



## THE COLLISION OF BDSM AGAINST COEDUCATION

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**ABSTRACT:** The objective of this paper is to contrast BDSM with the principles, the aims and the transformative proposals of coeducation. Due to the characteristics that define sadomasochism, the aim is to determine whether the normalisation of BDSM in the educational setting may pose obstacles and challenges to the progress of emancipatory pedagogy, which is coeducation. To do so, we compile samples of the popularity of BDSM; we look at the descriptions of BDSM from the available sources; and following a hermeneutic methodology, we review the academic literature of BDSM studies, including publications with testimonies of participants of the BDSM community. Subsequently, this is all contrasted and discussed with coeducation theory. Results show that not only can BDSM be understood as a controversial referent for coeducation but also, BDSM and coeducation are two antagonic paradigms. This work reveals that the normalization of sadomasochism in formal education would imply challenges about the efficacy of coeducation. This paper focuses on a cultural phenomenon that has not yet been analyzed within the Spanish coeducational research. This is a pioneering and innovative contribution to the current theoretical debates within coeducation.

**KEYWORDS:** BDSM, coeducation, pedagogy, emancipation, feminism, power.

## LA COLISIÓN DEL BDSM CON LA COEDUCACIÓN

**RESUMEN:** El objetivo de este artículo es contrastar el BDSM con los principios, las metas y las propuestas transformadoras de la coeducación. Por las características que definen al sadomasoquismo, se persigue averiguar si la normalización del BDSM en el espacio educativo puede implicar obstáculos y desafíos en el avance de la pedagogía emancipadora que es la coeducación. Para ello, se recopilan muestras

sobre la popularidad del BDSM; se describen sus características a partir de la consulta de fuentes; y, siguiendo una metodología hermenéutica, se realiza una revisión de literatura académica de los estudios sobre el BDSM, incluyendo publicaciones que han recogido testimonios de personas que participan en sus comunidades. Todo ello se contrasta y se discute con la teoría de la coeducación. Los resultados indican que el BDSM puede entenderse como un referente polémico para la coeducación, así como que el BDSM y la coeducación son dos paradigmas antagónicos. Se revela el desafío que implicaría para el desarrollo y la eficacia de la coeducación la normalización del sadomasoquismo en la educación formal. Este trabajo presta atención a un fenómeno cultural que no ha sido analizado en la investigación coeducativa española, por lo que implica una aportación pionera e innovadora para el debate teórico de la coeducación actual.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** BDSM, coeducación, pedagogía, emancipación, feminismo, poder.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Coeducation aims to subvert existing teaching processes in order to contribute to the cultural change necessary to achieve genuine gender equality (Subirats Martori, 2017). Hence, there is a systematic review of the cultural mechanisms that accommodate the symbolic codes of the patriarchal model. Attention is given to discourses and practices that legitimise violence, including sexual violence. Focus is also placed on discourses that legitimise positive attitudes towards sexual domination and hierarchy.

Coeducation examines the mechanisms that produce gender socialisation in order to question and eliminate them (Carrasco i Pons & Hidalgo Urtiaga, 2022). Alternative forms of socialisation have been proposed, rooted in the principle of gender equality (Ballarín Domingo & Iglesias Galdo, 2019; Otero Gutiérrez, 2023). Coeducation applies its lens to both formal and informal educational processes. Hence the interest in events that occur within popular culture, which is one of the environments where informal educational processes take place.

BDSM, which we will also refer to as SM as in the relevant academic literature (Weiss, 2011), has undergone a process of popularisation over the past two decades (Delicado-Moratalla, 2023). Cultural industries use iconography derived from the BDSM imaginary, which is simultaneously a pornographic genre consumed

massively on online free-content platforms (Bridges et al., 2010; Pornhub, 2023). BDSM is part of the imaginaries that shape popular culture.

In the academic literature on sexuality and sexual education, BDSM is discussed both as it appears in free online pornography and as part of a spectrum of sexual orientations and identities (Carlstrom, 2019; Langdrige & Barker, 2007; Simula et al., 2023; Weinberg, 2008). Some publications suggest lines of educational work linked to its normalisation (Bezreh et al., 2012; Boyd-Rogers et al., 2022; Eastman-Mueller et al., 2023). Recent studies, such as Sharman et al. (2024), even propose educating with a positive perspective on sexual choking, which is one of the BDSM practices, despite the documented risks it presents (Schori et al., 2022).

References to BDSM have gradually been incorporated into the educational space in recent years. For example, the “Guidelines on Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Young Women” of the Canary Islands Institute for Equality (2019) include the promotion of sexual practices originating within the framework of BDSM. In Great Britain, until very recently, learning how to engage in erotic asphyxiation “safely” was included in sex-education programmes (Ramos, 2024).

Given that the inclusion of BDSM in formal educational spaces is progressing, and that its development is occurring within a reality in which the consumption of free online pornography (including BDSM content) among minors and adults has increased over the past decade (Ballester et al., 2022), we can infer that we are in a context that favours the popularisation of its practice.

It is inferred that BDSM is a mechanism that possesses socialising capacities and participates in informal education processes. Because its essence is defined by practices of domination and submission, and its discourse equates pleasure with the exercise of power (Simula et al., 2023; Weinberg & Levi Kamel, 1995; Weiss, 2011), it is necessary to consider how its transmission may pose obstacles and challenges to the progress of emancipatory pedagogy, which is coeducation (Subirats Martori, 2017). Understanding how BDSM impacts the objectives of coeducation will make it possible to evaluate subsequent actions in the context of education for gender equality and within the wider educational community.

## **2. CULTURAL CONTEXT: THE POPULARITY OF BDSM**

Since the 1980s, the iconography and sexual narrative of BDSM have become popularised (Tyler & Quek, 2016). Turley (2024), states that between 10 and 22% of the population regularly engages in some form of BDSM. Bezreh et al. (2012, citing Renaud & Byers, 1999) report evidence of a common interest in BDSM.

Recent research in the United States (Herbenick et al., 2022) and Australia (Sharman et al., 2024) confirms that the practice of sexual choking has expanded to

become a mainstream behaviour among people aged 18 to 35. In digital pornography and on social media platforms such as TikTok and Twitter (now X), scenes and descriptions of sexual asphyxiation are common (Herbenick et al., 2022). The main source through which young people learn about this practice is pornography, cited by more than 60% of respondents in Australia (Sharman et al., 2024) and the United States (Herbenick et al., 2020), followed by films and social media.

At present, BDSM is a culture embedded in the entertainment industry, fashion brands, cinema, music, literature, and virtual communities. It is present in everyday life spaces (De Miguel Álvarez, 2023; Olson, 2017; Steinmetz & Maginn, 2014). Recently, the newspaper *El País* referred to the sadomasochism of Catherine Robbe-Grillet as part of the fine arts (Primo, 2024).

The iconography and practice of *shibari*, which involves immobilising the body using rope bindings and suspending it in the air, was featured in the visual representation of the poster for the 2023 Vociferio Poetry Festival in Valencia and also appears in pop music videos, for example, Rihanna's *S&M* (with 175 million views on YouTube since 2011) or *Copa Vacía* by Shakira and Manuel Turizo (Franco, 2024) (with 152 million views on YouTube since 2023). In daily press reports, we can read testimonies from people involved in this practice: "I discovered it by chance while studying theatre and decided to focus my career as an artist on the practice. Now, I dedicate at least five hours a day [...] Suffering is pure pleasure" (Franco, 2024, para. 10). According to Franco (2024), *shibari* in Spain "is experiencing a boom" (para. 13).

Currently, some central elements of BDSM have been the protagonists of major narratives that have reached a mass audience, as occurred with the *Fifty Shades of Grey* novel series (James, 2012).

Due to its presence in popular culture, we can infer that BDSM forms part of the informal education of the population in our society. Children are interacting with a world that presents them with an appealing script of domination and submission in both heterosexual and homosexual intimate relationships.

The popularisation of BDSM was already being discussed in the 1980s (Falk & Weinberg, 1983), and in recent decades this popularity has expanded, consolidating its presence in pornography studies and its academic development within the social sciences in the Anglo-Saxon world (Delicado-Moratalla, 2023). However, feminist theorisation has maintained a deeply critical stance towards BDSM (Linden et al., 1982), identifying in its principles and practices a set of parallels with the foundations of patriarchal ideology. Critical feminism has highlighted the trivialisation of domination, inequality, violence, gender roles, cruelty, torture, and fascist ideology inherent in BDSM (Delicado-Moratalla, 2022; Jeffreys, 1993).

Nonetheless, the popularisation of BDSM is viewed with disdain by its proponents, who argue that media powers have appropriated its iconography and practices. They criticise the fact that these powers offer the market a trivialised and normative idea of BDSM, which they consider contributes to the stigmatisation of the population that engages in these practices. They call for greater representation of positive depictions in popular culture (Simula, 2019; Turley, 2024).

### 3. BDSM

In BDSM relationships, erotic and sexual games revolve around power. For this purpose, roles of domination and ego exaltation are enacted, as well as practices of submission, punishment, or humiliation (Weinberg, 2021). Califia wrote in 1980: "Since I was two years old I have been constructing an intimate world of domination, submission, punishment, and pain" (1994, p. 242).

It is common in the SM scene to have role-playing games in which women and men—heterosexual and homosexual—portray hierarchical and oppositional positions such as master/slave, teacher/student, and adult/child (Moser & Kleinplatz, 2007). Some practices are considered more common, for example, bondage (which involves restraints and immobilisation) or the use of whips, while others, such as incest-related games, are less frequent (Ríos et al., 2019).

Rubin (2021) points out that sadomasochism is a form of sexuality concerned with intimate connection and intense bodily experiences. Rubin places SM within the pursuit of individual freedom and includes this practice among minority sexualities that are oppressed but seek normalised recognition and deserve to be acknowledged within sexual freedom.

BDSM focuses on the individual—their feelings, subjectivity, desires, and pleasures. The personal satisfaction of the individual is presented as the legitimisation of the practice, provided that consent operates between adults. Indeed, the BDSM relationship model is articulated through an agreement that assumes the liberal contractual paradigm, in which individuals, exercising their will, give their consent to establish an intimate and/or sexual relationship. As Catherine Robbe-Grillet affirms (Primo, 2024), "Without consent, sadomasochism does not exist" (para. 7).

The slogan used to summarise their vision is "Safe, sane, and consensual." BDSM communities assert that the terms of the contract must be completely clear. Ríos et al. (2019, p. 1683) also state that "due to the high risk these practices involve [...] it therefore makes sense for practitioners to take much more elaborate safety measures than in conventional sexual practices." Westlake (2024) notes that "Since some BDSM activities can involve risk, temporary or permanent marks, or even death, safety is a foundational principle of participation in BDSM" (para. 1).

A BDSM relationship includes the establishment of verbal limits that are part of the agreement and are enforced through a word referred to as the "safe word." This is expressed to order the cessation of one or more acts taking place during the intimate encounter.

Taking apparent control over another person is erotic within the power games of BDSM: "Watching the person in front of you shed themselves and give you the most valuable thing they possess [...], feeling that they offer you their will is one of the most intense and fulfilling sensations one can experience" (Sáez Jiménez & Viñuales, 2007, p. 38). In testimonies collected by Turley (2024, pp. 987, 989), we can read: "It was all sex and pleasure and using each other to get what we wanted [...] he had the control and I did not". "This is what I like about BDSM role play: there is no limit to the possibilities, you summon people and can mould and shape them however you want." One woman states: "[With humiliation play], my position of belonging to him is enforced [...], it places you in a vulnerable position and heightens the feeling of vulnerability" (Turley et al., 2018, p. 153). Vulnerability is associated with arousal.

In Hébert and Weaver (2015), dominant individuals are described as empathetic, while those assuming submissive roles are described as willing to relinquish control and motivated by a desire to please. A man who acts as a dominant admits: "Every submissive I have spoken to has said the same thing about feeling absolute freedom when they delegate control to their dominant" (Hébert & Weaver, 2015, p. 58). In this case, freedom is aligned with submission to another person.

According to Moser and Kleinplatz (2007, p. 49), one of the rituals involving a dominant man and a submissive woman is "Gor": "Gorans believe that male domination and female submission constitute the natural order." As part of the representation of hierarchical roles, there is also the parent/child relationship style, understood as a sexual relationship referred to as "Daddy-boy" or "Daddy Dom," which often "involves a woman in the role of a little princess" (Moser & Kleinplatz, 2007, p. 49).

Practices involving physical pain are presented as "intensity" practices (Moser & Kleinplatz, 2007), also referred to as "pain play" (Langdridge & Barker, 2007, p. 91) and associated with pleasure (see *It's Not Sex, It's a Lifestyle: Power, Pain, and Pleasure in Sexual Relationships*, cited in Ríos et al., 2019). Weinberg & Levi Kamel (1995, p. 15) describe sadomasochism as a practice of "giving and receiving pain for erotic gratification." Turley (2024, pp. 990–991) also records opinions in this regard: "I really enjoy the pain in my breasts [...] using clamps or clips on my nipples, digging in with nails." Ríos et al. (2019, p. 1680) describe BDSM as: "the experience of pain as something pleasurable." Simula (2019, p. 2) defines SM as: "experiences that include physical, psychological, or emotional pain or discomfort."

As part of the activities developed within this framework is edge play, which includes practices involving knives or fire, as well as suspending a person in the air, restraint, electricity, the use of enemas, urinating or defecating on others (Downing, 2007), and which are at the bounds of physical safety. Ríos et al. (2019, p. 1684) note that participants define limits “as the maximum point of pain a person can reach.”

Torture is a recurring element in the discourse surrounding BDSM, observable in descriptions of practice settings: “their grotesque walls adorned with chains, whips and ropes, the distinctive furniture composed of torture racks, gynaecological chairs and other macabre artefacts” (Sáez Jiménez & Viñuales, 2007, p. 139). It is also mentioned as one of the actions depicted in pornographic representations of BDSM (Whisnant, 2016). BDSM contexts often refer to dungeon-like spaces associated with torture. For example, Rubin (2021) describes one of the old venues of the San Francisco scene in the late 1970s: “At the back there were two surgical tables, perfect for medical scenes or for tortures requiring greater precision” (para. 28).

Erotic asphyxiation (Cardoso, 2022), also referred to as “breath play” or “breath control play” (Downing, 2007), is a practice associated with BDSM that may be performed with a partner or alone—the latter known in academic literature as autoerotic asphyxiation (Herbenick et al., 2022). It involves the use of hands, ropes, belts or other objects to apply external pressure to the neck, restricting the person’s breathing. Other ways of obstructing breathing include the use of an object such as a pillow, deep throat penetration of the penis, or placing a hand over the mouth to cover it. According to Herbenick et al. (2022), there is a common trend in which men are the ones who strangle and women are the ones who are strangled, whether with or without consent. Figures indicate that between 200 and 1,000 people, mostly men, die each year in the United States as a result of autoerotic asphyxiation, oxygen deprivation, neck compression, airway obstruction, and other causes (Herbenick et al., 2021).

Erotic asphyxiation is presented as “a safe way to be aggressive” (Herbenick et al., 2022, p. 511), although it is the most frequent cause of death (88.2%) among people who practise BDSM (Schori et al., 2022). It is often suggested that it can strengthen feelings of trust within a couple, since it involves an act of surrender that carries physical and health risks. However, there are also testimonies indicating that strangulation is common during the second or third sexual encounter (Herbenick et al., 2022).

BDSM advocates insist that the violence is merely apparent (Hopkins, 1994), that any physical harm is consensual (Downing, 2007), and that it is important to distance the meaning of violence from BDSM, as conflating the two contributes to social stigma. It is proposed that the scene be associated with a “carefully negotiated,

consensual, and respectful” context (Downing, 2007, p. 126), in which there are advisors available to ensure safe practices.

#### 4. COEDUCATION

The popular culture that is transmitted is the one that teaches us to be women and men according to the order established in patriarchal societies. Coeducation is an educational approach linked to the traditions of emancipatory pedagogies (Simón Rodríguez, 2017), which aims to foster learning that questions the characteristics of that culture. It encourages individuals to construct a critical interpretive framework that enables them to identify all cultural manifestations of patriarchal ideology, with particular emphasis on gender inequality. One of the aims of coeducation is the dismantling of hierarchical logics.

Questioning customs associated with violence is one of the coeducational activities currently implemented in classrooms, since one of its goals is to educate individuals who promote new societies in which violence has been rejected. Coeducation seeks to reduce aggressiveness and domination and teaches people to understand sexuality without violent codes, as one of its core principles is pacifism and the promotion of ways of seeing, feeling and thinking grounded in nonviolence (Magallón Portolés, 2023). For this reason, coeducational approaches and actions break the link between sexuality and violence, among others (Simón Rodríguez, 2017).

The culture of inequality promotes a social order based on gender roles, in which symbolic and material positions are distributed in very different and unequal ways between women and men. Dismantling this social structure is the task undertaken by coeducation, through processes of individual and collective awareness of how such roles operate (Simón Rodríguez, 2017). Coeducation teaches how to identify the social impositions that oblige or pressure men and women to conform to masculinity and femininity, and how the social mechanisms of control and re-establishment of these norms operate.

According to coeducational theory, gender roles function as restrictive corsets that limit individual freedom and involve a set of behavioural norms based on a stereotyped conception of the sexes (Subirats Martori, 2017). Gender roles are conceptualised as the manifestation of the organisation of social oppressions that affect women and men in differentiated and unequal ways.

Coeducation promotes learning processes that do not create distinctions or differences between individuals, except for the adaptations required to address the diversity of profiles that exist in society. This principle applies not only to the development of skills, knowledge and competences, but also to the use of space, the distribution of tasks, the selection of materials and classroom resources, and the



language employed in educational settings and communication with the school community.

In the coeducational classroom, learning is organised to enable individuals to detect how social hierarchies operate through the superiority–inferiority relationships inherent in gender roles. Within feminist genealogy there exists an extensive intellectual tradition that has defined, in depth and with precision, the system of meanings derived from the idea that masculinity occupies a position of superiority and femininity one of inferiority (Cobo Bedia, 2005).

Coeducation holds that teaching must contribute to the creation of an equitable society in which all individuals are fully human and enjoy the free development of their personality, unbound by the masculine and feminine universes. For this reason, it seeks to analyse “the sexist components tolerated as normal” (Simón Rodríguez, 2017, p. 130), to deploy methodologies and learning situations that dismantle gender roles at their root, and, in contrast, to provide alternative references and egalitarian examples through positive actions that promote equality between women and men.

Discarding the roles of masculinity and femininity entails the implementation of an active form of respect in which the human condition takes precedence over any other consideration. This necessarily implies a rejection of all mechanisms of inferiorisation, such as, for example, those involving the instrumentalisation of some people for the purposes of others, or those based on privilege-servitude relationships (Simón Rodríguez, 2017). The objectification of individuals, and particularly sexual objectification, belongs to the logics of inferiorisation that are questioned and dismantled, as they are rooted in the dehumanising dynamics of inequality.

Coeducation is conceived and defined as a model of civic education that embraces an ethics of care (Buxarrais Estrada & Valdivielso Gómez, 2021; Camps, 2021; Gilligan, 2013), to which we might also add an ethics of consideration (Pelluchon, 2024). Civic and interpersonal relations are designed from the principle of peaceful coexistence in all interactions. Hostility and cruelty between the sexes are rejected, as they are replaced by mutual cooperation, which in turn includes the requirement of reciprocity. Through coeducation, individuals learn to take equitable responsibility for the proper care of the needs of those for whom they are responsible, those around them, and those with whom they share their lives (García-Cano Torrico & Hinojosa Pareja, 2017). To care means to treat others well, as well as to treat oneself well. Consideration entails concern both for oneself and for others. Consideration connects individuals to one another, making them equals and stripping them of domination (Pelluchon, 2024). In other words, coeducation, together with its ethics of care and consideration, constitutes both a critical and a purposeful force.

## 5. DISCUSSION: WHERE DOES BDSM COLLIDE WITH COEDUCATION?

As can be observed, BDSM is a model rooted in a hierarchy based on the idea of inequality, since its practice requires the activation and eroticisation of roles of domination and submission. These roles share the same characteristics as the masculine and feminine gender roles found within the patriarchal social system, regardless of which sex performs them. For eroticism to arise, there must necessarily be some degree of positive assimilation of the meaning of domination and submission. This is precisely what education for equality between women and men seeks to deactivate and transform into a relationship between equals.

Coeducation, however, aims to deactivate the aggressive attitudes acquired in affective-sexual relationships, BDSM seeks to eroticise them and, at the same time, tends to distance itself from emotions associated with tenderness, care, self-care, and consideration. There is a degree of cynical rhetoric in expressions such as “safe” asphyxiation or in how the desire to dominate is presented as a form of empathy. The proposal of SM is to adopt aggressive attitudes and learn to tolerate them by identifying them with pleasure.

Thus, the educational approach that promotes an ethic of egalitarian love between boys and girls, such as that proposed in the guide *¿Amor? Sólo del bueno* [Love? Only the healthy kind] (Simón Rodríguez & Lillo Simón, 2020), would be undermined, giving way instead to a set of values that incline towards consented violence within the couple. What social cost might tolerance towards consented aggression within intimate relationships have in a world already overwhelmed by femicides? Can we educate people to perform “safe” strangulation in sexual–affective encounters without contradicting the ethics underpinning coeducation?

The BDSM narrative of power and its practices are rooted in attitudes and behaviours of aggression and vulnerability, even if the notion of consent is used to absolve them of their violent nature. Although the acts described in personal accounts are practices associated with violence, references to BDSM defend the idea that its intimate and sexual model should not be read as such, since it is based on a mutual agreement built on the participants’ autonomy, desire, and pleasure. However, for coeducation and for philosophical feminism, granting individual will towards violence does not transform its social meaning (Marzano, 2012).

What BDSM proposes is to dilute the meaning of violence through a self-serving interpretation, whereas coeducation must ground its interventions in a solid and radical framework of meanings. The BDSM standpoint is to neutralise the violent charge of its actions and discourse by appealing to the liberal contract. In contrast, coeducational discourse has always maintained that true cultural change towards real equality is achieved by revealing the apparent consent of women in gender-based violence.

The BDSM interpretation of violence would thus amount to an assertion such as this: in the intimate and sexual sphere, violence is defined by a person's consent. A situation that appears detached from its social context, as though this context did not determine the will or transform it into submission (Cobo Bedia, 2024; Leguil, 2023). In other words, for those who defend BDSM, the element that defines non-violence is the will to affirm the sexual contract. In this scenario, violence becomes alienated from the act itself and from its material reality (blows, punishments, torture, humiliation...) and moves into the realm of individual will. Within this paradigm, practices situated within a framework of aggression are displaced into the abstract and the relative. Aggression would thus lack any material dimension or intrinsic meaning if a person consents to it. The weight of meaning and responsibility for the act would then fall upon the person who submits by consenting, not upon the one who dominates and subjugates.

If we were to accept that violence can be polysemic and fluid in meaning, varying according to each subject's pleasures and will, where would that lead us when, in a coeducational classroom, we address the problem of gender-based and sexual violence, including sexual servitude, in today's society? How can we dismantle the myth that women consent to the violence they suffer? Can the meaning of (sexual) violence cease to be social and become defined by the particularities and desires of each individual? How could we unmask gender-based and sexual violence in such an educational context?

In BDSM, the pact of a relationship mediated by domination and submission is presented as an act of cooperation, mutual listening, care, empathy, and respect for the other person. Agreeing to cruelty is portrayed as an act of liberation for the oppressed. The practice of torture is framed as a sincere expression of repressed desire, and pain and violence are presented as a natural place for pleasure. In other words, the structure of inequality and suffering is imbued with positive meanings, thereby constructing a message that promotes a set of values which education for equality seeks to abolish. This creates the conditions for fostering attitudes and behaviours that deactivate a critical response to the elements defining domination and subordination between people, and more specifically between women and men, since these roles are identified with masculinity and femininity.

In this sense, BDSM collides with coeducational principles in its notion that inferiority (associated with the feminine) and superiority (associated with the masculine) can be chosen as sources of pleasure. It collides because coeducation promotes a sexuality in which people experience pleasure within a framework of equality and equivalence. It would be difficult to design pedagogy for equality if formal education were to assert that suffering produces pleasure.

While coeducational work has made a historic effort to erode the mystique of femininity, which allowed for the self-sacrificing acceptance of women's subordinate

roles, BDSM proposes that occupying a subordinate position, such as the role of submission, should be read as an act of sexual liberation. Associating subalternity with liberation can only foster a context that encourages inequality, as well as a conceptual confusion that is difficult to resolve for any emancipatory pedagogy.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

BDSM can be understood as a controversial reference point for coeducation. Placing BDSM and the principles of coeducation in contrast has revealed the depth of their antagonism, which manifests in the most fundamental principles of both paradigms. It has also exposed the challenge that the normalisation of sadomasochism within formal education would pose to the development and effectiveness of coeducation.

Coeducation has long sought to culturally delegitimise the logic that serves as the scaffolding for the restoration of traditional masculine and feminine models. However, it can be understood that at the core of BDSM lies a script that reproduces these very models through the eroticisation of domination and subordination. Within the discourse of BDSM, there is a desire for domination and subordination to become the new norm that individuals must accept in defining pleasure and intimate relationships. Moreover, it operates within a cultural context that already shows signs of internalising its model.

BDSM eroticises power asymmetry and situates it close to the idea of freedom. However, for the coeducational paradigm, the play of domination and subordination is not a dialogue with freedom. For coeducation, freedom means freedom without domination. Its premise is that engaging in dialogue with freedom necessarily requires abandoning frameworks of domination.

Although BDSM seeks to define itself as a relationship between cooperating individuals, the attitudes and practices enacted within its framework are identical to those found in the logics of the destruction of the other. By contrast, coeducation does not seek a destructive form of power but rather one that is cooperative and constructive, i.e., on of leadership, but without domination. Indeed, BDSM does not redefine the traditional structure of power within patriarchy, although it does display rhetorical intentions to transgress its sexual norms.

The commitment of coeducation is to ensure that society is constructed outside any framework associated with violence. Because it understands that only by reducing the space occupied by violence can the space of equality be expanded. BDSM, however, refuses to consider violence as violence. It seeks to dissociate violence from its meaning, endowing it instead with connotations of pleasure and freedom. The SM paradigm asserts its legitimacy by appealing to a supposed irrelevance of meanings associated with violence.

We may therefore infer that the normalisation of BDSM within formal educational settings carries a certain potential to weaken the transformative capacity of coeducation. It is thus necessary to establish an open dialogue within the educational community regarding the challenges that BDSM poses to the success of coeducational interventions.

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