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Women and Their Ability to Influence Romantic Relationships in the Big Bang Theory Series

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Autor práce:

Aneta Čermotová

Vedoucí práce:

Mgr. Zénó Vernyik, Ph.D.

Katedra anglického jazyka





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Jméno a příjmení: Aneta Černotová
Osobní číslo: P16000390
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Cílem práce je analyzovat mezilidské vztahy v americkém seriálu Teorie velkého třesku a schopnost vybraných ženských postav tyto vztahy ovlivnit. Práce se dále pokusí zjistit, jestli intelektuální schopnosti a vzdělanost jednotlivých postav mohou milostné vztahy ovlivnit.

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- 1) Studium odborné literatury.
- 2) Analýza postavení a možnosti žen ve vyobrazených mezilidských vztazích a jejich souvislost se vzděláním a intelektuálními schopnostmi.
- 3) Kontextualizace zmíněných vztahů a schopností z pohledu genderových a sociálně-psychologických teorií.

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- Savorelli, Antonio. 2010. *Beyond Sitcom: New Directions in American Television Comedy*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland.

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Zénó Vernyik, Ph.D.
Katedra anglického jazyka

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prof. RNDr. Jan Pícek, CSc.
děkan

L.S.

PhDr. Marcela Malá, M.A., Ph.D.
vedoucí katedry

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Anotace

Cílem práce je analyzovat mezilidské vztahy v americkém seriálu, Teorie velkého třesku a schopnosti vybraných ženských postav je ovlivnit. Všechny tři hlavní ženské postavy, jsou ve všech ohledech velice rozdílné osobnosti. Od chování, společenských návyků, všeobecných znalostí až po úroveň vzdělání. Práce se dále pokusí zjistit, jestli intelektuální schopnosti, vzdělanost a vzhled jednotlivých postav má vliv na tuto problematiku. V seriálu se prolínají různé postav s rozlišnou mentalitou, národností a prostředím z kterého pocházejí. Práce bude následně zohledňovat všechny zmíněné aspekty v souvislosti s chováním a vývojem postav a vztahy mezi nimi v průběhu analýzy 3. a 6. série.

Klíčová slova

Věda, sexualita, gender, nerd, nerdom, mezilidské vztahy, vzdělání, schopnosti, vliv

Annotation

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to analyse interpersonal relationship in the American series *The Big Bang Theory* and the ability of selected female character to influence them. All three main female characters are very different from each other in every aspect. From behaviour, social habits, general knowledge to the level of education. The thesis will also intent to find out whether the intellectual abilities, education and physical appearance of individual characters have an impact on this issues. The series mixes different characters with diverse mentalities, nationalities and backgrounds which they come from. The work will then take into account all the mentioned aspects in connection with the behaviour and development of the characters and the relationships between them during the analysis of the 3rd and 6th series.

Key words

Science, sexuality, gender, nerd, nerdom, interpersonal relationships, education, abilities, influence

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1. Introduction

The Big Bang Theory is one of the most successful and known sitcoms around the world. Its viewership has been breaking records since the show has been broadcasted. The producers of the show focus on the world of science, intelligence, nerds, relationships, sexuality and gender. They display diversity through people from different origins with diverse backgrounds, mentalities, intellects and worldview. Thus, that is one of the main aspects why I chose especially this TV series for my bachelor thesis.

I like the diversity of the characters, which are attempting and struggling at the same time to find a way to combine each other's worlds from having a conversation to having a romantic relationship. They bravely face a lot of uncomfortable situations and obstacles but they do not give up. The characters are based on real life and the producers endeavour to display a closer perspective to recent topics in today's world, as mentioned above. It is obvious, the TV series is not hundred per cent authentic, but it surely can help us to understand better to the science worlds, nerds and their personalities in general. The audience can empathize with their struggles or even find some similarities with their lives.

The aim of this paper is to look deeper into interpersonal relationships between the characters along with the ability of chosen female characters to influence them. I will analyse especially the capabilities of Penny, Bernadette and Amy. They are all very diverse characters with distinct level of attractiveness, intelligence and social skills. Therefore, they all use different methods how to influence their romantic relationship. I will also focus on, whether the intellectual capabilities and level of education have impact on the social and relationship related skills and knowledge.

In the first part of my thesis, I am going to introduce *The Big Bang Theory*. I will define such terms as nerd/geek or hegemonic masculinity. Later, I will shortly present the main male characters and their personalities and afterwards, the most important part for us, introduction of the female characters. I will analyse women's position in the society in terms of their appearance, level of education, social skills and behaviour in general.

In the second part of my thesis, I am going to analyse season 3 and 6, as it is clearly not possible to cover the whole 12 seasons in such a short period of time. I chose particularly these seasons because all the couples are meeting for the first time and their associations are just getting evolved. I will focus on the techniques, methods and all the "weapons" women use in their relationship, to fulfil their idea of a healthy and successful relationship. I will also analyse the techniques from the point of view of their level of intelligence, job position, general knowledge and the ability to use their appearance / intelligence against their counterparts.

2. Introducing the Show

The Big Bang Theory is not only a show about scientists and their beautiful neighbour. It also demonstrates several intriguing topics including asexuality, homosexuality, nerd-dom, relationships with family and friends, education and science (Farghaly and Leone 2015, 1-2).

The series presents and contrasts two different lifestyles in an entertaining way. On the one hand a group of brilliant young physicists, and on the other a young, pretty woman who rents the apartment across the hall. This juxtaposition overturns their everyday lives and pushes them out of their comfort zone (Shaw 2015, 1).

One of the reasons why the show is so immensely popular and successful is its ability to define nerd-dom in trustworthy and genuine conditions. The importance of plausibility and genuineness was significant for the show's creators as Bill Prady stated during an interview:

We're writing about ourselves. My highly nerdish background is that I was a computer programmer. I'm a science fiction fan and an obsessed *Star Trek* fan. Whatever you want to call that group of people, nerds or geeks, there's a great history of portraying them homogenously; that they are all the same with tape across the bridges of their eyeglasses and have pocket protectors (Bennett 2009).

Craig Byrne, writer of the fan site Krypton, in an interview with Tara Bennett, explains how central Penny's, the attractive neighbour's role is:

I love 'The Big Bang Theory' because not only do [the writers] incorporate geek elements into their dialogue, but the characters have a lot of heart. It's almost as though they had advanced mental development but somewhere along the line forgot to advance socially. The addition of Penny to their circle has given the characters a chance to grow, and has given Penny a chance to learn of a side of herself that she never knew existed (Bennett 2009).

Based on Nielsen surveys, the second season of *The Big Bang Theory* experienced an increase in viewership that ascended up to approximately 10 million with 20% viewers from freshman season (Bennett 2009). The producers, Chuck Lorre and Bill Prady, are displaying their characters in a sympathetic way to the contemporary population. Their intention was not to mock, but to portray. The purpose of the show eventually became comprehensible and evident, as a big part of that increase includes the student to middle-aged male, geeky-nerdy population, who found themselves in one or more of the characters (Bennett 2009). According to Mcclanahan (2015) “*The Big Bang Theory* resonates with the general population as most males and females do not ‘fit’ into the images of masculinity and femininity.” (4).

Sexuality, gender and race; these are three terms the show addresses the most. The purpose is to portray and manifest them with a sense of humour, to demonstrate the racial differences, as well as the masculinity and femininity of the main characters. Willey and Subramaniam (2018) states “The more ‘brilliant’ (white, male) the scientist, the less relevant the social. Conversely, the more enmeshed in the world (racialized, gendered) the scientist, the less brilliant they can be.” (21).

3. The definition of Nerds/geeks

In the popular scientific world, the term “nerd” and “geek” are often considered synonyms. They both carry the meaning of a certain oddness along with above-average cleverness. However, their origins slightly differ and the usage of the words is different, depending on the context (Willey and Subramaniam 2018, 18).

Kendall (1999) states that nerds are mostly represented by males in today’s popular scientific worlds. Nerds enjoy going to school, educating themselves, especially in science courses such as math, physics, and chemistry. They have very high IQs, are very computer skilled and possess general knowledge. Nerds also like collecting objects connected with

scientific knowledge, such as microscopes, telescopes, and are huge fans of the science fiction world (4).

They can spend hours re-watching their favourite science fiction movies or TV series and reading comic books. Another favourite activity of theirs to do is buying costumes and dressing up as their favourite characters. They also spend large amounts of money on collectable items from movies and merchandise.

The physical image of the nerd is that of a small white male, rather thin, somewhat awkward, lacking confidence, who has no clue how to talk to women and how to use some masculine techniques in order to connect with the woman he likes (Shaw 2015, 18). Kendall (1999) adds a few characteristics concerning the stereotype of the nerd's clothing. Nerds usually wear several layers of clothes, which are mismatched and uncoordinated. They tend to wear too-short pants ("high-water" pants) and glasses.

We can see lots signs of hyper masculinity and perceived feminization in the stereotype of the nerd. Hyper masculinity is a term that signifies an exaggerated form of masculinity, connected with the view of danger and violence as manly and adventurous along with the men's insensitive behaviour towards women (Craig, 2019). Arnold Schwarzenegger or Sylvester Stalone can be used as typical examples.

Nevertheless, hyper masculinity is also a term relevant to understanding the series' male scientists intelligence, poor taste in clothing and lacking confidence in social skills, as they can also be considered as signs of hypermasculinity. Feminization, on the other hand, is shown in their type of body (rather small and thin) and their disinterest in sports and their non-existent sexual life. The term nerd is related to both of these terms, as well as to hegemonic masculinity (Kendall 1999, 4). On the one hand, nerds demonstrate their masculinity through their skills and capabilities with technology. But on the other hand, they

truly have a dull social life and dull interactions with women, which contradict their association with hegemonic masculinity (5).

The representation of the nerd in the series of *The Big Bang Theory* displays the nerdy scientist that embodies both the portrayal of science and masculinity, and eventually also of getting closer to hegemonic masculinity. This character of an antisocial, awkward scientist represents an archetype of Asperger's exaggerated demonstration of average masculinity and a substandard capacity to empathize (Willey and Subramaniam 2018, 18-19).

The narrative of *The Big Bang Theory* centres on the four nerdy male protagonists Leonard, Sheldon, Raj and Howard, and their possibility to meet conditions of plausibility in relation to hegemonic masculinity. They try to overcome this problem through their relations with the female characters of the show, especially Penny, Amy and Bernadette. Although each of them has a different approach to overcome these obstacles, all of them eventually have promising moments of coming closer to hegemonic masculinity (Campbell 2015, 13).

According to Willey and Subramaniam (2018), in contemporary society, scientists are often portrayed as either mad, evil or as rescuers. The antisocial scientist in *The Big Bang Theory*, however is neither evil nor a saviour, but rather socially awkward, self-centred and asocial. He rather represents an archetype of Asperger's exaggerated demonstration of average masculinity and a substandard capacity to empathize as mentioned above. As mentioned above, the character of the scientist introduces the viewer to the world around science and its connection related to gender and race (19). The male scientists in the show are all of different origin and come from different conditions. Leonard comes from a white family with not very loving scientist parents; Sheldon, from a white family of a single hard line Christian mother; Rajesh comes from a rich Indian family with domineering parents and Howard from a Jewish family of single mother (20).

3.1 Female scientist

At the same time, nerdiness, regardless of its popular portrayal, does not only apply to males. Yet, the hegemonic masculinity applies to nerds due to their high level of intelligence and knowledge of technology and computers. Thus, when nerdiness applies to females, it generally means a decrease of their potential sexual attractiveness and appealing appearance in general. The general assumption is that they wear glasses and are buried in books all the time, which is not entirely true. They still possess a high level of intelligence, but are not considered so appealing at first glance (9).

The appearance of women nerds in TV series and films began in the '90s. One of the most popular and known geek girls is Lisa Simpson from the series *The Simpsons*. Lisa is a very smart, goal-directed, know-it-all character, who is always seeking new information, promoting feminine rights, but at the same time is a bit socially awkward and without friends. The combination of intelligence and determination was one of the major symbols of nerd-dom in the '90s. Another well-known example may be *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, or there more recent Hermione Granger from *Harry Potter*. According to Inkoo Kang: “To be a nerd is a feminist act, no matter the political leanings of the woman” (Kang 2017).

Nevertheless, smart females who want to be treated equally are a theme which is popular in recent culture. For instance, Elle Woods from *Legally Blonde* is another good example. She is a smart, but at the same time very attractive, woman. She goes from a self-centred, spoiled, have everything, sorority girl to a path to be accepted at Harvard, and later to become a successful lawyer. She does this initially to prove to her ex-boyfriend that she is not just a “pretty face” but actually a strong, independent and smart woman. This eventually takes a turn and she does not care anymore about proving anything to anyone, especially not to someone who is not worth it and is focused on himself; discovering what talent she has and eventually graduating from Harvard University (Scheg 2015, 6).

Women nerds/geeks, however are often not taken seriously. There is a tendency to mock them or even blame them for trying to look cool or even for trying to be a nerd just to gain men's attention. Men have suspicions and doubt their female counterparts' knowledge about topics related to nerd culture and are thus being questioned about those topics to prove their knowledge. But does anyone ask a male nerd about his knowledge of Batman or Star Wars? Of course, not (Patnaude, 2018).

Nevertheless, the fact remains that men have been more dominant in the STEM (Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields, unlike women, who rather participate more in fields such as biology, medicine, psychology, linguistics etc. The answer why they are underrepresented in the STEM fields while not in these disciplines is largely unknown. There is, however, the problem of sex discrimination, where people estimate that men are more intellectually capable than women. Therefore, there is a preference for hiring men, even though women have the same level of knowledge and education. But there is also the factor of women's preference and their field choices (Williams and Ceci 2018, 11).

The main female scientists in the series are, as previously mentioned, the neurologist Amy Farrah Fowler and the microbiologist Bernadette Rostenkowski. Another example is experimental physicist Leslie Winkle, who had a romantic relationship with both Leonard and Howard, only for sexual gratification from her side. And others, such as Raj's sister Priya, who is a lawyer; Ramona Nowitzki, postdoctoral researcher and graduate student of Caltech, who had a crush on Sheldon or Leonard's mother, Dr. Beverly Hofstadter, respected psychiatrist and neuroscientist (Burger 2015, 1). The professional success of these women may occasionally frighten their male counterparts and make them feel underrated, for instance, in the case of Howard, when Bernadette got promoted and had a higher pay rise, it made him feel inferior (3).

3.2 Hegemonic Masculinity

The term hegemonic masculinity represents the dominant position of men and the inferior position of females. In other words, it can be specified as an embodiment of the currently preferred response to the issue of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which assures the position of domination and subordination (Connell 2005, 77).

According to Mcclanahan (2015), *The Big Bang Theory* “uses heterosexuality, specifically the heterosexual imaginary, to make challenges to hegemonic ideals of masculinity and femininity more culturally digestible or acceptable to a mass audience. The show promotes heterosexuality and the heterosexual imaginary but, at the same time, challenges hegemonic masculinity and, in later seasons, hegemonic femininity to expand gender boundaries” (4).

Campbell (2015), at the same time, argues that the key element in the journey towards the alteration of nerds into males, along with their transformation or intention to approach the hegemonic masculinity, is Penny. Penny tries to moderate the popular turning points referring to nerds that are demonstrated in popular world (1).

Willey and Subramaniam (2018) adds that Penny serves as the “normal” character in the show, the one who is “street” smart and faces the nerdiness of the rest. Throughout the show, she is growing fond of the nerds, defends them and perhaps even understands them. Or, at least some of them (22).

Campbell (2015) claims that both Leonard and Howard meet the conditions of heterosexual masculinity, once again, thanks to Penny. It is evident that for Leonard, this happens through his intimate relationship with Penny. By contrast, Howard is in a platonic relationship with her, which does not seem beneficial at first glance, but it actually helps his performance of heterosexual masculinity. Penny also introduces several potential intimate

partners to Howard, for example Bernadette, whom he ends up marrying (15). On the other hand, Mcclanahan (2015) claims that: “Sheldon is the closest one to demonstrate hegemonic masculinity through his ambition, arrogance and non-expressiveness, yet breaks the boundaries by falling more into an asexual role when it comes to physical relationships.” (15).

However, even if the transformation of nerds into hegemonic masculinity may seem manageable, it also brings unpredicted side effects. Penny does not only socialize the nerds into social standards, they also unconsciously turn her into a nerd (16).

During her interaction with the nerds, Penny is not aware of any unexpected changes in her behaviour or manners, but the on-going process of Penny’s nerdification is obvious for the audience. Although these types of scenes are at first used only to entertain the audience, Penny eventually stops considering the nerds only as neighbours with strange habits. She accepts them with all their strangeness and they develop into being her friends and in the case of Leonard, romantic relationship. Once Alice, who moved into their apartment block, accused Penny of “using” them for her benefits, which strongly offended Penny. That behaviour shows her authentic emotions towards them and it proves that she considers them as friends (15-16).

Penny exhibits signs of her transformation to nerd-dom throughout the show, especially in the context of her relationship with Leonard. For example, the following scene takes place in season 3, in the 19th episode ‘The Wheaton Recurrence’:

PENNY: Having a little trouble catching your breath there?

LEONARD: No, I’m good. If my P.E. teachers have told me this is what I was training for, I would have tried a lot harder. [Laughs]

PENNY: ‘Do or do not, there is no try.’

LEONARD: Heh. Did you just quote Star Wars? [Looks at Penny in surprise]

PENNY: I believe I quoted *Empire Strikes Back*.

LEONARD: Ha, ha. Oh, my God. I am lying in bed with a beautiful woman who can quote Yoda. [Penny laughs and they kiss] (Prady and Leone, 2010, season 3 episode 19, 00:05).

4. Introducing the Male Characters – Basic Characteristics

The Big Bang Theory is a show that focuses on four main male characters; physicists and friends that all work together at the Caltech Institute in Pasadena, California: Sheldon Cooper, Leonard Hofstadter and their friends Howard Wolowitz and Rajesh Koothrappali. These four people are extraordinary, extremely intelligent, successful at their professions, have a tremendous knowledge of comic books, movies and TV series that are all related to science fiction (Bennett 2009). They also share interests in computer games, are immersed in merchandise and collections of diverse items related to science fiction and like to dress up as their favourite characters and go to comic book conventions like the Comic-con (Shaw 2015, 3). However, when it comes to social interaction and communication with people of the opposite sex, their knowledge and skills are truly lacking (Bennett 2009).

The male characters of the show are seeking any and all sorts of intimacy with women, meanwhile considering them as a sort of unachievable dream. According to Shaw (2015),

All four of the male characters objectify women to some degree. Howard views women as sexual objects, Leonard's behaviour is reminiscent of the knight to his patroness, Raj suffers from elective mutism in the presence of women as a result of regarding them as intimidating, and Sheldon distances himself even further by attempting to avoid physical or emotional involvement with females, while still relying on them as a nurturing agent (7).

Further, Willey and Subramaniam (2018) add that “Raj and Howard are both obsessed with sex, trying unsuccessfully to ‘get laid’ or to find some form of sexual gratification normally associated with adolescence. They are forever crossing ethical lines and engaging in sexually predatory (if ineffectual) behaviour” (26). Nevertheless, they never cause harm of any type to any woman, because most of their talks and practices are theoretical and almost never used. They are both socially awkward and do not know how to even start a proper conversation with a woman without being rejected.

Willey and Subramaniam (2018) also claim that “Rather than undermining scientist, this ineptitude actually comes to mark and serve as evidence of intellectual exceptionalism.” (23). The show thus does not portray the male scientist as awkward weirdoes who are not capable to fit into the social world, but as people who try to integrate into society, but simply do not know how to find the right way in (22).

4.1 Leonard

According to Spiegel (2015), the character of Leonard functions as the most reasonable male of the group, reassuring and moderating his friends when their absurd and inconvenient behaviour is over the line (1). Bennett (2009) adds that Leonard, who commonly has difficulties with getting attention from women, is considered to be the character with whom the majority of the audience can associate and empathize with. In Will Welsh’s opinion:

Leonard serves as the most relatable member of the group. He is painfully aware that he is a geek. He doesn’t always seem comfortable in his own skin, which is a feeling that I have had come and go throughout most of my life. The other guys on the show, they don’t even recognize that they are geeks. They just are and rarely view themselves from outside that window. Leonard teeters on not being a geek and occasionally wishes he wasn’t so geeky (2009).

On the one hand, Leonard is shown as a sensitive guy due to his relations with his mother and later with Penny. For example, when Penny does not say that she loves him back, he makes related comments all day while doing every activity. On the other hand, he is the one who tries the hardest to match the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, the struggles he has to go through notwithstanding (Mcclanahan 2015, 18). On the contrary, Kurt, Penny's ex-boyfriend embodies the perfect physical example of hegemonic masculinity – he is tall and very muscular, yet stupid. Leonard is short and not muscular, but at least he is honest and smart.

4.2 Sheldon

On the opposite end of the scale is Sheldon Cooper, who, as Bennett (2009) claims, is the most controversial character of the show. Sheldon embodies the extremism, weirdness, strangeness and unfeelingness of the stereotypical geek all in one person. According to Willey and Subramaniam (2018), "Sheldon Cooper, the theoretical particle physicist is the nerdiest of them all or the hyper/alpha nerd" (22).

His obsession with routines and order, his lack of understanding of most of the irony and humour, his lack of interest in people's feelings and lives, his conviction of being superior to others and his lack of humility places him in the position of the least understandable and relatable character of the show (Bennett 2009).

Shaw (2015) argues that although Sheldon is both self-absorbed and uncaring, he is also needy. Even though he is very self-restrained when it comes to a relationship, he seeks relations with women for their nurturing presence, such as his grandmother, whom he calls "Meemaw", his girlfriend Amy, or Penny. For instance, when Sheldon is sick, he always calls Penny to sing "Soft Kitty", a song that his mother used to sing to him, to make him feel better. This example provides an image of Sheldon who is still a boy stuck in a man's body, unable to

develop or maintain an intimate relationship (9). For example, in season 1, episode 11, called “The Pancake Batter Anomaly” Sheldon gets sick, goes to the Cheesecake factory, where Penny works and with annoyance asks for soup. Penny asks why did he not have the soup at home:

SHELDON: Penny, I have an IQ of 187. Don't you imagine that if there were a way for me to have had soup at home I would have thought of it?

PENNY: You can have soup delivered.

SHELDON: I did not think of that. [Looking perplexed at Penny] Clearly, febrile delirium is setting in. Please bring me some soup while I still understand what a spoon is for (Cedrowski 2008, season 1, episode 11, 09:50).

Therefore, Penny asks what kind of soup he wants. Sheldon answers “Well, my mother used to make me this split-pea soup with little frankfurter slices and these homemade croutons.” Penny replies they will not do that, they only have chicken tortilla and potato leek. Sheldon tries again and asks: “Can I get any of those with little frankfurter slices and homemade croutons?” Penny briefly answers that no, to which Sheldon answer “Then surprise me”. Later, she has to drive him home, because he was scared he will pass out on the bus and someone will harvest his organs' and when they arrive home, Sheldon even convinces her to rub some “VapoRub” on his chest and sing him his comforting song “Soft Kitty”.

PENNY: Okay, nice and cosy. [Tucking Sheldon in his bed] Okay, I'll see you later.

SHELDON: Wait. Will you please rub this on my chest?

PENNY: Oh, Sheldon. Can't you do that yourself?

SHELDON: VapoRub makes my hand smell funny.

PENNY: But, Sheldon--

SHELDON: Please, please, please.

PENNY: I can't believe I'm doing this. [starts applying the VapoRub on his chest]

SHELDON: No, no. Counterclockwise, or my chest hair mats.

PENNY: Sorry.

SHELDON: [Sheldon sighs] Can you sing 'Soft Kitty'?

PENNY: What?

SHELDON: My mom used to sing it when I was sick.

PENNY: I'm sorry, honey, I don't know it.

SHELDON: I'll teach you [Starts singing and makes Penny sing too] (Cedrowski 2008, season 1, episode 11, 15:45).

Kidult represents immaturity in general. According to Bernadini (2014) “the entry into the adult age, concurs with the crossing of certain thresholds: a steady job, stable relationships, independent living and parenthood”. Kidults are lacking on these characteristic features of adults. They may still live their parents, because of the freedom and independence, which includes also evading relationship, marriage and possibility of being a parent. It embodies a man over 30 years old, whose mind is stuck at his boy/teenage years. This type of men is also called as “boy-men” (2014). He is very fond of watching TV, cartoons, science fiction films with superheroes, plays video and computer games, collects diverse items related to the themes he likes, etc. He also likes to dress up in clothes with superheroes patterns that are aimed at adolescents, but they can still buy it or have them custom-made for their size. In case of Sheldon, he always wears clothes and even has custom-made underwear with diverse patterns and designs, which are either related to a superhero, to science fiction, such as Star Wars, Star Trek etc. or a physics theme. Sheldon and Leonard’s apartment is also full of, for

example, Star Wars themed kitchen equipment, such as Sheldon's toaster that impresses the burnt image of a Cylon from Star Wars into the toast (Cerdá Group, 2019).

Another characteristic feature is when there is a new film being released, autograph session or reading of their favourite comic books, they like to stand in the line hours ahead, to make sure they make it on time. This example can be seen in season 9, episode 23, called “The Line Substitution Solution”. There is a screening of the new movie *Captain America: Civil War* which includes deleted scenes. Sheldon has to leave in the middle in the waiting in the line and pays someone to stand in line for him; meanwhile another guy cuts the line, arguing with Sheldon “he is with his friends, it’s cool”. According to Sheldon, this manoeuvre is “a breach of line etiquette” and eventually causes an argument as certain people accused Sheldon of cutting the line as well and exchanging a place with the guy who was standing in line for him. But Sheldon is always prepared with his speech about breaching the line etiquette, which leaves them in incomprehension towards Sheldon (Rich 2015, season 9, episode 23, 11:30).

4.3 Howard and Raj

Spiegel (2015) introduces the remaining two male characters – Dr. Rajesh Koothrapali and Howard Wolowitz. Howard is the only one of the four friends who does not have a doctoral degree, but only a master’s degree in engineering. Therefore, he is often a target of ridicule, which he receives especially from Sheldon. One of the main purposes of Howard’s character in terms of the plot is the narrative with his Jewish mother. Their conversations, arguments and basically their daily life bring a lot of entertainment into the show (1).

Willey and Subramaniam (2018) add: “These characters serve to embody and contain stereotypes of the nerd as congenitally uncool. Despite their shared nerdiness with Leonard and Sheldon, these nerds are marked by racial difference that codes their ‘uncoolness’ in sexual undesirability and ineptitude coupled with desperate desire bordering on the pathological.” (26)

Howard is the one who dresses up the craziest. Tight jeans, t-shirt tucked in jeans, turtlenecks, bright colours and a huge collection of belt buckles, is a must have of Howard’s wardrobe (Mcclanahan 2015, 19)

Raj is a character whose sexuality is questioned the most. He enjoys going out to get a massage, to get pedicure, exercise yoga, he likes to watch a nice romantic movie with a lighted candle and with his dog, which he has a close relationship with. He clearly likes feminine things such as going out for shopping, smelling perfumes, doing face masks, he looks after what he eats, trying not to put on some weight, etc.

5. Introducing the female characters and their stereotypes

The show displays the male scientist in the “hard” sciences such as physics and engineering and the women in “soft” sciences, such as microbiology and neurobiology. The show focuses mainly on 3 female characters - Penny, a beautiful blonde waitress; Bernadette, a smart, cute scientist and Amy, a socially awkward, unattractive scientist. Penny is portrayed as the one who is always pretty, but not very bright. Amy and Bernadette are both extremely intelligent, more conservative than Penny, dress less boldly, both wear glasses and are quite nerdy as well. But unlike the boys, they do not share the same interests, as considered typical for nerds, such as reading comic books, watching science fiction movies or playing board or video games. Even though these two are scientists, they still try to embrace their femininity by dressing up nicely or, in Amy's case, attempting to dress up nicely.

Amy Farrah Fowler and Bernadette Rostenkowski are the two most frequently portrayed scientist characters on the show. The new alterations happening concerning the nerds, certainly work to benefit Amy and Bernadette, who know how to use these changes to their advantage. However, the same way Penny is using her influence upon the male scientists, she uses it upon the female ones too. The conditions of plausibility once again revolve around Penny. Penny is on friendly terms with Amy, though Amy constantly crosses personal, social and physical boundaries. Although Amy is extremely smart, she is also far behind in certain social standards and is not fully aware of when she trespasses certain boundaries and limits (Mcclanahan 2015, 25). For example in the season 4, episode 8 “The 21-Second Excitation” Amy invited herself to Penny’s girls’ night and started calling it a “slumber party” which she was never invited to as a child. Penny and Bernadette wanted to have “girl talk” which Amy was not very familiar with.

AMY: So, anyway, to make a long story short, turns out I have an unusually firm cervix. [Both Penny and Bernadette look really confused]

PENNY: You know, heh, Amy, when we say girl talk, it doesn't just have to be about our lady parts.

AMY: Shame, because I have a real zinger about my tilted uterus. [Penny and Bernadette look uncomfortable and Penny rather sips on her wine]

BERNADETTE: Penny, your nails look great.

PENNY: Oh, thanks. I found this place in Alhambra. It's in a woman's basement. I think it's a front for human trafficking, but they do a really good job.

AMY: A colleague of mine did her thesis on the fungus that grows on improperly sterilized manicure implements. -Well, don't tell me that's not girl talk.

PENNY: So where should we go tonight? A bar? A club? A movie?

BERNADETTE: Or we could just stay here.

AMY: Yes, and continue to bond. I have a feeling that after tonight, one of you will become my best friend forever or BFF, if you prefer. Which I don't.

PENNY: All right, time to open Bachelor Number 2. [opens another bottle of wine] (Cedrowski 2010, season 4, episode 8, 07:00).

During a truth or dare game, Penny gets upset and leaves to her bedroom.

BERNADETTE: She's been there for a long time.

AMY: Clearly, losing truth or dare upset her. Perhaps we should take her mind off it with another slumber party activity. [Looks at the list of options on her phone]

BERNADETTE: Like what?

AMY: Well, The Internet suggests that slumber party guests often engage in harmless experimentation with lesbianism. [Gets up and goes to Penny's bedroom]

BERNADETTE: Where exactly on the Internet have you been looking? [Looks disturbed and looks into Amy's phone]

PENNY: Oh, hey, Amy. Look, I'm sorry I got so upset, I just-- Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa! What are you doing?!

AMY: Don't worry, I'll avoid the nether yē. (Reference to intimate parts)

BERNADETTE: I might have gone with eating raw cookie dough. [Looks disgusted] (18:00)

On the other hand, the relation between Bernadette and Penny seems notably more standard. They work together at the Cheesecake Factory as waitresses. Bernadette is studying for a postgraduate degree in microbiology at university and this work helps her keep her finances in order. She is a scientist but compared to the male scientists, she is not only stuck in a lab or university, her position permits her to socialize with people outside her mainstream job and make new contacts (23).

Eventually, Penny decides to introduce Howard to Bernadette, which puts Bernadette between nerd-dom and the non-nerd-dom world, which she seems to handle completely. She can run an academic conversation with Leonard about his experiment while complimenting Penny's new shoes, asking where she bought those (23).

BERNADETTE: Oh, I love your shoes.

PENNY: Oh, thanks. They are cute, aren't they?

BERNADETTE: Where did you get them?

PENNY: Shoes for less.

BERNADETTE: I've been meaning to go over there.

PENNY: Oh, great selection, great prices.

BERNADETTE: So Leonard, Howard says you are working on fundamental tests of quantum mechanics.

LEONARD: I am. Are you interested in physics?

BERNADETTE: I find it fascinating. [Penny frowns at her in confusion] If I hadn't gone into microbiology, I probably would have gone into physics or ice dancing.

LEONARD: Actually, my tests of Aharonov-Bohm quantum inference effect have reached an interesting point. Right now we are testing phase shift due to electric potential.

BERNADETTE: That's amazing. Are you going to try to set up the voltages using tunnel junctions? [Penny looking at her in confusion again]

LEONARD: Yes, I am. You wanna see a simulation on my laptop?

BERNADETTE: Oh, yeah. Show me. In microbiology, the most exciting thing I get to work with is yeast (Prady and Leone, 2010, season 3 episode 10, 2:25).

Contrary to Bernadette, who has a lot in common with the male scientists as well as with Penny, Amy has much more common with the male nerds, especially Sheldon. Amy's and Sheldon's first meeting is arranged in a coffee shop by Howard and Rajesh who set his profile up on a dating website, despite Sheldon's protests. They both accompany him to the date as well, to assure he comes there. During the meeting, Amy and Sheldon quickly realize they are very similar when it comes to intellect and socialization. Amy, from the start clearly introduces her scientific, rationalist approach to life and that her mother made her to come (24).

AMY: Excuse me. I am Amy Farrah Fowler. You are Sheldon Cooper.

SHELDON: Hello, Amy Farrah Fowler. I'm sorry to inform you that you have been taken in by unsupportable mathematics designed to prey on the gullible and the lonely. Additionally, I am being blackmailed with a hidden dirty sock.

AMY: If that was slang, I am unfamiliar with it. If it was literal, I share your aversion to soiled hosiery. In any case, I am here because my mother and I have agreed that I will date at least once a year.

SHELDON: Interesting. My mother and I have the same agreement about church.

AMY: I don't object to the concept of a deity, but I am baffled by the notion of one that takes attendance.

SHELDON: Well, then you might want to avoid East Texas.

AMY: Noted. Now, before this goes any further, you should know that all forms of physical contact up to and including coitus are off the table.

SHELDON: May I buy you a beverage? [Nodding pleasantly]

AMY: Tepid water, please.

HOWARD: Good God, what have we done? [Shocked by watching them] (Chakos, 2010, season 3, episode 23, 18:30).

6. Analysis of the position of the women in the society

LaFollette (1988) observes that:

Depictions of female scientists in the early 20th century tended to emphasize the domesticity of these individuals. Such images frame female scientists as still possessing traditional female characteristics – nurturing, sweet, and attractive. At the same time, since character-types constrain narrative choices, making certain story lines implausible for particular characters, such depictions also work to constrain a character to a more traditional female role as the ‘weaker’ sex, ultimately subordinate to men (262-75).

In a similar way, Farghaly and Leone (2015) add that “the show has demonstrated a remarkable capability to reduce women to pretty bedfellows who do not necessarily need a brain or self-esteem; Howard and Raj especially make a point of using (or trying to use) women for sexual gratification and nothing else.” (1-2).

Archer (2015), on the other hand, claims that the show does not favour the sexual needs of men over the needs of women. Having sexual desires is a basic need of both genders. However, the significance and process of these urges may vary greatly between the sexes (26).

While the show often involves narratives revolving around Leonard, Howard and Raj’s sexual needs and experiences, these stories always emphasize this as a matter of defining their manhood. When one of the characters obtains a sexual experience, it is considered a great accomplishment. It is quite extraordinary for a nerd to have sexual success, let alone a girl. Therefore, it is considered a triumph in their world, and everyone has a decent tone of

admiration for them. On the contrary, for women scientists, who obviously are of extreme intelligence, such as Amy, Leslie or Leonard's mother, having sexual needs or succumb to them is considered as a weakness or a defect of the character (10).

According to Scheg (2015) “the female characters in the show play into stereotypes of females which make it difficult to present a woman as more than one categorization. This means that the females are presented in a way that dichotomizes them – smart or sexy.” (2). The general definition of smart in the series is having a PhD degree in a science field, being extremely smart, but lacking attractiveness and sexuality. On the other hand, Scheg claims the definition of sexy is “thin to moderately healthy weight/height ratio; thinness preferred; young; able-bodies; clear complexion; makeup enhanced skin; pleasant physical presentation in terms of clothes, hair and body; voluptuous, proportionate buttocks and breasts. However, entirely lacking smartness” (10).

The female scientists on *The Big Bang Theory* are divided into two categories: the first type of character is a female scientist who implies that the scientist is a woman first and a scientist second. This definition describes the “hyper-feminized” female scientist. The most corresponding case is Bernadette’s character. The second term is called ‘hyper-rational’ female scientist, defining a woman, who is highly rational, intelligent and unemotional. Naturally, it is Amy's character that perfectly fits and embodies this description (Archer 2015, 10).

6.1 Bernadette

Bernadette is first introduced in season three as one of Penny's co-workers at the Cheesecake factory. She is a very short, cute girl with a high-pitched kind of squeaky voice. She has curly, middle length blonde hair with bangs, into which she often puts various fancy headbands and hair clips. She also wears glasses and her wardrobe perfectly matches her appearance. Bernadette's style of clothing consists mainly of variously printed dresses, button sweaters, coloured tights and flat shoes. She wears clothes that perfectly fit her and compliment her figure, especially her chest and small waist area (Archer, 2015, 11).

According to Archer, "Bernadette represents the perfect example of the hyper-feminized character type of the show depict the female scientist in a way that emphasizes her femininity." (10).

Bernadette's feminine features are regularly represented by displaying her as a highly nurturing person who frequently comforts others, especially Howard. For example, in episode 2, season 6 "The Decoupling Fluctuation," Howard calls Bernadette from space to complain, as a child seeking comfort from his mother.

HOWARD: Hey Bernie.

BERNADETTE: There's my hubby. How's everything going up there?

HOWARD: Oh, it's okay. Space is beautiful, Earth is beautiful. Same old, same old.

[Looks upset]

BERNADETTE: What's wrong?

HOWARD: Nothing. Everything's fine, heh.

BERNADETTE: Howard. [Sounds worried]

HOWARD: The other astronauts are being mean to me. [Looks behind to make sure they don't listen]

BERNADETTE: No, what are they doing?

HOWARD: Well, like, for instance, the other day, when I was asleep, one of the guys went on a space-walk and glued a big-eyes rubber alien mask to the outside of my window. When I woke up, I screamed for like nine minutes.

BERNADETTE: Oh, Howie. Why don't you stand up to them?

HOWARD: What am I supposed to say?

BERNADETTE: I don't know. Say "Being mean is lame. What's cool is being nice."

HOWARD: Great, I'll do that when I wanna be the first guy in space to get a wedgie.

BERNADETTE: Do you want me to call somebody at NASA?

HOWARD: No, my mom already tried that. It only made things worse. (Cendrowski, 2012, season 6, episode 2, 15:10).

Spiegel (2015) points out that "Bernadette and Howard's relationship is a very apt jumping off point for introducing the other woman in Howard's life: his mother." The relationship between Howard and his mom is known to be the rather stereotypical Jewish mother and son paradigm. Howard is quite fixated on his mother, and Bernadette does not fail to notice it. His dependence on his mother greatly complicates their relationship at first, including the fact that it influences Howard's every decision regarding his relationship with Bernadette. Unfortunately, this is mutual. His mother is also highly fixated on Howard, ever since his father left them. She does not even have another acquaintance during the whole of Howard's adolescent life, she only lives with her only son. Thus, Howard is not able to properly take part in an adult relationship, including intimacy, cooking his own food or not even sleeping over at Bernadette's place, because he loves his mother's house and does not want to leave it (2).

Archer (2015) adds that this problem intensifies as the series and their relationship continues and progresses. Howard expects Bernadette to take care of him in the same manners as his mother does. From cutting his meat to making his meals, doing his laundry and cleaning his room. The closer they get to marriage, the stronger the tension develops between them (17). He also represents another example of Kidult. He lived with his mom throughout his whole life, until his thirties. He never held responsible of paying bills, doing domestic chores, he never had to wash his own clothes, prepare his own meals or doing any kind of activity as an average adult has to do. To add, he never even wanted to move out of there, but when Bernadette convinced him to come to live in her apartment, she soon began to realize, that he expects the same treatment as he was getting from his mother.

As stated earlier, Bernadette first appears in the show as a waitress working at the Cheesecake Factory, supporting herself during her studies for a PhD in microbiology. She eventually gains the degree and even a job in a pharmaceutical company with a high salary. Yet, the show somehow keeps minimizing her persona as a scientist, which she has accomplished to become and if she is shown working, it is at her office and almost never in the lab (13).

6.2 Amy

Amy has brown straight middle length hair, in which she usually puts a simple hair clip to keep her bangs out of her face and she obviously wears glasses. She nearly never wears makeup. Amy's wardrobe is... unconventional. Amy hates shopping for clothes, so most of her outfits are inherited from her mother or grandmother. She does not have much of a taste in dressing, so she usually puts all the patterns and colours together, some t-shirt topped with a collared shirt and sweater or sweater vest, sometimes even layered with a coat. Then she likes to wear knee length baggy skirts and dark tights finished with shoes and a purse that she always wears across her body (Archer 2015, 11).

Amy's character is the strongest example of the 'hyper-rational' type of female. Amy frequently talks without any intonation in a fairly robotic tone, unconsciously makes inappropriate comments, interprets things literally or is not completely aware of the social signs. Archer adds that even though these women have no fashion sense or style, they are indeed highly intelligent and unlike the hyper-feminized type of character, they are strongly emphasizing their identity as scientists along with being proud of their accomplishments. They may be standing equal to their male scientist colleagues, but there may be a slight disadvantage. The males usually focus more on their intellectuality rather than their sexuality (22).

Her character experiences a lot of changes through the friendship with Penny that taught Amy a lot about her emotional and physical needs. Penny tries to extract Amy from nerd-dom into the mainstream world a bit, due to Amy's ignorance of social norms. (Campbell 2015, 23-24)

Amy refers to Penny as her 'BFF', which means Best Friends Forever, a real friend that Amy has never had before. She admires Penny and views her as someone on a superior social level. Similarly to male characters, Amy is strongly attracted to Penny. Not homosexually, but viewing her as a feminine idol, constantly making inappropriate comments about Penny's physical appearance and attractiveness (Shaw 2015, 15). For example, in episode 8, season 5, "The Isolation Permutation" Bernadette, Amy and Penny are trying on their dresses for Bernadette's wedding.

PENNY: [Tries on dresses] What do you think?

BERNADETTE: I love it. Penny chuckles

AMY: What are you, a nun? Come on, bestie, let's see some skin. [Looks uncomfortable]

Bernadette [Tries on her wedding dresses and walks out the dressing room.]

PENNY: Ooooh! Bernadette, you look beautiful.

AMY: You do.

BERNADETTE: Thank you.

AMY: Not Penny beautiful, but beautiful. [Penny in shock looks at Amy while Bernadette seems bewildered.] (Cendrowski, 2011, season 5, episode 8, 20:15).

Later Amy even walks in Penny's dressing room while she is getting changed without warning, meanwhile recording. Another example is from episode 18, season 5, “The Werewolf Transformation”, Sheldon asks Amy about her opinion about Penny cutting his hair.

PENNY: Please let me cut your hair.

SHELDON: Amy, what do you think?

AMY: There's not a hair on my body I wouldn't let this woman trim. [Penny smiles, then quickly realizes what Amy said and is disgusted. Leonard in disbelief looks at Amy, who shrugs her shoulders, looking proud]

SHELDON: Fine, let's go. (Cendrowski, 2012, season 5, episode 18, 18:30).

As already mentioned in the previous chapters, Amy is introduced towards the end of season 3. Raj and Howard create Sheldon's profile on online dating website and Amy is the ideal match selected by the algorithm of the website. They were both very sceptical and incredulous, but throughout the series they realized, there truly is not a better match out there for one another. Amy and Sheldon both possess of extreme intelligence, their language and way of speaking is always grammatically correct, without ever using slang (Willey and Subramaniam 2018, 22).

However, their interests differ as Amy does not share Sheldon's passion for Star Wars, comic books, watching TV or video games. She also does not like the idea of dressing up in costumes, unless there is a Halloween party and they can dress up together and do couple costume. Another difference between those two is, Amy is open and willing to make new friends, which Sheldon is not interested in, as he says, he is happy with his closed group of friends he already has (Fandom n.d.)

As the show progresses, so does Amy and Sheldon's relationship. They share their first friendly kiss in season 3 and move in together to Penny's apartment at the end of season 4, due to Amy's flat being flooded. Despite them living together, they have no sexual intercourse. They are satisfied living together, meanwhile building a strong emotional connection between each other without the need of showing it off. They share the same values, opinions and find each other funny (Willey and Subramaniam 2018, 29). Later on, they share their first romantic kiss in season 7. Nevertheless, season 11 is a major point for their relationship. Sheldon proposes to Amy, they have their first sex and eventually get married and Sheldon even wins the Nobel Prize side by side with Amy, which was his life-time goal. Despite Sheldon's asexuality and non-interest in physical intimacy of any kind, he in fact realizes, he enjoys it, because in the end, he is only human with needs (30).

6.3 Penny

Penny, the tall attractive blonde who lives next door to Leonard and Sheldon, serves as a foil to the show's nerdy protagonists. She is an aspiring actress with very minimal knowledge of anything intellectual, particularly science – the occupation, hobby, and beloved pastime of the show's four main characters (Spiegel 2015, 1).

Penny usually wears revealing, tight clothes that really fits her figure. She likes to wear short skirts, dresses or crop tops that reveal her stomach, she also tends not to wear a bra. She has a great taste in fashion and knows what compliments her body, same as she knows how to do her makeup properly and very often changes her hairstyle as well. Scheg (2015) claims “Penny is quite aware of her physical appearance and uses it throughout the show to help achieve things for herself or others.” In terms of her personality, she is a very sincere, caring person, yet she can get very angry and fight for herself or her friends. She is also a bit naive and gets hurt in a lot of her relationships. She also has a tendency to be a bit selfish, for example when she starts to hide Leonard's collectible items and superhero related items he has all over his apartment, once she starts living with him (Fandom, n.d.)

Penny is characterized as the “sexy” female character on the show, and even without any effort, she looks always appealing. Penny does not possess any high level of academic education as she has dropped out of community college before finishing it (Scheg 2015, 11). She works as a waitress at the Cheesecake Factory, meanwhile trying to become a successful actress. Penny feels confident in her acting but the results at auditions are not really favourable. Nevertheless, she is very “street” smart, which the majority of other characters are not. She possesses knowledge of communication skills, popular culture, farm duties, how to use a gun or fight, sports, relationships and more (12). The others also usually go to Penny for relationship related advice, as she has broad knowledge in this area as well (1). Nevertheless, according to Scheg (2015) “Penny does meet all of the criteria in the definition of Sexy. Physically, Penny is thin waisted with a proportional figure. She is in her twenties, and generally has a pleasant physical presentation.”

During seasons 7 and 8, Penny changes her look and cuts her hair. Previously, in the earlier seasons, she does not really know how to manage her money, she often struggles paying her bills, rent or food but at the same time spends money on expensive shoes and clothes. It is not until she starts working for *ZanGen Pharmaceuticals*, as a sales rep for a pharmaceutical company, that she learns how to be economical with what she earns. She is very successful at her job and makes a great amount of money, eventually even more than Leonard (Fandom, n.d.)

The relationship between Penny and Leonard is very unsteady throughout the first 3 seasons. It ends at the end of the season 3, episode 19 “The Wheaton Reoccurrence” after Leonard tells Penny ‘I love you’ and he does not receive it back (Mcclanahan 2015, 11).

LEONARD: [After kissing Penny] I love you, Penny.

PENNY: [Starts blinking uncontrollably, not knowing what to say] Uh...heh. Thank you. [Pats Leonard on the shoulder]

LEONARD: [Looks very shocked and confused] You're welcome. I just wanted to put that out there.

PENNY: Oh, yeah. No, I--I'm glad.

LEONARD: Yeah-- Oh, good. Good. Glad is good.

PENNY: Yeah.

Both not knowing how to react and behave at this point

PENNY: No, uhm. So, heh.. It's getting pretty late. We should probably go to sleep.

LEONARD: Yeah.

PENNY: Okay. [Both laugh awkwardly]

LEONARD: Yeah. Okay.

PENNY: Okay. Good night, sweetie. [Gives Leonard a quick peck and rolls on her side in huge shock] (Cendrowski, 2010, season 3, episode 19, 00:48).

Unfortunately, they break up as Penny is not ready for such a commitment. It is not until season 4, when Leonard meets Priya, Raj's sister and realizes that she is in fact in love with Leonard. Later, during season 5 and 6, they try to glue their relationship back together and eventually build a strong relationship, where Penny is even able to say "I love you" for the first time. Leonard even proposes in the end of season 7. Penny agrees and suggests going to Vegas and they have a small ceremony. In season 10, they re-do their wedding for their friends and relatives and decide to move in together, to Leonard's apartment. Leonard is in quite a shock, when he discovers Penny does not desire having kids, which disappoints Leonard but he is willing to accept it. Penny claims she does not want to have kids until the last episode of season 12, when she admits she is pregnant (Fandom, n.d.).

7. Analysis of the seasons

Unfortunately, it is not possible to cover all of the 12 seasons in such a short period of time. Therefore, I decided to analyse the 3rd and 6th season of the series *The Big Bang Theory* as most of relationships are beginning to develop during these seasons. The male nerds are meeting their future girlfriends for the first time in season 3 and are experiencing their first encounter with a serious relationship.

I will analyse the three main couples and their ability to cope with each other. Penny and Leonard, Bernadette and Howard and lastly, the most eccentric couple, Amy and Sheldon. Surely, each of them has their progress of getting to know each other, getting used to one another and learning and accepting the other person's manners and flaws, which is not always an easy task, especially in the case of Amy and Sheldon.

Most importantly, I will look at the ways women are capable of using their influence, methods and power to influence their relationships. Penny, Bernadette and Amy are all very different kinds of characters and each of them has their own methods and skills which they use in the relationships.

7.1 Penny and Leonard

Penny and Leonard are truly opposites, nevertheless, they like each other and are building a strong relationship. Since the beginning of the season 1, where Penny moves across the hall, she catches Leonard's attention. She eventually becomes his friend and spends a lot of time in their apartment, with him and rest of the group. Leonard has always been, as mentioned, enamoured with Penny but during seasons 1 and 2, the love is mostly platonic. When Penny first shows her interest in Leonard, she does not want to get emotionally invested because she is insecure as she is not very smart, therefore she thinks that, she was not

good enough for him and he would get bored with her and thus she continues dating “other guys of her league”. They still remain friends.

At the end of season two, Leonard heads with the group to the North Pole to help Sheldon work on his experiment. Surprisingly, this makes Penny sad, wishing he was not going anywhere. He returns after a 3 month long expedition and right away heads to knock on Penny's door to let her know they are back. Penny opens the door, shouts “Leonard!” with obvious happiness and kisses him unexpectedly while dragging him into her apartment. They have their first intercourse, which unfortunately, is not as either of them picture in their heads, which leaves them both perplexed. They eventually have a conversation about this issue and the situation improves a lot. In episode 3, season 3 “The Gothowitz Deviation”, they even break a bed one time. This scene is a conversation between Penny and Leonard when their new bed arrives.

PENNY: My new bed got delivered, if you put it together, you can stay at my place.

LEONARD: Really? That's a lot of work, and it's late.

PENNY: Yeah, but at least there we won't have to be quiet.

LEONARD: (Quickly changes his mind) Let's go.

SHELDON: “Interesting. Sex works even better than chocolate to modify behaviour. I wonder if anyone else has stumbled onto that.” (Cendrowski 2009, episode 3, season 3, 17:50)

In this example, we can see Penny is using sex to influence Leonard to do something he does not feel like doing, because it requires a lot of effort. When she mentions a sex related reference, Leonard quickly changes his mind. The comment Sheldon makes upon this situation just shows how unfamiliar he is with the way women using sex in order to take advantage of certain situations. It is also of Penny’s major key influences upon Leonard.

She is well aware of her attractiveness and beauty and is not holding back using it. We can see another example of this behaviour in episode 17, season 3, “The Precious Fragmentation”, when Penny comes across the guys, when they are busy arguing and decide that who can hold on the longest the ring from *The Lord of Ring* film, gets to keep it. She mentions a bag from Victoria's Secret, which signifies a pretty well-known shop with the luxury lingerie.

PENNY: (Sarcastically) What are you doing?

LEONARD: Last one holding the ring decides its fate. I know it sounds silly.

PENNY: No, no, no. You are my boyfriend. Nothing you do is silly to me.

LEONARD: Thank you.

PENNY: FYI, this is a bag from Victoria's Secret. (All the guys look at Leonard)

LEONARD: (Letting go of the ring) I'm out. (Heading to Penny's apartment)

(Cendrowski 2010, episode 17, season 3, 14:05)

We can see another good example of Penny using her looks in the episode 20, season 6, “The Tenure Turbulence”. This time Penny tries to help Leonard to get tenure, he is competing for along with the other nerds. Sheldon is bringing Amy and Penny asks Leonard if he wanted her to come, saying she might be useful.

PENNY: Well, since Amy's going, do you want me there, you know, to support you?

LEONARD: Oh. That's nice, but it's just gonna be a room full of boring old men. I'm not sure how much help you'd be.

PENNY: Okay. I'm just gonna tie my shoe while you think about that. (Clears her throat and bend over to tie her shoelace)

LEONARD: Oh, yeah. That would be great help. (Penny stands up and smiles) You realize you might kill some of them.

PENNY: Then you all can get tenure. (Cendrowski 2013, episode 20, season 6, 12:25)

During the convention:

AMY: I'd like to know why Penny's here.

PENNY: I'm here to support my man, just like you.

SHELDON: What are you going to do? Take people's drink order and get them wrong?

LEONARD: Do it. (Penny unbuttons her coat and takes off her coat, showing off her black dress with a cleavage)

SHELDON: (Amy shakes her head and rolls her eyes) What? Did she do it yet?

AMY: She plans on flirting with members of the tenure committee to further Leonard's cause.

SHELDON: Well, that's a fine how-do-you-do. (Looks at Amy) Don't just stand there, take your breasts out. (Cendrowski 2013, episode 20, season 6, 14:10)

During a few episodes in season 6, especially episode 12, “The Egg Salad Equivalency”, Sheldon's new assistant Alex is frequently flirting with Leonard. Penny finds out and feels a little bit insecure, since as she said to Leonard “She's pretty and smart and when you talk about work, she doesn't have to look up words in the dictionary to understand what you said.” Leonard was in shock and a little pleasantly surprised, that Penny has insecurities as well, as he would have never expected Penny having the same feelings he always has towards her. On the other hand, what Penny is very self-assured about is her appearance. As mentioned above, she always knows how to trick, beguile or seduce Leonard. Natural sexuality is Penny’s biggest tool she uses for manipulation in their relationship.

PENNY: So hey, I was thinking about that stuff with Alex--

LEONARD: Would you stop worrying about that?

PENNY: I can't help it. But I figured I could sit around and feel insecure, or I could do something about it. So, I got a course catalogue at school and looked at some of the science classes.

LEONARD: That's great.

PENNY: No, it isn't, they are extremely boring. How do you not kill yourself, like, every day? Anyway, I decided I don't need to be a scientist, I could just look like one. So I bought these. (Pulls out nerdy glasses)

LEONARD: Glasses? I really don't think that's gonna change-- (Penny puts them on)
Oh, my God! You look so smart and hot!

PENNY: I know, right? Watch this. (Takes them halfway off and looks at him)

Molecules. (Leonard being excited)

LEONARD: Okay, come with me.

PENNY P: Where are we going?

LEONARD: To my bedroom so I can take everything off but those glasses.

(Cendrowski 2013, episode 12, season 6, 19:15)

Penny, as it is obvious from the series, and as it is already repeatedly mentioned above, is not nearly as smart as the male and female scientists she is friends with. On the one hand, she is very street smart, unlike the rest of the group, but on the other, Leonard sometimes still tends to unconsciously treat her in a degrading manner. For example, in episode 7, season 3, “The Guitarist Amplification”, Penny informs Leonard about a guy who is coming to LA and will sleep on her couch for a few nights. She makes it sound like it is not a big deal, but

Leonard has a different opinion. Penny mentions they were not even “going out” they just “went out”. Leonard states whether she is well informed “went out” is the past tense of “going out” which means “seeing each other naked”, lecturing Penny as if she was a moron, resulting in an argument. Later, they meet in the hallway.

LEONARD: So are we gonna talk about last night?

PENNY: Are you ready to apologize?

LEONARD: No.

PENNY: Ehh! Wrong answer. But thank you for playing.

LEONARD: Come on. This is stupid.

PENNY: Oh, there it is again. You think I'm stupid.

LEONARD: No. There's a difference between being and acting stupid.

PENNY: Oh, yeah? Well, there's a difference between being a jerk and being an ass.

LEONARD: No, there isn't. They're synonyms!! (Cendrowski 2009, episode 7, season 3, 06:30)

There are even several scenes, pointing out Penny's low level of education and her not very academic or high profile engagement as waitress. In the episode 11, season 3, “The Maternal Congruence”, Beverly, Leonard's mother is coming to town and Leonard has not let Penny know in advance. They go to pick her up from the airport and Beverly informs Leonard about divorcing his father, because of his infidelity.

BEVERLY: Oh, speaking of fathers, Leonard, that reminds me. I'm divorcing yours.

LEONARD: What? No.

BEVERLY: Yes. He was cheating on me with some waitress from the university cafeteria. Can you believe it? A waitress.

(Looks at Penny) Oh, no offense, dear.

PENNY: No, it sounded like a compliment. (Cendrowski 2009, episode 11, season 3, 09:00)

In the episode 6, season 6, “The Extract Obliteration” Penny unexpectedly started attending The Pasadena Community College. She did not want to tell Leonard, because he would get overexcited and wanted to get involved in her study duties, which exactly happened, once she told him. She did not want him to read her paper, but he did it anyway. He read it, rewrote it and gave it to her, even though, she asked him not to.

PENNY: So let me get this straight. You just assumed my paper would be bad, so you wrote one for me?

LEONARD: No, I assumed it would be good. Then I read it.

PENNY: What?! (Yells)

LEONARD:: Well, I mean, it was good. There were just a few things that needed a little polishing.

PENNY: What, you changed every word!

LEONARD: That's not true. Well “Slavery. 1619. Your name at the top. That's all you.”

PENNY: You are such an ass. This is exactly why I didn't wanna tell you I was taking a class in the first place .

LEONARD: Please, don't be upset. I just didn't want you ending up with a bad grade and get discouraged and give up on the idea of going back to school.

PENNY: (Scoffs) Yeah right, because me being in school is so important to you. That way, you wouldn't have to be dating someone who's only a waitress.

LEONARD: Oh, come on. You know that's not true.

PENNY: Do I? Listen to me. I need to do this on my own. If I fail, I fail. If I pass, I pass. Do you get it?

LEONARD: I'm sorry, I was just trying to help.

PENNY: Yeah, well, next time, don't! (Cendrowski 2012, episode 6, season 6, 15:00)

The preceding example displays Penny who gives a whole speech to Leonard about wanting to do this on her own and proving herself she has what it takes to pass the subject. However, eventually she realizes, she is struggling a bit, thus she asks for a help from Amy and Bernadette. She did not want to look stupid or useless in front of Leonard, and she could not ask for his help either. Later she came to show Leonard, that she got B-, bragging about her accomplishment without any signs of lying in her face or voice. Little did he know, Bernadette and Amy actually helped her write the paper-work.

PENNY: So I know this goes without saying but if either of you tell Leonard you helped me rewrite this paper, I'll beat you both with a bag of oranges.

BERNADETTE+AMY: Okay. Understood.

PENNY: Now, ladies. We got a B-minus on this paper. I think if we put our heads together, on the next one, we could get an A.

BERNADETTE: But we got you a B-minus on purpose to make it believable.

PENNY: Believable? You are saying I am not smart? (Leaned onto them)

AMY: (getting scared) You're smart. B: No no.

PENNY: That's better. (Cendrowski 2012, episode 6, season 6, 18:00)

Another example I am going to provide involves both the sexuality and smartness at the same. Penny and Leonard's relationship was on and off throughout the earlier series, therefore one can encounter Penny dating other men, such as Zack, who is without much exaggeration really stupid. In episode 23, season 3, "The Lunar Excitation", the nerds invited Penny to watch the lunar experiment on the roof top, to which Penny brings company, Zack. They all quickly realize he is the very opposite of smart, even Penny recognizes it now, after Zack asking questions such as "How they can be sure the moon won't blow up?" Penny gets drunk after this encounter and comes to talk to Leonard.

PENNY: Damn you, you rat bastard. Zack was a perfectly nice guy and then you ruined him.

LEONARD: How did I ruin him?

PENNY: Because in the olden days, I never would've known he was so stupid.

LEONARD: Come on, he wasn't that stupid.

PENNY: Yes, he was! He thought you were gonna blow up the moon!

LEONARD: Okay, yeah, he's stupid. (Laughs)

PENNY: He spent the entire night bragging about how he invented the word "appetizers".

LEONARD: (Chuckling) How is that my fault?

PENNY: You have destroyed my ability to tolerate idiots. Now, come with me.

LEONARD: Where are we going? (Takes his hand and leads him to bedroom)

PENNY: We're gonna have sex!

LEONARD: Why? I mean, okay. (Chakos 2010, episode 23, season 3, 07:50)

The following day Leonard does the same thing as Penny the night before saying “I was a perfectly happy, geeky, little lonely guy and then you ruined me. Come on. We're gonna have sex and it's not gonna mean a thing.” Penny shuts him down shouting “Are you out of your mind?” while kicking him out of her apartment, on which Leonard comments “I'm really starting to think there's a double standard here.”

7.2 Bernadette and Howard

These two, as mentioned earlier, happen to meet through an agreement that Howard and Leonard have made. They have agreed if one of them ever finds a hot girlfriend, the other one has to introduce the other one to one of her friends. In this case Leonard has to tell Penny about this pact and asks her to do him a favour. Penny decides to introduce Howard to Bernadette, her colleague from work. They all go to dinner one time and all Howard does is making inappropriate jokes that she does not understand and asks weird questions, to which, every single one of them, she answers no. They finally find a common ground when they come across the topic of obsessive mothers. Watching them two, Penny whispers a comment to Leonard: “Am I a matchmaker, or what?” while showing thumbs up at him. By showing thumbs up and winking at Leonard, she points out he could concur with her and support this situation. She is referring to the fact, they seem to be getting on well and that this is all her accomplishment by introducing them to one another.

Bernadette clearly performs a mother role in their relationship. She usually tells him what to do, excuse his behaviour and even gives him lectures like he is a little child. For example, as mentioned above in episode 2, season 6, “The Decoupling Fluctuation”, Howard calls Bernadette from space to complain, as a child seeking comfort from his mother. Bernadette keeps comforting him throughout his whole time in space. Another example about treating him like a child is when Howard refuses to do something or go somewhere, Bernadette makes valid points to make him go or do the thing she told him regardless.

For instance, in episode 5, season 6, “The Holographic Excitation”, Howard does not want to go to the Halloween party, because everybody is annoyed by his constant talk about the fact he went to space.

HOWARD: Maybe you should go without me.

BERNADETTE: No, if I'm there alone people might think I'm just a really short person from Avatar.

HOWARD: I'm sorry, I just don't wanna go.

BERNADETTE: Hey, I just spent the last three hours colouring myself blue. I'm gonna be washing paint out of my smurf for a month!

HOWARD: Fine. Two weeks ago I was an astronaut.

BERNADETTE: Yeah, well, now you're a Smurf. Keep walking. (Cendrowski 2012, episode 5, season 6, 16:30)

She treats him like a younger again, in the episode 16, season 6, “The Tangible Affection Proof”. They are having a Valentine's Day dinner with Leonard and Penny. They arrive and seem pretty agitated. In this example, Bernadette is punishing Howard, by hiding his Xbox for not doing the chores she asked him to do. He is defending himself and complains that she treats him like he was a child, but at a certain point he even says that he will tell his mother. Bernadette states, she will return the Xbox to him, once he does what she asked him to do. Howard, on the other hand, instead of doing what she asked him to do, is arguing with her meaninglessly exactly like a child would.

PENNY: Is everything okay?

HOWARD: Terrific, couldn't be better.

BERNADETTE: Oh, bite me!

HOWARD: Look, we can still have a nice night. Just tell me where it is.

BERNADETTE: Maybe if you did what you said you were gonna do, I'd tell you.

LEONARD: Uh, where what is?

HOWARD: She hid my Xbox like I'm a child. And my mom got me that for my birthday, so if you don't give it back, I'm telling.

BERNADETTE: (Penny rolls her eyes) I've been working late every night. All I asked was he clean the apartment and do one load of laundry. Did he do it? No. He just kept on playing that stupid game.

HOWARD: I said I'm sorry.

BERNADETTE: Sorry doesn't clean my underpants, buddy. (Cendrowski 2013, episode 16, season 6, 08:00)

Bernadette is also the one who has a remarkably higher salary and is very money skilled, thinking wisely of her expensive purchases, contrary to Howard. Howard does not make nearly as much as Bernadette, but enjoys spending her money. For example in episode 14, season 6, "The Cooper/Kripke Inversion", Howard buys a 3D printer, just in order to make a couple of dolls for 5000 dollars. That makes Bernadette furious.

BERNADETTE: I don't believe you. Howie, we can't afford to waste money on junk like this.

HOWARD: What are you talking about? We make plenty of money.

BERNADETTE: I make plenty of money. You make peanuts.

HOWARD: Well, yes, but we're married now. That means when you get sick, I take care of you. And when you make a bunch of money, I get to buy stuff. (looks at him furiously) Sorry if you don't like it, but that's how love works.

BERNADETTE: No. Here's how love works. You're gonna return the machine or you could print out a working set of lady parts and sleep with those (Howard is thinking) Oh, my God! Are you actually thinking about it?! (Cendrowski 2013, episode 14, season 6, 14:20)

In this example, Bernadette points out, she is the one who is earning a lot of money, which Howard apparently takes for granted, while thinking he can buy or invest it to anything he wants to without asking Bernadette. Clearly, he was wrong. When Howard tells Bernadette, how much money he spent and for what, she gets heat up and promptly explains the situation and lectures about how it works in relationship. She also orders and threatens him to return the 3D printer or he could print himself a new girlfriend.

Another situation where is Howard strongly under the influence of Bernadette is when they were discussing his moving from mother's house. Nonetheless, Howard was in fact under the influence of his mother and Bernadette of the same time, attempting to satisfy the needs of both them while trying not to hurt any of them. In the episode 1, season 6, "The Date Night Variable", Howard is in space and Bernadette is pressuring him to tell his mother, they are planning to live together.

HOWARD: Bernadette and I are starting a life together. And-

HOWARD'S MOTHER: Oh, god. You're gonna leave me!

HOWARD: Ma--

HOWARD'S MOTHER: It's okay. Your father left, you left me. I guess I'm just the kind of person people like to leave.

HOWARD: It's not definite. I'll talk to Bernadette.

HOWARD'S MOTHER: Don't bother. I'll just go sit in a hole in the ground so I'm no trouble when I die.

HOWARD: (Sighs) Stop it, Ma. (Cendrowski 2012, episode 1, season 6, 12:00)

In the example above, it is clear that Howard's mother is using her neediness and loneliness to influence Howard's decision about moving out, making him feel guilty of her living alone and possibly dying alone. Later he talks to Bernadette, trying to act cool and lying to her about the things he said to his mother.

BERNADETTE: That's such good news, Howie. Thank you for telling her.

HOWARD: Hey, I'm a grown man. I'm gonna live with my wife. My mother's just gonna have to learn to make do on her own.

BERNADETTE: Was she upset?

HOWARD: Who can tell? She yells everything.

BERNADETTE: Thanks for fixing it. I love you.

HOWARD'S COLLEAGUE: You realize you just lied your ass off to your wife and your mother.

HOWARD: I know.

HOWARD'S COLLEAGUE: What are you gonna do when you get back to Earth?

HOWARD: (Laughs awkwardly) Oh, I'm never going back. (Cendrowski 2012, episode 1, season 6, 19:35)

7.3 Amy and Sheldon

The centre of Amy and Sheldon's relationship is their extreme intelligence, which reflects in their everyday life. They both make clear from the start that they want to avoid unnecessary physical contact and even sign their relationship agreement Sheldon projects. Unfortunately, that changes throughout the series. Amy, thanks to Penny, starts feeling and

experiencing her biological urges, which earlier she is not aware or intentionally suppresses them all her life.

Even though, Amy would like to get physical with Sheldon and tries sending him signals, hoping it would work, Sheldon is clueless as to Amy's intentions. In episode 1, season 6, “The Date Night Variable”, they have their second year anniversary dinner date. As established in their relationship agreement: “Sheldon must take Amy out to a nice dinner, ask about her day and engage in casual physical contact that a disinterested onlooker might mistake for intimacy.” Amy gets drunk and tries to enter a sexy conversation with Sheldon.

AMY: Have I ever told you you're like a sexy praying mantis?

SHELDON: Every time you drink alcohol.

AMY: You know, what's wonderful about praying mantis, they devour their mate.

SHELDON: Your point being?

AMY: (Unbuttons her collar rapidly) Dessert is served.

SHELDON: I just had cobbler.

AMY: (She buttons it back again and gets mad) You know what? I'm done with this.

(And leaves) (Cendrowski 2012, episode 1, season 6, 15:05)

She makes Sheldon tell her something meaningful and from heart or it is over. He quotes a scene from *The Spiderman* movie and Amy accepts it.

In episode 10, season 6, “The Fish Guts Displacement”, Amy is sick and points out, once again, that their relationship agreement clearly states, when one of them is sick, the other must take care of them. Sheldon stays in her apartment to take care of her. Anyway, she is not feeling well and asks Sheldon to let her get some rest. Sheldon stops her, telling her his next steps in making her feel better, which instantly wake Amy up.

SHELDON: How can you sleep? I'm not done making you feel better. I still have to put a cold rag on your head, sing to you and apply VapoRub to your chest.

AMY: (Amy opens her eyes immediately) You wanna rub something on my chest?

SHELDON: Yes. All over it.

AMY: (Gets excited and fake coughs) Maybe we should start with that.

SHELDON: Now you're being a responsible patient. Now, you may notice some tingling.

AMY: Oh, I'm counting on it. (Cendrowski 2012, episode 10, season 6, 04:00)

Amy gets better after two days, but now she is faking it because she likes the way Sheldon is treating her. She tells Bernadette the truth and she is judging her a little and Amy decides she will tell him the truth.

SHELDON: Amy, would you be strong to bathe yourself or do you need my help?

AMY: I'll tell him tomorrow. Momma needs a bath. (Cendrowski 2012, episode 10, season 6, 12:30)

Sheldon finds out, telling Amy he has to punish her.

AMY: Are you saying you wanna spank me?

SHELDON: I don't want to, but it looks like you left me no choice.

AMY: That's true. I've been a very bad girl.

SHELDON: Are you prepared to receive your punishment?

AMY: (Nodding happily) One second. I wanna put on some music.

SHELDON: Why?

AMY: I don't wanna disturb the people next door while you discipline me.

SHELDON: Very well, then. Get over my knee. Let's begin.

AMY: (spans her and Amy enthusiastically says) Oh, my.

SHELDON: Excuse me. You're not supposed to be enjoying this.

AMY: Then maybe you should spank me harder. (Cendrowski 2012, episode 10, season 6, 16:00)

Over time Amy gets sad, because of the progress of their relationship. She does not want to rush Sheldon into anything, but at the same time, she feels like she needs something more. She needs some sort of intimacy which is truly lacking in the relationship. In the episode 23, season 6, “The Love Spell Potential”, Amy gets emotional during playing ‘Dungeons and Dragon’ with the whole group, when Penny says “Oh, I have an idea. Since it's not happening anytime soon why don't your character and your character do it in the game? (Referring to Amy and Sheldon)”. Others start making funny comments about it and Howard starts telling the story and that makes Amy feel uncomfortable, which results in Amy running away to her room saying “I don't like this.” Sheldon later comes to his room where Amy is and attempts to calm her down, as other suggested. She sees that Amy is emotional, and decides to finish the thought of them as characters in the game to find out what would happen to the characters during the game and successfully cheer Amy up.

AMY: They think our relationship is a joke.

SHELDON: Well, I don't think our relationship is a joke.

AMY: Sheldon, are we ever going to have an intimate relationship?

SHELDON: Oh, my, that's an uncomfortable topic. Amy, before I met, I never had any interest in being intimate with anyone.

AMY: And now?

SHELDON: And now what?

AMY: Do you have any interest now?

SHELDON: I have not ruled it out. I know it doesn't seem like it to you, but for me, what we have is extremely intimate.

AMY: I guess I know that. It's just I think part of me wants more.

SHELDON: More? I mean, look at us. It's only been three years, here we are in bed together.

AMY: (Sighs and smiles) Come on. Let's go back out there.

SHELDON: Well, no, hold. My elven magic-user and your half-orc warrior did have a love spell cast on them. (Decides to finish the story Howard started during a game) We wouldn't really be playing the game right if we didn't see that through.

AMY: Okay. (Looks confused)

SHELDON: I believe that, we just killed a dragon. While the others pillage the corpse, I lead you to a secluded area, where I attempt to remove your leather armour. (Rolls the dice) It comes off.

AMY: Oh.

SHELDON: What do you do?

AMY: I kiss you on the lips.

SHELDON: I kiss you back on the- (Rolls the dice) -lips as well. Your turn.

AMY: I remove your armour. What do you do?

SHELDON: I erotically caress you.. (Rolls the dice) nose.

AMY: Keep rolling.

Penny and Leonard get worried and come to knock on their door.

LEONARD: Hey, you guys have been in there for a while. You doing okay?

SHELDON: We're fine, thank you.

PENNY: Okay, we just want to say we feel bad about--

AMY: Go away! Sheldon is nibbling on my... (Die clatters) Fourteen! Yes! (Screams with excitement) (Cendrowski 2013, episode 23, season 6, 16:30)

Amy repeatedly makes Sheldon do what he is not comfortable with. She puts him in situations he would never choose to be in if it was his personal choice or that just seem meaningless to him. She often leads him out of his comfort zone by, at first glance, basic activities couples do, like holding hands in the movie theatre, where Sheldon complains, because Penny is not making Leonard hold hands. Another example is when Amy is convincing him to dress up in couple costume. Sheldon wants them to go dressed up as robots, but Amy wants him to compromise on something, they both will be happy with. In the end, Amy goes as Raggedy Ann and Sheldon as Raggedy C-3PO.

Once in the episode 15, season 6, "The Spoiler Alert Segmentation", Amy found out that Leonard wants to move out from their apartment and Sheldon will be eventually looking for a roommate. She took the chance and immediately suggested herself without even considering that Sheldon might not be ready.

AMY: Aren't I your perfect roommate?

SHELDON: Um...

AMY: Think about it, Sheldon. I'm not a stranger, we're intellectually compatible, I'm willing to chauffeur you around, and your personality quirks which others find abhorrent or rage-inducing, I find cute as a button. What do you think?

SHELDON: (speechless) Ummm...

AMY: Tell me one reason why this isn't fantastic idea?

SHELDON: Ummm..

AMY: See? You can't. I'm gonna go see if Leonard's room is big enough for my water bed. (Cendrowski 2013, episode 15, season 6, 10:00)

Turns out Sheldon is not ready at all, but does not know how to find an escape from this situation. He does not care primarily about Amy's feelings, but about the fact she laid out a series of logical arguments that he cannot refute. Nevertheless, Sheldon is clearly not ready for this level of intimacy and pressure that this change would bring into their relationship. After Amy brought his take-away food, specifically in the way he orders it every time and invented a new voice mail message, Sheldon had to confess the truth as he could not handle it any longer. When Amy lays out the reasons again, she blames it all on Penny.

SHELDON: You can't live here.

AMY: What? Why? Is it the message? I only used urban slang to sound tough so people wouldn't break in.

SHELDON: It's not the message.

AMY: (sounds really sad) Well, what is it then? I did everything just the way you like it.

SHELDON: You did.

AMY: (Yells) Then what the hell, Sheldon? We have been going out for over two years, and I've been nothing but patient with you. I watch your dopey space movies, I signed your ridiculous contracts, I even stopped wearing lip gloss because you said it made my mouth look too slippery. I am the best girlfriend you're ever gonna have. You give me one good reason why I can't live here. (Sounds teary)

SHELDON: It's Penny's fault. (Cendrowski 2013, episode 15, season 6, 17:30)

8. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to look deeper into the interpersonal relationship between the main characters, Leonard and Penny; Amy and Sheldon; and Bernadette and Howard.

Another purpose was to analyse the methods and techniques the female characters use in their romantic relationship. According to my observation, person's attractiveness and level of intelligence plays major role when it comes to romantic relationship.

All the nerds are lacking social skills and possess kind of awkwardness. Due to their personalities, they struggle to associate. The women help, especially Penny helps them to interfere into the society and eventually advise them or even teach them some general knowledge about being “street smart” or relationship. The integration of Bernadette and Amy into the series causes several changes as well, especially in Sheldon and Howard's characters.

Penny is the one, who is the most attractive and least smart. She is well aware of the fact. She time to time tries to compensate her lack of education, but mostly she uses her appearance to influence things and people around her, consciously or unconsciously, it works either way. Bernadette, is extremely intelligent, hardworking but at the same time adorable and not as awkward as her scientist colleagues. She knows her ways around and is aware of her capabilities when it comes to men and relationship. She can use both, her appearance and her smartness at the same time.

Lastly, Amy, character who is extremely intelligent but unfortunately, is not as attractive as the others. Amy is lacking the basic social norms, usually makes inappropriate comments and is very awkward. Nevertheless, when they met with Sheldon, they matched like a puzzle. She is using her influence upon Sheldon through science and her extreme intelligence, which most importantly, works. Penny and the others complement each other and learn from each other. As McClanahan (2015) says “Penny does not only socialize the nerds into social standards, they also turn her into a nerd”.

To sum up, each of the women uses different methods and techniques dependent on their appearance, knowledge and intelligence. All of these aspects play a role in their romantic relationships. The female scientists, Amy and Bernadette, also learn a lot from Penny, especially relationship advices while they help Penny to obtain some general knowledge.

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