

# INTERACTIONS PROMOTING DIVERSE MODELS OF MASCULINITY AND MEN'S ATTRACTIVENESS

EDITED BY: Juan Carlos Peña Axt and Oriol Rios-Gonzalez  
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# INTERACTIONS PROMOTING DIVERSE MODELS OF MASCULINITY AND MEN'S ATTRACTIVENESS

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# Editorial: Interactions Promoting Diverse Models of Masculinity and Men's Attractiveness

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**Keywords:** social interaction, new alternative masculinities, communicative acts, language of desire, gender-based violence

## The Editorial on the Research Topic

### Interactions Promoting Diverse Models of Masculinity and Men's Attractiveness

The key role of communicative interaction in the configuration of whom we feel attracted to and the sexual and affective relationships we build, renders it important to analyze in depth which communicative acts promote attraction. The study of the wealth of dialogues, reactions and responses toward these interaction patterns contribute to knowledge and advances in the field of prevention of gender-based violence. Articles selected in this Special Issue address, amongst other topics, the following research questions: How do New Alternative Masculinities (NAM, hereinafter) use language in social interaction regarding sexual-affective relationships? How do NAM men use language in their relationships? Is language use transforming patterns of attraction to violence or care?

A multidisciplinary understanding of how NAM men and the people around them perform communicative acts in relation to sexual attraction emerges as a relevant area of study. This Special Issue contributes to the development of this area with eight articles that examine the essential role of communicative acts produced by NAM men and the impact of such acts in altering expressions of attraction.

Data collection was primarily qualitative and followed the communicative methodology of research, which involves an egalitarian dialogue amongst researchers and social actors (Racionero-Plaza et al., 2021). Whereas, participants contribute their experience to the dialogue, researchers contribute knowledge accumulated by the scientific community on the issue they are addressing. For example, in all of the studies presented in this Special Issue, researchers provided the theoretical basis of masculinity models and attraction patterns, and the participants in the fieldwork applied this knowledge to their own experience. Data analysis not only focused on how communicative acts reproduce the mainstream attraction patterns but also on how these acts can be transformed through the dialogues regarding NAM men. To do that, the communicative research methodology analyzes the exclusionary as well as the transformative components.

The eight articles presented in this Special Issue demonstrate the power of the NAM perspective to subvert the mainstream socialization that leads to dissatisfaction with affective-sexual relationships. Four of the articles analyze the interactions of women who are in fact contributing to reproducing the patriarchal order and the double standard when they blame OTM (Oppressed Traditional Masculinities, hereinafter) men, rather than DTM (Dominant Traditional Masculinities, hereinafter) men, for gender inequalities. Some of the women reprimand OTM men for particular everyday behaviors, treat them as second fiddles and make them men feel insecure with regard to sex. However, NAM men are unmasking the real consequences of such

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discourse and counteracting them with a powerful language of desire that in fact contributes to overcoming the double standard. Two articles address the positive consequences for the struggle against gender violence of attributing desire to solidary persons. One article emphasizes the need to be consistent in personal commitments to have a truly passionate, egalitarian, and fully satisfying relationship. Another article discusses the usefulness of analyzing popular films to question adolescents' attraction patterns.

The article by Joanpere et al. shows evidence of communicative situations in which NAM men overcome the double standard by rejecting to be with girls who do not "jump for joy" when meeting them. Taking a clear position in favor of egalitarian and passionate relationships and rejecting any affective-sexual interaction that does not fulfill these standards. Analysis of the use of the language of desire and the implications for gender-based violence prevention is also presented.

Schubert et al. explore women's communicative acts that blame all men for what DTM men have done to women and conversely, NAM men's communicative acts that face and stop such blaming. By rejecting guilt and recognizing those men who have always fought on the side of women against violence, NAM men contribute to overcoming hegemonic discourses.

Valls-Carol et al. portrays how NAM men respond to the attacks of women who disdainfully criticize oppressed men's behavior in daily life situations whereas such women would never question this same behavior in dominant traditional men. Again, the use of the language of desire in these responses proves to be useful for eliminating the attractiveness of both DTM men's behavior.

The article by Ruiz-Eugenio et al. shows again how NAM men's position against the double standard confers attractiveness to them. In this case, the situation analyzed is that in which NAM men reject to be the second fiddle to any women.

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**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

In "No more insecurities': New Alternative Masculinities' discourse combining desire and equity to tear down offensive sexual statements," Zubiri-Esnaola et al. analyzes NAM men's communicative acts when they claim what is good and fully satisfying sex: that in which passion, love, desire, and equality are all mixed.

The article by Rodrigues-Mello et al. first addresses the communicative acts that promote attraction to DTM men in the film *Three Steps above Heaven*, which was a hit with teenagers in Spain. The authors dismantle these communicative acts, demonstrating that all responds to a farce strategy. The article also includes evidence on designed interventions with adolescents in which discussing movies transform perceptions regarding the sexual-affective relationship in the movie.

Pulido et al. demonstrates that, as some men have changed thanks to feminist women, some women have changed their perceptions regarding abusive relationships thanks to NAM men. The results of this analysis note that the use of the language of desire by NAM men with solidary women have become the turning point for women participating in the study.

Duque et al. addresses the crucial importance of the language of desire related to men and women who are successfully helping overcome gender-based violence. Given the close link between attraction and violence in society, the article argues that taking a stance against violence is not sufficient to overcome it. In this respect, the article presents evidence related to some feminist women and NAM men who successfully broke the silence using both types of language.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

OR has elaborated the introduction of the editorial. JP has prepared a brief description of the eight articles of the Research Topic. Both authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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# Stop Blaming me for What Others Did to you: New Alternative Masculinity's Communicative Acts Against Blaming Discourses

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Some feminist discourses blame some men for gender inequality, gender domination, and gender-based violence. Some women use such discourse as a perfect scenario to criticize some men's behavior. Indeed, they usually do so with Oppressed Traditional Masculinities (OTM) but not with Dominant Traditional Masculinities (DTM), who are the men who were violent with those women and with whom some of those women chose to have relationships. However, there have always been men who have been on the side of women and have never committed violence against them. Therefore, New Alternative Masculinities (NAM) reject being indicated as guilty of the violence committed against women by DTM. Through a communicative approach, applying six semi-structured interviews with a communicative orientation and a communicative data analysis of all information, this article explores both women's communicative acts that blame OTM for what DTM have done to women and NAM's reactions to these accusations to stop such blaming to make it possible to overcome hegemonic discourses.

**Keywords:** communicative acts, communicative methodology, new alternative masculinities, feminist discourse, gender inequality, blaming

## INTRODUCTION

Blaming discourses affect both women and men, but the literature has paid greater attention to the consequences of blaming women than men. Historically, blaming discourse has been used more against women in the feminist movement. An example of this type of discourse is the blaming of women for choosing to combine professional, personal, and family development because, as a consequence, they are not good mothers to their children (Jackson and Mannix, 2004; Bulbeck, 2010). In response to these blaming discourses, different scholars have characterized this type of discourse addressed to women as sexist and as promoting gender inequality (Bulbeck, 2010; Suarez and Gadalla, 2010).

In contrast, research has begun to consider that some discourses that derive from some feminist statements become blaming discourses toward men; these discourses assume that men are responsible for gender inequality and violence (Robinson, 2003; West and Zimmerman, 2009; Monteverde, 2014). Reactions to these blaming discourses against men continue to be scarce. Some of them have noted that this type of discourse of blaming men is developing



into a prejudice toward men. Kiesling (2007) reviewed some feminist contributions and emphasized that some extreme statements communicated that the unique desire of men is to dominate women. In response to these extreme statements, some authors have indicated that not all women agree with this blaming discourse against men, and they have noted the need to distinguish between diverse types of feminist discourses because not all discourse is the same (Monteverde, 2014). For instance, international debates have emphasized the contributions of feminism to equality of differences and the promotion of solidarity between women from diverse cultural, academic, and age backgrounds to enhance social transformation through coherence with discourse and practice, and these contributions also defend egalitarian collaboration with men (Beck-Gernsheim et al., 2003; Joanpere and Morlà, 2019). This is in line also with Hooks (2000) notion of feminism understood as anti-sexism, “a male who has divested of male privilege, who has embraced feminist politics, is a worthy comrade in struggle, (...) whereas a female who remains wedded to sexist thinking and behavior infiltrating feminist movement is a dangerous threat” (Hooks, 2000, p.12).

However, at the same time, there is a profound need to analyze and identify how this discourse of blaming men has been used by some feminists to blame all men without distinguishing those who have perpetrated violence against women and those who have not. Considering this premise, the aim of this paper is to analyze how communicative acts (Soler and Flecha, 2010) performed by some women are reproducing this discourse of blaming men, especially those who have never engaged in gender violence, for instance, the blaming of Oppressed Traditional Masculinities (OTM hereinafter) for actions committed by Dominant Traditional Masculinities (DTM hereinafter). Additionally, this paper aims to make visible those communicative acts performed by New Alternative Masculinities (NAM, hereinafter), who are addressing these discourses to stop the blaming of them and to attempt breaking hegemonic discourses about them.

The article is divided in four sections. The first section provides a literature review that considers how the blaming discourse has affected women and men, and some similarities and differences that are found are discussed. The second section presents a description of the study performed and the data analysis applied. The third section presents the main findings related to those exclusionary communicative acts defined by those who are blaming men who have never committed violence toward women. Also, those transformative communicative acts that have led NAM to reject blaming discourses to overcome the hegemonic discourse that all men are guilty of gender inequality and violence, clarifying how DTM have committed violence, while they (non-violent men) never have. The fourth section provides a conclusion.

## STATE OF THE ART

### Blaming Discourse and Gender

There has been broad research on the influence of language on gender issues. In fact, gender is a social construction due to social interaction mediated by language (Bohan, 1992;

Cameron, 2003; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Mills, 2006). In this sense, some scholars have noted the need to examine the uses of language that have a common sense or the types of uses that question beliefs that seem natural (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003). According to the studies reviewed, one of the research areas has been to evaluate the impact of language on gender interactions in the use of blaming discourses. This type of discourse has been addressed to women and men, both of whom have suffered prejudices and negative consequences due to blaming discourses (Robinson, 2003; Kiesling, 2007; Bulbeck, 2010; Thapar-Björkert and Morgan, 2010). The contributions reviewed have been classified in three main sections: first, definitions of blaming discourse are provided; second, blaming discourses addressed to women and men are analyzed; and finally, remarks considered in the study are provided.

To begin the examination of how blaming discourse has affected women and men, it is necessary to include a definition of what blaming discourse is. For this purpose, we have selected the definition of blaming discourse provided by Wodak (2006):

Blaming and denying constitute typical conversational patterns in conflict talk; such patterns are labeled “justification discourses.” The discourses of justification take place in public and private settings, in many written, oral, and visual genres. The explicitness of their linguistic realization depends on the formality of the conversation. Argumentation theory, speech act theory, and discourse analysis lend themselves best to analyzing justification discourses (Wodak, 2006, p. 59).

Considering Wodak’s (2006) definition, blaming discourse is typical in conflict talk, and it is used in public and private discussions and can be represented in different genres. Therefore, blaming discourse is a type of discourse used in conflict talk by those persons who are involved in the conversation. Within the category of private discussions, other scholars have identified how blaming is associated with the attribution of responsibility to others in the case of partner relationships: “An individual who acts in an abusive manner may ‘blame’ his or her actions on the behavior of the partner” (Scott and Straus, 2007, p. 853). Into the category of blaming discourse could be integrated the use of insults to blame the other. Wee (2015, p. 8) wrote, “insults are attempts by the speaker to get the target to feel worse about himself/herself (=the target) *via* implicating the speaker’s own superiority over the latter.” In fact, blaming others is an attempt to make the target feel worse, marking their inferiority relative to the speaker. Therefore, this evidence shows that blaming discourse intends to penalize the other. The characteristics of blaming discourses addressed to women and men found in the literature review are explained in the following sections.

### Blaming Discourse Addressed to Women

There are different types of blaming discourse addressed to women, but the literature selected has mainly focused on the type of discourse that blames women for being the victims of gender violence (Berns, 2001; Thapar-Björkert and Morgan, 2010) and, on the other side, attempts to combine professional, personal,



and familiar roles in a way that is detrimental to the woman's role as mother (Bulbeck, 2010). Attempting to determine who is using this blaming discourse addressed to women the most, the literature review included specifics that Socially Dominant Men are spokespersons for this type of discourse (Kelly et al., 2015).

Some scholars have analyzed how blaming is targeted mainly toward women in relationships in which gender violence occurs. Berns (2001) identified how patriarchal resistance defined domestic violence as a human issue in which women and men are responsible, but guilt is focused on women. In words of Berns (2001, p. 269), "Thus, although violence is degendered, blame is gendered." This contribution could be related to Thapar-Björkert and Morgan (2010), who, after reviewing some of the dominant discourse that sustains violence, conclude that the culture of blame disempowers women who are victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Other scholars who have identified that feminism has been blamed have noted that a discourse in which women who attempt to combine professional careers and motherhood cannot be good mothers (Bulbeck, 2010). In this sense, Jackson and Mannix (2004) collected the experiences of mothers who felt how this blaming discourse affected their daily life as mothers.

At this point, the question that remains is: Who is addressing this type of blaming discourse toward women? The blaming discourse is used mainly by men who are committing violence or who belong to dominant masculinities. For instance, Kelly et al. (2015) identified how Socially Dominant Men (men higher in Social Dominance Orientation, SDO) blame and despise women when they are rejected:

Men higher in SDO respond to romantic rejection with detrimental attitudes and behaviors, as a product of hostile sexism and belief that women ought to be disciplined for insubordination. Specifically, we argued that men higher in SDO would externalize the blame for rejection... (Kelly et al., 2015, p. 914).

This contribution coincides with the argument that violent men usually view their partners as malicious and blame them for relationship problems (Scott and Straus, 2007). Further, other scholars have identified by conversation analysis that some men sort men into two categories: those who hit women and those who do not (Stokoe, 2010). This type of masculinity corresponds to hegemonic masculinities that are learned in school, where deviance is characterized by different ranges of habits, including violence against other people (Hadjar et al., 2015).

The evidence found affirmed that there was no argument that justified this blaming discourse, there is no place for such a belief (Suarez and Gadalla, 2010). Therefore, blaming discourses toward women have been identified, such as sexist discourse that justifies gender violence (Bulbeck, 2010; Suarez and Gadalla, 2010).

## Blaming Discourse Addressed to Men

Compared with literature analyzing how blaming discourse has targeted women, literature about how men have been affected by blaming discourse is scarce. Kiesling (2007) reflected on

this issue and wrote that some men are invisible, or when they are visible, they are always characterized by the dominant model. He remarked that some discourses contribute to men being presumed to be always coercive, and there is a need to examine how men are subjected to societal stereotypes as women are (Kiesling, 2007). It is important to highlight at this point how women are also under a process of submission to a coercive dominant discourse (e.g., through teen magazines, popular media, or TV among other things) that associates attraction with violence and influences socialization processes of women. NAM fight against this coercive dominant discourse (Puigvert et al., 2019).

Therefore, blaming discourse affects both genders, although there is much more literature on how this discourse has affected women than men. Blaming discourse categorizes women as responsible for being victims and men as perpetrators of the violence, in the literature reviewed. The aim of this paper is to analyze blame discourse addressed toward men and the reactions to it, given that there have been only scarce reflections on it.

Robinson (2003) performed a broad analysis of theories of masculinity and radical feminist theory to contrast the contributions and to determine the perspectives that could provide common ground for working together. Some of the contributions that she identified were related to some radical feminist contributions. These discourses blame men in their attempts to dominate women in gender, or they include other scholars' contributions, based on the assumption of that all men are potential rapists; in words of Seidler (1994), "On the other hand, what about the radical feminist assumption that all men are potentially rapists?" (Seidler, 1994, p. 99). These sentences are typical of blaming discourse according to Wodak's (2006) definition. Robinson (2003) argued that these assumptions do not help to construct a full dialog between some feminist scholars and masculinities authors, and there is a need to advance the dialog between both for advancing in gender issues.

These contributions collected by Robinson (2003) have also been shared by other authors. West and Zimmerman (2009) explained how this discourse is rooted in the contributions of the radical feminists of the early 1970s, when feminists from this perspective did not trust men who called themselves feminists; they saw them with great skepticism because they were men. In contrast, Monteverde (2014) stated that not all feminisms have this point of view and collected the contributions of feminists who were not blaming men, instead noting reciprocal responsibility in inequality.

Other scholars have indicated that masculinity analysis is contributing to the goal of equality and justice, but this contribution presents a difficulty because the majority of studies provide a negative definition of manhood, and it is necessary to construct an affirmative identity, but it is also necessary that scholars provide an analysis of how an affirmative identity of manhood can be achieved (Dowd, 2010). For instance, there have been contributions that have identified the social pressure on men to choose only between two categories: hard boys (tough) or soft boys (babyish,

feminine; Georgakopoulou, 2005). However, there have been some contributions that have introduced NAM (Castro and Mara, 2014), providing a genuine alternative in which attractiveness and a clear statement against gender violence are combined in diverse masculine identities.

Our last observation is that we have identified a gap in the literature reviewed for this paper; we could not find any evidence for how the blaming discourse for the violence perpetrated by DTM is addressed by some women toward men who have never committed violence against women. There is evidence that some blaming discourses addressed toward men categorize all men as responsible for gender violence or gender inequality, while other scholars have rejected this blaming discourse as stereotype arguments, but none have analyzed in great depth how these blaming discourses are constructed and addressed toward men who have never committed violence. Another gap identified in the literature review was a profound analysis of how some men are rejecting this blaming discourse addressed toward them. For this reason, this paper contributes to closing this gap by analyzing how communicative acts (Soler and Flecha, 2010) performed by NAM (Flecha et al., 2013; Castro and Mara, 2014; Redondo-Sama, 2016; Joanpere and Morlà, 2019) are rejecting this blaming discourse, facing it and stopping this hegemonic discourse.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### The Communicative Methodology Approach

This study was developed with communicative methodology (Díez-Palomar et al., 2014; Flecha and Soler, 2014; Vidu et al., 2014; Rios-Gonzalez et al., 2018; Redondo et al., 2020; Ruiz-Eugenio et al., 2020). The communicative perspective gathers contributions from several research traditions. Elements of phenomenology, constructivism, symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, dramaturgy, transcultural studies, dialogic action, communicative action, and dialogic learning contribute to this methodological approach. The communicative methodology is an answer to a society that increasingly demands egalitarian dialog and in which individuals increasingly adopt reflective and critical positions within our environment, providing the opportunity to contribute with their arguments to the development of the research process into an egalitarian position (Racionero and Padrós, 2010; Puigvert, 2012).

To respond to this dialogical turn of societies, the communicative methodology is based on an intersubjective epistemological conception, indicating that, from the point of view of reality (the phenomena studied in the research) it is the product of intersubjective agreements between individuals who use dialog to define the reality around them. In other words, the meanings given to objects around us are meanings that we share because we have discussed them and have reached agreements (Lopez de Aguieta, 2019). The interpretation of reality is based on these common agreements, in which researchers and subjects maintain their respective roles;

researchers contribute to dialog with the academic background (the system), and the subjects contribute their knowledge, based on their experiences (the lifeworld; Habermas, 1984). In this sense, the construction of knowledge is always based on an egalitarian and intersubjective dialog between parts, linking theory and practice at the same time.

Taken from Habermas (1984) is the notion of social agents having the capacity of language and action and the dialogical creation of meaning through an egalitarian dialog. The most important aspect is the argumentation of the subjects and not the power relationships. The notion of common sense of social actors comes from Schütz and Luckmann (1973), and the notion of how subjects are not “cultural dopes,” which comes from Garfinkel (1967), is also crucial to Communicative Methodology. Thus, there is no interpretative hierarchy between researchers and subject; rather both are on the same epistemological level, the relationship, therefore, is not subject-object, but subject-subject (Beck et al., 1994; Gómez et al., 2006).

### Selection of Participants

The current research was fully approved by Community of Researchers on Excellence for All's (CREA) Ethics Committee. Before being involved in the research, participants were contacted individually by the researchers, who fully informed them about the study. All of the interviewed people had in common that they have experienced the evolution of women and men working against what Connell conceptualized as hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). They have been involved directly or indirectly in this fight, and they know perfectly well how women speak about men and how men react, both directly, if they have been involved in any association or movement against gender violence, and indirectly, if they have been close to militants in these movements, experiencing the fight with them. All the names used for the analysis of subjects' communicative acts are pseudonyms.

The interviewed people had to meet at least one of the three following criteria:

- Be involved in movements against gender violence in the past, in the present or both;
- Have close relationships with representatives of the feminist movement; and
- Be involved in associations of NAM.

We present very briefly the profiles of the interviewed people:

#### Participant 1: Koldo

A university professor, he was involved in radical left-wing movements during the 70s, and he was very close to the feminist movement in the Basque Country, knowing many of their most important representatives. He experienced the emergence of the “difference feminism” and its coexistence with the “equality feminism.” He also knew the men fighting against gender inequality in different social movements in the Basque Country.

### Participant 2: Carlos

A university professor, he experienced the influence of and the differences in feminism from the 90s until now. He has been very involved in the new masculinities' movement in Madrid for more than 10 years, fighting against DTM within and outside the academy. He is professor of media and gender issues at the university.

### Participant 3: Laura

A trainer, she was not directly involved in the feminist movement during the 80s, but she was involved in social movement struggles, and many friends of her were involved in the feminist movement in the Basque Country. She knows how the main feminist associations and the women assembled in the Basque Country work. She was not involved in this movement because she rejects the associations' homogeneity and radicalization.

### Participant 4: Nuria

She is involved in the social movement against gender violence. She was involved in the feminist movement in the 70s, and she is still participating. She has a valuable historical perspective on feminism and the current struggles. She was one of the founders of the Platform Against Gender Violence in Catalonia.

### Participant 5: Antonio

A secondary school teacher, he has been involved for 5 years in men's groups that follow the NAM approach. He has a direct vision of the oppression by some women of egalitarian men, and he now has many examples of how to overcome this situation of blaming men.

### Participant 6: Pedro

A university professor, he has been involved in the movement against violence against women for more than 10 years, within men's organizations. He is now an active member of a NAM association fighting against gender violence in Catalonia.

## Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews (Alarcón et al., 2000) with a communicative orientation. The communicative approach allows researchers to interpret reality through egalitarian and intersubjective dialog with social actors, maintaining each of them in his or her respective role (Ramis et al., 2014; Melgar et al., 2020). In this case, the researchers contributed to dialog with academic backgrounds regarding communicative acts (Soler and Flecha, 2010) and NAM (Castro and Mara, 2014; Joanpere and Morlà, 2019), and contributions from participants were analyzed related to blaming discourse in this paper.

We conducted five face-to-face interviews, and one, for major reasons, was conducted online. We concreted the face-to-face interviews in natural scenarios for the interviewees. All of them were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The interviews lasted an average of 1 h. After an initial analysis of the speech acts, we met again with the men interviewed to go more deeply into some of the issues analyzed. Thanks to this second

round, we concretely analyzed more in-depth the previous speech acts, and we provided more examples of blaming discourses against men.

## Communicative Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using communicative data analysis, which indicates the application of two dimensions: the exclusionary and transformative dimensions (Pulido et al., 2014; Redondo-Sama, 2016). The exclusionary dimension is defined by those barriers that prevent people from accessing concrete social benefits. In this paper, the exclusionary dimension is categorized through those communicative acts expressed by some women who blame those OTM who have not committed gender violence, based on acts committed by DTM. The transformative dimension consists of those components that help to overcome these barriers. In this paper, the transformative dimension is categorized through communicative acts committed by NAMs that exemplified how they rejected being considered guilty of the violence committed against women by DTM.

## RESULTS

### Exclusionary Communicative Acts: Blaming Men Who Never Have Committed Gender Violence

This section reports an analysis of those communicative acts addressed toward men who have never committed gender violence but who have been targets of blaming discourses for being a man. We selected examples of communicative acts in which blaming discourses were present in the interactions of women toward men in different times (70s, 80s, and currently) and in public (conferences debates) and private spaces (conversations between friends). This selection was based on evidence that the blaming discourse that began in the 70s is still present today, not only in some public feminist discourses but also in interpersonal relationships, as we can see in the following results. The analysis focused on verbal and non-verbal language, the social context of the interactions and the persons involved.

The first communicative act selected was provided by Koldo. He knows the feminist movement in the Basque Country since the 70s, and he experienced the change that occurred inside the feminist movement that brought it closer to difference feminism and moved it away from the prior equality approach. When starting to lead the movement, these women positioned themselves against all men, independent of whether these men were fighting in the feminist movement against oppression by DTM. Koldo remembered how some women involved in this feminism movement talked about men:

*The comments were like laughing at them because they are men (...) they had a concrete image of non-attractiveness, they were idiots to speak in a way (...) in general, they were looked down on; they were conceptualized as silly, and this fact was noted in all things*

-- in all human relations. In groups of both men and women, they occupied this position of silly men until the end (Koldo).

This communicative act exemplifies how the blaming discourse was addressed toward all men ("because they are men") and how it included disrespect and insults ("they were idiots"). In Koldo's words, these women did not consider that the men who were blamed by them were those who fought against gender inequality with them; these men also questioned DTM attitudes, but these women did not consider those men fighting in their feminist discourse.

In the 80s, the feminist discourse was very similar to that in the 70s. Laura was not directly involved in the feminist movement, but she had women friends who were involved in it. She remembers that they began to talk about who they were attracted to and why they were attracted to some men, and discourses about differences between dominant and egalitarian men were introduced in their conversations. Despite this discourse, Laura remembers that the dominant discourse that all men were equal remained: "The typical remark from one [woman] was that from all men whom I like I do not like anyone (...) how difficult it is to hook up; all men are bullies. This was the discourse" (Laura).

In this second communicative act, the blaming discourse contains a radical statement made by Laura's friends ("all men are bullies"). This statement is a clear example of how blaming discourse creates prejudices and stereotypes that, in this case, harmed those men who had never committed violence.

However, these examples of communicative acts that blame men who never committed violence came not only from past decades. A more recent example was provided by Antonio. He is a member of an association based on the NAM approach that works against gender violence. During the interview, Antonio provided an example of a communicative act by a woman (Silvia) blaming a non-violent man (Salva) who is her friend and who always treats her well. This communicative act occurred during a conversation in a bar. Salva and Silvia were with other friends having conversations. Silvia maintained a long-term relationship with a boy with DTM attitudes, and she was involved with another DTM boy, and she used a blaming discourse toward Salva when he attempted to help her:

*In a concrete moment, Silvia said she had a headache, so Salva answered that she could take an aspirin. Her reaction, with disdain and a scornful face, was to shout at him: "That's it, the advice! Women always want to be listened to by men, and men always give the same fucking advice!" (Antonio).*

In the communicative act described by Antonio, the contemptuous use of language is very clear, together with the aggressive and violent attitude of the girl. In response to the advice offered in a friendly tone by Salva, one expression in the woman's response is: "the fucking advice." When we spoke to Antonio, he explained to us how Silvia's DTM boyfriends (partner and former partner) did not listen to her at all, and

she expressed her frustration to the boy who had never underestimated her (Salva). According to Antonio, she allowed the blaming of men, including Salva, who is not violent, and she addressed him with disdain, curse words, and an aggressive tone.

Another example along the same line was provided by Pedro. Due to his experience in men movements, Pedro has many examples of how some colleagues from the masculinities movement have experienced blaming discourses and how it has affected them. Pedro knows men's groups working for equality in Catalonia, and he remembered how, in these groups, some men were analyzing themselves for contradictions that they probably had because of the patriarchy; many of them had suffered from blaming discourse for being men, even though they have never committed gender violence. The case provided by Pedro was about Miguel, a man who had never committed violence against his wife, but she (Alba) blamed him due to the specific feminist discourse she learned that all men are to blame for the patriarchy:

*Luis (a friend) told me that Miguel's ex-wife said that he had committed violence (symbolic), and he felt that he had committed this violence (but there was not any evidence of it). He had a daughter, and Alba said that he had committed symbolic violence against his daughter. Alba used the discourse of some feminist women that they have learned very well. This discourse is based on blaming men -- all men and patriarchy; they (some feminists) put patriarchy in everything (Pedro).*

Pedro said that Miguel felt so bad for being blamed, and even he believed that Alba had a reason. He interiorized the discourse of the women, and in the end, he believed that he really had committed violence, although he never did, according to Pedro. It is a very negative consequence of this process of blaming men with egalitarian values, harming those who never committed violence.

These communicative acts that exemplify blaming discourses also occur in public spaces, such as academic conferences. The influence of certain types of women who have propagated a specific type of feminism that present blaming discourses against men into academic discourse as well. Along these lines, Carlos, a university professor involved in the new masculinities movement, has participated in many academic events on gender issues over the last 10 years. During his interview, Carlos confirmed how most of the criticisms of men who fight against hegemonic masculinity came from women linked to some feminist movements who had elaborate discourses, as well as a violent attitude in the use of language and even gestures:

*I remember a situation when I was participating as a speaker at a conference on coeducation that one of the attendants, during the open debate, requested the floor. She was checking her notes; she was re-examining all of them one by one to note each of the words I said, speaking ironically and taking to extremes some of the examples*



*that I used, creating caricatures, until giving her verdict: “a well-intentioned discourse” (Carlos).*

Carlos was evaluated by the feminist point by point because she felt, as an expert in the area of coeducation, that Carlos had an egalitarian position. Carlos explained this situation as “the cotton test,” making a connection to the common situation when one is cleaning and passes cotton over the table to test whether it is really clean. He felt this way when the feminist spoke ironically against him:

*What attracted my attention the most was her discrediting tone, her position and even her posture: leaning back in the chair, with the pen in her hand, somewhat arrogant and overbearing (...) I was surprised by the anguish and unease she produced in me, maybe because it was unexpected (...). She waited to be the last participant, leaving no time to reply and generating an atmosphere of tension that could be fully perceived (Carlos).*

As Carlos states, it is a language normally assigned to men for its aggressiveness but that began to be used by some feminists in the mid 70s and that is still used by some women today. In this example, the verbal language was offensive, as is the way in which the woman articulated her discourse (non-verbal language), denoting a type of power position in which the interlocutor (Carlos) was disregarded, and the spokesperson (feminist woman) was in a power position, which exemplified the typical argumentation of the blaming discourse:

*Nobody gave their opinion about her discourse, either to approve of it or to question it. I did not find solidarity. I wanted to, for instance, among other men attending the conference and working on gender issues. Worse is that even my answer was something submissive, I think, looking for her approval. Her ironic and disrespectful smile confused me. I wanted to disappear certainly. I never felt like that before (Carlos).*

Then, as a consequence, the resulting atmosphere was tension in the space where it was produced and the generating of dissimilar reactions. Among men, as said by Carlos, there was neither support nor solidarity, and the interviewee himself was submissive in his answer, being at that moment an example of how OTM attitudes do allow for a reaction in the face of such an attack. The non-verbal language used by the woman, ironic and arrogant, together with her discourse, placed her above the others and caused Carlos not only to seek her approval but also to want to disappear from the event.

The blaming process against men who have never committed gender violence began during the 70s, with the process of change within the feminist movement. This blaming discourse has been maintained until today because there are some feminists and also non-feminist women who have attempted to blame egalitarian men for patriarchy and for the actions perpetrated by DTM. In the following section, we analyzed how men with

NAM attitudes are now taking a position against this blaming discourse directed toward them.

## **Transformative Communicative Acts: NAM Stop Blaming Discourses and Break Hegemonic Discourses About Men**

This section reports an analysis of those communicative acts that respond to blaming discourses against men who never commit gender violence, overcoming the hegemonic discourse that all men are the same. We selected examples of communicative acts that occurred in private spaces (conversations between friends) and in public spaces (such as conferences and debates). This selection was due to evidence of how to stop this discourse of blaming men for perpetrating violence in both (personal and public spaces).

The first communicative act selected exemplifies that not all feminists share the same position as those feminists who are blaming men, as we analyzed in previous sections. In this sense, Nuria, a woman involved in the fight against gender violence in Catalonia, criticized the normalized discourse that many people currently engage in about how the situation of women is worse than in the past: “Any past time was better than now” (...). We are now in a good period (...) there is goodwill in the dialog between men and women. “Not all men believe in hegemonic masculinity” (Nuria).

Nuria, being a woman activist, made a clear statement (“Not all men are hegemonic masculinity”). This statement was the opposite of the feminist contributions analyzed in the previous section and confirmed that collaboration occurs between men and women (“There is goodwill of dialog between men and women”). This change in discourse could influence feminist debates and overcome the blaming discourses used by some feminists.

However, the real change found in the fieldwork is the type of communicative act committed by some men who have acquired NAM attitudes to stop blaming discourses. In this sense, we recorded communicative acts provided by Antonio, Carlos, and Pedro.

Antonio provided us with an example of a communicative act in the face of blaming discourse. This type of discourse is sometimes applied in the manner in which women address men, seeming that they are angry with men. In this case, a woman interacted with a group of male friends (corresponding to a NAM model), and Sergio responded to her aggressive interaction toward them:

*The woman who was responsible for facilitating the proper footwear started to treat them in a less egalitarian manner. When forming the queue to ask for the footwear, she was asking them for their shoe sizes, but with an aggressive tone of voice and manners. Some of the boys chose their footwear, which was given to them in a very scornful way, without looking at their faces, until one of them (Sergio), when approaching the woman and before she had time to say anything, told her his shoe size, looking straight into her eyes and with a very secure tone of voice but without being aggressive. From that moment on, the woman set*

*aside her aggressive tone of voice and moved on to more cordial treatment with them (Antonio).*

Sergio stopped the woman's aggressive manner of speaking with a secure attitude "but without being aggressive." Facing these types of communicative acts is crucial, according to Antonio. This girl changed her attitude of being angry with the men because Sergio stopped it and did not allow her to continue.

These communicative acts that exemplify how to face blaming discourse are also present in academic debates occurring at conferences and workshops on gender issues. Pedro and Carlos talked about different academic events, conferences, and workshops in which men that favor gender equality received criticism from some women feminists. However, they also provided us with some examples of how some men who are acting according to the NAM model reacted with security and conviction in their answers, demonstrating the way to overcome the communicative acts that attempt to discredit them.

Pedro provided us with an example of a communicative act that occurred during a dinner with a speaker who was invited to a Conference of Masculinities organized by the City Council of Barcelona in 2005. A professor and principal of a school and an expert in sexuality (Daniel) were invited to this conference. He contributed to the debates and positions against the criticisms by some women of egalitarian man. After the conference, while having dinner, Daniel said to Pedro the following words that showed that he was so tired of the criticisms:

*Daniel said to me, "I'm fed up; I'm very tired. How could it be possible that, after 40 years, all men are guilty?" because recently, at this conference, some feminist authors were listed that continue with the discourse about patriarchy. I remember how Daniel said, "We are fed up. How can they blame you about patriarchy with twenty-odd that you have? What do you do in favor of patriarchy?" His discourse was so simple but so clear.*  
*Interviewer: But how did they say it? How did they express it?*

*In that way, you know, so simple. However, it is enough of that, blaming all men. They cannot keep blaming men for 40 years, it's enough of this discourse. He was very outraged; he stayed in a good mood, but he was so tired (Pedro).*

Daniel knows the feminist movement in the Basque Country, according to Pedro. He knows how they have been maintaining the same blaming discourse against egalitarian men from the 70s through today. This case occurred in Barcelona (Catalonia), but the argumentation and forms of the feminists were the same in both regions. These women reproduced the same discourse over time, and people like Daniel, who has been fighting against gender violence also since the 70s from an egalitarian position, is fed up; he is tired of it. The consequences can be detected in his verbal and non-verbal acts, because when he explained how it could be possible, he was quite outraged. As Pedro explained, his face and tone of voice denoted that he was very tired and outraged. This professor

was clearly positioned against these feminist women during the conference, as well as afterward, when he was having dinner with our interviewee.

The last communicative act selected is an example provided by Carlos that exemplifies a reaction to blaming discourse used by a feminist woman in a public debate during a conference. In a Congress on Gender and Education in La Habana, just after a speaker from México, he was criticized by a feminist with a very aggressive and arrogant attitude. A well-known professor, who coordinated the Latin American Network of Masculinities, who was invited as the speaker and who was in the room at the same time, reacted as follows:

*He gave a very forceful answer. He established a discourse based on good arguments but also with determination, conviction, and a lot of security. What attracted my attention the most was his self-confidence in detailing the critical words said by the Argentinian woman who attempted to disqualify the Mexican speaker, accusing men of victimizing them and usurping the gender debate (...). After requesting the floor and with the microphone, he stood up, turned himself toward the audience to address the Argentinian woman, looking directly at her – who was getting smaller now, sitting among her colleagues -- and he rebutted the criticisms with respect but firmly and angrily to some extent. He was saying implicitly and explicitly, "I'm not going to allow you any criticisms formulated with the sole intention of disqualifying and denigrating from arrogance." The way he expressed himself inspired great admiration, not only from me but also from many others (Carlos).*

According to Carlos, he answered in such self-confident manner, with well-based arguments and without showing nervousness or needing to justify himself for being a men ("I'm not going to allow you any criticisms formulated with the sole intention of disqualifying and denigrating from arrogance"), the Argentinian woman had no way to counteract his arguments but, in contrast, was ashamed ("who was getting smaller now, sitting among her colleagues"). The non-verbal language of the man was crucial in this sense because, by the mere fact of standing, turning, and looking at her firmly when rebutting her, he generated the sought effect on her. He was also reinforced because he generated on the floor a sense of admiration for him.

Therefore, the communicative acts that respond to blaming discourses obtain the result of breaking the hegemonic discourse that all men are the same. NAM's reactions put things in order, and they stop this discourse by not allowing men to be treated in disrespectful manner for things done by DTM.

## DISCUSSION

This paper has contributed to advancing the knowledge in two aspects: first, that there exists a blaming discourse directed at men in general, blaming all men, those who perpetrate violence and those who fight against it for violence committed



against women; and second, that there are some men, that can be classified as NAM whose reactions are stopping these blaming discourses based on action committed by DTM. In this sense, the analysis of communicative acts (Soler and Flecha, 2010; Rodríguez-Navarro et al., 2014; Carrillo et al., 2017; Rios-Gonzalez et al., 2018) is crucial for identifying the types of communicative acts that are either exclusionary and that promote blaming discourses (Wodak, 2006) against men who have never committed gender violence or transformative in the sense that they counter the blaming discourse, thus, helping to draw a line between who to blame and for what.

The results show how some discourses rooted in the radical feminists movements of the 70s (which are still present today) have promoted those blaming discourses regarding gender inequality toward all men (Robinson, 2003; West and Zimmerman, 2009), without distinguishing those who have contributed to it from those who have not. The scientific literature has evidenced that some men even part from feminist movements to continue their struggle against violent men on their own as they can no longer account to these women's request. From being allies in the feminist movement they have been pointed at as enemies for the single fact of being men. However, the literature has also clearly identified how men who used blaming discourses against women also belonged to a dominant model and committed violence (Scott and Straus, 2007; Kelly et al., 2015).

The present research contributes to the gap on how some men clearly position themselves as allies to the feminist movements and how for this specific reason they are subject to a blaming discourse perpetrated by women, especially feminist women following a certain discourse to discredit them. Yet, more often than not, these women would not dare using the same discourse with men who perpetrate violence.

Men who represent the DTM are the perpetrators of gender-based violence and not the ones representing OTM. Solnit (2014) argues that violence is not based on race, nationality, or religion, but on gender. She highlights how men are the ones who exercise violence, but not all, most of them are not violent and they are also suffering from violence exercised by others. The positioning of men who represent the NAM against other men who exercise this violence and against some women who exercise blaming discourses against men is fundamental in the struggle to overcome gender violence (Redondo-Sama, 2016).

In contrast, in the results from the fieldwork, there were only examples of how the selected communicative acts performed by women from some feminist movements blamed men who have never committed gender violence. On the other side, men who take a stand and do not allow themselves to be treated in a contemptuous or blaming manner perform transformative communicative acts to stop the blaming discourse from being addressed toward them, and in this way, they break the hegemonic discourse about men.

Finally, we want to highlight future research lines. It would be more insightful to have a greater number of participants to carry out fieldwork. In that sense, it would be interesting to think about the possibility of combining different collective and individual data collection techniques. In this way, it would

be possible to analyze blaming discourses against men by triangulating individual and group information.

Blaming discourses affect younger people. For this reason, it would be interesting to work with young people in future research. In the same way, it is important to develop fieldwork in other regions. If we worked with this target group, it would be possible to fight against blaming discourses at an early stage. Future research could also incorporate social impact as one of the main research variables. If we looked for a positive social impact on young people from the very beginning of our research, it could be easy to fight against these blaming discourses.

## Limitations

The information extracted and analyzed from the semi-structured interviews showed some situations and actions of other people, because they have not been experienced firsthand by the interviewed person. This fact affected the narrative and the concretion of the communicative acts. To overcome this limitation, we contacted some of the interviewees a second time with a selection of possible communicative acts, asking for more concrete details and also sharing the first interpretation of the information. A second limitation lays in the regional context of the interviewees. We conducted concrete interviews of people who live in the Basque Country, Catalonia, and Madrid, and the information provided was mainly centered on these regions. The analysis of the feminist movement and also of men's movements against gender inequality was located in these areas, and at no time are they extended to all women of the various feminist positions, nor of other places.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets generated for this study are available on request to the corresponding author.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by The Ethics Committee of the Community of Researchers on Excellence for All (CREA), University of Barcelona. Written informed consent for participation was not required for this study in accordance with the national legislation and the institutional requirements.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

TS, KK, CA, and AG made substantial contributions to the conception of the manuscript, searching the literature, drafting the article, and revising it critically. AG was responsible for data collection and contributed to the discussion and conclusions. TS conceptualized and designed the article and revised and approved the manuscript. KK and CA collaborated in data analysis and in elaborating the article. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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# “Come on! He Has Never Cooked in His Life!” New Alternative Masculinities Putting Everything in Its Place

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Communicative acts of some women are perpetuating the dominance that DTM (Dominant Traditional Masculinities) have over both women and OTM (Oppressed Traditional Masculinities). Some women use language in a disdainful manner to reprimand oppressed men’s behavior in daily life situations, the same behavior that such women would not reproach to DTM. But NAM (New Alternative Masculinities) are reacting to this. This article analyzes the communicative acts employed in all these situations, both those produced by women and DTM, as well as NAM’s communicative acts in response to those offenses. Data was collected using communicative daily life stories of give women and three men with diverse profiles and different levels of participation in women’s and men’s movements. Findings highlight, from the transformative dimension of the communicative methodology, that the use of language of desire in NAM’s reactions is effective not only to make justice with men who have never executed violence on women, but also to undermine the attractiveness of both DTM’s behavior and the comments of some women on such behavior. These findings complement previous research on preventive socialization of gender violence by broadening scientific knowledge on NAM’s communicative acts that prevent and eradicate gender-based violence. Further research ought to broaden the evidence of how some women who defend feminist values sometimes do not support and even tease or reprimand men who practice these values; moreover, an important line could analyze the way people talk about men with NAM attitudes to hold back reprimands in comparison to how people talk about men who follow a DTM model.

**Keywords:** communicative acts, masculinities, discourses, domestic work, reprimands, gender

## INTRODUCTION

Xavi: I remembered an example of a communicative act shared in a meeting where we were talking about trends in New Alternative Masculinities (NAM). One researcher explained the situation of a woman who always was reprimanding her boyfriend (Abel) for not doing some domestic work. This boy had egalitarian values and was worried by that, thinking that he was worse than her ex-boyfriend (Mauro). Then, this researcher, who knew that her ex-boyfriend (who follows a DTM model) never did domestic work and had sexist attitudes toward her, said to this friend (Abel): “Come on! He has never cooked in his life!”

Xavi's example is based on a communicative act performed by a researcher to his friend (Abel). His friend was worried about his girlfriend because she reprimanded him about domestic work. But the researcher knew that his girlfriend never reprimanded her ex-boyfriend (Mauro), who never did any domestic work and held attitudes belonging to the DTM model (Flecha et al., 2013), according to Xavi's words. DTM stands for hegemonic men with non-egalitarian attitudes, the main perpetrators of gender-based violence. For this reason, the researcher stopped the effect of this reprimand to his friend (a man who never perpetrated gender violence) of seeing himself as worse than the DTM ex-boyfriend. This reprimand was stopped through the communicative act performed by the researcher who has a NAM attitude: “Come on, he has never cooked in his life!”, according to Xavi's words. NAM are egalitarian men who portray strong, confident, and coherent attitudes in their relationships and are therefore a successful and attractive alternative against traditional models.

There are multiple studies related to the language used to talk about women that enable us to identify social inequalities and violence in gender relationships (Kollock et al., 1985; Jenkins and Aube, 2002; Holmes, 2006; Talbot, 2006; Boonzaier, 2008; Newman et al., 2008; Greenwood and Gautam, 2020). Language is a central tool in human life according to words Parodi's (2009), and for this reason research on language and gender is studied by scholars from diverse disciplines, according to Talbot (2006). Academics from this research field have explored the use of language in diverse fields, for instance in representation in media, broadcasting, and other institutions including the family. However, literature related to the language used by women toward men who never perpetrated violence is scarce. Therefore, the analysis of women's uses of language toward non-violent men in daily situations (such as Xavi's example provided above) and the language used toward violent men have been detected as a research gap that needs to be filled. The present research is an exploration of this language used by some women toward the Oppressed Traditional Masculinities (OTM, hereinafter) model (Flecha et al., 2013). OTM include men who do not practice violence but who don't awaken attraction, since they lack confidence. Particularly, we analyze which type of communicative acts (Santa Cruz and Redondo, 2010) are used to reprimand OTM or men who have never exercised gender violence in different daily situations: for instance,

when they are not doing some domestic work, in daily work situations, or in leisure situations with friends; and which type of communicative acts are used by these same women addressed to Dominant Traditional Masculinities (DTM, hereinafter) in similar situations. Further, our research does not only focus on these language uses, but it also sheds light on the different types of responses provided by men. Particularly, we have identified which type of communicative acts performed by NAM (hereinafter) (Flecha et al., 2013) tend to eradicate any reprimand or joke about men who have never perpetrated violence.

In doing so, the structure of this article is composed of four sections. The first section presents a review of the main contributions from the specialized literature related to how reprimands, jokes and teasing are used by women and men in order to ridicule someone, for instance in what situations they are used, and which collective suffers this type of language use most. Second, the methodology used in this study, involving data collection, and analysis, is presented. Third, we introduce the main findings which have been classified in two main categories: exclusionary communicative acts that reprimand and ridicule OTM expressed by some women and DTM; and transformative communicative acts performed by NAM that react upon these reprimands. Finally, the main conclusions of the study are provided.

## Research on the Use of Reprimands and Teasing in Gender Relationships

Previous to this study, a literature review was conducted focused on identifying the use of reprimands and teasing used by women and men in daily situations. The evidence found has been grouped into two main bodies of literature. The first section introduces the analysis of reprimands, jokes and teasing used in daily situations. In the second one, those evidence that confirm how dominant men are who reprimand and tease men who are not violent and a trend of some women who are reprimanding and teasing men who are not violent are introduced. At the end of the review, we present the current challenge faced by research, that is, the need to explore how to overcome these types of reprimands through the positioning of NAM's movement that counteracts these interactions, and how the present article is meant to represent a step forward toward this direction.

The first body of reviewed literature is focused on what we know about how sometimes reprimands, jokes, and teasing are used for ridiculing someone. In order to investigate more profoundly how they are used by people, some guiding questions have been defined to explore literature on heterosexual relationships. For instance, how are reprimands, teasing and jokes used for ridiculing? Who is using them? Addressed to whom? What are the consequences of that? Research in this field has already highlighted some meaningful information worth remarking upon here.

In the case of humor and jokes, milestone works have already pointed out how jokes exercise a double function: they are used to maintain healthy relationships and friendship, and to perpetuate power relationships (Hay, 2000; Holmes, 2006; McCann et al., 2010; Rees and Monrouxe, 2010;



Abedinifard, 2016; Greenwood and Gautam, 2020). Our work is focused on the latter function. Evidence is provided by McCann et al. (2010) about how humor could be used to ridicule persons, such as jokes that are close to homophobia. They investigated about how these jokes could constrain the attitudes and behaviors of all men, how they are used for preserving what is considered to be a real heterosexual masculinity and what is not, McCann et al. (2010). This contribution is related to reflections of Jewkes and Morrell (2010); they point out that hegemonic masculinity not only maintains power over women, but also produces hierarchies among men, often marginalizing those that do not adhere to the dominant model.

Other scholars such as Holmes (2006) found that gender stereotypes are the focus of workplace humor. Holmes (2006) pointed out that sometimes men and women reinforce negative stereotypes in their informal conversations: for instance, men are treated as communicatively incompetent and women as sexual objects. In the same line, Rees and Monrouxe (2010) analyzed how laughter is a mechanism for constructing gender identities. Sometimes, this mechanism could damage people who are the object of it. In the authors' words: "how laughter can make people feel bad (e.g., the butt of the tease)" (Rees and Monrouxe, 2010, 335).

Therefore, jokes, laughter, and humor could be used for hurting, and result in teasing mechanisms. In fact, Hay (2000) found that teasing was one of the languages used to maintain power over particular human groups. Specifically, Hay (2000) identified three functions played by humor in these settings: reinforcing solidarity, maintaining power-based relationships and psychological needs (to defend and to cope). Regarding the function of maintaining power-based relationships, Hay (2000) highlighted the aim of the teasing mechanism: "teases serve primarily to maintain the power of the teaser (Hay, 2000, 720)". One of the questions emerged is "who is the teaser then?" And "who is the target of the teaser?" It is clear how humor plays a role in perpetuating power relations in a wide range of situations; however, to what extent is this also used to maintain power relations within gender relationships? While some research has highlighted the use of humor in reinforcing gender stereotypes, mainly targeting women, scarce efforts have been dedicated to analyzing in which ways some women (Gómez, 2015) are also using jokes and humor in order to discredit and exercise power over particular men. This leads us to the second body of literature.

Evidence found confirms how boys and men who follow the dominant men model are those who exercise this oppression (McCarry, 2010; Hamllall and Morrell, 2012). On the contrary, men who are far away from this dominant model are those who mainly suffer reprimands and teasing from some women and dominant men (Jenkins and Aube, 2002; Bergmann et al., 2014; Pinilla et al., 2014). Examples of these reprimands and teasing have been found in different daily situations in diverse spaces: school, social movements, and in sexual affective relationships.

In this sense, Hamllall and Morrell (2012) conducted a research with secondary students and identified how the dominant masculinity model influenced students' interactions. Among other contributions, researchers highlighted that those boys who

follow the dominant masculinity model were teasing other boys and the terms that are used:

Dominant boys at the school called certain boys "gays" and "sissies" as a way of marginalizing them, and at the same time elevating themselves and endorsing the misogynistic and homophobic elements of the school's gender regime (Hamllall and Morrell, 2012, 492).

Due to this affirmation, dominant boys are learning to use teases for ridiculing others and maintaining their social status. The coercive dominant discourse (Puigvert and Flecha, 2018; Puigvert et al., 2019) influences these phenomena, emptying the attractiveness of the OTM men with such comments while reinforcing the link existing between dominant men and desire (Ruiz-Eugenio et al., 2020a; Racionero-Plaza et al., 2021). In other research, dominant young men are identified with those that are more prone to perpetrate violence against girls (McCarry, 2010). She found that young males with a violent attitude against others coincide with those young men who are ascribed to the dominant model and this was a significant factor of the perpetration of male abuse and violence against girls involved with them.

The following step was to explore what has been studied about how reprimands have been used by women and which type of masculine model was their target. Literature in this specific field is scarce and not many answers are found to this question in the literature reviewed. Nevertheless, some evidence has been collected that approaches the issue. Pinilla et al. (2014) conducted a qualitative research on men involved in the "Egalitarian Men Groups" in Spain and their relationship with feminists in order to analyze their role in the fight against gender-based violence and gender equality. Researchers found that some feminists who were in power positions established vertical relationships with these men with egalitarian values. Particularly, they showed how these men felt that they often had to give explanations to some feminists who represent the institutional movement and how some male colleagues assumed this submissive position (Pinilla et al., 2014), although they shared the same goals of gender equality and fight against gender violence. For this reason, some men interviewed did not understand why they were treated in this way. Our research will shed light on this phenomenon and how communicative acts which are apparently performed by some feminist standpoints can do otherwise and go against these ideals and even perpetuate gender violence.

Situations identified in research indicate how the use of reprimands and teasing are mainly addressed to those men who have not perpetrated gender violence. Evidence shows a trend of some women using reprimands and teasing against those men who are in favor of gender equality or are fighting against gender violence. However, there is no evidence in the literature whether the same women are using these reprimands toward those men who belong to the DTM. Thus, one of the challenges of this study is to deepen in the analysis of reprimands and teasing used by some women addressed to men who do not perpetrate gender violence, and to see if there is any evidence that the same women are also reprimanding and teasing those men that have perpetrated gender violence.



Concluding, situations as the ones described above indicate that some men are stigmatized for not following the DTM model although they are supporting women's rights and gender equality, consistent with research results of Rudman et al. (2012). In this sense, Primer and Moss-Racusin (2009) said that it would be necessary to introduce changes in ways of talking about men that support gender equality: "If it was understood that men who are supportive of women's efforts for equality are strong men—by definition [that] it actually takes more strength as a man—that changes the conversation" (Primer and Moss-Racusin, 2009, 15). This idea helps to search which type of leadership could contribute to transform practices (Santamaría and Jean-Marie, 2014). In this sense, NAM's movement has achieved this perspective, by combining language of desire and of ethics in their communication. In doing so, they are attracting young men to their movement because they show that it is possible to be committed against gender violence (Joanpere and Morlà, 2019) while not allowing for being undervalued (Serradell et al., 2014). Following the research by Puigvert et al. (2019), NAM are not submissive to that coercive dominant discourse that separates goodness from success and attraction (Ruiz-Eugenio et al., 2020b). Due to the positioning of the NAM's movement, it has been considered suitable to collect examples of reactions of NAM to counteract reprimands and teasing addressed to men who do not perpetrate gender violence. The last aim is to analyze what types of communicative acts are used to counteract reprimands and overcome inequality in order to cover an aspect that is not present in the literature, departing from the previous theoretical contributions.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study has been carried out using the communicative methodology (Flecha and Soler, 2014; Gómez, 2019). One of the main characteristics of this methodology is the creation of dialogic knowledge. This is possible because researchers and participants establish an egalitarian dialog where the former bring into the conversation the accumulated scientific knowledge in order to contrast it with the latter's lifeworld (Ruiz-Eugenio et al., 2020a). Besides, the present study has also been framed under the communicative acts theory (Santa Cruz and Redondo, 2010) focusing on the conflictive interactions developed in everyday life situations dealing with domestic chores, daily work situations, and leisure situations with friends and in partnership. Communicative acts include the analysis of verbal and non-verbal language, the influence of the social context where interactions occur, and the intentions and responsibility of the consequences of the whole communicative act that is performed (Rodríguez-Navarro et al., 2014). As Itakura (2014) concluded, it is necessary to include non-verbal elements and context for analyzing conversations in depth.

### Data Collection

This study focused on communicative acts that reprimand OTM undertaken by some women or DTM, and communicative acts performed by NAM that counteract reprimands. To

**TABLE 1 |** Participants' profile.

| N | Pseudonym | Age             | Profile                     |
|---|-----------|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | Ana       | 50–55 years old | Educational advisor         |
| 2 | Alejandra | 60–65 years old | Educational advisor         |
| 3 | Begoña    | 50–55 years old | Teacher of secondary school |
| 4 | Lucía     | 40–45 years old | University professor        |
| 5 | Laia      | 35–40 years old | University professor        |
| 6 | Marc      | 35–40 years old | University professor        |
| 7 | Luis      | 45–50 years old | Factory worker              |

start the interview, researchers explained both frameworks, communicative acts (Santa Cruz and Redondo, 2010) and the different types of masculinity OTM, DTM, and NAM (Serradell et al., 2014), in plain language to the participants. This presentation was the starting point of a shared reflection in which participants were asked if they knew any situations like the ones described in the results' section and whether they could provide personal examples or cases of their friends or colleagues. On the one hand, they were asked to explain communicative acts of women or DTM men, specific things they did or said toward a man that corresponds to the OTM as a reprimand, with bad manners, mocking, comments with second intentions that show complaint or disdain, in reply to some daily life attitudes of that man, such as at work, with friends, or at home. On the other hand, they were asked to explain communicative acts from NAM that respond to the former, where a language of desire is present, in the search of justice toward such non-violent men who are targets of the reprimands, and also to empty of attractiveness such comments. The data presented in this paper was collected from five communicative daily life stories with women, and three communicative daily life stories with men. This technique allows to go deeper into the participants' past and present events and to discuss the analysis of the interpretation of these events. Each daily life story lasted around 45 min. All participants were informed about the aim of the research before signing the informed consent. Pseudonyms (see **Table 1**) are used in order to preserve their anonymity and privacy. The consent forms comply with the international standards established by the European Framework Programme (European Commission, 2019).

### Criteria and Selection of Participants

We have selected 8 participants (5 women's and 3 men's), people who would be able and willing to share meaningful communicative acts on the topic studied. The basic criteria for the selection were aimed at achieving a certain level of diversity, as shown in different Socioeconomic status (SES) levels, age, gender, and family status (single, married, with a partner, etc.). A second basic criterion that came up in the literature was to interview people with different levels of involvement in women's and men's movement. According to evidence analyzed, examples of reprimands and teasing are mostly known by people involved in feminist movements or men groups (Bergmann et al., 2014; Pinilla et al., 2014). The participant's profile is the following:

Ana, Alejandra, and Begoña have a historical perspective of the changes that have occurred in gender relationships since the end

of the seventies. Ana is more involved in educational practices that are working to overcome gender violence. Alejandra and Begoña share the common situation of having women friends involved in feminist movements but they are not directly involved. Lucia and Laia are both university professors and they have participated in different social movements; specifically, they have been activists in diverse feminist movements. Marc and Xavi are university professors, and they are directly involved in NAM's movement. Last but not least, Luis is working in a factory and is not involved in any movement.

## Data Analysis

First, concrete communicative acts that best represent the daily life stories were selected, in order to analyze communicative acts performed by women and men toward OTM that exemplified reprimands and teasing of how they do something (at home, work, etc.). Second, communicative acts expressed by NAM that counteract teasing and reprimand were analyzed. Thus, two main dimensions were defined: exclusionary communicative acts that reprimand, and transformative communicative acts that counteract reprimands. In order to analyze these examples, the conversations were analyzed according to the communicative acts' theory (Santa Cruz and Redondo, 2010). For this purpose, the focus of the analysis followed two dimensions of verbal and non-verbal language; one, that exemplifies the exclusionary dimension (reprimands and teasing linked to violence, and silence/non-reaction in front of these situations) and, two, the transformative dimension (counteracting reprimands and teasing/ethic and desire linked to non-violence) (Ruiz-Eugenio et al., 2020a).

## RESULTS

Based on the communicative data analysis, findings are grouped in two main sections. In the first one, those communicative acts that have been categorized as exclusionary as examples of reprimands and teasing addressed to men who never perpetrated gender violence; in the second, communicative acts performed by men who counteract reprimands addressed to men who have not perpetrated gender violence. The latter are considered to be transformative communicative acts.

### Exclusionary Communicative Acts: Reprimands and Teasing Addressed to Men Who Never Perpetrated Gender Violence

Six communicative acts have been selected from the fieldwork: among them, four communicative acts are examples of reprimands and teasing toward non-violent men performed by women, and two communicative acts performed by men that follow DTM model who are teasing other men who do domestic work and who do not perpetrate gender violence.

The data collected through the communicative daily life stories provide evidence about how some women usually reprimand OTM or men who never have exercised gender

violence for issues related to domestic work. For instance, when talking about these issues, Lucia began to remember examples of her daily life that illustrate these situations. Specifically, Lucia provided examples of reprimands performed by women addressed to their partners (and these men were not violent) regarding domestic work issues. From these examples, we have selected two concrete communicative acts. Lucia for instance explained a reprimand of one friend to her partner because he was not folding the clothes in the way she wants it, reacting to this with a scream:

You are putting the thicker clothes inside the drier and then they are drying slowly, look at this! Or when he is cooking she said; You leave the kitchen a mess when you cook!

As Lucia remembered this example, she added that this same friend did not make any reprimands to her ex-boyfriend who never did any domestic work and who had a sexist attitude with her. This comment of Lucia indicates a first discovery that was not found in the literature: the same woman, who reprimands her partner for doing domestic work in his style, did not reprimand her ex-boyfriend that did not do any domestic work and treated her with a sexist attitude.

During the conversation with Lucia, she explained that these daily situations are common with all domestic tasks and also with childcare in some circles of friends. An example of this is that of a friend of hers who considers that her partner does not know how to properly dress their children:

I do not understand how you do not differentiate the right and wrong sides of the dress! How can you put it inside out?

In this sense, these types of interactions help to reflect about what type of language hinders the advance of egalitarian relationships between men and women. Hearn (2006) highlights the importance for men to be more active in domestic work and childcare for achieving more equal societies in Europe. But if some women reprimand their partners for their domestic work, it is not possible to advance in this direction, as they are emptying their relationship of attractiveness and breaking the sense of it.

The next two communicative acts selected are examples of reprimands made by women from different spaces. The first one is an example of how a girl reprimands her boyfriend in front of her group of friends, ridiculing him publicly. The second example shows how reprimands can occur in daily work situations.

Laia, a woman of 38 years, when asked if she knew examples of communicative acts of reprimands performed by women addressed to their (non-violent) partners, immediately recalled a situation of a couple (Noelia and Juan) who went to the beach at night with a group of friends, and how she always used to reprimand him even in front of their friends:

Laia: I remember a couple where Noelia treated her boyfriend Juan badly. He was very nice with her. One day a group of friends went to the beach at night (...) and she said that she was cold, then her partner (Juan) without saying anything went to the car (it was very far from us) to find a jacket for her. When Juan came back, he put the

jacket on her by surprise and Noelia said; “Fuck! Why are you giving me this jacket? I don’t like it, why do you go to get this jacket, I didn’t tell you to do it! You are an idiot!” – I was impacted, and Noelia said many times; “We make love only for his birthday and at the end of the year, and not more” – I remember that I talked to Juan and I told him that it would be better for him not to continue with Noelia, and he told me “It is ok for me, I have no personality”... Time passed and Noelia left him for a DTM boy, and she never treated this new boy in the same way that she did with Juan.

This communicative act proves that Noelia does not reprimand all men, but only a particular type: the ones who she feels are inferior to her. According to Laiá’s words, Juan represents the OTM model, and Noelia often reprimands him. However, Laiá identified that Noelia’s current boyfriend belonged to the DTM model, and Noelia never reprimands him as she did with Juan. In this example of communicative acts, the language and the tone used by Noelia are exclusionary because she uses an abrupt language (“Fuck, why are you giving me this jacket?”), using insults (“you’re an idiot”), and emptying his social image from any sexual attraction in front of all of the rest of people who were living this situation (“We make love only for his birthday...”). This kind of interaction is evidence of how this girl has assumed a DTM model and she reproduces it with Juan. This evidence is linked with the result of Jenkins and Aube (2002) and Gómez (2015), who show how some women were reproducing attitudes and habits of the dominant masculinity model. The communicative act of Juan is exclusionary because he is not reacting in front of his girlfriend’s reprimands, he stays silent, and when Laiá asked him why he is still with Noelia, who is not treating him well, his answer is to assume his submissive role with an insecure tone (“It is ok for me, I have no personality”). This man’s reaction is consistent with the research conducted on how some men perpetuated the unfair and violent treatment because they are tolerating it (Talbot and Quayle, 2010; Messerschmidt, 2012; Flecha et al., 2013).

The fourth act of communication selected exemplifies an interaction which occurred in the workplace. Begoña, a 55-year-old woman, remembered during her life story various situations within teams of teachers in schools. Begoña is an educational advisor, and therefore knows firsthand the interactions that take place in teachers’ meetings. Begoña told us how some female colleagues of a secondary school changed their behavior toward a new coming physical education teacher (Mario). In the words of Begoña, these women initially thought he was the typical cocky guy, and considered him very attractive, but Begoña explains that as Mario is showing his sensitivity and romanticism toward his current partner (Maria), the same colleague who had considered him attractive, began to tease him.

Begoña: I’m thinking of a secondary teacher (Mario). ... He had a strong body. ... and all the school teachers where I’m the advisor considered him physically attractive during the first days, they said “He is hot! mmm”... But when Mario

shared that he was in love with his partner (Maria) and he proposed marriage to his girlfriend giving her a nice ring belonging to his family, interactions of these women teachers began to change. Mario usually explained how he cares for his partner and his friends, sharing the attention he has for them and also gifts that he received from his partner and friends. Then, his female colleagues began to criticize him by saying “Look at him! He is like a woman,” and “he is a child and not a man, too soft, too healthy” (because he eats apples instead of drinking wine, etc.) ... I think that these women envied him. Yes, this is an example of how this boy was considered attractive and how these women emptied his attractiveness doing reprimands and ridiculing him because he shared beautiful feelings and was an egalitarian man.

This communicative act is an example of how some women use a type of language of desire (“He is hot! Mm”) in relation to a man that is physically attractive to them but whose communicative acts change when these women perceive that he is nice (Puigvert et al., 2019) and passionate with his wife and friends. When this occurs, these women begin to use communicative acts with no desire regarding that man and make jokes, trying to ridicule him (“Look at him! He is like a woman,” “he is a child and not a man, too soft, too healthy”). Begoña explained that this man was not worried about these comments; he continued with his healthy life and with his passionate relationship.

To conclude this section, we have selected two communicative acts performed by men who follow a DTM model addressed to men with egalitarian values and who have not perpetrated violence according to the participants interviewed. The first is provided by Alejandra, a 61-year-old woman, who told us she had identified such interactions especially in circles of friends. Specifically, she remembered a couple where Blanca and Antonio shared housework, but that shared responsibility was not well regarded by some friends of the couple and told us a situation where Antonio was teased by their friends for it.

Alejandra: They shared domestic work (Blanca and Antonio). I have a friendship with this couple, and I remember they have the agreement to share equally these tasks. Then I remember that he ironed the clothes. ... and he is a handsome man, and other men of the friends’ group, I think that they were DTM, were making fun of Antonio, for instance when they were drinking together, they said: “Where is Antonio? He’s probably ironing (hu, hu, hu)” and they all laughed at him.

Researcher: and the women. What did they say?

Alejandra: the women did not say anything when they were with these men in the group to defend this man, although they liked his attitude.

This communicative act illustrates how men tease Antonio because he was sharing domestic work with his wife. The exclusionary dimension of teasing is exemplified when they laugh about him (“Where is Antonio? He’s probably ironing



(hu, hu, hu)"). This communicative act is an example of how laughter can be used as a tease, a mechanism that can hurt people who are the object of laughter, as Rees and Monrouxe already pointed out (2010). Additionally, the passive attitude of women in this situation, of not saying anything when the DTM men laughed and ridiculed the man who irons, even though they apparently liked the attitude of Antonio, is identified as an exclusionary dimension of this communicative act. Silence is also a mechanism of consenting to teasing and violence. Therefore, in this communicative act we can see how the silence of these women made them accomplices of the men who ridiculed Antonio, without reacting to this situation and allowing it to continue happening.

The last selected communicative act is provided by Laia again. When asked whether she knew any examples of communicative acts by some men who corresponded to the DTM model toward a man who was not, Laia confirmed and focused on describing the reaction of a boy who, according to her, corresponds to DTM (Julio) in front of a man (Manu) with egalitarian values toward women. In particular, Laia pays more attention to Manu than to Julio:

Laia: When I was younger, I usually went with a group of friends to the beach. One of my friends (Manu) was very nice and I liked to talk to him because I enjoyed it very much. One day my group went to the beach and I was talking with Manu and not with the DTM boy of our group (Julio) because I found him boring. Then, we were sitting at the beach and when some of us got up from the sand he [Julio] said "Look! I have left a hole in the sand with my ass"... Then all of us began to get up and see the holes that we had left... but my friend [Manu] would not do it... Then Julio said "Look! This idiot doesn't get up because he is fat... hu, hu, hu... and his ass... sure he left a big hole... hu, hu, hu". He was teasing him so much. And nobody was saying anything to him... finally some people told him to leave him alone... And that it'd be better to get back to our motorbikes. Manu did not get up, he was alone there, because all of us went back and nobody stayed with him, we left him alone... Now that I remember this, I think that it was a tough situation for him, and we should have been with him and respond to Julio more clearly.

This communicative act is a clear example of how DTM men need to ridicule men who do not represent hegemonic masculinity in order to maintain their power status inside the group, as Hay (2000) mentioned in her research. In fact, Julio (DTM) felt jealous, according to Laia's words, because girls were not paying attention to him, and she preferred to talk with Manu. Julio needed to attack Manu with personal details (in this case physical traits) to reinforce his social status ("Look! This idiot would not get up because he is fat... hu, hu, hu... and his ass... Sure he left a big hole... hu, hu, hu"). Dominant boys who are teasers usually use language to humiliate (Hamlall and Morrell, 2012) and this is an example of that.

## Transformative Communicative Acts: Courage and Attractiveness in NAM's Reaction

This section exemplifies three communicative acts performed by men who follow NAM behavior, which undermines the attractiveness of DTM and women who try to ridicule OTM or men who never perpetrated gender violence. As we will show in our data, these communicative acts bring in a transformative dimension because they use a language of desire to counteract reprimands and teasing. We have selected communicative acts that occurred in different social contexts, evidencing that these interactions are present in diverse spaces. These three communicative acts (one personal and two from other two colleagues) are provided by Marc, an active member of the NAM movement.

The first communicative act selected occurred during a conference organized by the "Men in Dialogue" association in Barcelona in 2013. After finishing the conference an activist (Jose) who explained successful strategies to prevent gender violence, a woman from the public addressed Jose to tell him how men's movements have to organize their fight. Marc vividly revealed this situation during his communicative daily life story:

Marc: In the Q&A, a woman from the floor started to tell us in a very authoritarian tone "Men have to do this and that." Jose replied: "Men will decide what we should do." He said it with self-confidence, and he emptied the attractiveness of the woman. We responded instead of shutting up.

The literature review evidenced how some men are afraid to answer this type of reactions, especially if they come from well-established feminist women (Pinilla et al., 2014). Our analysis shows how NAM are not afraid to be assertive and respond to the communicative acts that try to dominate them (Serradell et al., 2014). They work together with feminists who treat them in an egalitarian way, not from a power-based position. In the same way that feminist movements considered as an imposition that men would decide about aspects concerned to women's life, these men also refuse any type of imposition that some women might want to impose on men's issues. From our data, it can be inferred that an effective way to respond to the communicative acts that try to dominate men is by having a secure attitude as Jose said: ("Men will decide what we should do").

The second communicative act selected is a personal situation experienced first-hand by Marc. When Marc worked at a technology company, he remembered one colleague, in particular, representing the DTM model (Roberto). According to Marc, Roberto used to ridicule those men who did not follow his model (Racionero-Plaza et al., 2021) as well as making very derogatory comments toward women. As the company had partners in different European countries, the example provided by Marc refers to a night out of the team after a meeting in Belgium. Roberto tried to persuade all the team to enter a brothel appealing to their masculinity, according to Marc, pressing and teasing who would not want to go there.

Marc: I lived this situation when I was with my colleagues and some clients on a men's night out. Roberto (DTM) wanted to joke and said we had to go to this brothel, pretending to be funny and boasting of his masculinity.

Researcher: Really?

Marc: Yes. I said that I didn't want to go inside, because I don't like it and also because of my ethical principles. There, Roberto tried to tease me, but he didn't achieve to make me feel bad and he didn't change my decision. Instead, the boss (Albert) of our team supported my decision and said that he would do the same. Albert was a leader, apart from being the boss, and he decided to stop the social pressure imposed by Roberto and he didn't go inside the brothel.

Researcher: But he did this because you were the most courageous, maybe he thought "hopefully someone says not to go inside. . ."

Marc: Yes, that's it. Roberto was mocking, and the boss and I felt fine with our positioning. We felt complicity and others left the brothel quickly; Roberto remained in ridicule.

According to Marc's narrative, Roberto tried to impose on the group to go to a brothel, deciding that it is the nature of heterosexual masculinity, using humor and jokes to convince them. This interaction is an example of how dominant men decide what a "real man" is (McCann et al., 2010). However, Marc decided to say "No" to going to this brothel because he did not like it and for his ethical principles. This is an example of a communicative act that includes desire and the language of ethics. He transmitted self-confidence and the boss reacted and supported his decision. This is evidence of the link between NAM and leadership toward social change already stated by Redondo (2016). Marc said that the boss and he had a good night talking in another bar and developed a good mutual understanding; from this moment their friendship grew. This evidences how male friendships who share a clear statement against gender violence (in this case a clear position for not wanting to go to a brothel) generated a better and passionate friendship (Gomez, 2014). The courageous attitude of Marc was crucial for not being an accomplice and to help his boss to be courageous too. This situation put DTM in ridicule, emptying his attractiveness. Robert lost the power in this situation in front of the group, and the possibility to decide what a "real man" is. In fact, we have real heroes in diverse social contexts, the only thing that we should do is to explain more often this type of communicative acts and counteract the dominant discourse, as Primer and Moss-Racusin (2009).

The last communicative act selected refers to Lucas, Marc's friend, who works as a teacher in a high school. Marc told us about how a colleague of Lucas tried to ridicule him when he saw that Lucas was receiving romantic messages from his wife. This situation occurred in the teacher's room of a secondary school:

Marc: One male teacher saw chat messages of Lucas' wife "How are you, my love?" This teacher tried to ridicule Lucas and said: "You are a soft man, do you allow that your

wife tells you this "how are you, my love?" Then Lucas told him "Hey man! Don't blame me if your wife doesn't tell you these things but tells you to go to the couch!"

This last example evidences how Marc was sharing the importance of Lucas using the language of desire and not consenting to be ridiculed. The interaction of the colleague tried to ridicule Lucas. But Lucas, instead of shutting up, responded to this situation with the language of desire ("Hey man! Don't blame me if your wife doesn't tell you these things but tells you to go to the couch!"). In this way, Lucas achieved to empty the attractiveness of that man who is teasing him.

## DISCUSSION

Our research has shed light on how DTM and some women reprimand or ridicule OTM or men who never have perpetrated gender violence. We have also shown how OTM oftentimes do not effectively respond to these exclusionary communicative acts. Instead, some OTM tolerate it, thus perpetuating unequal relationships. Our data also indicates how some women are accomplices of this type of communicative acts. Evidence shows that they only reprimand OTM but not DTM, thus strengthening the coercive dominant discourse that moves away attraction from kindness (Puigvert et al., 2019). The communicative acts analyzed here illustrate that men who follow a NAM model counteract these communicative acts and overcome them (Rodríguez-Navarro et al., 2014). They use a language of desire for undermining the attractiveness of DTM and women who reproduce that behavior; in fact, they are achieving and changing the dominant discourse, releasing their circles from the coercion by practicing communicative acts that promote a freer socialization based on egalitarian values combined with a language of desire. This language used represents a real alternative to combat gender-based violence and to achieve better relationships where nobody is being subordinated to anyone, and where more possibilities to achieve satisfactory relationships are given; where communicative acts are free of unjust reprimands.

Our findings lead to the identification of several implications for further research. First, the need to go deeper into the evidence of how some women who defend feminist values, in some cases do not support men who practice these values, in some cases they are even reprimanding or teasing them in public. However, in the cases analyzed this same behavior is not reproduced in interaction with those men who represent the dominant DTM model. This fact evidences incongruences between discourse and practice of these women. Hence, this result could be included in feminist debates that could help to advance in the aim of constructing egalitarian relationships between women and men and to review the coherence between discourse and practice in gender relationships.

Second, this article has been a first step to reveal how communicative acts performed by NAM counteract reprimands done by some women and men who follow the DTM model. They turn the situation around, and these women and men are dismantled. Another crucial factor obtained is the reaction

of those people who experience these communicative acts of teasing. In this sense, future research could analyze how people talk about men with a NAM attitude counteracting reprimands and how people talk about men who follow the DTM model. Thus, the analysis of the impact of NAM's communicative acts in the perception of those people who are present during the reaction of NAMs could be collected to evidence who is more valued and who is ridiculed. According to our initial data, DTM are considered ridiculous after communicative acts performed by NAM (Rodríguez-Navarro et al., 2014); thus, violent attitudes are undermined. Therefore, further research is needed in this area because this result is crucial for preventing gender-violence relationships.

Limitations of this study mainly refer to the fact that communicative acts are basically examples of past events, and some of them from third persons. This implied a certain level of difficulty because the research participants had to remember concrete situations and some specific details might not be exact. To reduce this limitation the researchers consistently posed follow-up questions that helped the participant to remember relevant details related to verbal, non-verbal and interactions from those persons who participated in the communicative act.

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## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by CREA, Community of Research on Excellence for All. University of Barcelona. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

RV-C approached the article's conceptualization. AM-P contributed to some insights on the literature review. RV-C and GL-T prepared and revised the final version of the manuscript. BM reviewed the last version of the manuscript. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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# “Tell Someone,” to Both Women and Men

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Contrary to an understanding of the struggle against gender violence as placing men and women in opposition to one another, victims have always been supported by both women and men. To prevent violence is important to know not only which message should be transmitted but also how the dialogue should unfold, and the characteristics of the people engaging in that dialogue. Because of the existing association between attraction and violence in our society, the unity of the language of ethics and the language of desire in such dialogue has become a key element in the struggle against gender violence. This study identifies the strong presence of communicative acts that unify these languages in the women (feminism) and men (New Alternative Masculinities) who are successful in this struggle. The opposition to violence that they defend guide their own desires, which are transmitted through their communicative acts to the people around them.

**Keywords:** new alternative masculinities, feminism, communicative acts, language of desire, violence against women

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## INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of the investigation leading to this article, Rosa, a teacher who supervises recess, explained to one of the researchers her concerns about a situation that had recently arisen at her centre. A mother had contacted Rosa to tell her that the director of her daughter Nora’s school had called her, saying that in recent weeks a rumour had been going around the school that Nora had felled Andrés, another student at the school. Andrés had been the one to initiate the rumour, giving numerous details about the incident and smearing Nora’s reputation. The faculty was most surprised when both students and professors had asked Nora about the situation, and she had confirmed it, proudly bragging. For her part, Nora commented that the student was now her boyfriend.

Rosa, the teacher who explained this situation to us, asked us the following question:

I would like to speak with Nora about this, to understand what’s going on, why she’s proud of this, what she thinks about the guy who is now her boyfriend, if it bothers her that he has chosen to spread private details of their intimacy and put her in a bad situation. However, there is one thing in particular that concerns me: how can I have this conversation in an effective way that will help her? I’m afraid to come off as moralising, imposing my criteria, so that she pushes back. It’s clear that the way we teachers have talked about these issues with the students until now has fallen on deaf ears: it seems like it hasn’t worked at all.

Violence against women has been studied in various disciplines, including sociology, psychology, law, and education, among others (De Koker et al., 2014; Stöckl et al., 2014; Ríos et al., 2018; Salceda et al., 2020). From this diversity of disciplines, there have been analyses of similarly diverse aspects of the reality surrounding the issue, i.e., its causes, profiles of victims and aggressors, circumstances surrounding aggressions, and preventive actions, among others (Melgar et al., 2021). However, there is an element that has been little studied and that corresponds to Rosa's concern: how should all of this accumulated scientific knowledge be transmitted to the public so that people build relationships without violence? That is, which elements specific to communicative scenarios contribute to preventing or overcoming violence?

To prevent violence, however, it is important to know not only which message should be transmitted and how the dialogue should unfold but also who should speak during the dialogue. Is this an issue that only women should speak about, or should men be included? Will the inclusion of men itself effect a transformation?

Building upon previous scientific knowledge, in this article we first present a review of the current literature, which includes studies of dialogue, gender relations, and gender-based violence. In the second part of the article we present our study in which we use four everyday stories to demonstrate the specific elements of the communicative acts that are the key to generating desire in the construction of violence-free relations.

## Communication and Action for the Transformation of Gender Relations

Starting with the distinction between language-as-product and language-as-action (Clark, 1992; Trueswell and Tanenhaus, 2005), we focussed our study on the latter. Specifically, we focussed on how conversation constitutes a process of action-oriented collaboration. For this to occur, a certain understanding of the statements made is necessary, and this understanding of the statements is related to the identification of the speaker's intention, that is, what each speaker intends by his or her expressions and what he or she is attempting to accomplish (Grice, 1957; Atkinson and Drew, 1979; Carston, 2002; Sperber and Wilson, 2002; Gibbs, 2003; Stone, 2005).

Searle (1969) emphasises the illocutionary force present in all speech acts; i.e., all speech acts contain elements that include the speaker's intent. Thus, two identical propositional contents can contain different speaker intentions, which can be revealed through an analysis of their illocutionary force. Searle also identifies perlocutionary speech acts, such as those in which the propositional content does not explicitly contain the speaker's intent, but does aim to have an effect on the listener. Soler and Flecha (2010) have later broadened these concepts, elaborating their theory of speech acts. These authors do not limit themselves to analysing speech acts; instead, they also examine other elements present in the communication, such as gestures, intonation, looks, and the context that surround the interaction. For Soler and Flecha (2010), these other components can determine whether a communication is a dialogic or a power

interaction – that is, whether the listener is acting freely or under coercion. For example, an identical propositional content – “Shall we have a coffee?” – is different when it is produced in a context of leisure between two friends who have an equal relationship versus when it is produced in a work context and the speaker has a hierarchically superior position to the listener (for example, the speaker is the boss). Therefore, it is necessary to recognise the set of elements implied in the interaction – specifically, non-verbal communication (i.e., the social context in which the interaction occurs) (Glenberg and Kaschak, 2002; Stobbe, 2005; Klein, 2006), and tacit knowledge (Soler and Flecha, 2010). The latter is understood as the implicit knowledge that we take for granted; tacit knowledge conditions our beliefs, hopes, and fears and, consequently, the significance of what we intend to say. These components can condition not only comprehension of a message but also the actions triggered by that message.

## Construction of the Narrative about Violence Against Women

In the beginning, violence against women was conceptualised – i.e., it was narrated and interpreted – as an individual pathology derived from the aggressor's problems with emotional management (specifically, anger) and the victim's psychological problems, leading to masochistic tendencies, dysfunctional moral conceptions, etc. In the 1970s, anti-violence movements were born that opposed these conceptualisations and intended to generate an alternative, contra-narrative interpretation, of the reality of gender violence (Schechter, 1982; Dobash and Dobash, 1992). Thus, since the movement's inception, gender violence has moved from being understood as an individual problem to being understood a social problem rooted in systems of patriarchy and gender inequality (Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Renzetti et al., 2001; Poore and Dabby-Chinoy, 2005; Lehrner and Allen, 2008). For this reason, with the goal of contributing to that counter-narrative, the principle focus of analysis has been to understand the elements that reinforce violence against women. Our discipline analyses the discourse to identify how violence is justified, how victims are blamed, or how the problem is minimised (Lloyd and Emery, 2000; Berns, 2001; Boonzaier, 2008; LeCouteur and Oxlad, 2011).

In this sense, these counter-narratives either confronted or deepened the rhetoric of men's rights that justifies men's violence (Adams et al., 1995), the moral discourses that surround domestic violence against women (LeCouteur and Oxlad, 2011), and the interpretations affirming that discourse is used to reproduce existing social order and power mechanisms (Foucault, 1978).

On occasion, this rhetoric or discourse has been reinforced by conglomerates of forms of speech that have created a normative language promoting discourse that has nurtured violence against women (Towns and Terry, 2014). One example is that of speech conglomerates composed of all of the words and expressions that either relegate women to an inferior position in the social hierarchy or render them invisible (King, 1991; Mills, 1995; Lillian, 2007; Coles and Fechter, 2012; Itakura, 2014). The first case has been well studied under the label of sexist language. The second case refers to the linguistic focus on the neutral gender,

which for some authors implies a reformulation that marginalises both feminist voices and initiatives for social change (Riley, 2001; Palomares, 2009).

Considering the incidence of language in the social construction of subjects, the studies that centre their analysis of discourse tied to violence against women do not limit themselves to the content of the discourse. Instead, they also analyse the role of the speakers and more concretely, their gender identity.

If we conduct a historical retrospective, we find a confrontation that calls into question whether these discourses should be constructed and disseminated only by women, only by men, or by both together. More recent studies have set aside the superficial man-woman confrontation and underscore that what is important is to focus attention on the appropriate characteristics of men and women who construct discourses against gender violence (Gómez, 2015; Puigvert, 2016; Puigvert et al., 2019).

Confrontation between the genders has been nourished by messages that have resulted in discrediting both women's and men's movements. For example, some messages present feminists as anti-equality activists, that is, feminists are characterised as seeking to recognise gender differences with the intention of generating unequal rights. Alternatively, some messages present feminists as extremists or crazies who exaggerate the historical oppression of women (Riley, 2001). With respect to men's movements, some people's views are premised on the conviction that antifeminism is the reason for their existence (Palma, 2008; Blais and Dupuis-Déri, 2012). These discourses, to the extent that they negate or minimise inequality and violence, make any transformative action seem unnecessary.

In recent years, this orientation has shifted and various sectors have recognised that the construction of movements fighting violence against women cannot be solely the responsibility of women: it is necessary to involve men (Crooks et al., 2007; Pinilla et al., 2014). This requires a change in the discourse, abandoning postures of blame and accusation that lead to all men being considered toxic agents and inviting men to a collaboration to advance the fight against gender-based violence from a place of respect (Joanpere and Morlà, 2019). Some programmes and campaigns, such as the Real Man Campaign, Green Dot, and Tell Someone, among others, have adopted this approach.<sup>1</sup>

However, just as we have advanced, the most recent studies on this issue take a further step and highlight the need to differentiate between those people who are part of the problem – those who either engage in some type of violence or are accomplices – and those who can be part of the solution if they join the discourse (Connell, 2000; Crooks et al., 2007; Gómez, 2015; Javald, 2017; Shumka et al., 2017). One of the causes of the persistence of violence against women, not only between adults but also between young people (Ríos et al., 2019; Ruiz-Eugenio et al., 2020; Íñiguez-Berrozpe et al., 2021), is the socialisation of some people into certain models of attraction that unite desire and violence (Rebllon and Manasse, 2004; Castro and Mara, 2014).

This socialisation is fostered through different interactions – family, friendships, the media, etc. (Elboj-Saso et al., 2020) – that reproduce a discourse in which people who manifest attitudes of domination and abuse attract others, whereas people who manifest egalitarian attitudes are presented as boring and even rendered invisible (Castro and Mara, 2014; Racionero-Plaza et al., 2021). This fosters attraction to people who are part of the problem, rendering invisible those who can contribute to overcoming it.

To encourage both men and women to contribute to the solution, we should pay special attention to ensuring that dialogues about affective and sexual relationships, or more generally about gender identities, join the language of ethics and desire (López de Aguilera et al., 2020), connecting attraction and desire with the values of friendship and solidarity (Rodríguez et al., 2014). Indeed, research has found that the discourses that promote the link between desire and violence separate the *language of desire*, referred to as “the capacity to raise attraction and be desired” (Flecha et al., 2013, p. 100) from the *language of ethics*, used to describe goodness and values. Breaking the union between desire and ethics promotes the double standards in which relationships in which there is domination are the exciting ones, whereas egalitarian relationships are seen as convenient but lacking pleasure (Torras-Gómez et al., 2020). However, language can be transformed through a re-socialisation process that enhances the awareness and critical reflection toward the link between attraction and violence, promoting rejection toward such model of attraction and propelling the union between desire and ethics in the same person (Gómez, 2015). In the case of men, we find this union in the identity that has recently been categorised as the New Alternative Masculinity (NAM), which is characterised by confidence, the courage to fight and ridicule of sexist and racist attitudes, an ethic that is combined with desire, uniting passion, friendship, solidarity, and equality (Portell and Pulido, 2012; Díez-Palmar and Mara, 2020). This union between ethics and desire is not only expressed and promoted through verbal language, but also through other communicative acts such as gestures, voice tone or gaze, among others, filling egalitarian attitudes with attractiveness and desire and emptying violent behaviours from any sort of attraction (Rodríguez et al., 2014; Racionero-Plaza et al., 2020). Taking communicative acts into account is therefore essential for overcoming gender violence (Flecha et al., 2020), as it is through the various elements of communication that attraction and desire are configured.

Therefore, to overcome the models of attraction tied to violence, it is not enough to identify violent attitudes or relationship, along with the prejudices they carry, nor is it enough to situate oneself exclusively in the language of ethics by simply counselling that this kind of relationship “isn't good for you.” To overcome this kind of relationships requires knowing alternative models in a manner that combines the two languages when such models are transmitted and spoken about, for example by stating that relationships following this model not only are “good for you,” but also have “passion and desire” (Rodríguez et al., 2014).

Thus, in the study of gender-based violence and more specifically, in the analysis of the dialogues that generate transformative actions in affective and sexual relationships,

<sup>1</sup>Office of the Dean (2003–2004). Tell Someone! Responding to Sexual Harassment, Sexual Assault and Rape. Harvard College. <http://www.womensaid.org.uk/>, <https://alteristic.org/services/green-dot/>



deepening the understanding of how receivers identify the intentionality of speakers and how they understand the message is a matter of interest. It is necessary to observe which factors beyond propositional content affect listeners and lead listeners to join those discourses. These are the focus of our analysis in the next part in which we take as a reference the concept of communicative acts.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Communicative Methodology

In this study, we applied a communicative methodology (Gómez et al., 2011; Gómez, 2017; Gómez, 2019; Gómez et al., 2019; Redondo et al., 2020) to identify communicative acts that contribute to elaborating narratives that overcome violence against women. This methodology was successfully used in previous research funded and recognised by the European Commission (European Commission [Ec], 2010; Flecha and Soler, 2014). It has been used also successfully in specific research on communicative acts (Ríos and Christou, 2010; Portell and Pulido, 2012; Rodríguez et al., 2014; Ríos et al., 2018).

The analysis of the situation via communicative methodology is based on the idea that knowledge is the result of the dialogue between science and society. In ontological terms, reality is communicative, that is, it is a human construction in which the meanings are built through interactions (Redondo et al., 2020; Soler and Gómez, 2020). In epistemological terms, the evidence are the result of a dialogue based on the intersubjectivity (Stolorow et al., 1994; Gómez et al., 2006) of the participants in the research. The intersubjective perspective underlines that the interpretation of reality and generation of new knowledge are influenced by people's meaning of reality (Flecha, 2000; Mercer, 2000).

This dialogue should confront both the arguments presented by the scientific community with respect to the issue studied and the arguments of the people participating in the study. The participants bring their lived experiences and interpretations from their *lifeworlds* (Schütz, 1967), which are contrasted with the scientific theories and investigations such that results represent the fruits of these interactions (Puigvert, 2014). Therefore, great importance is placed not only on listening to and collecting the opinions of the participants but also on working with the participants to interpret their contexts and social world.

### Sample and Data Collection Techniques

In this study, four everyday stories were told by key informants, who were the subjects of our interest because they have either personal or professional trajectories that tie them to the fight against gender-based violence.

Data collection that applies qualitative techniques of communicative orientation places special emphasis and care not only on the relationship that should be established between the researcher and the person being studied but also on the conditions necessary to favour dialogue. Therefore, throughout our investigation, the researcher established an egalitarian dialogue both in the collection process and in the interpretation of the results, empowering a relationship in which claims of

validity – not claims of power – prevailed. In other words, we attempted to achieve a maximum reduction in the inequality that is often established between researchers (i.e., “experts”) and the people that they studied.

Throughout the stories, together with the storytellers, we analysed the communicative acts present in various conversations that they had had about gender-based violence. In telling the stories, the participants created a narrative reflection about conversations that they had either had or heard over the course of their lives about gender-based violence. The intent was not to reconstruct a biography but instead to establish a joint dialogue with their reality and to interpret how their thoughts are configured in the present.

The script used by the investigator aimed to obtain information about the differences between those communicative acts that have influenced current narratives and that they consider as contributing to overcoming violence, on the one hand, and those that do not make such a contribution, on the other hand. The elements present in the communication that were analysed in the interviews were not the content of the messages transmitted by the participants, but in the rest of the elements present in the communication, which are collected in the concept of communicative acts (Ríos et al., 2018). These elements were the tone of voice, looks, attitudes, gestures or any interaction that would have contributed to bring closer (or move away) or influence (or not) the people with whom they were conversing, regarding overcoming gender-based violence.

Following a purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2012) researchers intentionally selected individuals to understand the central phenomenon of the research, the communicative acts, providing useful information to go in depth. Criteria included for selection were a) having information that is relevant for the research due to their social movements implication or their professional; b) having the same number of men and women and c) being more than 18 years old. The study sample was composed of two women and two men.

Below, we present their profiles, highlighting elements that are pertinent to the study:

- Juan, 39-year-old man and factory worker. Three years ago he decided to join a men's group; one of that group's objectives was to overcome gender-based violence. Juan had not previously been active in other social movements. His participation in the association was motivated by a friend who was a member. It is important to note that although Juan had not previously been a member of other movements, at times he had attended debates and lectures about the topic of gender-based violence, although in general, those events had not awakened his interest.
- Daniela, 41-year-old secondary school teacher. For the last 2 years, she has been working on overcoming abusive relationships both in tutorials and in the framework of her classes. She does this by opening spaces for debate and, most significantly, through paedagogical discussion groups about scientific texts on the topic. During this time, Daniela has also attempted to learn more about these topics by attending lectures and reading articles. She has never participated in a women's movement.

- Luis, 37-year-old secondary school teacher. Luis was involved in one of Spain's first movements of egalitarian men, which he left after 2 years, feeling that the discourses promoted by the movement came from a concept of equality centred on the equitable distribution of domestic chores or the type of language used, which made him feel that they were far from his reality. Currently, he continues to defend the rights of women but he is not active in any movement. In his daily work at the school, he is very aware of gender issues – specifically, violence against women. Whenever possible, he attempts to discuss the issue with his students and even helps them attend lectures and workshops.
- Cristina, recess-supervising teacher who does not participate in any women's movement or any movement against gender-based violence. Cristina has friends who are active in women's and anti-violence movements, which keeps her sufficiently informed about the discourses promoted in such movements. In 2009, encouraged by one of these friends, she attended the state feminist conferences, and since then, she has regularly attended other lectures about feminism, lectures about masculinity, workshops against violence, and other classes related to gender in general. Simultaneously, she attempts to work on these issues with adolescents at her job whenever she has the opportunity.

Researchers collected the data through open-ended interviews with the participants. Once the information was collected, the researchers transcribed the data and conducted a *hand analysis* (Creswell, 2012). Researchers read several times the data to have a general sense of the content and to identify the communicative acts influencing gender violence. Finally specific categories were identified and presented in this article structured in 3 sections. According to the communicative orientation focussed on social transformation, the results reported are related to the dialogues that promote overcoming gender violence.

## RESULTS

The results of this article collect the analysis of four people who participated in debates, workshops, conferences, and conversations with friends that had the principal theme of gender-based violence. The four people who participated in the fieldwork have heard a wide variety of discourses about this issue, and they came together to differentiate between a type of discourse that connects and helps generate transformation and a type of discourse that generates dismissal. Below, we present our results, which refer to the communicative acts present in dialogues that can influence the recipients of their messages.

### Women and Men Unifying the Language of Ethics and the Language of Desire

The four people who participated in analysing the communicative acts of men and women in the context of conferences, workshops, and informal conversations highlight

coherence as a key element. Coherence means that when speaking about alternative models – in which there is no violence – communicative acts should attempt to unite the language of desire and the language of ethics. Simultaneously, when transmitting their words, the speakers should indicate that they are engaging in a real discourse that they themselves practice (or believe that they practice). This coherence is perceived, for example, via the non-verbal language present in the interactions either between speakers or with the rest of the participants.

Juan first refers to talks in which the speakers were all men, discussing how they interacted with each other. Second, Juan refers to his observations of some of his female friends who are active in women's movements.

Juan: One of the speakers who was active in a pro equality masculinity movement, his whole discourse was “I am on top, I know what I'm doing.” However, **he transmitted, “Do what I say, not what I do.”** This is a pre-written discourse, but honestly, if you look at his face, you think “this guy has a double life, not even you believe what you're saying” **He transmits an insecurity or a sense of “I think this, but I'm a little guy, I'm not worth anything.” I especially saw this in the way he treated the other speaker –** who obviously did have an egalitarian attitude – **he cut him off, he tried to make fun of him, he was going to like pound him. (.)**

**I pay more attention to someone who, when he's speaking to me, transmits confidence and believes in what he does, rather than someone who doesn't do what he's defending.**

I have also been able to see this in female friends who are active in women's movements and who call themselves radical. They generalise that all of us men are the same. However, the worst is that many of them end up hooking up with pricks. They are claiming that they are radical, but they don't look at the nice guy, instead they focus on the biggest prick. So what they are reproducing, when they generalise, isn't reality, but it's their own experience, what they desire.

Daniela speaks to us about a lived example involving the students of the secondary school where she works. In 2014, she joined the students at a workshop for the prevention of gender-based violence. There were also people from other schools and of different ages at the event. Daniela's words collect not only her own impressions but also those transmitted by her students after the session ended.

Daniela: When we went to see a conference where there was a feminist girl and a New Alternative Masculinities (NAM),<sup>2</sup> they [the female students] still made a strong connection between the egalitarian man and the boring one, the ugly one. Seeing the speaker was attractive they said, “Ah, but if a NAM can be like that I like him too.” And I think that was **one of the things that helped them identify the NAM with a person who can be fun, attractive.** They also commented on **the good vibes, the complicity generated between him and her that they transmitted in general.** The fact that my students participated so much was a consequence of **the good vibe that they knew how to create, where it could be seen that between them there was an**

<sup>2</sup>The characteristics of NAM have been collected in the state discussed in this article. For more information, please see this monograph's introductory article.

**equal relationship. The confidence of the speakers permeated the air, and my students felt confident in speaking,** it seemed.

The collected examples discuss the bad praxis of speakers who talk about equality but treat others unequally. For example, they question disrespectfully or show more interest in people who are antagonistic to an egalitarian model. In the example given by Juan, we see how the speaker, through his or her interaction with other people, can reveal whether his or her acts correspond with what he or she is saying. In Juan's example, the speaker looks down on and cuts off the other speaker, which completely undoes the entire theory that he is explaining. With respect to Juan's female friends, we see that in the case of gender-based violence, coherence requires a union of ethics and desire. This means that the values and attitudes of people who are desired should correspond to the values and attitudes that are defended by the social movement. Therefore, defending equality means not choosing people who have attitudes that are violent, dominating, or abusive.

Conversely, the participants view as good those praxes in which the recipients have perceived that the message was not a learned utopic discourse that is impossible to put into practice. Instead, the speakers represented a way of relating that manifested a profound mutual respect, admiration, etc.

True influence is not achieved solely through ethical language – for example, saying, “this isn't good for you” or “this person is dangerous for you.” Instead, as we have noted, influence also requires the language of desire. This second language can influence adolescents when the desire for an egalitarian person goes beyond theoretical discourse. Examples include when a look or tone of voice directed toward the egalitarian person transmits that desire, or when adolescents see people truly enjoying and feeling passion in egalitarian relationships.

## Having the Confidence and Bravery to Defend One's Values and Oppose Violence

The stories related to coherence between theory and practice have also highlighted that coherence is transmitted through confidence. Specifically, when a message is being emitted, a look and a tone of voice must corroborate that the speaker believes in the truth of the message that he or she is transmitting. Daniela remembers an incident that occurred in one of her classes. She had been working with this group on the different models of attraction and, more specifically, on models connected to violence versus models of NAM. The contents of these models had been extensively analysed and debated. Daniela had already begun to note the transformations that these discourses had created amongst her students. The following example shows how these discourses positively influenced one of her female students and, specifically, how this student managed to transmit her attitude to the rest of the students.

Daniela: I remember a conversation between one girl and one of the boys, who had had a very aggressive reaction to me (the teacher): he raised his hand to me, he left the class. The next day, we were having an assembly, and she told him that: “now she knew that she would never go out with a person like him” And

he asked her why and she told him, “because I know what will happen to me with a person like you.” The majority of the boys in the class supported this girl and disapproved of the other boy's violent attitude.

She looked him in the eye without any fear while speaking to him. The level of confidence that she transmitted when speaking, the tranquillity, really surprised me. She didn't get nervous at all; at least she didn't let it show.

Confidence also brings with it the courage to defend equality and to position oneself against violence. In the speeches and workshops, confidence entails presenting the discourse without doubting or allowing oneself to be questioned, or in public spaces, like in Daniela's class, publicly rejecting people who use violence and defending those people's victims.

Thus, bravery is an attitude present in the transmission of discourses that effect transformation. This bravery is present in both the conception of a movement based on equality and the collective fight against gender-based violence in which the four participants coincide. The participants also note that in these movements, communicative acts that transmit inequality are unacceptable. In this case, we collect examples provided by Cristina, Luis, and Juan. Cristina's example is from a government-led feminist conference in which most of the women present were active in a feminist association. This was not the case for Cristina, who was invited by a friend who was part of an association. These conferences touched upon very diverse topics, but one thing that really surprised Cristina was the tension that was tangible in the different debates and especially, the disregard with which some women spoke of men in general.

Cristina: Those who oppose men lose credibility when they oppose everything. **Everything they said was from this aggressiveness, rage, with this attitude that we're going to destroy everything and that takes away all of their attractiveness and credibility.** What I noted there was that women are good and men are the opponents, and that's it. Facing that, those of us who were listening were asking ourselves, What's the point? To have women stick together so we get rid of all of the men, or to analyse what's going on and build something with the reality that we have, which is men and women?

**Part of the key to making the other discourse reach farther is that it comes from communal work.** It's not realistic for everyone to stick to his or her own side when increasingly things tend to be more egalitarian.

Juan had not previously been active in men's movements, but in his story, he differentiates very clearly what, in his words, “gets him hooked” and what doesn't.

Juan: For me, what some men have **transmitted in their talks, is that they promoted inequality.** If you tell a boy that what he needs to do is ask his partner forgiveness for everything that man has ever done to woman during all of humanity, always putting himself below. **honestly, it's not attractive.**

**In the alternative, the first thing you see is respect,** and even if there's some type of discrepancy, **people speak to each other with respect** with the idea that all of us have to carry the weight, it's not “you guys aren't worth anything and have to be below.” **They**



**make you feel that you can, too, and they're not going to look down on you in any way.**

For all of the participants, the discourses that denote an inequality or hierarchy between genders are unattractive. They understand that the fight against gender-based violence should be led by a movement that includes both men and women on an equal field. Cristina finds it inconceivable that there should be any type of inequality in the discourses against gender-based violence, either in the content or in the attitude of rage and aggressiveness. As we have stated, Luis was previously active in a men's movement that he left because, among other reasons, the movement's focus of analysis and action tended to centre on blaming all men for violence.

## Communicative Acts that Allow Liberty and the Establishment of an Egalitarian Dialogue

The third of the elements that all four participants agreed upon is how the discourses are structured. All of the participants agree about the necessity for a good argument in favour of what is being explained. Examples that help illustrate what is being explained should be added to the coherence demonstrated by the speakers. In their stories, the participants remember that in the past, they had constructed a narrative about gender-based violence different from the one that they now defend. Speaking with and getting to know other people (at lectures, workshops and more informal spaces) whose communicative acts transmitted what we have described in these results (coherence, unity between the languages of ethics and desire, and confidence when opposing any kind of violence) made the participants question themselves about their previous narratives.

Here, Luis tells us about the process of evolution that he has seen his students follow when they have participated in anti-violence workshops centred on the messages noted above. Luis chooses the metaphor of the lasso to exemplify how the workshop leader presents his arguments to the boys and girls, leaving them enough space and establishing an environment of trust so that they can give their opinions, are willing to present their own experiences, etc. As the leader gets to know the group and its situation better, he or she tightens the lasso, attempting to get to the point and showing students an alternative.

Luis: When a workshop leader, man or woman, who really responds to the egalitarian model. **the first thing the leader does is listen, not indoctrinate you.** Once you have listened, **you have to put yourself on an equal footing, explain, present an alternative model.**

In the workshop that my female students were in recently, what the guy did was like the rope, first he caught them but didn't tighten, in the sense that he **lets them talk and gives them examples**, and when he sees that they begin to speak openly about the socialisation that they've had, what he does is tighten the cord to **begin to question them, like so:** "is that the model you want to follow? These are the advantages of an alternative, egalitarian model. **I let you talk, tell me your opinions.** And we're going to try to make it so you can evaluate, out of all of the options, which is the best so that you live with more equality.

**He succeeds in getting them not to close ranks, using an unassuming attitude, never losing his smile,** that's important. **He says things clearly, he gives examples,** and as they start to realise: "hell, that's true, that's happened to me," they begin to reflect and interact. And the **interaction amongst themselves** also helps them change their way of thinking. They reach a moment when they forget that they're speaking with a researcher or workshop leader, and **they see him as an equal**, and they enter into a sincere dialogue, putting everything on the table to see which is the best option. It's a reflection that goes on.

Cristina shares her own experience, specifically, how she has been modifying her own attractiveness models and constructing a new narrative about them for herself because of the interactions established in spaces of egalitarian dialogue. The example below centres on the visions that Cristina had both about the protagonist of the film "Coyote Ugly," and about the film in general.

Cristina: This film, "Coyote Ugly," the first time I saw it I thought "wow what a shitty movie." Then, starting from that, I was talking with someone, **they talk to you with interest**, and you see it with new eyes.

What changed for me was how they talked to me about the guy. When they started to talk and say to me, "Look how the guy treats her," to show me that "she's better off...," I saw the movie through different eyes. **They asked me those questions not with a categorical attitude, they were questions that are really far-reaching because they're really normal:** "Let's address actual things that everyone can understand." With the dialogue you learn about how the guy is, it's not "I'll pass you a video and that's it."

For me **this dialogue is important, the tone in which it's said, a more dialogic tone.** "After you can do what you want, but I'm presenting to you what there is and how it is. You can look with these eyes and analyse in this way, and afterward you live your life however you want to, but it's important that you have this information."

The fact that they state things clearly is definitely good to start changing your mind. However, also **you have to have a lot of space to talk about these issues and the different aspects they implicate.** It's not just one thing that you say, "OK, I believe it and I will change."

What also changes about the other discourse is **being very careful about what is said, how it's said, and what I'm doing.** In other words, I am careful about how I present myself. That is, even behind a black screen, you can't see the physical image of the person, the tone of voice, the argumentation they use. that helps. It's the same if it's someone who's handsome or not, **if you present yourself in an attractive way that shows that you believe what you are saying, it reaches farther.**

Both of the participants and the adolescents about whom they spoke have been modifying their attractiveness models and constructing a new narrative for themselves based on the interactions established in spaces of egalitarian dialogue. This transformation has not been produced by the transmission of content via communicative acts that showed pretensions of power but instead by making valid arguments. Because of the establishment of this egalitarian dialogue, the participants were also able to present their doubts and contradictions. The



positioning of the speaker was never intended to impose his or her opinion but instead to simply share scientific knowledge, leaving each person free to then draw his or her own conclusions. For the participants, clarity, argumentation and equality have been keys to assimilating new arguments about affective and sexual relations, attraction, or gender identities.

Cristina recognises that her lived socialisation has generally led to more visible traditional masculinity models of domination. However, alternative – egalitarian – masculinity models tended to pass her by unnoticed or even, in some cases, to seem boring. However, interaction with people who show desire for alternative models of masculinity made her question some of her assumptions, and she began to show interest in those alternative models. For Cristina, clarity, argumentation, and equality have been key to assimilating new arguments about affective and sexual relations, attraction, or gender identities.

Cristina, Daniela, Juan, and Luis provide examples of this ability to assimilate new arguments. Those examples are both personal and observed in the framework of different lectures and conferences, where they have seen the evolution of other people's process of analysis and reflection.

## DISCUSSION

In the fight against gender-based violence, there has been a tendency to see the presence of men as either an unnecessary interference or even another example of men's oppression of women, their intent to control, women, etc. (De Koker et al., 2014). We know that this posture is not generalised and there are many mixed movements and that even without having activist men amongst them, activists count men as part of the solution. The four people who participated in the fieldwork agree with this outlook, and they start with the need for men and women to count on each other to transform society.

It is because of this that from the perspective of action via language, we should direct our interventions toward collective action, which develops a different narrative about affective and sexual relations (Lehrner and Allen, 2008; Salceda et al., 2020).

In the fight against gender-based violence, victims are currently urged to find help within the community – to tell someone – and the community is urged to facilitate this process by demonstrating a proactive attitude (Melgar et al., 2021). The campaigns with the best results are those that rely on the entire community's participation to act before violence erupts, while simultaneously developing preventive educational actions (Coker et al., 2011). However, beyond knowing that we should rely on the entire community and the content that we should transmit, both professionals in this field and the general population ask themselves the same question as Rosa: How should those messages be transmitted?

As laid out in the development of the scientific literature, when we spoke about the analysis of gender-based violence from a linguistic perspective, we encountered a multivariable problem that transcends gender, in other words, where it is not solely gender that conditions the type of communication that either reproduces or overcomes the problem (Stone, 2005;

Palomares, 2009). Moreover, not every type of communication sets off transformative actions (Clark, 1992; Klein, 2006).

Beginning with the concept of communicative acts instead of the concept of speech acts when analysing the articulation of discourses that can contribute to overcoming gender-based violence allows us to take a step further. In our study, these components have allowed Daniela, Cristina, Juan, and Luis to identify which are the elements in communicative acts that enable the construction of this narrative: the unification of the languages of ethics and desire, showing confidence and bravery in opposing violence and publicly positioning oneself in favour of victims and contributing clear and concrete arguments that exemplify the alternative, taking into account that these arguments should be made in the context of an egalitarian dialogue. For example, in no case was equality perceived only through speech acts that expressed a propositional context. Instead, the treatment of other people (either of respect and admiration, or of criticism and disrespect) or tones of voice (either enraged and recklessly destructive, or confident, convincing, and presenting alternatives) made the difference between a communication that reproduced violence against women and one that was transformative, along with the level of impact that the speakers had on the listeners.

Our results have contributed general knowledge about the communicative acts that contribute to overcoming gender-based violence. In future studies, it would be interesting to provide a more in-depth analysis of the aspects that comprise the communicative acts. This would entail identifying the non-verbal language, the social context, and the tacit knowledge present in those dialogues that contribute to transmitting the union of the languages of ethics and desire, showing confidence and bravery in opposing violence and publicly positioning oneself in favour of victims, and contributing clear and concrete arguments that exemplify alternatives.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by Community of Researchers on Excellence for All (CREA). The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

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All authors have made substantial contribution to the article, and read and agree to the publication of the contents of the article. ED and PM contributed to the review of the scientific literature on communicative acts that overcome gender violence. ED, PM, SG-C, and GL contributed to the fieldwork and subsequent data analysis. ED reviewed and coordinated the final article as a whole.

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# “No More Insecurities”: New Alternative Masculinities’ Communicative Acts Generate Desire and Equality to Obliterate Offensive Sexual Statements

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To justify attraction to Dominant Traditional Masculinities (DTM) and lack of attraction to non-aggressive men, some women defend opinions such as “there are no frigid women, only inexperienced men”. Such statements generate a large amount of sexual-affective insecurity in oppressed men and contribute to decoupling desire and ethics in sexual-affective relationships, which, in turn, reinforces a model of attraction to traditional masculinities that use coercion, thus perpetuating gender-based violence. New Alternative Masculinities (NAM) represent a type of masculinity that reacts to reverse such consequences with communicative acts, in which they state that women who support such discourses have never met a NAM man or have never experienced a successful sexual-affective relationship where passion, love, desire, and equality are all included. This article presents data analyzing these communicative acts (exclusory and transformative; language employed and consequences) to ultimately find the key to NAM communication that would contribute to changing attraction patterns. The data was collected using communicative daily life stories of three heterosexual white men and one heterosexual white woman, between the ages of 30 and 40. Findings emphasize the importance of self-confidence manifested by NAM men when communicating about sex and facing these offensive mottos in the presence of other men and women. Findings also demonstrate that supportive egalitarian relationships encourage the emergence of self-confidence in NAM men and that NAM men’s self-confident communicative acts foster healthy relationships and obliterate coercive ones.

**Keywords:** self-confidence, attraction patterns, offensive sexual statements, new alternative masculinities, desire, communicative acts

## INTRODUCTION

The scientific literature on masculinities and communication has disregarded the influence of men’s self-confidence and self-esteem in shaping whether they are considered attractive or not. While there are communicative acts that can contribute to enhancing a man’s attractiveness, others can diminish it. A key aspect of these interactions is how the man reacts, leading to an increase



of his attractiveness or otherwise. Therefore, most studies that analyze men's self-confidence are psychology-centered and do not consider communicative acts as a key explanatory element (Long and Martinez, 1997; Levant and Pollack, 2008; Reilly et al., 2014). In this study, we include various contributions from gender studies and linguistics that have explored the influence of men's communication to shed light on this topic (Edley and Wetherell, 1997; Renold, 2001, 2004; Mac an Ghaill, 2003; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Bogg and Ray, 2006; Chopra, 2006; Korobov and Thorne, 2006; Brown and Macdonald, 2008; Itakura, 2014; Reda and Hamdan, 2015).

Thus, psychological investigations have mostly studied men's emotional development and its connection with self-confidence (Long and Martinez, 1997; Levant and Pollack, 2008; Reilly et al., 2014). From gender studies, the analysis of men's communication has focused on the gendered discourses connected with hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 1994, 2012; Edley and Wetherell, 1997; Renold, 2001, 2004; Mac an Ghaill, 2003; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Bogg and Ray, 2006; Chopra, 2006). Linguistics researchers have explored messages from the media, communicative acts and interactions that promote hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities (Edley and Wetherell, 1997; Korobov and Thorne, 2006; Hall et al., 2011; Portell and Pulido, 2012).

However, the role of non-hegemonic men's communicative acts that are rooted in self-confidence and change general attraction patterns among heterosexual women are not deeply analyzed, nor in the way in which offensive sexual statements influence non-hegemonic men's self-confidence. This article will present findings with relevant empirical data on the influence of these communicative acts. In this regard, we will start from a theoretical conceptualization based on the definition of the three types of masculinities (Díez-Palmar et al., 2014). These three types—which are widely explained in the introduction of this Special Issue—are New Alternative Masculinities (NAM, hereinafter), Oppressed Traditional Masculinities (OTM, hereinafter), and Dominant Traditional Masculinities (DTM, hereinafter). Alternatively, the theoretical perspective on communicative acts (Soler and Flecha, 2010) that are extensively described in the introduction will be the sociolinguistic approach that is used to analyze men's and women's communicative acts. This approach pays particular attention to the social consequences of both men's and women's communicative acts.

The article is divided into four sections. The first section provides a literature review and considers the aforementioned perspectives on the types of language uses and discourses connected with hegemonic masculinity (including DTM), non-hegemonic masculinities (including egalitarian men, new masculinities, OTM, and NAM within this typology) and self-confidence. The second section presents the description of the study carried out, including the theoretical and methodological approaches used for the data analysis. The third section shows the findings that are obtained through this analysis, presenting the consequences of utilizing exclusionary and transformative communicative acts, especially regarding sexual issues, in shaping men's self-confidence and insecurity. At

the end, the conclusions with further research implications are presented.

## LANGUAGE AND DISCOURSES ON NON-HEGEMONIC MASCULINITIES AND SELF-CONFIDENCE

Different studies have tackled the relationship between non-hegemonic men's communicative acts and self-confidence from different points of view. In particular, research conducted in gender studies, psychology and linguistics has given greater attention to this topic. In the following section, a review of the evidence from these three disciplines will be presented and considered according to its connection with other complementary aspects of our analysis, such as men's insecurity, sexual statements, desire, and attraction.

Drawing on a gender studies perspective, Raewyn Connell (in Kessler et al., 1985) initiated men's studies with her work on “hegemonic masculinity” in schools. In that analysis she argued, following Gramsci, that boys and girls construct gender identities in school that become predominant. These identities are mostly shaped based on gendered discourses that reinforce male power and competitiveness. More recently, Connell (2012) affirmed that the globalization process is contributing to changing this situation and disseminating gendered discourses that foster non-hegemonic masculinities, such as the egalitarian men's movement. However, these non-hegemonic masculinities are not always socially valued; in fact, there are several studies that illustrate the types of discourses and language uses that generate insecurity for men exhibiting these masculinity types (Edley and Wetherell, 1997; Renold, 2001, 2004; Mac an Ghaill, 2003; Bogg and Ray, 2006; Chopra, 2006). For instance, in the school context, these studies identify bullying practices against non-hegemonic boys (Renold, 2001, 2004; Mac an Ghaill, 2003; Lawson, 2013). Renold (2004) calls them “other boys,” showing the typology of the language and words that are commonly used by peers to bully non-hegemonic males. Words such as “swots” and “geeks” undermine these boys' level of attractiveness (Renold, 2001, p. 373). Duque and Teixido (2016) analyzed bullying related to homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and gender violence in the school context and identified several actions to prevent and overcome it, among which is breaking the silence by taking a stand against violence, and bystander intervention, which consists on protecting those who suffer violence, so that relationships based on solidarity are created.

The scornful language has extremely negative consequences in non-hegemonic boys as they consequently experience marginalization and damaged self-esteem. Furthermore, Renold (2001) also underlines that dominant girls repeatedly humiliate and bully these boys, generating a deteriorating atmosphere in the class and influencing these boys' social reputation. The damaged social reputation is persistent in different contexts where non-hegemonic men break with normative gender rules. For instance, Chopra (2006) discusses the role of male domestic workers in India and the harmful effects caused by the speech styles and body language that their employers use toward them.

Despite male domestic workers using body language and speech acts that are connected with virtue and innocence, employers do not place value on these acts and usually utilize hierarchical forms of communication to harass them: “Often speech is literally replaced by a bell to summon a worker. The bell asserts hierarchy and initiates required actions literally without a word being spoken” (Chopra, 2006, p. 161).

In contrast to previous studies, Edley and Wetherell (1997) perform an analysis connected with gendering sports discourses. In this regard and based on a deep analysis of young, non-hegemonic men’s conversations, they identify the existence of positive discourses on non-hegemonic men in which the consequences foster their social acknowledgment. These discourses are constructed when non-hegemonic men display self-confidence with their own masculinity that is widely accepted and valued by their surroundings. Although these men do not normally practice traditional masculine sports such as rugby and are not engaged in “macho” and chauvinist dynamics, their manhood is commonly questioned. In contrast, rugby players who maintain these chauvinist practices do not experience such questioning of their masculinity. In this way, in spite of the previously mentioned transformative elements, the findings corroborate the persistence of constructing hegemonic discourses that discredit non-hegemonic men as “sissies” and “poofs.” Piedra (2017) also analyzed a case in which boys between the ages of 8 and 19 who practiced rhythmic gymnastics, traditionally seen as a female sport, were insulted and teased for doing so.

Tsuda (2020) analyses the attractiveness of hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities and how they entangle with ethnic features. Men framed in non-hegemonic masculinities are considered to have a lower value in the field of sexual-affective relationships. Women state that these men “don’t fit the stereotype of the sexy, desirable man.” Women depict them as “socially inept”: they “don’t have a personality,” “they can’t carry on a conversation and they are awkward” (Tsuda, 2020, p. 9–10). Some of these non-hegemonic men try to overcome stereotypes by performing the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, which is defined as aggressive and domineering over women, but these acquired hegemonic characteristics do not raise the value of these non-hegemonic men. Nevertheless, Tsuda (2020) emphasizes that non-hegemonic egalitarian masculinities are beginning to emerge and begin to challenge hegemonic masculinity, focusing mainly on the ethical components of non-hegemonic masculinities.

Focusing on psychological analyses of non-hegemonic masculinities, as had been previously introduced, more attention is paid to the configuration of their self-confidence than the influence of language and communication. Firstly, it is relevant to highlight the work done by Reilly et al. (2014) as they study the relationship between two elements of men’s behavior to comprehend certain personal changes: heterosexual men’s conformity with masculine norms and self-confidence. The findings show that men’s acceptance of masculine normativity is strongly connected with having strong self-confidence and self-esteem. In other words, when men are comfortable with a traditional gendered identity, they emotionally feel positive.

Similarly, Hoffman et al. (2000) discovered a strong connection with the sex-role conception related to men’s self-confidence. Thus, they found that men who scored high on gender self-acceptance are happier with themselves and their self-confidence is consequently more robust. In the same way—in a previous study developed by Long and Martinez (1997) on Hispanic professional men’s self-confidence—self-esteem and self-acceptance became an important explanatory variable in understanding the levels of confidence that these men developed in their workplaces.

In contrast to the preceding studies in the field of psychology, Levant and Pollack (2008) introduced interactions in their psychological analysis of men’s self-esteem and self-confidence. They explored the emotional changes that fatherhood implies for men who are deeply involved in the fatherhood role. The investigation performed by these authors suggests that fatherhood offers men the opportunity to transform their self-structure based on their emotional dedication to their children’s well-being. In this sense, men’s interactions with children contribute to transforming them into less selfish, more egalitarian people with higher self-esteem and self-confidence.

From the linguistic perspective, several studies have explored the incidence of media discourses and communicative acts for the social construction of masculinity. However, these analyses rarely include self-confidence as a key element in men’s socialization processes but include the study of the consequences of these discourses and communicative acts both in men and women. Hall et al. (2011) have investigated media messages on “metrosexual” men. This typology was momentarily categorized as part of new masculinities simply because “metrosexual” men are seen as interested in fashion and personal care. Thus, they performed a discourse analysis of messages exchanged in online forums dedicated to “metrosexual” men’s discussions. The findings coincide with previous contributions and underline the effects of these online debates on the reproduction of the hegemonic masculinity as a successful male model, especially the promotion of hypermasculinization (Harris and Clayton, 2007).

In their analysis of males and females’ heterosexual appeal, Bogg and Ray (2006) found analogous results based on messages from youth-centered magazines regarding university students’ sexual interests. In this regard, the authors surveyed men and women by showing them images of male and female models from this type of magazine. The findings illustrate the effects that result in women’s perception of middle-age “non-macho” images, in which women employed words such as “dad” or “older gentleman” to define these men’s images and used unappealing adjectives such as “nerdy,” “geeky,” “dorky,” and “too preppy” that deprive them of sexual appeal. These results also support previous findings on the social construction of desire and attraction that demonstrate how linking seriousness and ethics in men’s descriptions eliminates any link with sexual desire (Flecha and Puigvert, 2010).

In the field of linguistics, a study developed by Portell and Pulido (2012) sheds light on the connection between non-hegemonic masculinities and self-confidence. The authors developed a qualitative study on the communicative acts that men and women perform in various daily settings, such as

at schools or companies. They pay special attention to the communicative acts that promote egalitarian masculinities in these spaces. In this regard, they identify that these conversations and interactions, which are based on men's self-confidence, are crucial to becoming a respected man. The following quote from a young student at a vocational school that was captured by the authors perfectly exemplifies this reality: "He has to be someone who stands out, who claims your attention, not just a stereotype but (...) Yes, somebody who is self-confident and who inspires, therefore, confidence and security" (Portell and Pulido, 2012, p. 75).

Isaksen (2017) found that from a non-hegemonic masculinity approach, negative representations can be defied through the humorous, calm, and laid-back use of rhetoric that ridicules the attacks and shows that this non-hegemonic masculinity is that of a bold, confident and cool man who is able to neutralize the attacks that want to represent him as an outsider.

Gómez (2015) also shows the importance for egalitarian men of the attitude they adopt toward other people, with self-confidence being fundamental, in order to be attractive and thus overcome situations in which they are dominated by discourses that promote double standards, gender-based violence and resignation in the face of unjust situations. Likewise, Villarejo et al. (2020) demonstrated that audiovisual products such as movies and videogames only created attraction to non-violent egalitarian masculinities when these characters showed self-confidence in relating to others, implying that the ethical component was necessary but not enough to generate attractiveness toward NAM. The key challenge of NAM is to embody ethics and attractiveness in a social context in which peer communicative interactions influenced by the coercive dominant discourse (Racionero-Plaza et al., 2020) often empty egalitarian non-violent men of their attractiveness and make violent masculinities attractive (Racionero-Plaza et al., 2021). In sexual-affective relations, coercion can occur both in verbal and non-verbal communication, and, therefore, the solution is necessarily based on taking into account not only speech acts, which are essential, but also other types of communicative acts (Flecha et al., 2020). The coercive dominant discourse imposes the link between attraction and violence, influencing the socialization that occurs from birth, in settings such as school, family, circles of friends, and audiovisual products, and therefore prevention is necessary in all of these settings (Aiello et al., 2018; Rios-Gonzalez et al., 2018, 2019; Ruiz-Eugenio et al., 2020; Villarejo et al., 2020).

In this line of prevention, Díez-Palomar and Mara (2020) found that the creation in the school context of dialogic high quality spaces for academic learning, free of violence and disruptive attitudes makes it possible for NAM boys to become more popular because they foster the link between the discourse of ethics and the discourse of desire. Meanwhile, in these contexts the attitudes of DTM boys, who tend to oppose academic dynamics and have aggressive attitudes toward peers, are not socially valued. Likewise, Redondo-Sama (2016) demonstrated that in organizations that are governed by democratic principles and where leadership is dialogic, NAM men become more visible to the detriment of traditional masculinities.

Drawing on these emergent results that connect the construction of non-hegemonic masculinities with communicative acts, in this article, we will take these results into account but also examine two particular elements that have not yet been studied: the effects of offensive sexual statements on non-hegemonic men as well as the influence of communication of men who follow some premises of NAM theory in changing attraction patterns. As will be later explained, there is no empirical evidence on these two elements, so new information on men's communicative acts and their social consequences will be provided, filling a gap in this field.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Theoretical Perspective and Methodological Approach

The theoretical perspective on communicative acts (Soler and Flecha, 2010) has been used to analyze verbal and non-verbal communicative interactions. This conceptualization has its origins in the scientific discussion on speech acts initiated by Austin (1996), Searle (1969), and Habermas (1987) who contributed to theories on the social basis of people's communication.

In addition to this theoretical framework, the methodological approach that has been followed in our study is Communicative Methodology (CM, hereinafter). CM's main objective is the construction of useful knowledge for the achievement of social transformation, and fulfilling this objective requires taking most of the relevant scientific contributions on the social sciences into account (Gómez et al., 2010). Among these contributions are Chomsky's (1988) universal grammar, Mead's (1934) symbolic interactionism, Habermas' (1987) theory of communicative action and Beck's (1992) conception of reflexive modernity.

CM attempts to establish an intersubjective dialogue without interpretative hierarchies between the researchers and subjects (Gómez et al., 2019; Soler and Gómez, 2020). The former contribute relevant scientific knowledge of the investigation and the latter provide information on their daily lives on the topic that is discussed. Afterward, transformative and exclusionary dimensions guide the expected data analysis in which the results show, on the one hand, that these barriers create difficulties in people's life, and on the other hand, that these successful mechanisms help them overcome these barriers (Pulido et al., 2014).

### Selection of Participants

The equations should be inserted in editable format from the equation editor. The selection criteria of the sample included (a) men who have felt insecure in their sexual and affective relationships due to offensive sexual statements they have been told or who know men who have been told these statements; (b) men who have not felt insecure after hearing offensive sexual statements or know men who remained self-confident in the face of such statements; (c) men who have felt insecure when facing these offensive sexual statements but have recently become more self-confident and know men who have experienced a similar change; and (d) women who have performed these

**TABLE 1** | Participants' profile.

| N | Name      | Age          | Profile                                    |
|---|-----------|--------------|--|
| 1 | Alejandro | 35 years old | University professor                       |
| 2 | Xavier    | 38 years old | Secondary school teacher                   |
| 3 | Teresa    | 34 years old | Educator in leisure time                   |
| 4 | Enric     | 36 years old | Employer in a telecommunication enterprise |

offensive sexual statements or know women in their immediate surroundings who have performed these statements.

The participants in this study were three heterosexual white men and one heterosexual white woman, between ~30 and 40 years old (Table 1). These four participants have different work profiles and come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. More details about their social identities and sexual and affective relationships are described below.

### Participant 1: Alejandro

Alejandro is a Chilean man who comes from a working-class family. In Chile, he underwent vocational training to become an electrician because it was a commonly sought occupation in his region. After his professional education, he managed to attend college. While working as an electrician, he met a Spanish girl who is currently his wife. They relocated to Spain and had two sons. In Spain, he earned a PhD and became involved in an egalitarian men's association. This involvement has helped him become more self-confident in terms of rejecting his friends' chauvinist attitudes. In addition, as Alejandro asserts, he feels as sexually attracted to his wife as the day they met.

### Participant 2: Xavier

Xavier belongs to a middle-class family and attended a private school as a child. He completed a degree in sociology and is now working as a secondary school teacher. He has always defined himself as an egalitarian man who does not want to follow hegemonic masculine practices. During his adolescence, he felt pressured by his family and friends in this regard but he remained confident about his gender identity. When he was in his twenties, he began participating in an egalitarian men's association and commenced a fulfilling sexual-affective relationship that has made him more self-confident. He has been with the same woman for 14 years and they now have two sons.

### Participant 3: Teresa

Teresa has always lived in a humble working-class neighborhood in a large city in northern Spain. She did not finish secondary education as she was assigned to a remedial educational program. After working as a volunteer for an NGO in her neighborhood, she began working as an educator in leisure time. Teresa had various sexual and affective relationships that did not satisfy her, but a decade ago she fell in love with an egalitarian-minded man who is her current husband. Teresa and her husband's childhood friends are very skeptical about their egalitarian and sexually satisfactory relationship, so they are often questioned in this regard.

### Participant 4: Enric

Enric comes from a middle-class family and is currently living in a working-class neighborhood in a northern Spanish city. Enric did not finish secondary education, but at 35 years old he passed the university entrance exam. Presently, he is an employee of a large telecommunication company where he often faces scornful sexual comments from his boss. He considers himself an egalitarian man with a high level of self-confidence, and he feels fortunate because his last sexual-affective relationship is very successful in terms of attraction and equity.

All the names used for the analysis of subjects' communicative acts are pseudonyms.

## Data Collection

The data collection was conducted using a communicative daily life story. This technique aims to gather participants' reflections about their past, present and future to interpret their lives with researchers (Gómez et al., 2010). Therefore, in our study, participants and researchers share their quotidian and scientific knowledge on communicative acts that are linked with (1) sexual statements against OTM men, and (2) NAM men's self-confidence-based language. Due to the interviewee's life experiences, they easily recognized several situations where these communicative acts emerge. The conversation allowed the research team to gather information regarding not only the interviewee's direct personal experiences but also those of their close friends and family who had experienced the relevant communicative acts as revealed by the study participant. These indirect communicative acts (experienced through a third person) have greatly contributed to the richness of the data gathered as the communicative acts were not only reproduced but the posterior reflection between the persons involved and our interviewee was also collected. In fact, this prior understanding helped develop more profound reflections and construct a dialogic knowledge about the incidence of language uses in people's lives.

## Data Analysis

The study presented in the article analyses two main aspects of language use: (1) exclusionary communicative acts that generate sexual-affective insecurity in oppressed men; and (2) transformative communicative acts based on non-hegemonic men's self-confidence when they communicate about sex and attraction. In this regard, the results will present these two dimensions of communicative acts that emphasize their social consequences. The objective of the data analysis is not to carry out an exhaustive examination of the interviewees' biographies; on the contrary, the objective is to study significant communicative acts that the interviewed subjects disclose concerning the effects of sexual statements aimed at OTM and NAM men. These significant communicative acts provide information about scornful language uses but also provide new evidence on the typology of language that transforms this dynamic and its social consequences.



## Ethics Statement

The current study was reviewed and approved with the number 202102231 by the Community of Researchers on Excellence for All's (CREA) Ethics Committee, which considered that present research meets the criteria established in the European Commission (2013) and the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000/C 364/01) (European Union, 2000).

## Limitations

In the data collection process, we found some limitations regarding the objective of collecting peoples' communicative acts. These limitations include four main elements: (1) assurance of participants' sincerity about third persons' conversations, (2) the inability to identically reproduce people's disclosed communicative acts, (3) memory difficulties regarding interviewees' previous conversations, and (4) the limited number of subjects interviewed.

## FINDINGS

### Exclusionary Communicative Acts: Generating Sexual-Affective Insecurity in OTM Men

The qualitative data confirms the existence of communicative acts that negatively influence men's self-confidence, sexually speaking. These exclusionary communicative acts performed by women and men are particularly affecting men who, considering our data, respond to the OTM model, which renders their egalitarian attitude less relevant and less attractive. For instance, Alejandro's daily life narrative presents different situations in which these exclusionary communicative acts emerge. In this regard, he relates one of these situations involving a dinner that he and his wife have with Pedro, his best friend, and his wife, Lucía. Alejandro defines Pedro as a "good guy" who strives to avoid conflict with others; however, Lucía is radically different and she complains often about many issues. In this situation, Alejandro remembers that Lucía made several comments to Pedro that discredited him at a sexual level. In fact, she blamed Pedro for not getting her pregnant. She also attacked his manhood, saying he was not "masculine" enough, and that he is not good in sexual relationships. The following three sentences illustrate the offensive sexual statements by Lucía:

I am not pregnant because of him. He cannot impregnate me, he does not hit the mark, he has no force and he is not masculine. It is his fault because he does not have enough sexual potency. He is very bad in bed.

From Alejandro's perspective, Lucía's offensive comments made Pedro begin to feel insecure. This situation made him nervous and he did not know what to say in the face of his wife's provocations. Alejandro described how Pedro blushed because he felt self-conscious about his inabilities and he tried to switch to another topic. Later, when Alejandro and Pedro discussed the situation, the latter justified his wife's comments: "Lucía was feeling so nervous; she has a lot of work."

Similarly to Alejandro's experiences, Xavier has witnessed several situations in which one of his best friends, Jordi, was targeted with offensive statements from his girlfriend, Susana. Xavier describes Jordi as a very romantic man who always showed passion and devotion to his girlfriends, but these sentiments are usually not reciprocated. In this case, Xavier heard two comments that Susana repeatedly said about Jordi. One of these comments referred to Jordi's respectful attitude that did not generate any desire in her. Thus, they reinforced Susana's perception of him as only a friend. Indeed, she argued that this lack of excitement was due to Jordi's behavior because he was always doing what she wanted and treated her too well.

They had been together for 2 or 3 months. She described him as a friend because, basically, she did not feel sexually attracted to him. While she was with this guy, other guys called her every day. She hid this information and did not say anything to him. During this period, she said "He was very much behind me. He was too good of a person because he treated me very well."

Susana's second comment illustrates how the use of offensive sexual statements about Jordi was a way to justify her lack of interest. Thus, she openly remarked that he was not bold enough and never took the initiative in their sexual relationships:

At the end of the relationship, she made offensive sexual statements, like "I wanted to make love but he did not because he was not bold enough," or other comments like "He needed more bravery to make love." That is, more self-confidence.

Xavier also detailed the negative consequences of these comments on Jordi. The consequences are predominantly linked to a significant disaffection and insecurity for sexual and affective relationships. Jordi suffered greatly observing how his dedication increases his girlfriend's apathy. After that experience, he did not want to initiate any relationships or sexual affairs: "This experience negatively impacted him a lot—I guess, also for his initial motivation and then for being totally in love and it not being returned—to the point of not wanting any relationship or partner, or any girl with whom make love."

In her narrative, Teresa also shared several examples of how her female friends used to make exclusionary communicative acts that some women often do to ridicule men they define as "wimps." She narrates some discussions she had with one of her friends, Maria, about her sexual-affective relationships. Teresa likes to share experiences of intimacy with her friends but recently has been feeling very tired of listening to how they, including Maria, are always talking unenthusiastically about their partners, using negative adjectives such as "dumb" or "pain in the neck." In this regard, Teresa explains that sometimes these conversations include offensive sexual statements that undermine men's attractiveness. In the next quote, Teresa recalls one of the comments that Maria made about the lack of sexual excitement she has with her husband, insisting that she prefers a man who treats her badly because otherwise she loses interest.

He is very understanding and so quiet, and this makes me feel that he is a wimp, that he is bad in bed, and this type of man doesn't

excite me at all. I prefer to care than to be cared for, a man should comply and hit me, and if not, I don't give a damn about him.

As a result of these frequent comments and scornful statements, Maria and her husband had a dull sexual and affective relationship. Analogous situations were experienced by Teresa's friends; their partners' self-esteem is affected because they feel distance from their wives and girlfriends. In contrast, Teresa sees that her friends frequently question her relationship because she is sexually excited for her husband, and they sometimes ask her: "Shit! And he never gets angry? He is never aggressive? Are you sure that you are ok with him?"

Finally, more data on exclusionary communicative acts are found in Enric's daily life narrative, in which he introduces some examples of men's perceptions of these sexually offensive statements that women sometimes made. He underlines that he considers his male co-workers very respectful and assertive with their partners and female co-workers. However, in their conversations about sexual and affective relationships, they feel insecure because they perceive that their girlfriends are the ones who make the decisions in this regard. This situation contributes to labeling them as "wimps," including hearing expressions that hegemonic men and women who discredit OTM men often employ, such as: "In my house, I fuck when I want, and when I want is when my wife says." This example and the others described in this section unveil some language uses that perpetuate unequal situations with regard to gender and sexual relationships. In fact, instead of being inoffensive verbal jokes, they become relevant barriers that undermine OTM men's self-confidence.

## Transformative Communicative Acts: NAM-Related Self-Confidence

The offensive sexual statements discussed in the previous section can have different effects when self-confidence-based language is used by non-hegemonic men. The interviewees described several examples of this situation and their consequences for the offenders and society as well. These men, considering our analysis showing evidence that responds to the NAM model, experience changing dynamics in their daily life, as Alejandro's story demonstrates. Thus, Alejandro commented on how his involvement with a men's movement, where discussions about NAM attitudes take place, has helped him significantly in developing his self-confident attitude. He highlights the importance of this aspect and shows how displaying this attitude in front of others is an element that contributes to changing heterosexual women's sexual desires. The communicative act explained here perfectly exemplifies this change. Alejandro describes how his best friend, Pedro, generates attention from women when he uses self-confident body language. Despite being sexually scorned by his wife, Lucía, when situations arise that uplift his self-confidence, the responses are radically different. Therefore, Alejandro decided to invite Pedro to his university class on social work because, as a university professor, he has conducted a large amount of investigation into social rights. Alejandro knows that this situation benefitted Pedro, as that day

the audience was impressed by Pedro's lecture and he generated a lot of attention.

More than the physical attractiveness is the appeal of self-confidence, with the attitude that you show, because Pedro has also given lectures at the university. He was talking about social rights, and he started to talk in front of the students and professors, and he was very comfortable because it is an issue they understand, and this self-confidence that he showed generated a lot of sexual appeal.

As mentioned before, changing women's specific attraction patterns became possible because of these types of body language and communicative acts; these elements were strongly marked by self-confidence in his sexual appeal. The following comment, made by Alejandro's female university colleague regarding his friend, demonstrates how women who do not often feel sexual desire toward non-hegemonic men can change this desire because of the NAM self-confident attitude: "The Director of social work studies, who is a friend of mine, told me, 'Hey, please give me his phone number' jokingly, because at that moment he seemed very self-confident."

Alejandro's own experience is also illustrative of the power of these transformative reactions, particularly how it is useful to speak confidently about sex and attraction in the face of offensive sexual statements. Alejandro enjoys playing amateur soccer and he used to share locker-room with men who follow the DTM model. For that reason, he commonly has to deal with various situations where certain sexual statements are made by his colleagues. His colleagues' mockery is often connected to his egalitarian attitude that, for them, is totally disconnected from sexual success. Alejandro combats these types of statements by using responses where he clarifies that his sexual life is very active and delightful.

Friends: I am going to fuck and you, Alejandro, are going to wash the dishes and iron!

Alejandro: I do the housework because we distribute the tasks, like when we make love.

Friends: She doesn't let you go out and, on top of that, you don't fuck!

Alejandro: You are very worried about my sexual life—maybe you are the one who doesn't fuck? Because I have never complained about this. I am very satisfied.

The interactions that Alejandro has in his weekly meetings with soccer colleagues demonstrate a reality that scientific literature had already underlined: the reproduction of chauvinist attitudes in men's traditional spaces, such as sports (Anderson, 2011). However, Alejandro's attitude, based on the self-confidence that characterizes NAM men, changes his colleagues' reactions. As he affirmed in the interview, they respect him: "After my answer, they laugh and respect me and leave me alone."

In the same way, Xavier's observations on communicative acts that address offensive sexual statements are powerfully connected with self-confidence as well. Since he was a child, Xavier has had to deal with offensive situations so as not to follow the DTM model. He made it clear that he wanted egalitarian and passionate

relationships, but he found some traditional attitudes in others' reactions. In this regard, some of the situations he described in the daily life narrative refer to him. One situation took place at the university where he met a girl that wished to become intimate with him, but Xavier rejected her because he did not like her arrogant and disdainful attitude toward non-hegemonic men. Consequently, she began to insult him and questioned his sexual orientation, but he answered to her very confidently:

There was once a girl in my class who wanted to hook up with me, and she was very insistent. I did not want to do this, and she said to me in a bad mood: "Are you a homosexual?" And I responded to her: "I hook up with whom I want, when I want."

This quick reaction has positive consequences because this girl did not make any further offensive statements about Xavier's sexuality. Comparable reaction succeeded with Xavier's current girlfriend when he adopted this attitude, but with sexual situations in this case. If he is self-confident and makes jokes when indifference appears during sex, his girlfriend drastically modifies her attitude and her attraction increases.

If I am self-confident then her eyes start to shine, it is automatic, and if I am not self-confident, she disconnects. If I'm feeling good I say: "You are controlling everything again, right? I notice that you are relaxing" or something like that. She already knows what happens... then I say to her: "You are ordering me around again because you feel like partying. You are already in fifth gear"! Then she laughs, she normally understands it and changes. I feel better about myself, and she is more interested. I feel ok because I see how she changes.

Xavier is extremely aware of the importance of self-confidence and having high self-esteem to keep his girlfriend's sexual desire alive. The relevance is illustrated in the following quote, where he provides an example of the type of language he usually utilizes in such situations. Xavier relates how, during a date where they were intimate, his girlfriend started to yawn. He described how this situation engendered a loss of sexual drive, and to get the situation to how it was previously, he started to make non-offensive jokes that maintained his girlfriend's interest.

In a situation where she is ignoring you or yawning, if you feel self-confident with what you want, you can make a joke to clarify what it is that you want, what you do not want and what interests you. From that moment, you can see how she reacts. You can say: "Well, now you are relaxing, you are starting to yawn." It is a way to say that I do not want to be with her in this way.

Thus, Xavier feels very relevant and has such a high level of confidence that he does not have to accept any attitude of this type. In that case, when something similar has happened, he has chosen to immediately stop the date several times. This type of reaction has become crucial for maintaining the passion in his relationship: "So my reaction is to stop, and I say, "No problem—if you are feeling like this today, it is not the best day to be together. You can go home" because I do not enjoy being with her in this way." Xavier describes how his girlfriend alters her sexual desire toward him when these types of communicative

acts are performed. Xavier notes that this change is due to his commitment to be self-confident: "When I win Maria's respect and I am coherent with what I am saying and feeling, I see that she is very excited sexually, and I feel comfortable and more self-confident."

Like Xavier, Teresa clarified in her interview how her husband, Manuel, is self-confident about his sexual appeal. Since they started their relationship, he made clear what type of treatment he would require. Hence, Manuel demanded equality but at the same time passion and desire. Manuel's commitment to this demand is evidenced in different situations. For instance, Teresa explained one situation where she lived with him and his childhood friends. In that situation, his friends make comments ridiculing his sexual life, but he answered very self-confidently showing that he was very much sexually active:

Friend: Surely you don't fuck much. Teresa is always stopping you. Oh my goodness, Manuel, if only they could see you now.  
Manuel: The number of times you do it doesn't matter, but the quality does.

Self-confidence of one's sex appeal is one of the elements that Teresa highlights the most when recounting her daily life narrative, which has drastically influenced her sexual desire. Prior to meeting her current partner, she used to lose interest in other men, but now it is different because Manuel's attitude generates desire in her:

He helps me to see the relationships from another perspective, with this attitude of self-confidence, and he says: "This is what I think, and just because I am like that does not mean that I will follow you or do what you want."

Teresa insisted that this is a question of willingness, based on self-confidence, and the long conversations they both usually had about their relationship increased her attraction toward him:

He always has been clear about how he wanted to live with me, and he has always explained this to me perfectly with very long conversations. I like these conversations very much, and every time we speak, the respect and desire increases.

Enric's reflections on his daily communicative acts in the workplace are in the same line as previous participants. His self-confidence and sexual-affective fulfilling relationship help him face his boss' sexual and intimidating jokes with very self-confident responses. For instance, a recent situation that Enric experienced with his boss, Robert, shows the nature of these responses. Enric explains how Robert went to his desk and, in front of his co-workers, made an insulting joke and tried to undermine his sexual appeal while Enric was talking with his girlfriend on the phone. He said, "Is your girlfriend controlling your life?" Enric did not become quiet, and he continued talking aloud to his girlfriend saying: "Darling (referring to his girlfriend), wait a moment, because Robert is joking with me, and he wants to have a coffee with me as well, but I am not interested in him." After this situation, Robert did not insult him anymore, and his female co-workers became interested in Enric's sexual appeal.

## DISCUSSION

Hegemonic masculinity and the reproduction of gendered discourses that foster its privileges are widely explored (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Korobov and Thorne, 2006; Brown and Macdonald, 2008; Duncanson, 2015; Yang, 2020). However, it has also been claimed that the concept of hegemonic masculinity can have a transformative dimension (Duncanson, 2015; Yang, 2020). Thus, studies on the discourses of non-hegemonic men, such as the egalitarian men's movement, have been developed (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Connell, 2012; Ramirez et al., 2015). The latter shows evidence of the creation of men's public messages that do not replicate traditional chauvinist mottos; on the contrary, they construct language that prioritizes gender equality. In spite of all these studies, several recent analyses show a gap in this dichotomy (Serradell et al., 2014; Puigvert et al., 2019). Puigvert et al. (2019) demonstrated the existence of an attraction pattern promoted in socialization leading to consider violent men as the most sexually desirable. These findings denote that there is a dominant coercive discourse that fosters the link between violence and desire in the socialization process, and, simultaneously, dissociates egalitarian men and sexual attraction. Serradell and colleagues illustrate how young people do not consider egalitarian messages as attractive, thus creating a double standard (Serradell et al., 2014). At the sexual level, this means that there are men who are exciting—that is, men who are described with language full of desire with whom heterosexual women want to have sex. In contrast, there are “good boys,” “wimps,” very egalitarian and understanding men, who are defined by language that lacks desire and sexual connotations.

However, recent research has also shown that the coercive discourse that forcefully associates violence with attraction can be reversed through appropriate interactions. Racionero-Plaza et al. (2018, 2020) demonstrated that certain interactions have the capacity to raise a critical consciousness about the dominant coercive discourse in sexual-affective relationships and thus the approach to relationships can be transformed. In this vein, NAM's communicative acts also have the capacity to reverse the coercive discourse. By describing the offensive sexual statements made in front of oppressed men, new elements to understand the preceding analyses emerge. Thus, our data sheds new lights on previous analyses of language use with regard to non-hegemonic men (Portell and Pulido, 2012). On the one hand, our findings show how non-hegemonic men face insulting messages that question their manhood and undermine their sexual appeal from heterosexual women who associate desire and sexual excitement with the DTM model (Duque, 2006; Puigvert et al., 2019). These elements reduce their capacity to exist outside of the aforementioned double standards. In contrast, men who follow NAM's premises, when their communicative acts are based on self-confidence in the sexual arena, as well as when attracting women, transform this inequality spiral. NAM's communicative acts can obliterate offensive sexual statements. Thus, they can generate desire and equality toward NAM and contribute to undermine the link between violence and

desire, and so erode the attraction toward traditional hegemonic masculinities. NAM men's communicative acts have a central role in this transformation as scientific literature had already indicated (Diez-Palomar et al., 2014). In order for these acts to be transformative, the results show that it is necessary that these men combat the coercive discourse with confident behavior at the sexual level, so that they can foster changes in women's attraction patterns.

These last remarks have several social implications that we believe should be taken into account in further research. Although these social implications have already been noted in research (Duque, 2006; Valls et al., 2008; Aguilar, 2009; Racionero-Plaza et al., 2018; Rios-Gonzalez et al., 2018; Puigvert et al., 2019; Duque et al., 2020), more analyses are needed to understand how NAM men's communicative acts, based on self-confidence in sexual and attraction issues, are shaped in various daily-life contexts such as in schools and in leisure time. In this regard, there are some schools around the world that implement actions that consider the NAM approach (Padrós, 2014; López de Aguilera et al., 2020; Racionero-Plaza et al., 2020).

In short, there are certainly more stories of men, women, boys and girls who change their conceptions of attraction in their language uses. Stories like those of Teresa, Xavier, Enric, and Alejandro show evidence of the consequences of employing specific adjectives or having particular attitudes. Hence, following the premises of CM, researchers have the responsibility of making these stories more visible because they are offering important knowledge to achieve social change in affective and sexual relationships that citizens are requesting.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by the Community of Research on Excellence for All's (CREA) Ethics Committee with the number 202102231. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study. Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

HZ-E and NG-F conceived the idea of the study. NG-F, HZ-E, and MG contributed with the literature review. HZ-E wrote a draft of paper with the support of NG-F and MG. NG-F and MG conducted a review of the draft and provided feedback. HZ-E included the feedback and wrote the final version of the manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the submitted version of the manuscript.



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# Making Choices in Discourse: New Alternative Masculinities Opposing the “Warrior’s Rest”

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Psychology research on men studies, attractiveness, and partner preferences has evolved from the influence of sociobiological perspectives to the role of interactions in shaping election toward sexual–affective relationships and desire toward different kinds of masculinities. However, there is a scientific gap in how language and communicative acts among women influence the kind of partner they feel attracted to and in the reproduction of relationship double standards, like the myth of the “warrior’s rest” where female attractiveness to “bad boys” is encouraged or supported. Some women imitate “the warrior” behavior of men by choosing dominant traditional masculinities (DTM) to have “fun” with and oppressed traditional masculinities (OTM) for “rest” after the “fun” with DTM—choosing an OTM for a stable relationship, but perhaps without passion, while also feeling attraction toward DTM, a response which perpetuates the chauvinist double standard that the feminist movement has condemned when men behave in this sexist way. Through conducting a qualitative study with communicative daily life stories, this article explores, on the one hand, how language and social interaction among women can lead to the reproduction of the DTM role by women and, on the other hand, also how new alternative masculinities (NAM) offer an alternative by explicitly rejecting, through the language of desire, to be the rest for the female warrior, the second fiddle to any woman. This has the potential to become a highly attractive alternative to DTM. Findings provide new knowledge through the analysis of communicative acts and masculinities evidencing the importance of language uses in the reproduction of the double standards in gender relations and to understand how and why these practices are maintained and which kind of language uses can contribute to preventing them. Implications for research and interventions on preventive socialization of gender violence are discussed.

**Keywords:** warrior's rest, double standards, communicative acts, new alternative masculinities, the language of desire

## INTRODUCTION

The women’s movement and other progressive social movements have traditionally been committed to foster gender equality by condemning, among other issues, gender inequalities regarding sexual behavior and interpersonal relationships by advocating sexual freedom and equality. Therefore, double standards about social attitudes and expectations toward the sexual

behavior of men and women and its consequences in terms of gender differences have been widely examined and challenged (Kreager and Staff, 2009; Lyons et al., 2011; Dunn et al., 2014; Zaikman and Marks, 2014; Rios-González et al., 2018; Armstrong et al., 2020; Duque et al., 2020; Kim, 2020; Álvarez-Muelas et al., 2021). Feminist theories (Beauvoir, 1949; Greer, 1970) have condemned the sexist myth of the *warrior's rest* that positions women as passive sexual objects, subject to their partners' dominance and dependence. This patriarchal myth relies on the double standard and classifies women into two types, those for casual sex and those for marital and family purposes. The *warrior's rest* practices are exerted by dominant traditional masculinities (DTM), which have been traditionally linked with a successful image of aggressive and chauvinist manhood (Flecha et al., 2013). Nevertheless, some women also imitate the *warrior's rest* by reproducing these chauvinist double standards (Valls et al., 2008; Lyons et al., 2011; Gómez, 2015). However, this role reversal does not foster women's sexual agency, quite the opposite. It perpetuates traditional double standards and gender inequality.

While this phenomenon has been analyzed in gender studies, it remains unexplored through communicative acts and men studies' prism. This article addresses this, firstly, by conducting a qualitative study on how language and social interaction among women can lead to the reproduction of appreciation and esteem that the DTM role receives by women and, secondly, by examining how new alternative masculinities (NAM) can become a highly attractive alternative to DTM when they use the language of desire for explicitly rejecting to be the rest for the female *warrior*. The language of desire is a language connected to attraction, tastes, and sexual excitement (Flecha and Puigvert, 2010; López de Aguilera et al., 2020). In order to address these themes, we firstly present a selection of scientific literature on sexual double standards and gender role reversal, as well as the influence of social interactions and language uses on women's partner choice and the role of NAM with particular attention to the role of communication in this regard. Secondly, we describe the methods of the qualitative study which was conducted. The study results are presented in two parts: language and interaction among a group of women friends that promote the imitation of the *warrior's rest* by women and how some communicative acts by men can manage to overcome this tendency. Finally, we end with a discussion of the results and conclusions for future research as well as their implication for gender violence prevention.

## Reversing Traditional Roles and Perpetuating the Double Standard

Psychology research on men studies, attractiveness, partner preferences, and gender differences in partner choice has traditionally focused on the influence of different elements such as sociobiological aspects, hormones and pheromones, facial appearance, sexual dimorphism, physical attributes, and body shape preferences (Perilloux et al., 2013; Price et al., 2013; Wells et al., 2013; Hatz et al., 2020; White et al., 2020). Other studies have analyzed the influence of interactions and peer groups in selecting sexual affective relationships and the desire toward different kinds of masculinities (Herold and Milhausen, 1999;

Urbaniak and Kilmann, 2003; McDaniel, 2005). On this subject, most studies draw from psychology and sexology. However, there is a significant gap in scientific knowledge about the influence of interactions, language, and communicative acts among women that influence them to choose and initiate sexual relationships with DTM and to imitate a female version of the traditional *warrior's rest* or alternatively that promote, through the language of desire, the rejection by NAM to be the rest for the female *warrior*.

Since the 1980s, researchers have noted the sexual double standard that influences men's and women's sexual behavior by penalizing women, being less permissive for them, and alternatively forgiving or rewarding men for the same sexual behavior (Lyons et al., 2011; McClintock, 2011; Dunn et al., 2014; Zaikman and Marks, 2014; Pecheny et al., 2019; Álvarez-Muelas et al., 2021). In this regard, Manago et al. (2015) examined in a study the double standards in the messages about sex that adolescents receive from their friends, showing how girls were conveyed more values linked to relational sex and boys to recreational sex. Nowadays, the traditional double standard persists, with reports of worse consequences for girls, who suffer from their reputation being harmed, especially in school contexts (Amaro et al., 2020). Lyons et al. (2011) analyzed the meaning of the sexual double standard at the peer level, gathering data through interviews conducted with female students where some of them reverse the traditional roles and imitate the double standard of men. They also highlighted the kind of adjectives and conversations that often emerge between peers when women reproduce the traditional role. For instance, usual adjectives are employed to define them such as "slut," and repeated "behind the back" conversations of a harmful kind commonly occur. In this regard, other research has also evidenced the influence of social imaginaries and media messages, often promoted by romantic novels or in women's erotic literature, that perpetuate this reversal of roles (Hawley and Hensley, 2009). Research also suggests that friendship among girls during their adolescence can either protect them from their peer critics regarding their sexual behavior or lead to double standard reproduction (Racionero-Plaza et al., 2021).

The double standards are also linked to masculinity models and partner choice. In a study conducted by Tift (2015), women interviewed regarding their sexual interest classified men into two different groups: "nice boys," where the language used to describe men is connected with care and ethical behavior such as "giving" and "caring," or in terms of "bad boys," where more aggressive words are used such as "rude" and "dominant." Some of the reason that explains this duality will be examined in more detail in the next section by analyzing social interaction and its influence on women's desire.

## Influence of Social Interactions on Women's Attraction to DTM or Oppressed Traditional Masculinities (OTM)

Regarding women's attraction and influences on partner choice, research has explored the repercussions of social and cultural



contexts, such as romantic literature, on the influence on women's choices and relationship models (Barros del Río, 2005). Beyond the importance of these elements, the influence of social networks and friendship on romantic relationships and partner choice during the start of the relationship and throughout the relationship is clearly crucial (Wright and Sinclair, 2012; Killoren et al., 2019; Elboj-Saso et al., 2020). Also, research on the language use emphasizes the potential of language in socialization processes (Burdelski, 2013; Rios-González et al., 2018; Arnold, 2019) and in the transmission of patterns of gender inequalities among children (da Luz Scherf et al., 2020). Regarding partner choice, other researchers report that young girls are more influenced by the popularity and prestige of their potential partners (Little et al., 2015; Gouda-Vossos et al., 2018). In addition, there are also studies that analyze if women prefer more or less typically masculine men and the influence of gender equality and traditional gender norms on this selection (Desrochers, 1995). However, such studies have not paid much attention to the influence of the interactions, language, and communicative acts among women toward the kind of partner they feel attracted to and its influence in perpetuating double standards enacted by men and women.

Other research has highlighted the duality through which “nice guys” are more desirable for committed relationships but are perceived as less sexually successful in contrast to those considered as “not nice” (Herold and Milhausen, 1999). In this regard, Urbaniak and Kilmann (2003) explored the nice guy stereotype and the pejorative discourse around the “nice guys finish last,” which has become a motto to define these heterosexual men unsuccessful in sex because they do not treat women very badly. Ahmetoglu and Swami (2012) have also examined how some women defined men who looked dominant versus those known as “nice guys” as more sexually attractive. As a consequence of this discourse, most women recommended the nice guys as the best choice for having more serious, long-term, and stable relationships, while they preferred a “macho man” for casual and sexual relationships. In the same line, McDaniel (2005) examined the duality and double standard that girls experience regarding the choice and attraction to men exhibiting different masculinities. Thus, this author points out that some girls have shown a desire toward romantic and stable relationships with “nice guys” but nevertheless prefer to have sexual relationships with “jerks” and “bad guys.” In fact, these young women describe “nice guys” with adjectives that indicate the absence of desire, such as “someone my friends would like.” Sometimes, the bad guys are referred to in terms that mix desire with violent connotations such as “physically attractive” and “aggressive.” Although it was not a specific dimension of the study, it would have been interesting to analyze the kind of language that is behind each conception and desirable relationship. More evidence in this regard was illustrated by Georgakopoulou (2005) in her analysis of young heterosexual women dialogues about guys. She discovered how these conversations reinforce specific male images labeling “soft men” with humorous references like “baby face.”

The line of research on preventive socialization of gender violence provides evidence of the influence of the dominant

coercive discourse in partner preferences and desire that perpetuates double standards and associates attraction with violence (Gómez, 2015; Elboj-Saso et al., 2020). The quantitative study of Puigvert et al. (2019) with high school girls showed female participants' preference for boys with violent attitudes for sporadic relationships and “hooking up” and for non-violent boys for stable relationships. This reproduces double standards by presenting violent and unequal relationships as exciting and egalitarian relationships as convenient (Torras-Gómez et al., 2020). In short, scientific literature confirms the duality in the selection and attractiveness between both masculinities, the “jerks” and the “nice guys,” which perpetuates the traditional model of the double standard because while the objective is to get a good, perfect guy to have a stable relationship with, young women's attraction to “jerks” and “bad guys” is seen to be more sexually exciting (Puigvert et al., 2019). Some analysis goes beyond and evidences that the duality between both masculinities persists because they complement each other, reproducing the traditional chauvinist double standards (Flecha et al., 2013; Díez-Palomar et al., 2014).

## NAM Reject Perpetuating the Double Standard Through the Language of Desire

Research on the use of language and social interactions among men has focused mainly on gender differences between men and women, the topics of the conversation, the gendered use of language, the influence of social context on interpersonal communication (Stobbe, 2005; Portell and Pulido, 2012; Rodríguez-Navarro et al., 2014), the behavior and communication between men in specific contexts such as fraternities (Fabius, 2005), and the importance of friendship on their masculinity (Gómez, 2014; Migliaccio, 2014; Boulton, 2020). Regarding the manifestation of the linguistic process, research has also pointed out the different interactional styles between men and women (Baxter, 2006; Jackson, 2018). Other studies have analyzed the use of non-verbal signs and communication behavior among men on partner selection and courtship interaction (Renninger et al., 2004; Brak-Lamy, 2015; Fisher et al., 2020). Besides, many researchers have related the accounts of violence and the discourse of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995; Mullaney, 2007; Mañas-Viejo and Martínez Sanz, 2020; Mensah, 2021).

In short, there is a gap in the study of exclusionary language that perpetuates the double standard. On the one hand, there is a dearth of literature about the language used by the NAM (Portell and Pulido, 2012; Rodríguez-Navarro et al., 2014), and on the other hand, there are no studies that connect this discourse with the myth of the *warrior's rest*. In this regard, the aforementioned duality in the selection between DTM and OTM omits another kind of alternative masculinity (Connell, 1987; Bridges and Pascoe, 2014), the NAM, where feelings of passion and respect come together in the same person. As Flecha et al. (2013) concluded, NAM's distinctive traits are the attractiveness and desire that they generate; and particularly, this happens due to the verbal and body language which they employ that include

an emphasis on desire and equality at the same time. This is an aspect that contributes to the attraction of an alternative masculinity model (NAM).

Regarding the potentiality of speech and communicative acts for transforming reality, Fairclough (2003, 2006) highlighted that speech not only is necessary to shape and preserve social structures but also helps to challenge and transform them. Even though cultural discourses and social interactions often influence men and women, they are at the same time active participants in the discourses' development, reinscription, or rewriting (Fabius, 2005). Therefore, cultural and social discourses can be argued, and previous ideas can change, which is an important aspect of partner choice and relationships (Giordano et al., 2006). Social interactions, dialogues (Austin, 1962; Habermas, 1987; Searle, 1998), and communicative acts that include not only language but also gestures and the tone of voice as well as the social context (Searle and Soler, 2004; Flecha et al., 2020) are fundamental in transforming the processes that contribute or challenge sexual double standards. Moreover, research has already shown that communicative acts linked to NAM are decisive when preventing gender violence (Portell and Pulido, 2012; Rodríguez-Navarro et al., 2014).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Methodological Approach

Two questions have guided the present research: *How do language and social interactions among women lead to the reproduction of and esteem that the DTM role receives by some women? How can NAM, through the language of desire, resist the female warrior's double standards?* To answer these questions, the purpose of the study was two-fold: (a) to analyze how language and social interaction among women can lead to the reproduction of DTM role by women and (b) to explore how NAM offer an alternative by explicitly rejecting, through the language of desire, to be the rest for the female warrior. The present research followed the communicative methodology (CM) approach (Gómez et al., 2011, 2012, 2019; Flecha, 2014; Gómez, 2017; Pantic, 2017; Puigvert et al., 2017; Díez-Palomar et al., 2018). This methodology has been implemented in previous and several competitive research projects addressed to identify communicative acts that promote NAM funded by the European Framework Program or the Spanish Plan for Scientific and Technical Research and Innovation, such as the project "Impact of the Communicative Acts and New Masculinities" (Soler, 2010-2012). It was selected because the CM is oriented toward social transformation by identifying both the components that represent barriers and those that contribute to the transformation of social inequalities. For this study, this approach allowed us to identify, on the one hand, the barriers related to language and communicative acts that can lead to the reproduction of DTM role by women and, on the other hand, the transformative elements related to the use of the language of desire by NAM that contributes to opposition to this sexist double standard and makes it a highly attractive alternative to DTM.

Also, the egalitarian dialogue is one of the principles which characterize CM, and it was convenient in this study for exploring aspects related to communicative acts on an issue as sensitive as intimate relationships. This egalitarian conception is shaped through the absence of interpretative hierarchies between participants in the research (Flecha, 2000; Oliver et al., 2011; García Yeste et al., 2020). In CM, researchers participate in the dialogue by providing their own scientific knowledge and understanding, whereas researched subjects contribute equally with their daily life experiences and the knowledge acquired through living (Matulič-Domadzič et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Oramas et al., 2020). The use of the egalitarian dialogue in this study allowed the research team to share scientific evidence on the topic studied and to deepen the daily communicative stories from an egalitarian position. Throughout the dialogue, the interpretations of reality are jointly agreed upon in an intersubjective way.

### Participants and Data Collection Techniques

To promote an egalitarian dialogue between researchers and participants who recount their life experiences, a qualitative inquiry was conducted based on the communicative daily life story data collection technique (Ramis et al., 2014; Soler, 2015). This technique was designed to focus on dialogue about specific moments of a subject's life. In this study, these moments account for the influence of communicative acts on heterosexual affective-sexual relationships and masculine identities. Through the communicative daily life stories technique, participants explained concrete situations, interactions, conversations, gestures, and other communicative acts that they have experienced in their life or with their friends or acquaintances. The egalitarian dialogue generated in the communicative daily life stories allowed us to gather cases and examples of interactions and communicative acts that lead to the reproduction of DTM role by women or of the communicative acts of NAM showing the use of a language of desire for rejecting to be the female warrior's rest. At the beginning of the communicative daily life stories, researchers explained the purpose of the study, asking participants to feel free to delve more or less carefully into each experience. Researchers explained to them the theoretical foundations of the NAM approach as well as the myth of the warrior's rest, and then, a dialogue was generated between researchers and participants around a script of general topics to be addressed. Participants contributed with their experience of this theory's practical implications in terms of dialogues about relationships that illuminate these ideas. It is the foregrounding of the dialogue in these situations that the communicative daily life stories seek to elicit. The communicative daily life stories lasted between an hour and an hour and a half. They were conducted in Spanish, recorded, and later transcribed. Participants also signed informed consent. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, all participants were given pseudonyms.

To reach and select participants, we employed snowball sampling. To answer to the aim of the study, we selected three men and two women because they present accounts related

to the reproduction of the double standard and the myth of *warrior's rest* or they provide essential information on these issues based on the experiences of their friends or acquaintances. These five persons narrate independently different experiences; that is, there were no connections between the situations described (Table 1). Researchers asked participants directly about their own or their friends' experiences. Communicative daily life stories with women participants were focused primarily on how communicative acts among women can lead to the reproduction of the female *warrior's rest* and double standards, whereas with men participants, the central theme addressed was NAM's rejection toward the female *warrior's rest* and the use of the language of desire in this process. However, both women and men participants shared experiences and communicative acts on both main themes.

## Data Analysis

From this data set, we have included only responses that clearly demonstrate communicative acts and practices which reproduced the myth of *warrior's rest* or challenged it. Through the communicative daily life stories and participants, we achieved to gather data on the following categories that respond to the aims of the study:

- women who reproduced the myth of *warrior's rest* and at the same time the traditional model of affective–sexual relationship based on the double standard;
- women whose friends have also reproduced the myth of *warrior's rest* and the double standard in their affective–sexual relationships;
- men who have been involved in an affective–sexual relationship based on the myth of *warrior's rest* and the traditional model of the double standard;
- men whose circle of friends has been involved in an affective–sexual relationship based on the myth of *warrior's rest* as well as the traditional model of the double standard; and
- men who claimed they did not want to be *the second fiddle* to any woman.

We specifically analyze the role of communicative acts in social interaction to highlight the different types of language use and their effect on sexual–affective relationships. When analyzing the communicative acts, attention was paid to the situations that counted which elements of the communicative acts influenced that interaction, verbal communication, non-verbal communication, tone, gestures, if there was a power

relationship, and the context in which the interaction took place, among others. Thereafter, the evidence and implications for the prevention of gender violence are explored.

## RESULTS

The results are presented in two sections corresponding to each of the research questions. The first section focuses on exclusionary interactions that promote the double standard and reproduce the myth of *warrior's rest*. The second section sheds light on the transformative use of language that goes beyond these two exclusionary elements: interactions and communicative acts which point to the existence of an alternative model to counteract this tendency, which has been defined in theory as the NAM (Flecha et al., 2013; Rodríguez-Navarro et al., 2014).

### Language and Interaction Among Women Promoting the Double Standard Toward Men

The information provided by the communicative daily life stories responds to the theoretical assumptions that some women imitate the male model of looking for a partner for the *warrior's rest*. In that sense, when talking about the different models of attraction and relationship patterns, some of the interviewees report that women show this kind of behavior of attraction to men who treated them badly, causing them to have several unsatisfactory but sexually exciting relationships with this kind of men but then turn to non-dominant men to have a stable relationship and start a family life but lacking passion and sexual excitement. In order to respond to the first research question about *how language and social interaction among women can lead to the reproduction of esteem that DTM receive by women*, the analysis of the communicative daily life stories focuses on those communicative acts used among the participants or their circle of friends.

In this regard, during Maria's daily life story talking about the diverse relationship patterns and the imitation of the *warrior's rest* by one of her closest friends, she started to explain her relationship pattern, identifying similarities between her behavior and the aforementioned theoretical assumptions. According to what Maria's friend explained to her, she repeats relationship patterns following the double standard, feeling attracted to men that according to Maria “are no good” and, on the other hand, choosing “nice guys” to settle down with but who bore her. In her narrative, Maria specifically mentions how her friend's circle of friends influences this behavior, although Maria disapproves.

Maria: She has entered into a circle of friends, girls that are living this process and now among them they got angry at each other, and this world is so crazy that they even fight for the bad guys, you know?

Interviewer: And do you think that among them, they promote attraction to the bad guys?

Maria: So much! They are all the same! Because with these guys, when you tell them “these guys are no good for you,” “don't believe everything they say” they don't want to hear that so they establish a distance to those people

TABLE 1 | Participant profile.

| Pseudonym | Gender | Age   | Place of residence |
|-----------|--------|-------|--------------------|
| Clara     | Woman  | 30–35 | Madrid             |
| Maria     | Woman  | 45–50 | Burgos             |
| Natalia   | Woman  | 30–35 | Madrid             |
| Albert    | Man    | 35–40 | Catalonia          |
| Eduard    | Man    | 40–45 | Catalonia          |



who tell them [such things] and gather with their peers who encourage them.

In this contribution, Maria stresses the impact that her comments, in the form of advice, have on her friend's desire toward "bad guys." Instead of achieving Maria's objective to change her friend's mind about these kinds of men, more distance is created between Maria and her friend because of her questioning. This can be explained because her questioning is performed with a type of language which is only connected with ethical arguments, and this generates rejection as Maria's friend prefers to talk about tastes and relationships with friends that currently promote her double standard-based practices. Thus, Maria's explanation demonstrates that sometimes the use of language of ethics by saying "these guys are no good for you" is ineffective in preventing a woman from having relationships with them and can cause damaging effects.

In the same vein, although through a very different experience, Natalia's story recalls interactions with her friends discussing the inversion of roles that one of her friends performs with "bad boys." Thus, Natalia's friend is having a stable relationship with a "nice guy" with whom she did not have sexual intercourse for a long time and is, at the same time, feeling attraction and sexual excitement for a man from their group who they identify as "the worst." Natalia explains two kinds of interactions concerning her close friend. The first one refers to a specific interaction of that friend toward her partner in front of other friends and the effects of this attitude on him:

Natalia: The last days I spent at their house I felt kind of uncomfortable because she is really violent toward him, not physically but verbally. She ridicules him because they don't have sex and does so in front of everybody. And that makes me feel very uncomfortable.

Interviewer: And what does she say?

Natalia: For example, she said, "well I'm happy you're having sex, because we haven't had sex for..." turning to her boyfriend, "for how long didn't we fuck, huh?" and it's like "what the hell are you doing?!"

Interviewer: and how does he react to that?

Natalia: Oh he gets red and doesn't say a word, or he gets into the tease and gets somehow aggressive and the rest just laugh with her!

The second interaction shows the conversations she had with that friend and other girls about the attraction and desire she feels toward the "bad guy," even explicitly arguing because he is terrible.

Interviewer: And at the same time she tells you that she gets excited by the other guy?

Natalia: Yeah sure!

Interviewer: And how does she express that?

Natalia: Like, great "the other day I've been dancing with him, oh, and I got so excited! And I felt so guilty because it's such a long time that I didn't feel that way! And especially with him, who is the worst! I shouldn't feel that way about him!" Well, pretty much like that. But in the group of

friends there is another couple that is very nice, they are a bit older, like me and we tell her "this has nothing to do with love, the fact that this guy gets you excited" and we talk to her like that. But then she has other friends who say "Sure, that he gets you excited is love." For example, Maria, who is with a musician and they have a relationship which is based on abuse but depends on the sexual excitation that she feels for being with a guy like that. So she understands and justifies that. (...) The first thing she said was "I knew that you would like this guy, as far as I know you, I knew it, so if you want to just let it flow and see where it ends, your partner won't find out, he isn't even in the same city."

This part of the narrative provided by Natalia clearly evidences both the identification of the theory in real life with the double standard that the girl pursues in her relationships with men and how the interactions with her friends encourage her in reproducing this pattern of the *warrior's rest*. It becomes clear that Natalia's girlfriend's humiliating behavior toward her partner is tolerated and appreciated by their friends. When Natalia's friend asks her boyfriend in front of their friends for how long they had not had sexual intercourse, she is not merely posing a question. She is reproaching him for not having sex and ridiculing him as the person responsible for that situation. Whereas Natalia shows her rejection toward this behavior in the interview, according to her narrative, the friends seem to approve of this kind of behavior by laughing at her partner. This communicative act of laughing shows that the social practice of humiliating the partner is accepted and even emphasized since the person who humiliates finds approval for this in her circle of friends. According to the narrative, neither the partner who is humiliated nor the friends make any gesture of stopping this violent behavior expressed in the woman's words. Despite the general acceptance of this situation, Natalia reports her discomfort with this kind of interactions and classifies them as violence. However, she does not report any communicative act expressed by any of the friends that would show this discomfort and counteract the behavior in question.

Moreover, Natalia also recalls how she and the group reacted to her friend's crush on one of the "worst" guys from their circle of friends. While Natalia explains that she and another friend did not encourage her in progressing this affair, the narrative does not provide any evidence of communicative acts that would prevent her from engaging in this endeavor. Contrarily, these acts illustrate how some friends directly encourage her to reproduce the double standard and the pattern of the female *warrior's rest*. Thus, by saying that she should continue with her affair while maintaining her partner's relationship, she is being incited to cheat on her boyfriend.

Lastly, the narrative also clearly shows that the use of language refers to either model of masculinity that Natalia's friend gets involved with. Whereas she ridicules her partner for whom she does not feel any sexual excitement in front of others, she expresses a desire for another man they consider as *the worst* for his dominant attitude. When explaining how her friend talks about this man, Natalia employed a tone of voice where the interviewer clearly identifies excitement and desire. At the same



time, the sentence “the other day I’ve been dancing with him, oh, and I got so excited! And I felt so guilty because it’s such a long time that I didn’t feel that way! And especially with him, who is the worst! I shouldn’t feel that way about him!” shows the contradiction she experiences between what would be ethical and what she desires. It is precisely this contradiction which is promoted in the interactions with her friends, who encourage her to pursue the double standard, that is, leading her to continue to practice the pattern of the *warrior’s rest* in having a “good guy” as her stable partner and sexual excitement with “the worst guy” as an affair. Nonetheless, this role inversion and double standard reproduction are not always successful, particularly when men, who act following the premises of the NAM model, respond with a more principled reply. Several examples of this are presented in the following section.

## Guys Say It’s Enough! Moving Forward to Build the NAM

Eduard’s story illustrates some situations he experienced with an ex-girlfriend where he stopped her intention to transform him as the *warrior’s rest*, as he explained to his ex-girlfriend, who wanted a stable relationship to become a young mother and for that reason she desired a “good guy.” Her previous relationships mainly were with “bad boys,” but she was very anxious to get involved with a man that she could rapidly start a stable relationship.

Eduard: After 1 month of dating she asked me whether I loved her. . . and well she was in a hurry to run with that. But of course my reaction was “What are you doing?” right? I mean, “Your pushing an accelerator that doesn’t exist, there are no accelerators for that. Or it goes or it does not. But don’t think that everything goes as you want because you have already finished the puzzle and I am the missing piece in your puzzle.”

In Eduard’s relationship, there were different situations like this. In this regard, his ex-girlfriend continuously tried to confound him with scorning statements as an attempt to control his decisions. In the following quote, Eduard explains another of these situations.

Eduard: I am part of a men’s group and we meet monthly. So, we [he and his ex-girlfriend] met for the weekend, she came to sleep over on Friday, and we do the meetings on Saturdays and this time I had completely forgotten about it because we changed the date, we brought the date forward, I didn’t write it down, my fault, but she knew the importance it had to me. So I told her, that we couldn’t leave that weekend, that I was very sorry, I had mixed up the dates, but that we had the meeting and I couldn’t stop to go. She directly started to make a fuss, but a . . . a huge fuss! (laughs) and I told her, also in other words, that I didn’t want that, that she should take her things and leave, that I didn’t want these kind of situations and less in my house, that she knew perfectly what makes me happy and to be honest that weekend, we didn’t have anything super

important to do so that I couldn’t go to the meeting. So it was perfectly compatible.

Interviewer: And how did the situation end?

Eduard: Well she had an anxiety attack, fake, fake, she started to hyperventilate and you can see that she does so because . . . So I waited until it was over and I told her again to get it together and leave, that I didn’t want her to be there. But in the end it was late at night and I didn’t want her to be out on the streets on her own, so I took her home.

In his narrative, Eduard exemplifies his ex-girlfriend’s expectations toward the relationship and him, and when she saw that he would not exactly respond to her expectations, she started to get angry and act aggressively. In fact, the interactions described above evidence an adverse reaction in a given situation that his ex-girlfriend disliked. Eduard associates this reaction to his involvement in a men’s group where non-egalitarian myths such as the *warrior’s rest* are tackled. When the communicative acts of Eduard’s responses are analyzed, it is necessary to highlight his self-confidence in not permitting emotional blackmail and his decision to separate. Thus, it becomes clear that he rejects her behavior that, according to his interpretation, corresponds to her interest to transform him as her *warrior’s rest*.

The narrative further evidences that he keeps calm about the situation. He does not express any kind of disrespect toward her but, on the contrary, continues taking care of her and wanting the best for her. His communicative acts express that he rejects a certain behavior, and the verbal language used to express his rejection combines desire and ethics. In other words, he expresses his wish and desire for interactions free from violence by saying “I don’t want that” and by strengthening the force of this sentence with his gestures and actions of actually making her leave even when she tries to make him feel guilty about her physical condition through the anxiety attack.

A similar example is given by Clara, explaining one of her friends’ experience with his ex-girlfriend. When discussing the myth of the *warrior’s rest*, she recalls this relationship because, according to her, Laura, the ex-girlfriend of her friend Pau, shows behavioral traits that fit this description. Laura had been married, and when her dream of having children did not come true, she started to look for someone new and to recover the time she had “lost” being with the first and only man in her life. So she starts dating Pau, but when she sees that he is a good guy, Laura starts to have an affair with Juan, who is in a relationship himself and known to be disrespectful toward women and for having affairs constantly. When Pau finds out about this, he breaks up with Laura because he does not want this kind of relationship using similar communicative acts as those reported by Eduard.

Clara: He said “girl I think it’s great that you make out with anyone you like, maybe it’s not our time, enjoy it, and maybe in some years we find each other again and we’ll see what happens” because he wouldn’t cut the wings of nobody. So he told her “I don’t want this for me, I don’t like this,” the fact that one person, because he found out through the chat, because she had left it open and he saw the conversation she had with Juan, the dog trainer, so he found out about it. ( . . . )

As a result, the conversation with Clara and especially the description of Pau, contrasted with the description of Juan, are interesting to analyze in terms of the type of language that she employs to describe Pau, which is full of desire evoking an attractive image of Pau.

Clara: She [the ex-girlfriend] had broken up her previous relationship because she was married and she saw Pau as something new, someone good, but he has this feature of the unknown, he likes to go to the mountains, to take out the dogs, he knows people, like something different to what she had before, but when she sees that in spite of all this he is a good guy, because he is a good guy and he is a super fair person, like . . . he is a fucking great guy! you know? A super just guy, egalitarian and so on. And she went to look for Juan who is the opposite, a chauvinist, a liar, taking advantage of everyone, and so on.

As Clara's words show, describing Pau as a "fucking great guy," as well as with the tone of voice she employed in the interview when she talks about him, a language use that mixes desire and respect is evidenced. In the first quote, Pau knows his worth, and he does not tolerate being with a woman who only wants him for a stable relationship without any passion, as it can be observed in his words: "maybe it's not our time, enjoy it" and "I don't want this for me, I don't like this." That is what Clara emphasizes in her narrative and what she values about Pau.

The communicative acts analyzed in the present section evidence their effect on women when men, following some premises of the NAM model, use language to demonstrate they are not playing second fiddle to anybody. Particularly, findings suggest how performing a language of desire challenges the chauvinist double standards that some women imitate is becoming crucial to increasing these men's sex appeal. In other words, this language generates attraction and excitement because it is especially based on self-confidence as well as coherence between the words and the feelings that men exhibit by rejecting being a female *warrior's rest*.

## DISCUSSION

The present research adds new knowledge through the analysis of communicative acts and masculinities, evidencing the importance of language uses in reproducing the double standards in gender relations. Although some previous analyses confirmed how the traditional double standard is reproduced from a language of desire which promotes dominant masculinities (Flecha et al., 2013; López de Aguilera et al., 2020), there are no deeper analysis on how this language maintains this double standard throughout practices as the myth of *warrior's rest* implies. Scientific literature has also confirmed that some women reproduce this double standard by imitating this myth (Lyons et al., 2011) and by how they choose "nice guys" for stable relationships and "macho men" for having "fun" and sexual encounters (Herold and Milhausen, 1999; Urbaniak and Kilmann, 2003; McDaniel, 2005; Ahmetoglu and Swami, 2012). However, none of these analyses study in

detail the role of interactions, conversations, and non-verbal language in the perpetuation of this conventional male practice. Thus, our analysis contributes to a focus on this gap on the influence of people's communication on the shaping of this myth.

The second contribution of the article refers to the importance of communicative acts and their influence on partner selection among men (Renninger et al., 2004; Brak-Lamy, 2015; Fisher et al., 2020). The present research provides a novel insight into the potential of the use of language to break the tendency of reproducing the double standard in heterosexual relationships and the model of the female warrior. The evidence of language use contributes to emphasizing the distinct features of alternative masculinities to the hegemonic model and represents a theoretical model of masculinity that can contribute to gender violence prevention. In this regard, the present research shows that some men use communicative acts to overcome a pattern of female behaviors based on the dominant OTM or being dominated by DTM. With a language of desire, these men do not allow oppression and domination by women who behave as female *warriors* but show their rejection of this kind of behavior. Both of the above contributions should be examined considering some limitations regarding access to suitable participants willing to provide information on the sensitive themes addressed, which may have limited the data obtained. Another limitation is related to relying on participants' self-reported data that may involve potential limitations regarding selective memory when recalling past events, together with attributing events and outcomes to lived situations and interactions experienced with other people. Nevertheless, the findings presented have several future implications for research and educational interventions to address gender violence. Concerning research, there is a dearth of investigations that focus their attention on the importance of language in the reproduction of traditional practices, like the myth of *warrior's rest*, where female attraction to "bad boys" is encouraged or supported. Therefore, this is a research field that could be widened in order to understand how and why these practices are maintained and which kind of languages use can contribute to preventing them. Referring to interventions, the results presented in the article can help to construct educational actions and to design social policies where the language of desire and NAM become a central focus of educational practice for gender equality and liberation from patriarchal assumptions and hegemonic practices.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

All participants were informed that their participation was anonymous and voluntary and that data would be

treated confidentially and used for research purposes only. Ethical requirements were addressed following the Ethical Review Procedure established by the European Commission (2013) for EU research, the Data Protection Directive 95/46/EC, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000/C 364/01). This research was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of the Community of Research on Excellence for all.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

LR-E performed the conceptualization. LR-E and GM conducted the research and investigation process. LR-E, GM, and AT conducted the data analysis. LR-E, GM, and AT prepared the

original draft. LR-E and JC revised the draft critically for important intellectual content. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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# Corrigendum: Making Choices in Discourse: New Alternative Masculinities Opposing the “Warrior’s Rest”

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In the published article, there were two errors in affiliations 2 and 4. The affiliations 2 and 4 are interchanged. Instead of “Department of Education, Nebrija University, Madrid, Spain” for affiliation 2, it should be “Department of Sociology, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain.” Also, Instead of “Department of Sociology, University of Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain” for affiliation number 4 it should be “Department of Education, Nebrija University, Madrid, Spain.”

In the published article, there is an error in the correspondence email. Instead of “guiomar.merodio@gmail.com” it should be, gmerodio@nebrija.es.

The authors apologize for this error and state that this does not change the scientific conclusions of the article in any way. The original article has been updated.

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# “Three Steps Above Heaven? Really? That’s All Tactic!” New Alternative Masculinities Dismantling Dominant Traditional Masculinity’s Strategies

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Research on preventive socialization of gender violence has contributed abundant empirical evidence that attraction to violence is common among adolescents. This has meant that “bad guys,” or those who reflect the Dominant Traditional Masculinity (DTM) model, are chiefly perceived as appealing, while “good guys” are perceived as good friends but not desirable. The mainstream media tends to reproduce this traditional model of affective-sexual relationships, which has harmful effects on young girls concerning gender and sexuality. However, New Alternative Masculinity men are challenging this traditional and unsatisfactory model of affective-sexual relationships. The 2010 Spanish version of the movie *Three Steps above Heaven*, a good example of this kind of media product, has proven to greatly impact communicative acts among adolescents. This article explores how this influence on adolescents is because the communicative acts about Hache – the main character in the movie – are full of the language of desire, and his own communicative acts are full of violence. On the one hand, we analyze how *Three Steps above Heaven* employs communicative acts to enhance the attractiveness of DTM. On the other hand, based on the evidence gathered in a communicative focus group (CFG) addressed to 15- and 16-year-old female adolescents, we analyze how New Alternative Masculinity men are demystifying Hache and the idea of having a “Three Steps Above Heaven” by demonstrating with the powerful language of desire that men like him employ farce strategies. The article includes evidence from interventions with adolescents where discussion of movies like this, with the involvement of New Alternative Masculinity men and grounded in the language of desire, can transform the perception about the sexual-affective relationship in the movie, thus counteracting their negative influence in terms of attraction to violence.

**Keywords:** communicative acts, dominant traditional masculinities, new alternative masculinities, language of desire, violence, preventive socialization

## INTRODUCTION

Violence in affective-sexual relationships is a global public health problem that affects women of different ages and socio-economic contexts (United Nations Statistics Division, 2015), both in stable and sporadic relationships (Puigvert et al., 2019). Gender-based violence affects young women to a greater extent (Stöckl et al., 2014). Having suffered violent relationships entails a series of severe health risks, including symptoms of depression and anxiety and suicidal ideations (Exner-Cortens et al., 2013). One of the risk factors that increase the chances of suffering violence in affective-sexual relationships is the influence of a dominant coercive discourse that connects attraction with violent attitudes and behaviors (Puigvert et al., 2019). This discourse is disseminated through the media and the primary agents of socialization (Gómez, 2014).

For many Spanish adolescents, the 2010 Spanish version of the Italian movie *Three Steps above Heaven* (from now on, 3MSC, from the Spanish title *3 Metros sobre el Cielo*), originally a book written by Federico Moccia, is the most, or at least, one of the most exciting love stories they have ever known. Additionally, Hache, the main male character, is one of the most appealing boys and, by extension, Mario Casas, the actor performing this role, has become an idol for teenagers. For example, one of the posts about this film in the most popular Spanish magazine for adolescents revealed how teenagers' communicative acts considered both Hache and his affective-sexual relationship with Babi (the girl) as examples of excitement and desire. This is also present in the large amount of 3MSC-related content created by Internet users such as comments, photomontages, or even Twitter and Facebook accounts exclusively created to reproduce Hache's words.<sup>1</sup>

Steinberg already addressed the influence of media "for good, for bad, or for the ugly" (Macedo and Steinberg, 2007) and warned of the deleterious impact of commercial culture on children. She also explored these harmful effects on young girls with regard to gender and sexuality (Steinberg and Kincheloe, 1998). Along the same vein, our analysis of the film's communicative acts uncovers the connection between supposed "love relationships" and the violence that has been identified in research on violence against women (Town and Adams, 2000; Borochowitz and Eisikovits, 2002). Nevertheless, these and other findings lead us to argue that 3MSC is not actually a "love story" but is instead a simple reproduction of the coercive dominant discourse, which links attractiveness to violent attitudes and behaviors (Puigvert et al., 2019). This model is based on a double standard (Gómez, 2014) that separates affection, stability, and friendship from excitement, arousal, and fun, and thus establishes a dichotomy between those to be in love and those to have passionate relationships that is evident and recurrent among adolescents and young women (Puigvert et al., 2019; Ruiz-Eugenio et al., 2020b).

Hache's character clearly belongs to the second group, as he is the archetype of Dominant Traditional Masculinity (DTM; Flecha et al., 2013). According to Gómez (2014) and contrary to popular belief and the image represented in the film, this type of man does not love or fall in love. As hunters, they are cold, calculating and fraudulent in their maneuvers to trap women.

The first objective of this article is to dismantle DTM strategies through the analysis of the communicative acts in 3MSC referred to and performed by Hache (presented in the section "Dismantling Hache's Attractiveness in 3MSC"). In line with Subero et al. (2015) claim for the recognition of the multiple literacies that emerge from using different semiotic resources in different contexts of life and activity, research on hegemonic masculinity and its representation in mainstream media discourse has focused on the use of semiotic resources such as body image and language to reproduce heterosexual norms (Kivel and Johnson, 2009; Hiramoto, 2010) and the relation of this process to the "social semiotics of desire" (Cameron and Kulick, 2003). The semiotic notion of intertextuality (Kristeva, 1980) provided an explanatory basis for the mutual influence of text and context. Thus, we can argue that 3MSC depicts intertextual discursive practices that connect its main characters, Hache and Babi, with the hero and babe archetypes of heterosexual normativity- note that even their names evoke the archetypes- as described by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003). These authors also explained the link between the so called heterosexual market (Thorne, 1993), its importance in the emerging adolescent social order and its influence on the way teenagers mold themselves as objects of desire to others (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003). Furthermore, Williams and Harper (2014) also noted that many research studies identified media as the origin of "gendered sexual scripts," or the understandable conventions that organize sexual encounters (Simon and Gagnon, 1986), so that these "scripts" effectively dictate who will do what and when in a particular context. Recent contributions from Socioneuroscience show that the more intense the socialization linked to the dominant coercive discourse, the more emotional reactions of attraction to aggressive or violent men will occur (Puigvert et al., 2019).

In this respect, research on preventive socialization of gender violence has contributed abundant empirical evidence about the influence of the abovementioned coercive dominant discourse among adolescents (Puigvert et al., 2019). This has meant that "bad guys," or those who reflect the DTM model, are chiefly perceived as appealing, while "good guys" are perceived as good friends, but not desirable. This finding is consistent with the great success of Hache and the double standard "created by DTM men as part of their domination in our patriarchal societies" (Flecha et al., 2013, p. 100). However, New Alternative Masculinities (NAM) men are challenging this traditional and unsatisfactory model of affective-sexual relationships (Portell and Pulido, 2012).

Previous research points out that heterosexual young women tend to accept the symbolic violence in 3MSC (Cardona et al., 2019). On the other hand, various investigations framed in preventive socialization of gender violence have shown

<sup>1</sup>See examples at: <http://frasesdelapelicula.com/tres-metros-sobre-el-cielo-3msc/>  
<http://desmotivaciones.es/218992/3-metros-sobre-el-cielo>  
<https://twitter.com/FrasesDeHache>  
<https://www.facebook.com/FrasesDeHache>



that interactions based on the language of desire (Puigvert, 2016; Rios-González et al., 2018) are capable of transforming preferences in adolescent women choices, thus freeing participants from the pressure exerted by the dominant coercive discourse (Flecha et al., 2011; Racionero-Plaza et al., 2020; Ruiz-Eugenio et al., 2020a).

In this line, the second objective of this article is to demonstrate that interventions with adolescents discussing movies like 3MSC, with the involvement of NAM and grounded in the language of desire (Puigvert, 2016), can transform the perception about the sexual-affective relationship in the movie. The communicative acts gathered for the discussion group with the girls showed that dialogs framed by scientific evidence on male and attraction models can counteract mainstream socialization on these issues. Thus, at the end of discussions like the one analyzed in this article's section "Changing Language of Desire: The Adolescents' Voices," participants have more information to assess whether their own desires and choices are leading them toward stormy and even violent relationships or to fully satisfying and violence-free relationships.

## ABOUT 3MSC

The Spanish version of 3MSC was the highest-grossing Spanish movie in 2010. It presents a supposed love story between Hache and Babi, two teenagers who live in worlds that appear almost irreconcilable. She is a good high school student and the older daughter of an affluent family, while he is a tough and violent biker that wastes his time riding his bike at top speed and getting into trouble with his gang. They are attracted to each other and, despite many difficulties, begin to date. Everything seems perfect, until Hache blunders several times because of his aggressive and violent attitude. In the climax of the story, Hache even hits Babi's face and this ends their relationship. Then, Hache is portrayed as a very sorry and shattered boy who is the victim of his past suffering and instincts.

To fully understand the analysis in the following sections, we provide a short presentation of the film's main characters:

- a. Hache is the main male character, a biker who always wears a black leather jacket and rides without a helmet. He does not study or work and mixes with lower-class bikers who like to drink alcohol, hold illegal motorcycle races and party. They shape a dangerous environment in which Hache appears to be the toughest guy.
- b. Babi is the main female character, a pretty high-class student who wears a school uniform. She is virgin, unlike her best friend Catina, and she appears to be the perfect daughter: responsible, quiet, kind, sweet, and intelligent.
- c. Dani is Babi's little sister. She is the crazy girl in her home and displays great admiration and desire for Hache. Her continuous phone conversations with her friends are an interesting narrative resource because in many cases Dani makes explicit her sister's thoughts.
- d. Mara is Babi's nemesis, a tough lower-class girl who used to have sex with Hache until he leaves her for Babi. She is hooked on Hache and accepts her secondary role, though she suffers a lot.
- e. Chico is the alternative to Hache presented by the movie. He and Babi are about to date at the beginning of the story. However, a series of circumstances lead him, Babi and Hache to a dark and deserted road on the outskirts of the city. Hache hits Chico and, when Babi tries to defend Chico by jumping on Hache's back and shouting at him, Chico takes advantage of the situation and escapes without her. Hache's sardonic comment ("And he bailed!") to Babi after that sheds a very unflattering light on Chico, and presents him as a weak, selfish coward.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The results presented in this article are based on two different studies: the analysis of the 2010 Spanish movie version of 3MSC and a communicative focus group (CFG) held to discuss the movie and adolescents' attraction models. In both cases, the focus was on communicative acts because prior research demonstrated their strong influence on affective-sexual relationships and the construction of NAM (Searle and Soler, 2005).

### Analysis of the Movie 3MSC

The analysis of the movie revolves around the communicative acts that reflect excitement, desire, or attraction toward Hache and on Hache's own communicative acts that reveal violence or domination. In short, it is about exploring how the 3MSC script is full of communicative acts that enhance DTM's attractiveness. Similar to Wingard and Lovaas (2014), our detailed language-in-use analysis does not focus on isolated comments, but we take into account the sequential context of the segments in which communicative acts occurs. Therefore, we selected six segments (five developed in detail as examples and the other one alluded more concisely in section "Dismantling Hache's Attractiveness in 3MSC"), which display communicative acts that clearly illustrate the following analysis categories:

- a. Snubs, taunts, and provocation to get the girl's attention.
- b. Connection with delinquency and risk taking.
- c. The creation of doubts and insecurity.
- d. Winner, leader, and hero.
- e. Justification of violent behavior.
- f. Self-confidence.

Two more categories have been identified that do not enhance Hache's attractiveness, but are useful to subvert it:

- a. Selfish interest and unequal starting points.
- b. Excitement only in hunting.

### Communicative Focus Group

The second study was based on the analysis conducted in the first study. We used this analysis to edit a 18 min video with some of the most illustrative scenes in this respect together with others that are important to understand the 3MSC story as a whole. With the aim to dismantle the strategies that present Hache as attractive, we wrote short and forceful messages trying to reveal

and, if possible, ridicule the strategy at stake. These comments were added to the selected scenes, generally at the end, to bring the strategies and the arguments against them face to face.

This video was shown to a group of eight female adolescents (ages 15–16) who participated in the CFG. Since the research focused exclusively on heterosexual affective-sexual relationships and more specifically on the attraction of young girls toward DTM men, participants were only heterosexual girls that have explicitly express that they liked very much the movie, and particularly Hache, the male leading role representing the paradigm of DTM men.

They all were classmates in a secondary education center. The CFG took place in one of their school's classrooms and in the presence of one of their male teachers. The girls asked for their parent's permission to participate and attended the school in their free time to participate in this discussion about the boys they feel attracted to and why. Additionally, the teacher and the researcher both had previous experience in discussions and workshops with adolescents about attraction models and NAM, so they could create a climate of confidence in which the girls could talk clearly and honestly.

The CFG lasted an hour and a half and followed this outline: presentation of the masculinity models and preliminary questions, viewing of the 18 min edited video about 3MSC, discussion about Hache and the DTM boys, viewing of another 11 min video (about the film "The Lucky One" and specially edited to display the attractiveness of a NAM character named Logan), discussion and comparison of DTM and NAM characters. The use of these materials and their subsequent discussion is consistent with the role a researcher is supposed to play in CFG, that is, "to motivate the participants of the group to engage in the debate and to bring their arguments – their lifeworld" (Díez-Palomar et al., 2014). At the same time, the researcher is also charged with bringing scientific evidence on the topic into the discussion (Martí and Mertens, 2014).

This data collection technique was selected because of its suitability for this study. Traditional focus groups are stressed by Click et al. (2014) for understanding how audiences make sense of TV because discussion offers a better sense of participants' perspectives. Moreover, the communicative methodology of research has proved to be very effective for the identification and analysis of some elements underlying violence against women and has had an important impact in transforming situations of inequality (Gómez et al., 2011). Accordingly, the CFG aims not only to help in the collective generation of scientific knowledge through egalitarian dialog between researchers and participants but also to transform the context through this process of reflection (Aubert et al., 2011; Ruiz-Eugenio et al., 2020a). In this case, the second objective is to transform adolescents' perceptions of the affective-sexual relationship depicted in 3MSC and, by extension, to question the mainstream attraction model that favors DTM boys.

The analysis of the data collected in the CFG (see section "Changing Language of Desire: The Adolescents' Voices") principally involved two categories: "perspectives on Hache's violence" and the "division between boys desired for one night and boys for long-lasting relationships." According to the communicative methodology, the data analysis also took into

account the exclusionary and transformative components of the communicative acts collected. The text does not formally separate these two dimensions, but the analysis is presented chronologically, to better suit proposal of detailed language-in-use analysis of Wingard and Lovaas (2014), which focuses on the sequential context of the segments in which communicative acts occur.

## Ethical Considerations

The research team ensured all significant ethical standards, including informing participants of the aim of the study and procedures, also in terms of confidentiality, coding CFG and anonymization of participant information. Ethical approval for the study was obtained by the research ethics committee of CREA Community of Research on Excellence for All.

## RESULTS

### Dismantling Hache's Attractiveness in 3MSC

In this section, we discuss our analysis of the communicative acts displayed in 3MSC that enhance the attractiveness of Hache and, by extension, of DTM men. The order in which, we present the different examples is the same order that they appear in the movie. Some refer to the speech acts of Hache himself and others are the acts of other characters, but in all cases the narrative language employed in the film uses many semiotic resources (music, sound effects, locations, the characters' clothes, gestures and tone of voice or even the context in which they take place) to shape communicative acts full of the language of desire (Flecha and Puigvert, 2010). This element has proved to be essential to both the analysis of the origins of violence against women and to its prevention.

Example 1 describes the communicative acts when Hache and Babi first meet:

1. Hache has just left the court where he was condemned for brutal aggression against his mother's lover. His voiceover expresses his bad feelings and his disdain toward the people surrounding him: the victim of his aggression, the judge, his father, and his brother. He starts his powerful and customized motorbike and rides at high speed. He does not use a helmet and wears his characteristic black leather jacket half-opened.

When he is passing by some cars stopped by the traffic lights and is about to see Babi, his voiceover says:

"And suddenly it happens: something triggers and in that moment you know that things are going to change. They have already changed."

Then, Hache sees Babi, who is in the backseat of her father's car, with her head out of the window, stops his motorbike and screams at her aggressively:

Hache: Ugly! (Whistles at her) Yes, you!

Babi puts her head back into the car. She looks astonished. Then, Hache pulls his motorbike up next to Babi's car, touches her hand and laughs at her repeating:

Hache: Ugly, what?....

Babi quickly separates her hand from Hache's and looks angry and surprised at the same time. When they are moving away, Babi puts her head again out of the window and gives the finger to Hache (this gesture means fuck you). However, when she puts her head again into the car, Babi's expression changes from anger to excitement and pleasure, and she even smiles a little at the blank look on his face at the end of the scene.

This scene reveals a common DTM tactic, which consists of attracting the girl's attention through snubs, taunts, and provocation. Moreover, these forms of mistreatment are usually conducted in a way that makes the girl feel insecure. In the example, Babi probably always thought she was pretty, but suddenly a stranger appears and screams "ugly" at her in such an aggressive and intrusive way. This strategy is always conducted by boys who try to portray the self-image of being untouchable and bastard. Research relates these features to boys who usually are considered very attractive by adolescents (Puigvert et al., 2019) and is consistent with the purpose of this strategy: to get the girl by making her feel she is the chosen one. In fact, Babi's reaction demonstrates that the tactic worked. Situations like the one described in this example illustrate how mainstream socialization influences the separation of the language of ethics and the language of desire (Aubert et al., 2011), a matter that lays at the foundation of the double standard. DTM's behavior is not perceived as good (at first, Babi rejects him), but it provokes the arousal of desire.

In addition to the strategies of the DTM character, the situation described above also shapes the communicative acts that contribute to DTM's attractiveness. The fact that the judge considers Hache guilty for assault plus his riding on a powerful motorcycle without a helmet at high speed connects him with delinquency and risk taking. These two elements attract the romantic interest of adolescents, according to Rebellon and Manasse (2004).

Attraction to the untouchable and aloof boy is also evident in another scene in which Mara ("the other girl") is talking to a friend about Hache. She went to bed with him twice and she is looking forward to receiving a phone call from him. Her friend argues that having had sex with him a couple of times does not mean they are together. However, Mara tries to justify Hache's inattention because "he never calls." At that very moment, Hache arrives riding his motorcycle and Mara shows her excitement by touching her friends' arm nervously. Hache takes off his leather jacket, while he is walking and gives Mara the "great honor" of holding the jacket during the flexing exercises contest in which he becomes the winner in front of the whole gang. Mara's facial expression after Hache's victory, which shows great joy, pride and desire illustrates how DTM's strategy of creating doubt (Mara never knows if Hache is going to meet her again or if he is dating other girls) can generate excitement and attraction in addition to anguish and suffering. Mainstream socialization in sexual-affective relations has a great impact on Mara's election and attraction (Gómez, 2014) because doubt, anguish, and suffering do not lead her to break up with Hache, but actually create more excitement.

This scene identifies Hache as a winner, a leader that exercises influence over the others. Leadership is also attributed to attractive boys and this feature also connects with the hero character referenced frequently in research on media and hegemonic masculinity (Kivel and Johnson, 2009; Hiramoto, 2010). Nevertheless, it is important to make clear that, unlike many heroes represented in cultural texts throughout history, DTM men link leadership with dominance over the others, so that they generate fear and submission (Valls et al., 2008). 3MSC tries to identify Hache as a hero through diverse communicative acts, like those exposed in the following example 2:

1. Hache and his gang burst into a party in the high-class neighborhood, where Babi is one of the guests. When Hache sees her, he repeats the strategy of taunting and provoking to attract her attention. She finally reacts by throwing her milkshake into Hache's face. Hache responds violently by catching Babi and placing her on his shoulders, while pushing Chico to the ground. Then, Hache dives into the swimming pool carrying Babi on his shoulders.

When Chico is later driving Babi home in his car, they are attacked by Hache's gang on their motorbikes. The chase ends with Chico running away from Hache, who was beating him, leaving Babi alone with Hache in the dark and on a dangerous road far from the city. Finally, after facing another cocky boy who addresses Babi cheekily, Hache drives Babi home. He is wearing only his leather jacket because he got wet in the swimming pool. Babi's dress is also wet, making her sylphlike body curve more evident.

When they arrive, they meet Babi's parents and sister, Dani. She looks at him lewdly from top to bottom and greets him. Later, when they are alone:

Dani: (very excited and nervous, showing admiration to Babi) What are you doing with him? Are you going out with him?

Babi: (annoyed) I do not even know him....

Dani: (with enthusiasm) His name is Hugo Olivera, but he is called Hache. They say something terrible happened to him and that he wants to forget his name. My friends and I say that he is Hache, the hero. He seems like he saved your life....

This example provides several different elements that are worthy of analysis. First, the characterization of the hero as tough and aggressive has proven to be appealing for many adolescents and the general audience (Hiramoto, 2010; Click et al., 2014). Second, heroes are sexually desired by women, so "being a hero and being strong will get you the 'girl' in the end" (Kivel and Johnson, 2009; McDonald, 2015). Third, communicative acts within the peer group, represented by Dani, exert a great influence on adolescents' tastes and preferences because they are performed through the language of desire. The idea of the protector who could "save your life," as referenced by Dani refers to the moment in which Hache faces another cocky boy supposedly to keep Babi safe from him. It is worth paying more attention to this fragment of the scene previously narrated, but exposed more in detail in the following example 3:

1. Chico has just run away from Hache and left Babi alone with him on a dark and deserted road outside of the city. Babi is completely wet and her wet dress makes her sylphlike body curve more evident. Desperate, she tries to stop a car to get a ride home. A big customized red car with a big spoiler stops and the driver, showing big tattoos in his arm leaning on the car window, addresses Babi cheekily: Driver: Do you want me to take you somewhere, babe? Hache: (behind Babi, sitting on his bike, with a strong bully's attitude, in loud voice) And do you want me to wring your neck, twat? Go, go away! The driver looks afraid and he immediately leaves. Hache and Babi are alone again. Babi is scared and wants to go home. Hache: (addressing Babi) Go, hop on! I have already fought enough people tonight because of you. Then, he drives Babi home safe and sound.

When Hache threatens the other cocky boy, the threat of violence pretends to be legitimate here because it is for a noble cause (Kivel and Johnson, 2009), to protect Babi from dangerous boys. This situation hints at a great paradox: although all men that are violent against women respond to the DTM model represented by Hache, the analysis of examples 2 and 3 reveal that the movie portrays Hache like a protective hero. However, in reality Hache himself created the mess and extreme circumstances that led to the dangerous situation for Babi. Presenting Hache as the rescuer from the danger he created is a rough strategy to enhance his attractiveness.

Self-confidence is another characteristic that generates attractiveness in men (Flecha et al., 2013; Castro and Mara, 2014; Joanpere and Morlà, 2019), so in 3MSC it is linked to DTM. Example 4 portrays some of the communicative acts that enhance this feature in Hache.

1. Hache hits a man (Mr. Santamaría), an acquaintance of Babi's family, in the presence of Babi. The man wanted to file a law suit against Hache and asked Babi's family for his name. Under her mother's pressure, Babi informed against Hache. With Hache's criminal record, another sentence would land him in prison. After all these events, Hache and Babi meet again incidentally in the place where illegal motorcycle races are held. When Hache sees Babi, he taunts and provokes her again. She also responds aggressively: Babi: Let us see if you are so cocky when you get the denunciation, because this afternoon I reported that it was you who broke Mr. Santamaría's nose! (Sound effects emphasizing the gravity of the situation). On hearing these words, a friend of Hache insults Babi and pretends to attack her. He knows that his friend can go to jail. However, Hache stops and calms him with a self-confident tone of voice and affectionate gestures. Then, he continues, addressing his friend, but in loud voice and walking toward Babi: Hache: The day I will be called to testify this good girl will say that I did not do anything (Very close to Babi and addressing her full of confidence). Do you know why?

Babi: (very nervous and flooded) Why?

Hache: (staring at Babi with a half-smile) Because that day you will be so crazy for me that you could do anything to save me.

Babi can only stare at him, totally flooded.

That same night, a series of circumstances force Babi and Hache to run away together from the police. During the escape, Babi loses her clothes and stays in underwear. Hache lends his leather jacket to Babi and drives her home safe on his bike again. The music and the way Babi hugs Hache and lays her head on his back with their eyes shut suggest that she is about to drown in her desires. At the same time, Hache's facial expression also reveals relaxation and satisfaction.

This scene not only depicts some of DTM's strategies to get the girl but also that the whole process of seduction is in response to his interest in avoiding prison. Herein lies the importance of analyzing communicative acts because they take into account speech acts and body language as well as the role of interactions and the context of the moment in which the communication is produced. If attention is not given to these elements, which clearly set the two protagonists on unequal starting ground, one could believe that, despite all, they really like each other. Actually, the music, the scenery and the character's expressions along the last ride described in the example above lead the audience to think that mutual feelings of love are growing between them. Nevertheless, in accordance with mainstream socialization in the coercive dominant discourse of affective-sexual relationships, Babi latches onto Hache, but not the other way round. As hunters, DTM men do not feel excitement in being with their prey, but only in hunting them (Gómez, 2014). The communicative acts in the next example (5), which occur immediately after those described in the previous one, are very illustrative in this respect:

1. When they arrive at Babi's door, Hache takes Babi from his arm and then slides his hand until hers, very serious and staring at her with desire in his eyes. She corresponds grasping sweetly one of Hache's finger with her hands, also staring at him. Their gazes are full of desire and excitement. Hache grabs Babi by her waist and moves her closer to him. She shivers and emits a labored moan, while he slides his hand up on her side. Hache puts his mouth close to Babi's ear and whispers: Hache: Are you going to inform against me? Babi: Yes (also whispering, with haunting gaze, and softly nodding. She is almost numb with excitement). Hache: (Whispering) Yes? Do you swear to me? She cannot respond. He moves her hair away from her cheek and begins to kiss her, getting close to her mouth. Their lips are almost grazing and then Babi, with her eyes shut, slightly opens her mouth, absolutely devoted to passion. At this moment Hache separates his face, taunting her. Hache: Oh, Babi, Babi, Babi! I am a pig, an animal, a beast, a violent guy, but you would let me to kiss you (Snaps his tongue and shakes his hand with the index finger raised as a sign of denial). You are an incoherent.



Babi: (Raging) And you are a bastard! (Leaving).

Hache: (Chasing and taunting her) But, what were you doing there, gaping like a little fish and begging to be snogged? Babi turns around and slaps Hache's face.

Hache: Uuuuh! (In louder voice) I want you to give me my leather jacket back! Come on!

Babi removes the jacket and throws it to Hache aggressively. She is very angry.

Hache: Little fish! Are not you going to give a goodnight kiss to me?

Babi: (Shouting) Go fuck yourself! (She leaves and slams the door).

Hache stands on the other side of the door, smiling. His expression denotes that he has already got the girl.

This key moment depicts the success of all the DTM strategies to get the girl. The evident contrast between the completely committed girl, who is looking forward to being kissed, and the aloof boy that takes advantage of the girl's desires to humiliate her reveals the irreconcilable opposition between what really excites each one of them. Yet 3MSC subsequent communicative acts try to show a beautiful and tender love story that would be impossible to believe using this analysis. First, because a relationship based on taunting, provocation, mistreatment, and constant tension cannot suddenly turn into one based on confidence, commitment, and passion with the same person. Second, because one of the parties has a selfish motive in being with the other person (not being denounced; Simmel, 1906). Third and finally, because DTM men do not fall in love or love women (Gómez, 2014), so that all communicative acts, which show Hache as a committed lover or that make Babi feel three steps above heaven are a farce.

## Changing Language of Desire: The Adolescents' Voices

Communicative acts performed in dialogic contexts like the CFG "develop interactions that strengthen attraction toward persons with egalitarian values and that question the attractiveness of those who exercise power and domination" (Aubert et al., 2011, p. 302), so that they contribute to changing adolescents' language of desire. Along the same lines, the CFG conducted in our study consisted of viewing the videos and a follow up. Before viewing the videos, the CFG participants were asked if they were attracted to Hache. They answered with an emphatic and unanimous "yes," and some saying "of course." Later, after viewing just the video, and being asked if Hache seemed attractive to them along the different scenes displayed, no one said "yes." In fact, many of them said "no," although lacking conviction, and one said "not at all." This first change reflects the questioning of their initial preferences, but not a profound transformation. Other communicative acts occurred in the framework of the CFG, which we analyze below. Special attention is given to the two issues that appeared in the debate and that promoted relevant discussion for our analysis: the diverse perspectives on Hache's violence and the division between boys desired for one night and boys for long-lasting relationships.

## Perspectives on Hache's Violence

The girls were asked for the most characteristic feature of Hache after viewing the 3MSC's scenes specially edited for the occasion. It is worth noting that this video emphasized Hache's violent behavior and strategies to get Babi. "Aggressive," "cocky," "hot-headed," and "slap-happy" were the first answers, but immediately after Girl 1 took the floor:

1. Girl 1: He also has a past. He is aggressive for one reason...

(the video shows that Hache committed his first brutal assault as a response to the discovery of his mother cheating on his father with the downstairs neighbor. The neighbor was the victim of Hache's aggression and denounced Hache).

Girl 2: Yes.

Researcher: (ironically) Of course. And as he has that reason, what should we do with him?

Girl 1: (doubting) Ok, yes, he has the reason..., he does not deserve the podium, but... I do not know..., you feel sorry for him.

Girl 3: But, you cannot let him hit you because he has a past (...). A person who loves you very much is supposed not to treat you badly, because if he appreciates you, he cannot hit you, you know? So, if I demonstrate that I love you and you love me, he is not treating me badly.... It is assumed....

Researcher: (Ironically) But, if he has a past, he suffered a lot and he is aggressive and treats you badly because he... like him (referring to Hache), he has a trauma. Then, what do you do?

Girl 4: But, if he really loves you, no matter what happened, it is not an excuse to treat you this way.

Researcher (addressing all the girls): Do you agree?

Girl 5: Yes.

Girl 6: Yes.

Girl 1 (doubtful and unwilling to change his mind): More or less....

Faced with violence, Girl 1 and Girl 2 focused on the reasons of the aggressor, while Girl 3 and Girl 4 focused on the mistreatment and its incompatibility with love, a dichotomy already identified in research (Borochowitz and Eisikovits, 2002; Enander, 2011). Later in the discussion, when Girl 2 expressed her doubts about how to forecast whether a boy is going to hit you in the future, Girl 4 and Girl 3's previous emphasis on the boy's behavior made it easier for the researcher to contribute the scientific knowledge on masculinity models. Thus, paying attention to how a boy treats others, kindly or not, aggressively or not, was presented as a good predictor of how he would treat you. At the end of the conversation, these arguments appeared again when talking about how to choose with whom to have a relationship. First, some of the girls said they look at whether the boy is good-looking and his style of dressing, but immediately after others added elements like his way of looking, attitude, behavior, or the way he treats others and the way he treats you. This was interesting because the girls included in their own discourse the knowledge derived from scientific evidence and they used these arguments for appraising a boy's attractiveness.

## Division Between Boys Desired for One Night and Boys for Long-Lasting Relationships

Most girls made a clear distinction, first, between funny (and attractive) and boring (non-attractive) boys and, second, between boys for one night and boys for stable relationships. The second separation was surprising because it was made after viewing the videos, which clearly identified the DTM (Hache) and NAM (Logan) boys, and having unanimously chosen Logan as their best option. However, when they were asked who would be their election for a one-night relationship, they chiefly opted for Hache. They thought that sex would be better with boys like Hache. When the researcher asked why, they answered:

1. Girl 3: Because he is rougher (...). You can tell he is not shy.  
 Girl 2: You can tell that he did (sex) many times.  
 Girl 7: As if he also has experience....  
 Girl 5: Because he goes hard (laughs).

These arguments were based on myths and suppositions derived from the double standard: tough guys are more determined, sexual experts, and tough sex provides more sexual pleasure. Girl 1 even said that Logan (the NAM boy displayed in the other video) would be too dull for her. In her eyes, he was not tough enough.

Wanting to emphasize the language of desire, the researcher provided arguments to dismantle the double standard, which was deeply assumed by the participants. On one hand, he argued that boys who are committed and passionate with a girl, like NAM, logically provide more sexual satisfaction than selfish boys who mistreat girls. To reinforce this position, a sex scene was shown (not from 3MSC, but from other movie and suitable for the girls' ages) in which the protagonist was a NAM and that clearly showed that the girl was having a very funny, passionate, and sexually satisfying time.

On the other hand, the researcher referred to his experience in boy's changing rooms as a former football player and revealed the comments that DTM boys make about the girls they get ("whore," "bitch"...). These contributions were consistent with the findings from the study of the phenomenon of the mirage of upward mobility (Puigvert, 2016), which is the mistaken perception of linking the fact of having a romantic relationship with people responding to DTM to raising their status and attractiveness, when in fact the contrary occurs, and both status and attractiveness decrease (Oliver, 2010-2012). In accordance with this scientific and personal evidence, he asked the girls to think about how Hache (as archetype of DTM) and Logan (NAM) would talk about them after being with them one night. They clearly and unanimously recognized that Hache would speak ill about them, while Logan would speak well. They also recognized some cases of the mirage of the upward mobility in their context. Later, at the end of the discussion, the researcher asked again who they would choose for one night: Hache or Logan. This time at least half of the girls preferred Logan.

1. Researcher (addressing Girl 3, one of the participants that first would choose Hache and later Logan for a one-night relation): You told me that you are now opting for Logan....

Girl 3: Oh.... Because... I do not know... it is true so that... it is not necessary to be with a bad boy and all that to have a funny night, because... I mean... the good guy can make you to have fun equally (...). It is better to be with a person who treats you well than other that treats you badly and so that later Hache would say: "I fucked her, she is a bitch." The other guy would not do that. I did not think about that. And that is true.

Researcher: What made you to change your mind?

Girl 3: So that then they speak ill of you.

Although Girl 3's language of desire did not change along the CFG, the use of the language of desire has proven to be useful for changing her perception and choices because she did not want to appear less attractive. This last example emphasizes the usefulness of research evidence for preventive socialization of gender violence and communicative acts for questioning the perception of girls according to mainstream socialization and for protecting them from DTM boys.

## CONCLUSION

Our analysis of 3MSC's communicative acts leads to the conclusion that they serve to promote the coercive dominant discourse, which links attractiveness with DTM. The film demonstrates that cultural texts can be instruments for normalizing violence and for making violent men appear attractive. Thus, language is used to reference social norms and point to the unsatisfactory traditional model of affective-sexual relationships, the double standard and the discriminatory patriarchal order that shelters violence against women. The dissemination of violent stories portrayed as love stories feeds the dominant coercive discourse, reinforces the double standard, and increases the risk of gender violence.

Considering the success that movies like 3MSC have among heterosexual teenage women and their impact in terms of attraction to violence, it becomes necessary to dismantle the false romantic appearance of movies that have nothing to do with love and to unveil the strategies used by DTMs to perpetuate relationships that are not based on love but on domination. The study of communicative acts, which takes into account verbal and non-verbal language and the interaction and context of communication, permits a deeper understanding of affective-sexual relationships. Accordingly, the analysis provided differences between strategies to "get girls" and interactions guided by love and affection.

Moreover, sharing this scientific evidence in a CFG with teenage girls and stressing the language of desire, proved to be effective for transforming adolescents' perceptions of the "love story" displayed in the movie. Personal choices and perceptions with regard to affective-sexual relationships were also transformed in the CFG in some cases. However, we cannot firmly assert that changes in the language of desire (that is, a profound shift in the adolescents' attraction from DTM to

NAM boys) have occurred. Actually, some adolescents participating in the discussion expressed some resistance that revealed the need for conducting further research on communicative acts and preventive socialization of gender violence because more elements are demanded to counteract the forces of the mainstream, traditional model of sexual-affective relationships.

## PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results presented in this article suggest that it is necessary to continue analyzing movies – especially those with significant impact on teenage audiences– that mask relationships of domination and present them as loving relationships, mainly focusing on the identification of the domination strategies used by DTMs. Besides, it is advisable to set up dialog processes based on the language of desire with the involvement of NAMs to counteract the negative impact that the dominant coercive discourse exerts on adolescent women in terms of attraction to violence, using the critical analysis of this type of movies as a starting point.

## LIMITATIONS

Field work data presented in this research relies upon the focus group conducted with eight adolescent heterosexual girls who claimed feeling attracted to Hache. To overcome this limitation and enrich the data, future research should explore the opinions of other adolescent profiles, including boys who identify with DTMs or NAMs, different sexual orientations, and diverse perceptions about the characters in the film.

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## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because of personal information. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to Esther Oliver-Pérez (estheroliver@ub.edu).

## ETHICS STATEMENT

The research team ensured all significant ethical standards, including informing participants of the aim of the study and procedures, also in terms of confidentiality, coding CFG and anonymization of participant information. Ethical approval for the study was obtained by the research ethics committee of CREA Community of Research on Excellence for All. Written informed consent to participate in this study was provided by the participants.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

RR-M and EO-P conceived the original idea of the article. MC-S conducted the research and data collection process and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. LB-G revised and edited the final version of the manuscript. EO-P supervised the final version. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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# I Only Want Passionate Relationships: Are You Ready for That?

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Research shows the existence of a coercive dominant discourse that associates attraction with violence and influences the socialization processes of many girls and women. According to previous studies, the coercive dominant discourse constitutes a risk factor for gender violence, as men with violent attitudes and behaviors are socially presented as attractive and exciting while egalitarian and non-aggressive men are considered “not sexy.” Yet fewer evidences indicate that men acting from the New Alternative Masculinities (NAM) model overcome this double standard through verbal and non-verbal communicative acts, which tell that they do not choose women acting under the coercive dominant discourse for a relationship because they are not “jumping for joy” when meeting them. Drawing from communicative daily life stories conducted to men and women from diverse sociocultural backgrounds and ages, this article presents how language is used in concrete heterosexual sexual-affective relationships. The analysis resulting from the fieldwork focus on how NAM men’s communicative acts with women set conditions of desire. This article shows evidence on how communicative acts of NAM empowerment incorporate “language of desire,” taking a clear position for egalitarian and passionate relationships. Implications for gender violence prevention are presented.

**Keywords:** communicative acts, communicative methodology, language of desire, language of ethics, passionate relationships, new alternative masculinities

## INTRODUCTION

Amy: When we met, he usually looked in my eyes and depending on the face, which I arrived with - showing hope or desire or enchant, then. . . he smiled.

Amy talks about a relationship with a man illustrating the impact that a communicative act has on her attitude before a date with him. The situation she describes shows the power of non-verbal communication (looking in my eyes) in social interaction, because the gestures and expressions they shared illuminate the way their “encounter” is going to occur. In this particular interaction, the man’s attitude aligns with what previous research in gender studies has defined as New Alternative Masculinities (NAM). Particularly, like the man in our example, those who embody the NAM model desire and choose girls who intensively desire to have a relationship with men

like them. Consequently, the communicative acts underpinning this example are at the core of this article, which focuses on the language use in heterosexual sexual-affective relationships. It presents and discusses data from social interactions in the context of sexual-affective relationships and demonstrates the ways in which men whose attitudes are associated with the NAM model perform these communicative acts in diverse contexts, as well as some of the resulting effects upon women.

Research has analyzed the consequences of men's communicative acts on women's attitudes under the framework of the hegemonic model of masculinity (Gordon, 1997; Georgakopoulou, 2005). Recently, this debate deepens through speech and communicative acts to defining for example consent in sexual relationships, beyond the use of the words to prevent the coercive dominant discourse (Flecha et al., 2020). In a similar vein, different authors have explored the influence of the hegemonic masculinities in the existence of a coercive dominant discourse that associates attraction with violence. In this arena, Puigvert's pioneer research analyzed the pattern of attraction in female adolescents (aged 13–16) toward boys with violent attitudes and behaviors or boys with non-violent behavior in European secondary schools (England, Spain, Cyprus, and Finland). The results show the existence of a coercive dominant discourse that associates attraction with violence and influences the socialization processes of many girls during their sexual-affective relationships' awakening, which has been shown to constitute a risk factor of gender violence (Puigvert et al., 2019). Likewise, different authors focused on the role of language use in relation to attractiveness and have demonstrated how participating in hegemonic discourses of masculinity may lead to reproduce and reinforce the hegemonic model of masculinity in social interactions (Kiesling, 2005; Richardson, 2010).

In the current dialogic societies, the hegemonic model of masculinity coexists with the emergence of the New Alternative Masculinities approach (NAM) that shows different ways to understand and live masculinity. Men who combine attraction and equality and generate sexual desire among women represent these types of masculinities –NAM– and they are being more active working against gender violence together with women (Flecha et al., 2013). In this work, we argue that social interactions with NAM men may open new possibilities to create conditions of excitement when women meet them. There is little knowledge about the communicative situations as a result of the NAMs' language use in heterosexual sexual-affective relationships that contribute to create these conditions, which may transform previous coercive dominant discourse and its consequences for women. This article addresses this question by presenting evidence based on the communicative acts of men performing under the NAM model. Moreover, it explores the effects that the use of a “language of desire” has on women.

This article has four sections. First, we present the state of the art in relation to the synergies between communicative acts, models of masculinity and consequences for women. The analysis of communicative acts performed by NAM men is relatively new, and the theoretical and empirical contributions come from diverse disciplines, enhancing understanding of the

phenomenon. After contextualizing the topic, we present the methodology of the study and the research questions. Third, we discuss the findings of the communicative daily life stories, and finally proceed to the conclusions to address potential developments in this field of study for the future.

## COMMUNICATIVE ACTS, MODELS OF MASCULINITY AND THE IMPACT ON WOMEN

Communicative acts have been widely analyzed from sociolinguistic and pragmatics perspectives (Searle, 1969; Reich, 2011). In this arena, the intentionality underpinning each speech act is crucial in the understanding of the communicative role of language. Searle's analysis of intentionality behind people's utterances (Searle, 1969; Searle et al., 1983) is well recognized. However, the analysis of communicative acts looks not only at intentionality *per se*, but its relation to the consequences of the interaction among all the participants involved. The extent to which there are power or dialogic interactions in a communicative situation explains whether a relationship is more or less dialogic or egalitarian in very diverse daily life situations (Soler and Flecha, 2010). This includes also those encounters in heterosexual sexual-affective relationships. Actually, the dialogic approach contributes to the understanding of dynamics of change in intimate relationships. Resonating with this approach, Reich (2011) introduces the notion of cooperation as a relevant element to understand conversations between subjects. According to the author, each communicative act is a proposal aimed to obtain a cooperative response. Therefore, the intentions behind speech are actually dialogically oriented. Following these contributions, the analysis of communicative acts between NAM men and women includes both, the interactions they had and the cooperative responses in their relationships.

Major advancements on linguistics and pragmatics ground a crucial aspect of this article, which is the understanding of how women (in heterosexual relationships) react to communicative acts when performed by NAM men, and the extent to which this promotes an alternative to the hegemonic model of masculinity. Some works in sociolinguistics and pragmatics' studies focus on women's conversations as they reproduce the double standards and dominant traditional male gendered identities. Georgakopoulou (2005) studied the construction of girls' erotic interests in boys and found that some girls' discourses reproduce the hegemonic images of men. According to the author's findings, girls' speech acts distinguish between boys who can be considered as “feminine” and “soft” and boys who can be described as “tough” and “hard.” The findings in this case show that the hegemonic model of masculinity is strengthened and the differentiation between “soft” and “hard” boys remains in speech, reproducing the dominant traditional standards of masculinity.

Our analysis also includes some contributions from other disciplines such as gender and sexuality studies or social psychology, as they have also explored the models of masculinity and its construction through the language use in

social contexts. Contributions from gender studies address elements such as media, cultural messages, and language uses linked to heterosexual women's sexual behaviors. As in some of the previous contributions in sociolinguistics and pragmatics, this perspective goes in depth into this type of aspects to provide evidence that may explain women's construction of sexuality. However, there is less emphasis on the socialization process influenced by the coercive dominant discourse that associates attraction with violence, appearing through social networks, TV, popular media, films, magazines, among many others. In this line, Kim et al. (2007) develop a discourse analysis of prime-time television programs frequently watched by teenagers. The conclusions state the persistence of a heteronormative discourse on sexual scripts, which reproduce male characters who are insistent and aggressive when looking for sex. As in Georgakopoulou (2005) and Gordon's contributions (1997), Kim's findings confirm the use of language linked to the dominant traditional model of masculinity.

The cultural dimension appears as relevant to the socialization process of many girls and women, influenced by the coercive dominant discourse that fosters attraction toward violence. Recent scientific literature on this topic, shows that coercive dominant discourse constitutes a fundamental risk factor of gender violence. This coercive dominant discourse influences many girls' and women's socialization into linking attractiveness to men with violent attitudes and behaviors. In this vein, research on risk factors related to gender violence developed from a preventive socialization of gender violence approach has identified that there is a coercive dominant discourse in which people with violent attitudes and behaviors are socially portrayed as attractive and exciting (Puigvert et al., 2019).

Some contributions from social psychology and interdisciplinary approaches are unveiling transformative results on women's communicative acts and their sexual-affective relationships. According to this, Jackson and Cram (2003) conducted a large study of young heterosexual women's talks about their sexual relationships. As a result, they argue how girls reject dominant traditional sexual conceptions by using several alternative messages against double standards. However, the authors also note that these discourses would be silenced should there not be the support from educators and teachers. This contribution is particularly relevant to our understanding about how discourses and meaning are developed by diversity of agents, including educational leaders addressing gender issues (Samul, 2020) or school principals responding to cultural diversity (Parthenis and Fragoulis, 2020), direct or indirectly involved in a particular situation and interaction. Furthermore, there is evidence of how in concrete regimes and contexts, schools, and educators impose the dominant hegemonic masculinity in students (Bhatty and Sundar, 2020).

Pioneer research on this topic presents crucial findings that resonate with the impact of communicative acts in sexual-affective relationships. Gómez's (2015) contribution on young sexual and affective relationship, from an interdisciplinary perspective, highlights the relevance of socialization process in shaping heterosexual young men and women's patterns of

attraction by including language use and interaction with media, peers and family, among other agents. While this socialization process is characterized by attraction to dominant and aggressive masculinities, the author also argues that alternative sexual-affective relationships are built in dialogic spaces. In the same vein, Flecha and Puigvert (2010) contribute a new concept by describing dialogic spaces and relationships that mix both language of desire and ethics. Recent studies in the field, deepen on the impact of the language of ethics and double standards in the affective and sexual socialization. Rios-González et al. (2018) focus the analysis on the role that family environment and language have in the process of linking the language of ethics and the language of desire.

The analyses on men's communicative acts about their sexuality or sexual-affective relationships exemplify the predominance of discourses and language uses that perpetuate the gender normativity as well as the hegemonic masculinity's practices (Murphy et al., 1999; Kiesling, 2005; Richardson, 2010; Bowleg et al., 2015). From different perspectives, these contributions support the fact that heterosexual men's conversations are not creating alternative discourses in relation to men's sexual-affective experience. Therefore, it could be argued that the existing literature has not yet contributed to overcoming the double standard or attraction patterns.

Other works analyze heterosexual men's communicative acts that pay more attention on the interconnections between men's conversations and their sexual behavior and personality (Murphy et al., 1999; Bowleg et al., 2015). Murphy et al. (1999) set up an experimental investigation with men with high and low rates of likelihood to sexually harass (LSH) in their interactions with women. They discover relevant differences on non-verbal language performed by high and low LSH men. In the first case, men show more dominant and aggressive non-verbal language than the second group. However, the percentage does not differ when sexual non-verbal language was developed. In an exploration of Northern-American heterosexual black men discourses and conversations about safe sex, Bowleg et al. (2015) studied sexual practices and found how these men follow conventional masculinity patterns when they talk about sexuality. For instance, they used to blame women for their non-safe sexual practices and consequent HIV infection. According to the authors, there are relevant implications emerging from this analysis because it shows the need to plan gender-based interventions to prevent exclusionary and chauvinist masculine discourses.

Within the line of advancing research that provides transformative elements with regards to masculinity and communicative acts on sexual-affective relationships, De Meyer et al. (2014) observe a significant correlation between adolescents' sexual life and supporting gender equality discourses. Thus, boys addressing egalitarian principles point to be more sexually satisfied and with a better communication with their girlfriends. Likewise, Rodríguez-Navarro et al. (2014) also unveil how egalitarian discourses and heterosexual alternative men are being supported, but they stress the importance of teachers and educators to foster this support. According to these contributions, it is critical to take advantage of successful

interventions that result on more desirable new alternative masculinities and less dominant traditional masculinities. Examining the communicative acts that resonate with the NAM approach and its impact on heterosexual women seems critical to advance knowledge in creating new contexts for transformative interactions (Rodríguez-Navarro et al., 2014).

Through communicative analysis, Richardson (2010) identified a strong influence of peers' conversations on their sexuality. While prior works had already underlined the impact of peer group on adolescent and children's socialization processes (Reay, 2001; Skelton, 2002), Richardson takes a step further in relation to sexuality. The author identifies how heterosexual young men would reproduce hegemonic communicative acts in relation to their sexual practices in order to have the approval of their colleagues. Once again, verbal and non-verbal communication with other subjects is underpinning the reproduction of a certain model of masculinity. Additionally, the author also argues that young heterosexual men should daily face with contradictory gender conceptions, which are conditioning their sexual talk and not contributing to overcome associated traditional problems, as double standards or sexual mis-education. In this sense, Kiesling (2005) reaches similar conclusions in the analysis of men's talks in university fraternities. The author observed how men perform discourses where heterosexuality and masculine solidarity is given priority, although there is a lack of profound sharing of conversations on sex and related issues. Consequently, Kiesling states that men's rejection to share conversations about their intimacy is strongly connected with the traditional cultural conception of masculinity. Deepening on this issue in the current societies, at a legal, political, citizen, and scientific level there is an enormous concern about the communicative acts that promote or not the consent of sexual relations through communicative acts. This is a field of exploration with a crucial impact on the prevention of abusive relationships for girls (Flecha et al., 2020). In this vein, there are studies that deepen communicative acts in different environments such as nightlife, in order to identify the interactions that prevent or promote violent behaviors (Duque et al., 2020).

## METHODOLOGY

This article uses the Communicative Methodology in the design, development and analysis of the communicative acts. In line with the European Commission's recognition of the positive impact of this methodology in the analysis of social inequalities (European Commission, 2011), special attention has been paid to the relevance of the results as a potential contribution for gender equality in sexual-affective relationships. Besides, relevant prior research has been taken into account, especially as regards the prevention of gender violence through the analysis of communicative acts analysis using the communicative approach (Portell and Pulido, 2012; Rodríguez-Navarro et al., 2014).

The article includes data collected through seven communicative daily life stories conducted to men and women from diverse sociocultural backgrounds and ages.

Communicative daily life stories consist of conversations between the researcher and the participant, which in this case refers to NAM men and women involved in relationships free of violence. This qualitative technique has a narrative orientation, in which the researcher and the participants collaborate in a joint interpretation of the participant's daily life story in relation to the topic discussed (García-Yeste, 2014).

Five NAM men were selected according to some of the features highlighted in the NAM approach (Flecha et al., 2013), namely being: self-confident, involved in egalitarian and passionate relationships, and standing up against gender violence. The two women selected had reported interactions with NAM men. The participants in the study shared their daily life stories in one session between 45 and 75 min each, creating a favorable environment to facilitate conversation and dialogue. The way to contact the participants to invite them to the study was basically done by email, and the conversations were recorded. The daily life stories were developed and analyzed in Spanish and Catalan languages (the mother tongues of the participants involved). The excerpts in this article have been translated into English.

With the aim of going in depth into specificities of NAM men's communicative acts and their consequences for women, particular attention was paid to the understanding of the ways in which the language of desire – it is the capacity to raise attraction and be desired – was underpinning the verbal and non-verbal communication in the participant's interactions. Therefore, they were invited to discuss about very specific aspects of the communicative acts that occur in their sexual-affective relationships, from a simple gesture or smile to significant speech. They also were invited to share motivations, desires and consequences of the language of desire on their attitudes and behaviors.

The ethical aspects were addressed through participants' written consent. Personal data has been protected, aware that questions addressed personal and intimate relationships. All names have been anonymized accordingly. The study received the ethical approval of the Ethical Committee of the Community of Research on Excellence for All (CREA) with reference number 20210215.

## FINDINGS

### “Jumping for Joy,” Conditions of Excitement

An important characteristic of Paul's verbal communication was that when he talked about a particular situation in a relationship, the conditions to continue with the other person were clear and direct in his speech. He recognizes the impact of his words on the other person and his readiness to avoid any type of reaction that does not show excitement.

- (1) Paul is talking about the shine in the eyes and the words he said to a woman with whom he had a relationship.

Paul: if you are in this mood (with no shine in your eyes), I don't want to know anything about it.



Interviewer: how do you transmit this?

Paul: by talking, saying. . . “Hey, where’s the shine in your eyes? (eyes wide open) You are not jumping!!” (laughs) I see that you are not jumping, there is evidence! I see that you are not. . . and I am telling you this.

This excerpt shows a communicative act in which Paul sets certain conditions of excitement through his speech anticipating consequences if there is no “thrill” (“if you are in this mood. . . I do not want to know”) or reiterating his perception about the other’s “thrill” (“you are not jumping. . . I am telling you this”). He also uses non-verbal performance (laughs) showing consistency with his own argument related to need for excitement. Paul uses speech to trying to identify an emotional response in the woman through this particular interaction (“where’s the shine in your eyes? You are not jumping!”), while his face movements change accordingly (eyes wide open). Additionally, the use of the expression “not jumping” is metaphoric; this is not physically occurring but full of meaning in the way the relationship is build.

Amy explains a relationship in which the communicative acts made her react and increased motivation. We can identify in her words evidence about the consequence of a very particular non-verbal dimension of the communicative act. The following situation exemplifies how she changed her thoughts of a NAM man as a result of a look from him. In a sense, it resonates with Paul’s explanation about the conditions of excitement, although in this case, the effect results only from a performative non-verbal sign.

(2) Amy is explaining the moments before a date.

Amy: we knew each other very well. . . and just with a simple look of him, I understood everything, and I said by myself “buff. . . stop it”

Interviewer: was this something you had talked about before?

Amy: it was not a technical thing. . . we did not say “when I arrive I will look at you and. . .”

In this example, the words Amy use to explain her thought (“buff. . . stop it”) are very illustrative of the effects of his communicative act on her (“a simple look”). All the previous interactions in the relationship are attributing meaning to the performance of a look (“we knew each other very well”). Besides, she emphasizes this previously constructed meaning when she says, “a simple look,” reiterating there is no need for speech. The change this produces on her attitude becomes crucial to understand the impact of those interactions for building a type of relationship based on excitement. She continues explaining the conversations they had to maintain and increase a passionate relationship, thus prior interactions.

(3) Amy: We often talked about it and he said “if the relationship we want is this and you don’t act accordingly like that, it makes no sense that I have to lower my

expectations of the relationship that I want, I’ll look for someone else” (laughs). . . He is very self-confident, I didn’t doubt a word of what he said, his words, his look, made it clear that I would be the one regretting it! (face showing emphasis on the word regretting).

Amy shows her understanding of the consequences of not being “jumping for joy” with him through “laughing” when remembering his words (“I’ll look for someone else”). Remembering of these interactions explains how the conditions for excitement were built in the relationship, so that a *simple look* was enough to elicit meaning. She emphasizes her understanding with her face at verbalizing the possible consequences of her communicative acts (“I would be the one regretting it!”).

The following example describes the end of a relationship, showing the relevance of communicative acts in the construction of attraction to NAM men.

(4)

Philip: you keep on showing tenderness and love. . . but then the discourse and what I see is another thing.

Interviewer: what do you mean by saying “is another thing”?

Philip: yes, I said it, I saw there was no passion. I did not use the words but in the end, you are saying the same.

Philip strengthens the conditions of excitement concerning the perceived passion from the woman on him. In this case, the perceived “lack of passion” opposing the discourse of love he was told (“what I see is another thing”), has strong influence on his decision of breaking the relationship. He does not need words to talk about the expected passion. In this case, the man is empowered by acting according to his expected conditions of excitement.

According to these examples, a crucial element that underpins these cases of heterosexual relationships is the fact that NAM men do not only claim excitement through communicative acts, but they also create conditions of excitement that should be present in their interactions with women. As a result of these communicative acts, if women do not fulfill these conditions, these egalitarian men simply do not want to be with them.

## Language of Desire

The role of the language of desire appears in the daily life stories as a crucial aspect underpinning men’s communicative acts and the consequences for women. By doing this, the implications of using language of desire go beyond the communicative act itself as it contributes to set the conditions of excitement previously explained. Participants provided several stories and we find in their narratives the crucial role of this dimension in this kind of heterosexual relationships.

(5) Paul talks about sex in the context of a conversation about the expected motivation from a woman. He describes his attitude when interacting with her. He may not use these words with her, but he means these words:

Paul: I'm not gonna have sex with you and I don't know until when. maybe never again, right?

Paul uses language of desire ("I'm not gonna have sex") to explain how he performs in setting conditions of excitement in a relationship. He uses language of desire to describe his attitude. In this sense, there is evidence that demonstrates how communicative acts with NAM men enhances the creation of new contexts of interaction based on the language of desire.

- (6) Paul describes a very concrete situation about how he uses the language of desire while considering the effect of his look into a woman with whom he has a relationship.

Paul: Wow... she was in roller-skates! Roller-skates are like heels, they make a very beautiful leg... and I looked at her from bottom to top, she noticed that, and I said, "You've been out like this?" Something that shows that you think this person is really attractive to you (...). The girl gets excited about that, *and this is crucial* (emphasis by slowing down speech)... and she said, "Oh, I'm coming from the street and it's very hot" (smile) and I was like "Come on! You look great, you're wonderful!"

The non-verbal dimension communicative acts which Paul highlights ("I looked at her from bottom to top") attached to his words ("You've been out like this?") transmits an attitude based on both body and verbal language that enhances the creation of excitement and desire through communicative acts. He makes clear how much aware he is to the effect of his communicative act on her ("she noticed that"). The communicative act involves the consequence and reaction of the other person involved in the communication ("she noticed that; 'she said, 'Oh, I'm coming from the street and it's very hot'"). The woman's reaction was also based on body and verbal language. He smiles when remembering her words about coming from the street, meaning that she blushed and was trying to hide her sexual excitement. The smile, at this very moment of the conversation, attributes language of desire to his narrative. It is relevant to notice how this very short interaction occurs in a few seconds and the final consequences for the woman and the relationship. Paul's last communicative act ("Come on! You look great, you're wonderful!") demonstrates in which ways the language of desire generates a remarkable atmosphere for both in the relationship.

The examples presented to this moment concern the point of view of NAM men. However, we find the expression of similar consequences to the language of desire on the women interviewed. As defined in the section "Methodology," these are women who had reported passionate relationships with egalitarian men. Next, evidence of this is presented by analyzing of some of the reactions, feelings, thoughts and concerns these women have.

- (7) Amy talks about a relationship and a very particular word underpinning the communication.

Amy: it is about how he talked... he said "blonde" and he said this with desire and the people noticed that (...)

Sometimes he said "you look so beautiful" (deep breath, emotion) and sometimes I would say "behave, we are in a public space" (excitement).

In this excerpt, the word "blonde" is not just a description about a physical characteristic. This word embraced profound consequences in terms of communicative acts as it was said with desire. Amy highlights the effect of his language of desire not only on her but also on the people around her ("the people noticed that") as part of her own excitement. Continuing the conversation, her reaction to his praising ("you look so beautiful") involves also other subjects ("behave, we are in a public space") while the non-verbal emphasis on both utterances denote a language of desire dimension. This communicative act illustrates the impact on the women not only of NAM men attitude but also of other people's reaction to these men attitude. Therefore, it is important to consider the extent to which the impact of the language of desire goes beyond the persons involved in the relationship, as evidenced in this example.

## Toward Egalitarian and Passionate Relationships

The third main finding is about the type of relationship emerging as a result of the NAM approach and the communicative acts associated to it. The interactions analyzed display passionate relationships tightly linked to equality, and show that subordination or superiority of women are both far away from the ideal of love.

The process of reflection on the communicative acts as an element that increases attractiveness of NAM men in egalitarian sexual-affective relationships requires a constant attitude. The dialogue underlying the interactions that raises motivation promotes this dimension. Also, it contributes to re-address situations that could potentially reduce desire.

- (8) Paul explains his perceived difference in a women's attitude if she is with a NAM man or a dominant traditional masculinity man and his reaction to this:

Interviewer: how do you materialize this in concrete interactions?

Paul: [by telling her that] the way you used to looked at "X" is not the way you are looking at me right now, and how I treat you is not how he treated you. If you want, I'm like, "what's going on? Do I need to treat you as he did?" I'm not going to do it, I don't want that.

Paul is clear about the contrast between someone who did not treat her well in the past and him. He verbally manifests his conditions of excitement linked to his egalitarian attitude and behavior toward her ("I'm not going to do it"). In his communicative act there is a clear rejection about a type of relationship based on mistreatment ("how I treat you is not how he treated you") and his clear position in front of her ("I don't want that") attributes the speech act with an empowerment

connotation filled with attractiveness, which does not put him below the other man.

In another daily life story, Claudia goes into details about the perceived equality in a relationship in which she is involved. She reflects upon the way by which this dimension is built between the subjects involved in the relationship and the extent to which equality can be constructed either attached or detached from motivation, passion or desire. We include below an excerpt from the conversation with her:

(9)

Claudia: Since the beginning, if I wasn't equally motivated about being with him as he was with me, it didn't work, it didn't go well, and he would leave, or at least he showed he was willing to do so.

In her words Claudia clearly establishes a connection between equality and sexual attraction ("equally motivated about being with him"). Using language of desire, not only language of ethics, shows how the discourse of equality performs in the relationship. This connection is also linked to the possibility of passionate egalitarian relationships ("it didn't work, it didn't go well"). Again the conditions of excitement are included in the interaction, and become manifest in the construction ("since the beginning") of egalitarian relationships.

The daily life stories have provided evidence about the impact of NAM men for the construction of egalitarian relationships. Furthermore, new insights about the communicative acts are to be obtained in further research.

## CONCLUSION

The evidence presented in this article demonstrate the ways in which NAM men are using communicative acts in a way that creates at least three consequences for women having sexual-affective relationships with them: conditions of excitement, use of the language of desire and egalitarian passion.

First, we have analyzed several examples of communicative acts that illuminate how NAM men within a sexual-affective relationship understand excitement. Accordingly, in their communicative acts they use either speech, body language or other non-verbal signs such as intonation or performative emotion to set these conditions on their interaction with women with whom they have or might have a relationship. At the same time, there is evidence with regards to the effect these conditions cause on the women interacting with them. Second, whereas there is a coercive dominant discourse in which men with violent attitudes and behaviors are socially portrayed as attractive and exciting, we found evidence of how NAM men's use of the language of desire contribute to feeding attractiveness to them and to their relationships with women. Both discourse and attitude are performed together in them, thus showing that they do not subordinate themselves to either women or to dominant traditional masculinities. Instead, they stand up for love ideals by manifesting their desire with words, body language and signs included in the interaction, rather than an ethical stance. In this sense, the

distinction between the language of desire and the language of ethics contributes new insights to pragmatic analyses of men and women interactions in and about their sexual-affective relationships. These analyses provide valuable information in the understanding of the communicative aspects of passionate and egalitarian relationships. Accordingly, our third finding points at the communicative clarification of the association between equality and passion, as a condition that can contribute to the construction of satisfactory mutually corresponding passionate relationships.

Overall, this article contributes new knowledge about the communicative acts of NAM men and the consequences for women. The discussion of the results fills the gap identified in the scientific literature, which to the best of our knowledge had not yet accounted for desire in the analysis of the different dimensions of communicative acts. Additionally, the consequences of these communicative acts on women have been also explored.

There are some limitations that this article does also put forward. On the one hand, the fieldwork deals with a topic that is related to intimate relationships. Therefore, the communicative daily life stories are sensitive to personal thoughts or feelings that may be further investigated by developing deeper trust with the researcher. Furthermore, the inclusion of other research techniques for data collection, such daily observations of the interactions between the subjects involved in the research, could enrich the obtained results. On the other hand, the role of dialogue underpinning the communicative acts, both speech and non-verbal performance, could also be further explored.

Research on the construction of new alternative masculinities has suggested a clear line of action in gender violence prevention. The findings in this study contribute new insights in the understanding about how the communicative acts performed by NAM, and the responses they get from the women with whom they get involved, enables egalitarian and passionate relationships. Moreover, the results illuminate the ways to overcome the coercive dominant discourse. Further research is needed to demonstrate how the everyday interactions of these NAM men with women, are actually contributing the prevention of gender violence, enhancing sexual-affective interactions free of violence and full of passion.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available as they contain personal information. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to the authors at [adriana.aubert@ub.edu](mailto:adriana.aubert@ub.edu).

## ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by CREA Ethical Committee. The

participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

AA and RF: conceptualization, investigation, and writing – review and editing. AA, RF, MJ, and GR-S: formal analysis. MJ

and GR-S: writing – original draft. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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# I Do It, but I Decide With Whom

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Social interactions and communication shape the desires and preferences of men and women. While it is true that some men have modified their behavior due to feminist women, the same happened with some women, who changed attraction patterns thanks to new alternative masculinities (NAM). This study examines the latter, focusing on social interactions mediated by language, as a crucial element to impact and change the desires of people. For this purpose, six autobiographical interviews were conducted with women aged 19–39 years, from two different countries and continents, paying attention to the narratives of their sexual-affective relationships. Using the communicative methodology, interactions have been analyzed from verbal communication and nonverbal communication, based on the consequences of the actions rather than intentionality. The results of this study show how dialogic communicative acts with NAMs influenced some women who first defended or justified actions of male perpetrators to later prefer to support female survivors against their perpetrators. Analysis reveals that communicative acts grounded in such language that enacted the desire of NAM for women of solidarity have shaped some memories of women of relationships with dominant traditional masculinities (DTM) and, ultimately, contributed to change their attraction and election patterns.

**Keywords:** social interaction, autobiographical memory, language of desire, new alternative masculinities (NAM), dominant traditional masculinities (DTM), memory reconstruction

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## INTRODUCTION

Scientific research studies in social interaction and communication have shown their potential in the acquisition and modeling of social behavior. There is an agreement in the literature studies on the fact that what makes us human is our ability to interact with other people (Mead, 1967). We are social beings, and we develop in society acquiring tastes and desires through the process of socialization. This implies that we know that human behaviors are created in society and are also transformed in society. A recent research study has even linked the influence of social interaction on the brain and memory (Hirst and Rajaram, 2014; Racionero-Plaza et al., 2020). Given that the main function of memory is about the future and not about the past (Kandel et al., 2013), it is key to analyze those communicative acts that make us remember wishes and preferences. Current advances in neuroscience show that not only human behaviors are able to be transformed but also human memory and the memories of people could be transformed as well (Williams et al., 2008).

Gender-based violence (GBV) and its effect on the health of the people, both at an economic level and social level, as well as physical level or mental health level, are a problem that affects many social domains (Ramón y Cajal, 1989). Furthermore, violence among adolescents is increasing and

dating violence is of increasing concern (Puigvert et al., 2019). This study analyzes the socializing processes, the dominant coercive discourse, and the preventive socialization of GBV. Along with the positive insights regarding social change, this study focuses on the transformation of memories of violent relationships. The language of desire (López de Aguilera et al., 2020) is studied as a channel for this transformation, through communicative action with men who perpetuate attitudes of new alternative masculinities (NAM) (Flecha et al., 2013). This new line in the analysis of masculinities opens the way to changing the attractiveness patterns that the dominant coercive discourse tries to impose through violent attitudes portrayed as attractive.

## STATE OF THE ART

### Communicative Acts and the Self

The concept of “communicative acts” (Soler-Gallart, 2017) highlights “we do things” not only with words (Austin, 1962) but also with myriad symbols involved in *nonverbal* communication (tone, facial expression, and gesture, etc.), which may communicate on their own or accompanied by words. In addition, the theory of communicative acts has shed light on the importance of *context* and *effects* of communication because of their influence in the construction of a wide range of social phenomena. Certain phrases, such as “look at me,” acquire a different meaning if they are performed by a boy in a disco and addressed to a girl who he does not meet before, or they are said by an ophthalmologist who is examining the eyes of a patient in a clinic. Accordingly, those who interact with one another should be aware of context to make sure that their communicative acts do not produce undesired effects. Another central feature of the approach of communicative acts is the importance of the consequences of communication rather than the intention of speakers. In this sense, the theory of communicative acts goes beyond the philosophy of consciousness (Habermas, 1987) to include the relevance of interaction, to emphasize that what makes a difference in terms of social reality are the consequences of communication. Following this implication, people interacting with each other should care about the effects and consequences their communicative acts might produce on the other person, rather than be concerned about their intentions when communicating. The context and effects of communication are of particular analytical relevance in this study.

Interaction, as the genesis of communication, is also central to the theory of communicative acts for understanding the development of both this social phenomenon and the self. Building upon the symbolic interactionism of Mead (1967), the approach of communicative acts agrees on the fact that it is through communication with others, mediated by linguistics and socially constructed signs, that we build an image of ourselves (Mead, 1967). The Self is in constant dialog with two phases: the “I,” which is the personal and most organic reaction to the internalization of the perceptions of others of us, and the “Me,” the internalization of the views of significant others into the Self. Among the views of other people, those about expectations, beliefs, and emotions related to us are transmitted

by communicative interaction and are individually internalized, thereby developing our sense of the Self. The communicative development of the self and its transformation frame part of the goals of this study.

Based on the community in which one develops and the history of social interactions someone has had, people use to internalize a particular idea of what is expected from us as humans, what is valued in our communities, how we should behave, and personal perception of our own Self (Wertsch, 1993). Linking this approach to the sexual-affective sphere, some women who have been socialized in a context where men are considered as attractive, fits into the category of dominant traditional masculinities (DTM) (Flecha et al., 2013), and it is expected, for some women, to internalize a positive view of themselves as attractive too. This may happen especially considering they might have had some kind of sexual-affective experience with DTM, and their peers reinforce this idea for them (Castro and Mara, 2014). Nonetheless, research studies in the area of preventive socialization of GBV have examined such phenomenon and described it as a “mirage of upward mobility” (Rosell et al., 2014). This concept describes the misunderstanding reality experienced by a girl or woman who believes she increases her attractiveness by having sexual-affective relationships with DTM and when she behaves so to draw their attention, while the contrary happens and she uses to become less attractive for DTM and for other men. Unless that woman does not experience other, very different, communicative interactions, she may tend to repeat that behavior with other men, whether they are DTM, oppressed traditional masculinities (OTM), or NAM (Gómez, 2015; Joanpere and Morlà, 2019). The research works reported in this study explores the tendency of this behavior in some women when interacting with men considered NAM and, more specifically, the response in terms of communicative acts that such behavior evokes in NAM. Additionally, our study examines the potential of the communicative acts of NAM to reconstruct the memories of these women of their relationships with DTM, voiding them of attractiveness and increasing the attraction of women to NAM.

### The “Social Turn” in Memory Research Studies: The Role of Communicative Interaction in Memory Development

Research studies on the *social turn in memory* (Hirst and Rajaram, 2014) emphasize the constructive nature of autobiographical memory, that is, the type of long-term memory of the events of the own life of an individual (Conway and Holmes, 2004). In particular, the approach of this research study stresses the influence of social interaction in recreating episodic memories, which are memories that we employ to remember past events we have experienced (Loftus, 2013). This perspective is inseparable from the understanding of mental life as “acts of meaning,” which are collaborative and communicative in nature (Bruner, 1990).

Studies in this field have noted the importance of group dynamics and types of interactions in shaping “collective memory” (Halbwachs, 1992) and the power of social interaction

to implant a “memory” into another person (Loftus, 2013). More precisely, in terms of communicative acts, it is noted that people used to remember things in a collaborative way and through communicative action. All these research works show that social interaction is not only central to encoding information but also to the recalling and rebuilding of autobiographical memories (Marian and Neisser, 2000; Hedrick et al., 2009). Along this line, the previous studies have indicated the importance of context in enhancing memory retrieval, including the linguistic context. In particular, it has been shown that information acquired in a certain linguistic atmosphere is likely to become more accessible when recall takes place in that same ambience (Marian and Neisser, 2000).

Our study included this social perspective on memory, understanding that attractiveness has a social origin (Gómez, 2015), so the attraction to certain types of men is influenced by the way in which individuals remember sexual-affective episodes, i.e., with desire or disgust. In this regard, we explored the extent to which men, with characteristics of NAM, use a language of desire in their communicative interactions with some women might be able to promote the following: (a) the retrieval of memories of women of sexual-affective experiences with DTM and (b) the reconstruction of women of some of those autobiographical memories regarding their associated emotion and self-perception.

In addition, a research study has indicated that autobiographical memory is a constituent part of the self-memory system (Williams et al., 2008; Kandel et al., 2013). Memories become the knowledge base providing a sense of Self and coherence in our life; at the same time, they are key to personal interpretations of new experiences and to decision-making (Klein et al., 2010). Thus, if occurring that some women change to some extent their perception and memory of sexual-affective relationships with DTM through communicative interaction with NAM, this might well foster other transformations in attraction and election patterns supporting intimate relationships free of violence. Because of such potential effects, the research study reported here is aligned with studies on positive elements that support constructive human development (Vázquez et al., 2009); in our case, language and interaction are conceptualized as useful tools that can support better sexual-affective relationships, thus letting people act in the world in order to transform it (Coulthard, 2011).

## Language of Ethics to Combat the Coercive Dominant Discourse

The coercive dominant discourse has been defined as contributing to promoting the attraction toward violence (Racionero-Plaza et al., 2020), through which people with violent attitudes tend to be socially presented as attractive models, while people whose behaviors are not violent are usually presented as less attractive (Gómez, 2015). A research study has also shown that violent profiles, or boys belonging to the so-called hegemonic model of masculinity (Connell, 2012), tend to be the ones most preferred by girls for sporadic relationships, while

boys with a nonviolent profile are usually chosen for stable relationships (Puigvert et al., 2019).

Communicative acts are a key element in the analysis of the influence of the dominant coercive discourse. In this sense, the concept of “mirage of upward mobility” has also been analyzed (Rosell et al., 2014). It is defined as the erroneous perception that some girls have developed when they believe that, if they have a sexual relationship with a boy with violent attitudes, this fact increases her attractiveness or her status, while research studies have shown that the opposite actually happens, that is, her status decreases.

An interesting aspect of dialog is framed under what is described as “language of desire” or “language of ethics” (López de Aguilera et al., 2020). The *language of ethics* refers to attitudes defined as *good*, *convenient*, or that “*should be done*.” Otherwise, the *language of desire* used to be performed when linking attractiveness to violent behavior. In the cases analyzed in this study, the language of ethics would be implied to refer to some boys as bored or unattractive, especially those with good behaviors, while the language of desire would be used to mention some behavior as cool and desirables, especially when performed by those boys that places as “for sporadic relationships” (Gómez, 2015).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research works discussed in this study employed the communicative methodology of research studies (Redondo-Sama et al., 2020; Gómez-González, 2021), which has been previously used in research studies on communicative acts that achieved important scientific and social impact (Soler-Gallart, 2017; Rios-Gonzalez et al., 2018). A central feature of the communicative methodology is that it is not limited to describing social reality but also provides mechanisms for solving social problems. Such transformative scientific knowledge results from another key feature of the communicative methodology, the constant dialog between researchers and participants in the research studies. Researchers share scientific knowledge on the topic being researched, which is later contrasted with everyday knowledge from the research participants. It is in that dialog between the two types of knowledge, scientific and experiential, that it is possible not only to better understand social problems but also to contribute to their transformation (Denzin and Lincoln(eds), 2011; Gómez-González, 2021). In our study, the dialog between researchers and participants involved ongoing conversation in which we shared primary knowledge from the study of communicative acts, gender violence, masculinities, and memory, and the participant women provided their interpretations about the topic of communicative acts, desires, and memories of men.

## Sample

Participants were selected after a series of autobiographical interviews focused on their history of sexual and affective relationships. These interviews included questions and examples that helped the potential participants to identify whether such

history included relationships or interactions with men who exhibited some characteristics in line with what the study has conceptualized as DTM and NAM. On the one side, the model of DTM is embodied by those men who represent the values of the patriarchal society, sometimes related to violent behaviors, and use to envision themselves as “experts” on sexual issues. On the other side, the model of NAM constitutes a utopian model, featured by the language of desire and embraced by men who are equalitarian, against violent attitudes, and are considered sexually attractive at the same time (Puigvert et al., 2019). Six women constituted our sample. They were from two different countries, Spain ( $n = 2$ ) and Chile ( $n = 4$ ). Their age ranged between 19 and 39 years old, and most of them had completed a degree in higher education.

## Data Collection

In-depth interviews with a communicative orientation were conducted individually with each woman. Before the interviews, the researcher explained the role and made themselves clear about the different models (as “ideal types”) of masculinity found in the scientific literature study, emphasizing their characteristics regarding their behaviors toward women (Flecha et al., 2013). Following the premise of communicative methodology, the authors shared the objectives of the study being conducted. Participants had a chance to ask questions if they wanted. In addition, researchers employed examples to clarify the aim of the questions. When responding to the specific questions during the interview, the participants themselves decided which personal stories to share and which elements to select from their memories of past sexual-affective relationships.

The in-depth interviews lasted approximately 90 min each. The participants signed a consent form, meaning a written document consenting to the use of the data in a rigorous scientific manner while remaining entirely anonymous. All interviews were conducted in Spanish, and they were later translated into English by the same researchers who carried out the interviews.

## Data Analysis

The verbal data collected by the authors were transcribed and analyzed according to the theory of communicative acts, and the main questions of the study were as follows: How do men, who (according to the participants) might correspond to some of the characteristics of the NAM category, exert influence with their “language of desire” over women who might have defended DTM? More concretely, how do the communicative acts performed by those men influence these perceptions of women regarding previous sexual-affective relationships with DTM? Additionally, how does such influence, if any, affect the memories of the woman with whom the NAM interacts in terms of how each of them remembers potential relationships with DTM?

To respond to the aforementioned questions, the authors analyzed the content and the consequences of communication in terms of the impact on the self-perceptions, memories, and behaviors of women.

This study was submitted for evaluation by the CREA Ethical Committee and approved under the reference code: 20210225.

## RESULTS

Once the interviews with the six women were carefully analyzed, two main findings emerged as particularly relevant. On the one hand, the authors could confirm that the communicative acts performed by those men, who the female participants perceived as NAM, contributed to the questioning and dismantling of the sexual-affective perceptions and attitudes of participant women about the experiences of women in the past with DTM. On the other hand, the data showed that the communicative acts performed by NAM, grounded in the language of desire, could drive the recall of memories of women of past sexual-affective relationships, supporting a review of those memories regarding their associated emotions, and promoting a shift from attraction to rejection of DTM. This trend of change seemed to generate a reflection among these women regarding changes in their behavior in relation to DTM, to NAM, and to other women, thereby increasing feminine solidarity.

### **“There Are Many Who Would Never Like to Meet Up With Him”: Communicative Acts of NAM Based on the Language of Desire Dismantling the Perceptions of Women**

Following the theory of communicative acts, we focused our analysis on the *contexts* and *effects* of communicative acts performed by those men who the participants perceived as or closer to NAM. Findings indicated that interactions with men, who the participant women defined as embodying NAM characteristics, developed in a *context* featured by the language of desire. In addition, authors could identify that the central feature of those communicative acts was the *effect* they produced in women, impacting the beliefs of women about the previous sexual-affective behavior in relation to those men they perceived as DTM and supporting a change in how they visualized themselves in such past situations.

Monica shared a story in which she was engaged in a relationship with a guy whose features she presented as a DTM. She broke up with him, but they continued to call each other and meet occasionally. One day, Monica wondered whether she was getting together with him after he had called her. Monica wanted to meet him, but she was having doubts because she knew that he was not the “right” guy. She decided to talk about it with a male friend, Paul, whom she defined as NAM:

I remember a guy with whom I was engaged in a relationship. After we broke up, he continued to call me occasionally. One day he called me to ask for a meeting with him, and I was wondering whether to do it or not. So, telling this to a friend, I made a comment like “any girl would want to go out with him.” Then, my friend said, “That’s not true, there are many women who would never like to meet up with him.” He said it in a way that deeply touched me. It was not only the message that other girls would never be with that other guy but also that those girls who desire to meet up with him are crappy. The real meaning of his words was not that “you say ‘yes’ and other women would say ‘no’, but, ‘you are the crappy one that would be able to meet up



with him, because I know girls who would never meet up with him.” And, for sure, the way of saying it, because the sentence itself was nothing special (...) But the sentence: “all girls would like to meet up with him” had something behind, the idea that “I am cool because I want to be with him.” And his response: “not all women would like to meet up with him” had a different message behind: **“not all are so crappy like you.”**

This story shows that Monica desired to meet up with the man she defined as a DTM. To express her own desire, she used the argument that all women would desire to do the same. She responded very naturally with that idea in her interaction with her friend. Immediately, he replied with an answer that made two things clear to her: that the desire of Monica was not representative of the desire of other women and, also, that he did not like women who desired to meet up with men like that guy.

We do not know the intentions the male friend had behind his words, but his communicative act made Monica think that she appeared ridiculous in the eyes of Paul. That effect was central in her revision of her self-perception with a different insight: *“my statement: ‘all girls would like to meet up with him’ had something behind, the following idea: ‘I am cool because I want to be with that boy.’ And his response: ‘not all women would like to meet up with him’ had a different message behind, as follows: ‘not all are so crappy like you’.”* Instead of making her see herself as “cool” for having the opportunity to meet up with that guy, he made her think that maybe she was “crappy.” Additionally, the way the interviewee shared the episode, ending with *“And his response: ‘not all women would like to meet up with him’ had a different message behind—‘not all are so crappy like you’”* may indicate that she did feel crappy at that moment of the interaction, and as she told us, she worried about looking crappy in the eyes of her friend, who purported to know in person, many women who would never go out with a guy like that: *“I know girls who would never meet up with him.”*

The interviews revealed other situations that showed how some responses of men caused some women to question their perceptions of their sexual-affective behaviors, which they may have learned in the previous experiences with DTM. In this regard, Monica also described a situation in which she was dating a boy whom she defined as close to NAM in the interview. She liked him and wanted to start a romantic relationship with him. However, according to her, he did not show much enthusiasm, despite Monica manifesting she was interested in him when they got together. She thought that maybe he was not aware that she was available, and more broadly, she thought he “did not get the message.” Therefore, Monica decided to be explicit and tell him that she liked him, which generated a response from the man that shocked her:

I remember one boy that was NAM; I went out with him and we were meeting and so on... but there was no feedback on his side... And I thought that maybe he just did not realize that I liked him, **he was just a little “short”** (meaning he wasn't very smart) **and did not get that he could go out to me; I mean that I was available and he could flirt with me.** One day we were talking about people who we liked and so on, and I said: **“I like you too, eh,”** and he said: **“I’ve already noticed.”** And I was like, **“So what? Do you like me too?”** He said: **“Well, a little, but that does not**

**mean we are going to have sex. I know I can, but I’m deciding if I want to.”**

The reflections of Monica show the impact of her socialization with DTM on how she interpreted the situation with this other man, whom she defines as NAM in the interview, and how she perceives and talks about him. Her flirting strategies, as learned in prior relationships with DTM, do not work with the NAM. Instead of considering the possibility that she was doing something wrong, she believes that the problem was the man, who *“was just a little ‘short’ and did not get that he could start a relationship with me.”* Monica perceived the man as out of place in the flirting game, as if he was poorly experienced. However, the words of the man showed a radically opposite situation: *“I know I can, but I’m deciding if I want to.”* With just a few words using the language of desire, he changed the mind of Monica, as she shared:

You can imagine, someone who you know 100% to be nice, he is NAM, is telling you that! That dismantles you, and not because a similar situation had never happened to me; actually, it already happened, that guys had “gone away” from me. However, this guy is someone super cool, nice, and it is clear that he likes me, but it is just... he does not like how I’m behaving. It’s as though **“with this attitude... I do not want to be with you.”** Then, I thought, what do I have to do to make him like me? **Then, I realized that what I was used to doing when flirting with boys was not working anymore.**

With the response of this man, Monica realized not only that she was wrong in her analysis, as he confirmed that he had noticed that she liked him, but also, and more importantly, she realized that it was her who was out of place in the game of flirting. As she expressed: *“I realized that what I was used to doing when flirting with boys was not working anymore.”* So, Monica understood that with the man whom she defined as NAM she used the flirting strategies she had used before with DTM.

I was misplaced because I was not used to that type of answer. Someone nice who tells you, **“Yes, I like you, but I cannot see the point of your behavior.”** Therefore, I felt like, “What do I have to do in order to get a yes from him?” I mean, what do I have to do to get him to have more and more desire and interest [for me]? That was a key moment of transformation for me.

The clarity and confidence in the words of the man Monica described as NAM made her question her behavior while increasing her desire for him. This produced a change in the behavior of Monica from that moment on:

Then, I decided to do nothing, just to be natural. That was when we got on, and I was like: “Now?” For me, it did not fit at that moment. I thought, “Why now and not before?”, but it was then when it happened.

The *results* of the communicative act performed by that man made the woman change her behavior, to “just be natural,” and not engage in any strategies. Monica stopped pressing him, and thus, he liked her more and decided to move forward.

Another participant, Luisa, described a situation in which she behaved antagonistically toward a man with whom she had a relationship and had defined as NAM in the interview. She shared

that this man was helping her to finish some paperwork she had to do before an imminent deadline. The man had decided to stay up late into the night to help her. At one point, Luisa reacted in a very negative way, complaining about what he was doing. Right after, the communicative acts performed by the man, both verbal and nonverbal, were very convincing, strong, and clear:

He was losing sleep for me. He decided to be there to help me to finish things, for me to have everything ready and well done. And there was a moment in which I talked badly to him: "You are doing this wrong! This thing does not go there, it goes here! You do not understand!" When that was a thing for me, and he was helping me and being very much in solidarity with me. . . And he said: **"OK, so, I'll leave you. I'll go to sleep. You take care of it by yourself."** And he left the room and left me there alone. ( . . . ) And he did not help me anymore, but not because he was not in solidarity with me. That made me think that I could not treat people that way; that people are not going to tolerate me in that way marked by a lack of solidarity. I have not done that anymore, as I saw that the next time he would not go to sleep but he would leave home.

She continued her reflection sharing the importance of the language of desire expressed not only in the words of the man but also in his gestures, facial expressions, looks, and tone, etc. This can be seen in the following explanation of Luisa of her own communicative acts when recriminating her boyfriend and when she reiterates that what made her conscious of the seriousness of what happened was, above all, the looks and facial expressions of her boyfriend and the fact that he left her alone in the room:

In that situation, I was telling him all those things **and I was not looking at him or anything, and using a very disgusted tone of voice. And he looked at me as if he was telling me: "I have no desire for you."** His was an insight that expressed clearly that he was making no effort to tell me "bye" but, on the contrary, it was like: **"Sorry, girl? I don't like this at all."** So, it was not only what he said. . . I saw he was not seeing me as attractive, that he was seeing me as a rude person, a woman he does not want to be with. So, what he said impacted me, but much more so was his way of looking at me, which told me "this is not the girl I want to be with." **It made me think a lot. . . not only because of what he said but also because he left the room.** So what he said was accompanied by action; he was absolutely coherent because he sincerely felt that rejection. He did not make any effort; he did so because he really did not like me that way.

Here is evidenced that the power of the communicative acts of NAM grounded in the "language of desire" to impact perceptions and that the behavior is not limited to words: *So what he said impacted me, but much more so was his way of looking at me, which told me "this is not the girl I want to be with."* The effects of the communicative interaction, translated in the fact that the man left the room leaving her alone, were acknowledged by Luisa as central in making her aware of how disgusting was her lack of solidary behavior toward him: *It made me think a lot. . . not only because of what he said but also because he left the room. So what he said was accompanied by action; he was absolutely coherent because he sincerely felt that rejection.*

## **"(It) Made Me Change the Perception of That Entire Memory": The Power of the Language of Desire of NAM to Trigger Memory Revision and Reconstruction**

The analysis of the in-depth interviews sheds light upon another central finding: The language of desire of the communicative acts performed by the men who the interviewees perceived as NAM made these women question their perception of the relationships with DTM men and their behavior in those relationships. Such questioning meant a turning point in terms of the beginning of the revision of memories of those past sexual-affective relationships, fostering their reconstruction by initiating a process of emptying them of attractiveness.

Monica shared a story in which she was engaged in a relationship with a guy from a village where she used to spend the summer when she was an adolescent. She defined this man as DTM. They were together one summer, while he had a girlfriend and Monica had a boyfriend. After the summer, she returned home and continued her life and relationship with her boyfriend. Monica had always considered that boy from the village to be a friend. Some years later, while she was initiating a different relationship with a different man who she labeled as NAM, the boy from the summer village phoned to invite her to his wedding. He was getting married to the same woman he had betrayed that summer when he and Monica were together. She could not understand why he was inviting her to his wedding with that girl, yet somehow she was happy to be invited by a man she still considered a friend. She decided to share this circumstance with her current boyfriend. His communicative acts after hearing Monica tell the story were strong and definitive:

I explained it to my boyfriend. He did not know the whole story, and I told him at that time. Then, what surprised him the most was not the fact that I was with that guy that summer, but **how I described the story: I was very happy, smiling, like "Ha, ha. . . That's a friend calling me. . . Ha ha ha! And I am not going to go to his wedding in which he marries that girl."** Then, he [the boyfriend] stood up with such a face that I freaked, and I thought: "Do not be shocked! It is not so shocking. Moreover, I am not going to attend the wedding." After that day, we met two more times, and he was a little weird. Then, one day, **he said that he did not know why, but he was no longer in love ( . . . )** So, I told this story to Luis, a NAM friend who clearly stated that, actually, I was the one who broke up the relationship. And I was like: "Why? It was just received a call from a colleague who invited me to his wedding." My friend told me that **it was a stupid boy calling me 10 years later to invite me to the wedding with this girl who he had cheated on; and that he did so because of the morbidity attached to the infidelity.** When Luis made me see that, it changed my image of what happened.

This quotation shows that it was through the communicative acts with her boyfriend and her friend how Monica revisited and reconstructed the memories of that summer relationship. The communicative act of the boyfriend [*"He said that he did not know why, but he was no longer in love"*] and the consequences of it [ending the relationship], together with the *sincerity* of the communicative act of her friend about the analysis of what

happened [*“you were the one who broke up the relationship”*], made Monica question her perception of the sexual-affective relationship with that man from the village and of the entire episode of sharing that story with her boyfriend.

Monica moved from thinking that her boyfriend was excessive in his reaction to acknowledging that her feelings about the other story caused the end of the relationship [*“Then, I was well aware of that as the reason that had actually broken the relationship”*]. Through the communicative acts grounded in the language of desire performed by the two men, Monica came to realize that her story from that summer was neither nice nor cool. Because she had been remembering that guy as a friend and had given no importance to the betrayal, she talked enthusiastically about the phone call with her boyfriend. He noticed mainly her nonverbal expressions: She was happy and she spoke with amusement and laughter, showing that she was pleased and satisfied to be invited to that wedding: *How I described the story: I was very happy, smiling, like “Ha, ha. . . That’s a friend calling me. . . Ha ha ha! And I am not going to attend his wedding, in which he marries that girl.* What mattered for the boyfriend of Monica was not that she had decided not to attend, which is what she shared verbally, but rather her lack of concern in receiving the invitation many years later, which was manifested in her nonverbal communicative acts. Therefore, he saw Monica as a doubtful partner, and, deciding to end the relationship, he showed that he did not like women who did not react more negatively to such situations.

Monica narrated how this fact changed her memory. She began to analyze the relationship with the man from the village whom she labeled as DTM and could find no evidence of friendship on it. Therefore, she asked herself why she considered that boy to be a friend. Additionally, she began to situate betrayal as the central piece of the story and the relevance of such fact had for her relationship at that moment.

**I was well aware of the reason that had actually broken the relationship.** He was a guy [the boyfriend] who was not willing to accept that. Somebody’s past can be dark, and that’s hard to accept, but you may try to say that “now” for X time you are different and that such thing would not happen again. However, when you see this stuff as something that just happened in the past but you have not reflected well on it, then a NAM will not accept it. (. . .) **For him, it is like, “this girl can go out with anyone at any time.”**

Because of the “language of desire” involved in the communicative acts performed by both her former boyfriend (*he said that he did not know why, but he was no longer in love*) and her friend Luis (*my friend told me that it was a stupid boy calling me 10 years later to invite me to the wedding with this girl who he had cheated on; and that he did so because of the morbidity attached to the infidelity*), Monica reconstructed her memories of that summer relationship, that is, she and that boy were never friends, and they were cheating on their partners, which was the cornerstone of the story instead of small detail. Thus, the memory of a “crazy summer adventure” became what it was, a typical betrayal.

The review of memories of past sexual-affective relationships through communicative acts performed by men, who the

participant women labeled as NAM, was also evidenced in a story shared by another woman, Melissa. She explained that she was in a relationship with a man that she defined as a DTM. This man used to judge people, including women, based on their appearance. Melissa learned to do the same and criticized people along those lines: *When I was with the DTM, he made me see people in very superficial ways.* Later, when she started a relationship with a man that she defined as NAM, he made her realize her attitude has no sense and how shabby it was. Melissa highlighted a communicative act performed by her later boyfriend in a party, which made her see herself as “ridiculous” in her behavior and comments and fostered her change:

I felt ridiculous when I started to change my way of “seeing” other people; the new way of looking at people that my boyfriend taught to me. **That changed me when he said to me: “stop that attitude with people and be more open.”**

Language of desire is expressed here in the clarity and confidence of the sentence of the man and in the use of expressions such as “be more open-minded” as, generally, it is not desirable to be labeled as a “closed person.” In addition, that sentence acquires stronger meaning as said in the context of a social event, like a party. This led Melissa to revisit her memories of the previous relationship, to see herself as ridiculous in that past behavior, and, importantly, be aware that her current boyfriend did not like her with such attitude: *He realized my attitudes when I got to know new people and that was one of the things that he did not like about me at the beginning.* Afterward, Melissa decided to act differently in present and future sexual-affective relationships:

When I was with that man [she refers to the one she referred to as DTM in the interview], I argued that such a relationship was normal, but then. . . a NAM telling me more and more things. . . made me change the perception of that entire memory (. . .). And that relationship came to represent what I would now not look for in a sexual-affective relationship.

The data analyzed also indicated that the communicative acts performed by men who the interviewed women saw as close to the NAM “ideal type” also fostered some of the women to be more critical of their past behavior toward other women. Luisa, for example, shared that she changed her interpretation and memories about past relationships of betrayal in which she had been involved thanks to the communicative acts performed by men whom she perceived as NAM. She shared two episodes that shed light on the power of communicative acts grounded in the language of desire on women to reject betrayal and have more solidarity with other women who are victims of the scorn of other men whom the participant women saw as responding to the DTM type:

This happened one time that we were on a train. There was a man. We were talking about various issues. He took out a list of contacts that he had, and told me: **“I would never have on my contact list a person who has betrayed someone.”** And then I said: “But, those are only the ones who have partners who betray.” And he said, “No. No. Those who betray are all the people



who participate in the betrayal, whether those people be the one who betrays and has the partner or the third person involved.” I remember so well that I thought “WOW. I have participated in betrayal.” **It was at that moment that I came to realize that I had been a part of betrayal, that I had betrayed.** This man was super clear in his mind that he rejected having men or women who participate in betrayal as friends, and this guy was very very valued in the group. I remember very well that I thought, “Ugh. . . I do want to be with him, I do want to be her friend.” That made me think that betrayal is always betrayal, regardless of your role in it and that there are people who decide not to have friends who betray others. (. . .) The fact that a man who was very valued by many men and women was telling me that. . . that affected me a lot, and this happened because of course, I wanted to be part of his group of friends. **I did not want to be the crappy one doing those things.**

Along with this narrative, it is of particular relevance how the friend, a very cool man in the group, performed a very sincere communicative act to convey the idea of rejecting as friends people who betray. This, together with his clarification of who the people are who betray, all those who participate in it, helped Luisa to recall past stories of personal engagement in betrayal and to see herself in a different way, no longer as more attractive than the betrayed woman but as “crappy.” Importantly, Luisa came to realize that, regardless of having a boyfriend, by participating in betrayal, she also despised other women. Other stories she shared evidenced her change in attitude in this regard, becoming a supporter of those women.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Research studies on the preventive socialization of GBV (Gómez, 2015) have examined the ability of the language of desire to promote change in attraction patterns, moving from attraction to DTM to attraction to NAM. The research works reported in this study adds to that line of research studies by exploring whether and how such language, when used by men perceived as NAM, has the ability to inspire change in the perception and memories of some women of sexual-affective relationships with DTM men, contributing to the transformation of their attraction patterns, while contributing to overcome the coercive dominant discourse that associates attraction with violent behaviors.

The analysis of data from the interviews, analyzed through the lens of the theory of communicative acts (Searle and Soler, 2004), informed us that these acts, when performed by NAM and grounded in the language of desire, tend to dismantle sexual-affective attitudes and self-perceptions of some women acquired in relationships with DTM, and somehow assumed, including flirting strategies, discord with other women, and betrayal. That first moment of “dismantling” the previous images and ideas was fundamental, as it made women think for the first time that their behavior related to relationships with DTM was inappropriate, ridiculous, and totally undesirable to other men who might respond to the characteristics of NAM.

In addition, the language of desire employed by men identified by the interviewed women as NAM encouraged the

participant women to revisit some of their past sexual-affective relationships with men they described as belonging to DTM features. They came to perceive those relationships in a new light, voiding them of attractiveness. Interpreting this result from a symbolic interactionism point of view, social interaction with NAM, grounded in the language of desire, may trigger the transformation of the Me of women (Mead, 1967), supporting the development of a new sexual-affective Self. This transformation implies a process in which what was previously perceived as “cool” behavior, relationships, and masculinity is now understood as “crappy.” For the particular case of the sexual-affective Self, the dimension of “desire” in communication seems to be essential in supporting this transformation of the Me. This result aligns with other studies in conversational analysis (Nyroos and Sandlund, 2014), which have shown how the same question may beget many different actions. In this study, depending on the type of language used, i.e., language imbued with desire or not, communication acquires different meanings and produces different effects on women in terms of revising perceptions and memories of past-sexual affective relationships with DTM men.

Additionally, the dimension of *effects* of communication, a distinctive feature of the theory of communicative acts (Searle and Soler, 2004), emerged as a central factor in the research works presented in this study. According to the interviewed women, consistency between the words, gestures, and actions (effects) of NAM strongly induced these women to question their sexual-affective attitudes and past relationships and promoted change, as supported by many research studies showing how communicative daily-life stories transform the analysis of women around the reasons and effects of their own cases of GBV (Marian and Neisser, 2000; Puigvert et al., 2019).

Importantly, the evidence found suggests that the communicative acts of NAM, being *convincing*, *sincere*, and grounded in the *language of desire*, triggered in the participant women a process of recall and revision of potential episodes of sexual-affective relationships with DTM men. In the cases studied here, such memory revision helped the women to better understand their sexual-affective biographies and question their interpretation of certain relationships with DTM, starting to perceive those as unattractive and ridiculous, while approaching to identify relationships with egalitarian men as attractive and cool. This finding adds to research studies on the social turn in memory (Hirst and Rajaram, 2014). In particular, studies on memory and language have found that information acquired in a certain linguistic ambiance is likely to become more accessible when recall takes place in that same ambiance (Marian and Neisser, 2000). Given the evidence collected in our study, we suggest that the recall and transformation of autobiographical memories about sexual-affective relationships are more likely fostered using the “language of desire” in communicative acts. The practice of the language of desire in communicative acts performed by NAM supports similar linguistic ambiance between the time the information about the experience was encoded and the recall of that same experience. This might indicate that because desire and emotion are crucial components of *episodic memory* (Conway and Holmes, 2004), it is through



desire that memories of sexual-affective relationships could be potentially changed. This is an insightful finding that should be further explored with a greater and more diverse sample of women and through complementary perspectives, such as those from cognitive psychology and neuroscience.

Finally, all findings reported are central to a transformative perspective of communication and social reality. Our results shed light on which types of social interactions and communication enhance sexual-affective relationships that are free of violence and coercion. The communicative acts explored in this study tend to enhance the creation of a desire for egalitarian men and the rejection of individuals with violent and non-egalitarian values (Rios-Gonzalez et al., 2018). Given that change in emotion implies a certain change in cognitive schemata, the effects of the communicative acts of NAM reported here might aid women in potentially making better choices throughout their sexual-affective trajectories. Longitudinal studies could more deeply examine this question. Additionally, the change in the interpretation and memories of past sexual-affective experiences with DTM seems to encourage solidarity among women; some of our interviewees who had first defended DTM turned to defend women who were victims of those men. In all of these processes, men close to the definition of NAM acquire an important role in supporting the changes in women, a finding that adds more evidence to the relevance of masculinities to social change (Connell, 2012).

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## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author/s.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

The current research was submitted for evaluation by the CREA Ethical Committee and approved under the reference code: 20210225. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

SR-P and AV conducted the research and investigation process. LP contributed to the conceptualization of the study in relation to the New Masculinities line of research. CP participated in the data collection. SR-P performed the data analysis, especially focusing on the memory analysis. CP, LP, and AV contributed to the formal analyses and discussion of the data. SR-P, CP, LP, and AV collaborated in writing the manuscript, revised its content, and approved the final version submitted. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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