a girl that I knew- well I know what the fuck that she told me

2   that before she played football and she was criticized for that

3   and one day she started to cry because of this

4   and people started to support her and she continued playing football

4b (told by Luis)

    (...)

5   yo también me ha pasado uno de esos pero o sea a nivel más grande

6   porque en el equipo en que estábamos-que estoy-está Rafa también

7   o sea no hay-no hay fútbol femenino ¿vale?

8   se fué a meter esa chica

9   juega bien y eso es mu-es mejor que algunos chicos en verdad

10   pero no se sabe porque

11   pero la dijeron que no porque tenían que hacer otro vestuario para ella aparte

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5   *I also lived one of those but at a larger level*

6   *because in the team we are in-I am in it-Rafa is too*

7   *so there is no female section, right?*

8   *that girl tried to join*

9   *she plays very well better than some guys in fact*

10   *but we don't know why*

11   *they told her it was not possible because they would have to make another changing room for her*

4c (told by Álvaro)

       (...)

12   él y yo ((points at peer in front of him)) bueno y más gente, él también la conoce, más gente de aquí de XXX

13   hay una chica que antes se juntaba mucho con chicos y se vestía así (...)

14   le gustaba mucho el fútbol, la ropa de chico y todo eso

15   y fué-y la empezaron a llamar marimacho, la empezaron a insultar y todo eso (...)

16   y ahora es como ahora es como una más

17   y porque se ha cambiado el estilo de ropa, se ha cambiado-ya no le gusta el fútbol,

18   se ha cambiado los gustos

19   y todo por lo que la gente le ha dicho y no por (seguir sus instintos) (...)

12   *he and I well and more people, we know her too, more people here*

13   *there is a girl that spent a lot of time with boys and dressed like this (...)*

14   *she liked football a lot, boys clothes and all that*

15   *and so-they started to call her a tomboy, they started to insult her and all that (...)*

16   *and now she is like one more*

17   *because she changed her clothing style, she changed-*

18   *she doesn't like football anymore,*

19   *she changed her tastes*

20   *and everything because of what people told her and (not by following her instincts) (...)*

The telling of these incidents took place during a wider discussion about conformity to peer norms and expectations led by Inés. In this conversation, adolescents in the group shared and discussed various examples of boys and girls who did not display typical gender preferences and how these were treated by peers (cf. Maccoby, 2002). Stories about non-conforming girls showed more elaboration and uptake on the part of the group. The segments of the conversation (Excerpts 4) illustrate two cases: the incidents of a girl at two points of her life (4a and 4b) and the

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transformations in another girl (4c). There are two features in these stories worth highlighting. On the one hand, they describe instances in which a female attempts to engage in what, despite changes in participation in organized sports, continues to be seen as a masculine typified activity (in Spain: playing football). Thus, the stories simultaneously characterize feminine and masculine identities. They explicitly present a non-conforming feminine identity and the social trajectory that involvement in non-gender typified interests had. Yet, by presenting this non-typified femininity, they also implicitly characterize a type of one-dimensional masculinity. On the other hand, the stories describe instances of discrimination -including how peer pressure pushed a girl to change her interests ("instincts", line 20)- within these adolescents social settings. Within this proximity, or perhaps precisely because of it, all the episodes are presented from a third-person perspective allowing the narrators and peers in the room to detach themselves from the perpetration of these acts of discrimination (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Finally, during the last session of the workshop Inés attempted to review the different threads of discussion she had developed over several weeks regarding how gender is constructed, how gender is taught and learnt in daily interactions and how it permeates all aspects of social life and participants' social relations. This overview took place towards the end of the class, after the major parts of the workshop (e.g. preparing and performing a short piece around gender) were completed and in a context in which the group had become much more relaxed in their interactions. Thus, admittedly, in the episode below most of the group was not too engaged in the discussion and the adult facilitator had to draw participants back into the activity several times (all these efforts are omitted in the transcript below). Nevertheless, she tried to close the workshop by exploring directly with students how gender stereotypes and gender inequalities affect their own daily lives. That is, Inés tried to introduce questions that could provide some indication about the impact of participating in a collaborative experience and the degree to which reflexive activity around gender was appropriated by the adolescents in the workshop. The question is posed to males and females (in the latter case, to the only female student in the group at the time).

> Excerpts 5: Gender stereotypes and discrimination
>
> (...)
>
> <u>Male stereotypes</u>
>
> 1I: Os quería preguntar ¿en qué creeis que os puede perjudicar a vosotros? (...)
>
> ser hombres (.) ser lo que os han enseñado (.) todas estas cosas que estamos diciendo
>
> de cómo son los hombres ¿en qué creeis que os puede perjudicar a vosotros? (.) ¿os
>
> acordáis que hemos visto en cada una de las áreas a que os tenéis que dedicar, cómo
>
> tenéis que sentir, cómo tenéis que pensar, cómo tenéis que mostrar vuestro cuerpo, la
>
> fuerza? (...) contestadme a esto (2) ¿creeis que os perjudica? (3)
>
> *I wanted to ask you how do you think it can harmful? (...)*

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> *being men (.) being what you have been taught, all these things we have discussed about how men are, how do you think this can be harmful? (.) do you remember that we saw in each of the areas what you have to be, how you have to feel, how you have to think, how you have to display your bodies, strength (...) can you answer this (2) do you think it can be harmful to you? (3)*

2MA: sí ((unclear who answers, probably Mara))
      Yes

3I: ¿en qué? (3) ¿en qué os puede perjudicar?
      in what? (3) in what can it be harmful?

4MA: pues no se (.) personalmente no sé
      I don't know (.) personally I don't know

5I: Fran ¿en qué crees que te puede perjudicar cumplir los estereotipos?
      Fran, how do you think that it can harm you to meet stereotypes?

6FR: ((several)) en nada
      in nothing

7I: en nada ¿por qué?
      in nothing why?

8ED: porque eres como un igual pero luego si nos lo cumples (XXX) pero no debería de ser
       así
      because you are just the same but then if you do not meet them (XXX) but it should not be like this
      (...)

Female stereotypes

9I: ¿y a las mujeres en qué creeis que nos perjudica estos este-esta forma de ser
      mujer?¿en qué creeis que nos perjudica?
      and women in what ways do you think this way of being a woman is harmful? how is it harmful?

10ED: en nada XXX-
      in nothing XXX

11I: en nada, ser mujer ¿en qué nos perjudica?
      nothing, being a woman how is it harmful?

12ED: pues (.)
      well (.)

13I: ¿A Mara y a mí en que nos puede perjudicar ser mujer?
      How is it harmful for Mara and I to be a woman?

14ED: el machismo
      machismo

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15I: y-y ¿en qué-en qué consiste ese machismo?

and-and what-and what does this machismo consist of?

16ED: pues en hacerte sentir [(inferior)

well in making you feel [(inferior)

17I: [vale que necesitemos que nos protejan, que::-que::-que respondan por nosotras, por ejemplo ¿sabéis el 8 de marzo por qué salimos a la calle? ¿el día de la mujer?

                                [Ok that we need to be protected, that they answer on our behalf, for example do you know why we march on March 8th? on Women's Day? (.)

18A: pues no=

19I: =(.) porque:: ((Inés is standing now, holding a laptop in her arms and looks to the screen to find something she wants to project to the group))

because::

20A: XXXX ((several students talking quickly, overlapping, non-transcribable))

19I: ¿sabéis cuántas mujeres asesinan al año en España?

do you know how many women are murdered a year in Spain?

20MA: y las que no se saben=

and the ones we do not know about=

21I: =y las que no se saben 700 en diez años una media de 70 mujeres al año, suena una cifra así pero son de 1 a 70 que mueren por esto, por ser mujer porque su pareja considera que por ser mujer la puede matar ¿os parece esto::? ¿os parece esto justo?

=and the ones we do not know about 700 in ten years that's an average of 70 women a year, it sounds like a figure like that but this is between 1 and 70 a year that are murdered because of this, because they are women and their partners thinks that since they are women they can kill them what do you think about thi::s? do you think this is fair?

22CAR: pero esto es que esta mal de la cabeza-

but that's because there is something wrong in their heads-

23I: -¡no! no es que está mal de la cabeza es que ha aprendido a ser hombre y hemos aprendido a ser mujeres y por ese aprendizaje acaban matándose (...)

                                -no! it's not that there is something wrong with

their heads it's that he learned to be a man and we learnt to be women and this learning ends up killing them (...)

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This final discussion provides a sobering assessment of the capacity of the workshop to transform these adolescents' gender discourses. So far, the instances we have discussed show how the male students in the group are far from moving out of the stereotyped masculinities they inhabit (cf. Connel, 1997). When the male students in the class are asked to examine ways in which male stereotypes may constrain their identities and choices (line 1) they have difficulties providing an answer - in the context of the extended framing of the question provided by the adult mediator (line 1). Finally, when they acknowledge this might be the case they are not able to provide specific examples (lines 4 and 8). When the question turns to female stereotypes and gender discrimination, the adolescents introduce the label machismo (line 14) but, again, cannot expand much on the meaning of the term (outside the adult's support). When Inés frames the question in the context of surrounding social and political debates -at the center of Spanish media attention- such as women's political mobilization (line 17) or gender violence (line 21), the student's also fail to provide arguments that would suggest they are engaging with a more structural understanding of gender relations. As a telling example, when they are confronted with the figures related to deaths caused by gender-related violence in Spain, the students appeal to an explanation based on individual problems and deviance (line 22), which is quickly refuted by Inés turning attention to gender socialization and inequality (line 23) - noticeably, this is one of the few occasions throughout the full workshop in which adult mediators intervene and redirect so explicitly student's discourses[3].

CONCLUSIONS

Collective Gender Positionings and Gender Socialization

The experimental collaboration presented in this paper uncovered gender discourses and practices in adolescents that point towards various tensions. On one hand, the ease with which machista gender discourses emerge in students' collective interactions makes it clear there is still substantial work to be done in relation to the gender ideologies of (male) adolescents and youth. Reductive constructions of gender identities and gender relations are present at various discursive levels and suggest the students in the workshop have probably not moved far beyond the conventional and heteronormative gender ideologies that existing research has identified in Spanish adolescents (Ovejero et al; 2013; Martínez, Navarro and Yubero, 2009; Colás and Villaciervos, 2007; Martínez et al;

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[3] In a commentary to a previous version of this article, Virginia Acuña points out a relevant issue related to this last exchange. The dramatic issue of gender-related physical violence and deaths was not introduced or problematized in the workshop until this closing session within the conversation in which Inés introduced the most visible consequences of machismo. Consequently, it is not that surprising that adolescents in the class fall back to individual-psychological explanations of gender-based violence, as these have a very strong presence in media and public discourse and the workshop did not create spaces to build alternative explanations of this particularly complex problem. We are very grateful for this analysis.

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2008). Hegemonic masculinities (Jociles, 2001) emerge in the gender dynamics and identities embedded in the narratives participants generated during the workshop (L1), are present in and come to dominate the interactional climate during the workshop and educational experience (L2), and are manifested in how students engage more explicitly with gender ideologies and current social debates (L3). There is no question that the gender imbalance of the classroom contributed substantially to how these dynamics unfolded (see Excerpt 3) and this gender imbalance, among other things, reproduces larger gender patterns in student participation in different educational streams. On the other hand, nonetheless, the participatory experience showed how students were capable of discussing and playing with gender through various activities and communicative modes – and how this activity was eventually acknowledged and recognized by the school, which was a rare event in the relatively unsuccessful academic careers of these students (Cruz, 2018). Even if we consider that these are timid transformations, as they emerge during jocular events, in the discussion of episodes involving discrimination from which students manage to distance themselves and deal with relatively low-stakes scenarios, perhaps the educational potential should not be underestimated either. The collaborative workshop described here is relatively short, does not occupy an important place in the larger curriculum of the students and, more importantly, emerges as an encapsulated educational episode that happens quite late in their schooling. Thus, it is clear that there are numerous aspects that could be reconsidered to increase the educational/developmental impact of interventions around gender, especially if they attempt to draw from a participatory/collaborative framework. The modest effects of this experience could be seen as a signpost regarding the direction of future transformations.

Working Gender in Secondary Schools: Methodological Considerations

In this final subsection we want to focus on two issues that are particularly connected to the type of intervention methodology discussed in this paper. There are numerous challenges associated with drawing from an experimental collaborative/participatory research approach in school settings and in adopting this approach to design educational interventions (Poveda, Morgade, Cruz, Piñeiro and Gallego, 2020). This experience highlights some of these issues. First, there is a central challenge connected to how collaborative work is incorporated into a school program. In the Spanish curriculum, gender is included as a theme to be explored across the curriculum - and is an explicit theme in the progressive educational organization that runs La Colonia. However, the practical reality is that cross-curricular themes of this type are not easily incorporated into formal academic subjects and less so in secondary education. As the story behind this experience shows, interventions around gender are re-allocated to particular curricular slots and often as a response to perceived and emergent issues, rather than as a primary educational experience for all students across a school or an educational level. In addition, schools and educational programs may vary in terms of the methodological flexibility they tolerate. In this case, La Colonia was receptive to methodological exploration and facilitated implementing a

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participatory/experimental approach, within the constraints of a school setting, that involved visible transformations in the organization of classroom activity and the artefacts students worked with in class. Finally, related to the previous point, schools may work with relatively constrained definitions of educational outcomes. Particularly, in an era dominated by educational accountability, this often leads to intervention designs based on a semi-experimental logic with standardized pre/post assessments. Again, in the case of La Colonia, alternative materializations of the intervention were possible: it allowed for drama and arts-based productions to be the output of the workshop and the school facilitated spaces to share these productions with other classes in the school. In short, even under relatively favorable conditions, it was difficult to truly work on gender across the curriculum and with a stable work plan for an academic year or term. Yet, below this scale there were opportunities for creative work to take place in the classroom and school.

Second, all educational work involves reworking and transforming social actors identities - at the very least, the situated identities that emerge through involvement in joint activity (Gee, 2000). In an educational project, these identity transformations affect both educators and the presupposed recipients of the intervention. In this sense, the collaborative workshop was a space in which both the researcher-facilitator and the (mostly male) adolescent students explored their gender identities and gender discourses. Gender identities develop and change throughout the life-cycle (e.g. Lemaster, Delaney and Strough, 2017; Hyde et al; 2018) and the participants in the workshop found themselves at particular junctures that precisely the workshop tried to open up for examination. Throughout the paper we have shown the type of identity work students were invited to perform but we would like to close by pointing out how the workshop was also a space for changes in the researcher-facilitator, a young adult emergent researcher for whom the experience was also an opportunity to explore the interconnections between action research, (feminist) activism and her own gender and professional identities.

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