

Read the following scenes narrated in the context of the University. Work in pairs.

Try to identify what is happening in each one of the scenes, where different behaviours related to gender discrimination and violence appear.

Scene 1: Girls doing work on role models

Mar and Fátima are taking the degree in Architecture Studies. In class they have been assigned to do an in-depth study of one of the most outstanding architects of the 20th century. They have a list of up to 30 possible architects and not one of them is a woman. Although this happens in all classes and they are used to it, they have decided to approach the professor to suggest expanding the list or to ask permission to do the work on an author who does not appear in the list. The professor is not all that impressed.

"In this subject we're working on the most outstanding personalities in the history of architecture, not men or women. The list is what it is because these are the people who left their mark on 20th-century architecture," the professor says.

"We're not calling that into question, but there are also many important women architects who never appear in any class..." says Mar timidly.

"They're not that important if they've not managed to find a place in the pages of history. Having to look for a woman and make her prominent because she's a woman is not just madness, it's even more sexist! And it's an insult to people who value the work that's been done beyond the sex of who did it," the professor replies.

"That's not our intention. It's just that we've brought some women's names that we think might also work for this assignment because..." Fátima tries to explain.

"Look, the assignment is what it is. I've explained it and I've already posted the list on the virtual campus. We're not here to personalise our students' work, and we're not going to change the rules every time someone feels like it. Now we want different architects, now we want an extra week to deliver the assignment... If we had to listen to every request it would never end. The answer to your request is no, period," the professor says, ending the conversation.

The two girls end up leaving the office, feeling frustrated because they haven't been listened to.

The view from which history has been constructed has always been androcentric: with men at the centre and the participation of women in different disciplines either never explained or explained away as anomalous. While it is true that over time women have been made invisible, belittled or even banned from certain professional fields, the fact that they never appear in textbooks or teaching materials has more to do with an unwillingness to break away from this androcentrism.

Although the professor's behaviour in this scene may not directly contravene the UPC's rules and there is no direct reflection of harassment or violence, his later comments and his disregard for the students' proposals on the issue of female representation make them feel uncomfortable and belittled.

Scene 2: Girl who goes up to the blackboard

A professor asks for a volunteer to go up to the blackboard and solve the problem he had set as homework.

Situation 1: Marta quickly raises her hand: she is convinced that she has solved the problem correctly.

Situation 2: The professor looks at her for a few seconds and then says, with a half-smile, "Oh, how daring! Go ahead."

Situation 3: While Marta writes on the board, the professor looks at the rest of the class and asks, "Do you think she'll have done it well?" Some students laugh. "If she spends half the time on the subject as she does on her makeup, she's sure to pass the exam."

Situation 4: Marta doesn't know what to do or what to answer, whether to turn, whether to say something, whether to... Suddenly, any certainty of whether she had done the exercise well or not has dissipated completely. Hearing her classmates laugh and whisper in the background makes her feel embarrassed and angry.

She finishes writing the answer without saying or doing anything and goes straight to her chair, head bowed. It is not clear to her whether what was on the board made sense in the end or not, because the rest of the class has not been able to pay attention to what was happening.

Marta has not been able to respond to the professor's comment as she might have been able had it come from a classmate.

The lack of visibility and female representation in professional and technological sectors has a direct impact not just on the social construction of what women 'can do' but also on the perception that girls and women have of their own individual abilities and options. This also affects and modulates career tastes and preferences. It is no coincidence that the UPC has a mainly male student body, but this has to do not with sexual or biological differences but with the learning we have done around gender.

The professor's comments help to create an intimidating, unpleasant, hostile and humiliating atmosphere for Marta and any classmates who may have witnessed the scene.

Scene 3: Girl who has just arrived on Erasmus

Juliette is an Erasmus student who has just arrived at the school. She and Juan have exchanged phone numbers and he has told her several times that if she needed anything she could write to him, whatever it was. From the start, Juliette had the feeling that he was “super nice” to her. Since then, they have been talking in the instant messaging group about work, but Juan has also said other things to her: he has made jokes about her being French, he has told her that if she wants to he can show her “cool” places in Barcelona and he has invited her to party with him and his friends several times.

Juliette hasn't yet signed up to any of the plans he's proposed to her, but she's always said no in a very friendly way. Over the weekend, Juan wrote to her several times, made jokes and insisted when she didn't answer. Then he called her insistently late Saturday night. On Sunday, he apologised, saying that it was Carles, another classmate, who had called her, that he had taken his phone and that they were both a bit drunk. He again suggested going for a beer and Juliette said she couldn't. Juan continued to talk to her, but Juliette has stopped answering his messages.

She didn't go to class on Monday and Juan discussed it with his friend, Carles. *“Do you know if she hasn't come today, or has she just skipped this class?” asks Carles.*

“I don't know, man. Do you think she's annoyed? I mean, I called her on Saturday, but that's no reason to be annoyed, is it?” Juan answers.

Carles: Who knows, but by the looks she was giving on the first day, it seemed obvious to me that she wanted something.

Juan: I know, and she was the one who gave me her phone number on the first day!

“Perhaps it's what French girls do; they always seem slutty but then they turn out to be cold fish,” concludes Carles.

Although we don't have her perspective on the story, we can assume that she might be feeling intimidated and insecure, particularly because being an Erasmus student from abroad puts her in a double position of vulnerability: Juan is in a position of power. She may even feel guilty for having given Juan her phone number, for having had conversations with him or for not having said no to his proposals in a more forceful way.

Scene 4: Controlling behaviour in an intimate relationship

Pol and Txell met in their first year at university and started going out soon after. They have now been together for almost two years and it is the longest relationship either of them has ever had.

A few days ago they had arranged to go out with their classmates; when Txell was getting dressed, Pol said, with a clear tone of disapproval:

Pol: Are you seriously going to wear that dress?

Txell: What's wrong with it?

Pol: There's nothing wrong with the dress, it's really quite lovely. But, to be honest, it doesn't look good on you at all.

Pol: I would be ashamed to go out dressed like that. It's just that, frankly... It's not the fact that you're showing your legs, it's that they look ugly. You look like a mug.

It's not the first time Pol has made this type of comment: sometimes it's about the clothes, sometimes it's about her wearing too much makeup. At first Txell laughed it off and did whatever she wanted anyway, but now she can't seem to put that particular outfit on without worrying about how her legs look.

Interestingly, Pol usually says these things when they've met the class group (who are all boys) or when Txell goes out with her school friends (and he isn't invited), but he doesn't seem to do it that much when the two of them go out for dinner alone, for example.

Today, when Txell is going to get dressed and sees the dress in the wardrobe, she feels terrible, she wants to cry and she throws the dress away. The feelings this behaviour causes Txell are related to shame, discomfort, doubt, ambivalence, etc., and have a direct impact on her self-esteem, which also limits her personal autonomy.

Scene 5: Boys' conversation about girls

Today, Alejandro, Quim, Jaume and Pau are having a beer at the student union bar after class. The group has started questioning Alejandro about whether or not he likes Paula.

"Come on, man, you're after her all the time, a smile here, a funny comment there! But have you hooked up yet or not?!"

"No, really. Hell, I don't like Paula. I like her as a friend but she's not my type. I mean, I don't like girls without tits. I think Mar and Gala are much prettier," answers Alejandro.

"What are you saying! Gala has tits but she's really ugly. How can you like her? Paula at least has a very pretty face. If I had to choose, I'm more team Paula than team Gala," answers Quim.

"I agree with Quim. But honestly... Some criteria about whether a girl is hot or not are universal. You may disagree with some things, but Paula is definitely hotter, isn't she?" adds Jaume.

"Yes, yes, we all agree on that except Alejandro. But it's because he's ashamed to tell us he's in love," *says Pau.*

Alejandro: I'm not! Stop provoking me. Do you want us to be democratic and vote on it?

It starts off as a joke, but after a while they get sheets of paper and pens out and start making a list of the girls at the university who they think are prettiest. They each rank their top five and then calculate the average score for each of the girls. They share the result in their instant messaging group, in which there are only boys. The rest of the classmates who receive it continue to comment on the game.

"If the girls find out we've done this, they might kill us," Alejandro points out.

"What you don't want is for Paula to find out," Quim laughs.

Alejandro: I think we should write up our results and hang them in the hallway. I'm

sure Mar would like to know that she's won.

Many things are wrong with this scene. Asking a friend if he likes a girl and discussing the topic in a group need not be wrong, as long as it's not done from a position of demeaning women.

However, the conversation has escalated into something that goes beyond whether Alejandro likes Paula or not: evaluating and scoring female classmates based on their physical appearance, as if they were objects and not people, is to objectify and sexualise them.

Scene 6: Girl on work placement

Since Lucía started her placement two weeks ago, she has been very nervous, because the place she has been assigned is in a very good company and it is therefore very important for her to do everything as well as can. Her placement tutor, Arnau, must have noticed, as he has told her several times not to be tense, that although the image of the company is of high seriousness and notoriety, the treatment there between professionals is very relaxed and warm, that she must let go a bit.

Lucía was not shocked by this type of comment at first, but yesterday it became a bit stranger when he insisted on the issue.

Situation 1: "Being such a young and beautiful girl you shouldn't even worry, you don't have to try to pretend." Seeing Lucía's doubtful face, he continued, "Instead of dressing like you're uptight, it would be good if you went a little more casual, because you don't need to look like a 50-year-old lady. Why don't you wear a skirt? It's a shame you don't make the most of those legs."

Situation 2: Lucía was very surprised and had doubts as to whether it was normal for her placement tutor, who is also much older than her, to say something like that. However, she also felt a kind of shame: she had tried really hard to look like a professional woman, which perhaps didn't quite match what was expected of her.

Situation 3: The next day, choosing what to wear became a problem. She felt very anxious: was Arnau serious about what he said? Or was it just a joke? If she dressed up again, would she be looked down on? She wanted to avoid more comments or seeming like she didn't care. Why was she having to dwell on it so much? Finally, she decided to wear a fairly normal skirt and blouse.

Situation 4: When she went into the office, Arnau looked her up and down, studied her legs for a particularly long time, and then smiled. Lucía felt very, very uncomfortable, and obviously she didn't smile back. In fact, she went straight to her desk, embarrassed, and tried to avoid Arnau's gaze and that of the rest of her colleagues. However, the effort was of little use to her, as Arnau spent the day getting closer to her than was necessary, and it seemed to her that he was looking for excuses to talk to her, looking her up and down the whole time.

When she left the building, Lucía was so overwhelmed by the situation that she started to cry on the way home.

Scene 7: Boys' instant messaging group

Marc, César, Eloi, Albert and Oriol have an instant messaging group where they share all kinds of content. On Saturday night they went out to a club with other students. There Eloi met Laura and at the end of the night they went home together.

On Sunday morning the friends wrote to the group to ask how the night had ended, and Eloi sent them a photo in which he was making a victory sign, although his face was not visible, with Laura beside him, asleep and completely naked.

"Ha, you're a genius," laughed Oriol.

"She's hotter than she looked last night," Marc said.

"Dude, take more pictures of her!" César demanded.

"That's right; sharing is living," replies Albert.

In this story, Laura is objectified and treated like a trophy, both by the boy she slept with and his friends.

It's a crime

What Eloi has done is reprehensible and may be punished, but for César, Marc and Oriol to side with their friend and laugh and encourage him to continue the behaviour is also wrong. In addition, if they share the photos with other people they will also be committing a crime.

Peer pressure

In this situation there is another factor that must be taken into account, which is peer pressure: when people are in a group context they sometimes do or say things that they do not fully agree with, as peer pressure makes it more difficult to break the group's dynamic or implicit rules. This also happens in this scene.

Violence: it's everyone's responsibility to put an end to it.

Seeing the response of his friends, it would probably have been very difficult for someone such as Albert, for example, to have reproached Eloi for what he has done, even if it seemed wrong to him. But the fact that it isn't easy is no excuse or justification for inaction.

Scene 8: Girl starting work

Laia recently joined the UPC as an administrative assistant. Her male and female coworkers all seemed friendly and approachable, and they helped her settle into the job. Of all of them, perhaps the one with whom she has spoken least is Mario, who, oddly enough, sits at the desk right next to her.

The first Friday she worked was the first time they spoke, because they were alone in the office as they were the only ones who had to work.

Having said hello, he looked at her and said, "You remind me of someone, but I'm not quite sure whom. Some actress, perhaps, but I can't think who it is." Laia laughed and said that she hadn't often been told that.

"I think it's because of your high ponytail," he concluded. They didn't really strike up a conversation after that and didn't interact again until the end of the afternoon.

Laia froze when she saw his screen: Mario was playing a video of two people having sex, one of which was a woman who had a high ponytail, in fact.

Luckily, it was soon time to leave, and Laia left in a hurry. Even though she had felt very uncomfortable and thought that what Mario had done was outrageous, over the weekend she thought that it was perhaps best to brush it all off.

She didn't worry about it again until two weeks later, when they were again alone in the office. At first, nothing unusual happened and they practically didn't talk, but as the time to leave approached, when

Mario wasn't looking at her and didn't say anything, his gaze was fixed on the video, but Laia noticed that the screen wasn't in the position it normally was: she had a feeling that he had turned it with the intention that she saw what he was looking at.

Scene 9: Girls going out

Sara, Cristina and their friends went to a festival that takes place every year. They were really looking forward to it, because they had had to miss the previous year's. When they got there, Cristina suggested going up to the bar, where Luís had told her he would be.

Sara: I'm not sure I want to. The guy acts like he's super nice and your friend, but all he really wants is to get you into bed. You can tell by the way he looks at you.

Cristina: No, Sara, no. We're friends, but he's clear that that isn't the way he wants it to go. We kind of talked about it, you know? I told him I'm hung up on Mario, so he's clear on that, and he knows we even hooked up. But I like him, you know, and I feel like going where they are.

Sara: I prefer to stay here with the girls from class...

They stayed with the girls, but after a few hours Luís and Cristina were still sending each other messages. In the end Cristina told Sara that she was going to hang out with the group of boys. When she got there, she had already been drinking for quite some time, but Luís insisted on inviting her to one drink and then another. Cristina was fine at first, but after a while she was a bit groggy from the alcohol and realised she was having a hard time following a conversation.

A little later, Luís took her by the waist and caressed her shoulder... And she felt uncomfortable. She tried to pull away from him a little and took out her phone to ask Sara where they were. Realising that Cristina wanted to leave, Luís offered to accompany her. They started walking towards where Sara was supposed to go. They walked through the crowd for a while and then stopped, quite a distance from where the concert was taking place.

Cristina was leaning against a wall. At that moment, Luís kissed her and Cristina didn't react at first, but then she tried to push him away.

Cristina: Oh, Luís... I don't feel well. I don't think it's the right time, I've had too much to drink. "You're drunk, I'm drunk too. It's okay," he replied, as he continued to touch her under her T-shirt. "No, it's not okay," Cristina tried to say, but Luís wouldn't let her speak. She felt trapped, because the weight of his body didn't let her move or even breathe, he was a head taller than her and much stronger. She was stunned and felt powerless, and she was feeling more and more frightened. Luís kept touching her under her clothes and kissing her mouth, her neck... She started to cry. "Stop, Luís, please," she said again.

At that moment a group of people approached them and he moved away. He stared at her, clearly angry. He said something to her, but Cristina couldn't make it out. She sat on the ground and was speechless, scared and not knowing what to do. After a while, she tried to find Sara. She met her crying, disoriented and confused, still very scared.

Her friends were worried at first, but when she started to try to explain what had just happened, she didn't get the answer she expected. "I mean, Cristina, what did you expect? This guy has been trying it on with you for a while, so you knew what you were getting into," concluded Sara.

Cristina explained that she was so drunk she couldn't follow the conversations or pay attention to the concert, and this fact alone shows that a person cannot consent. Consent, for it to be valid, must be active, conscious and enthusiastic, because consent is not just about giving permission: it must always start from desire.

Emotional consequences

The emotional consequences of this situation for Cristina are clear: crying, confusion and fear. However, even her friend Sara responds to the situation by blaming her. The fact that she has been talking to this boy or agreed to meet him, that she has accepted a drink from him, none of this ever justifies an aggression. Most people are clear about this, in theory, but in practice these ideas still appear when we talk about a specific case. Her friends were worried at first, but when she started to try to explain what had just happened, she didn't get the answer she expected. "I mean, Cristina, what did you expect? This guy has been trying it on with you for a while, so you knew what you were getting into," concluded Sara. Cristina explained that she was so drunk she couldn't follow the conversations or pay attention to the concert, and this fact alone shows that a person cannot consent. Consent, for it to be valid, must be active, conscious and enthusiastic, because consent is not just about giving permission: it must always start from desire.

No one deserves violence

Everyone has the right to flirt with someone and then decide not to have a relationship with them, just as they have the right to initiate sexual contact but then not want to go further. Whatever precedes the situation of sexual assault, it must be emphasised that no one ever deserves the violence they receive.

The victim is not to blame

The idea that a girl establishes 'a debt' that she must pay off later if she does not forcefully reject the attention she receives is very dangerous. This discourse, which in this story is maintained by Sara but is probably also shared by Luís, establishes dynamics in which the victim is blamed for the violence received. This attitude removes responsibility from the aggressors and not only allows them to go unpunished but also allows them to repeat an action like this (or a more serious one) in the future.