



UNIVERSITAT DE BARCELONA

Universities free of Gender Violence

Communicative acts among the university community that overcome gender violence in Spanish universities

Tinka Tabea Schubert

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UNIVERSITIES FREE OF GENDER VIOLENCE

COMMUNICATIVE ACTS AMONG THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY THAT
OVERCOME GENDER VIOLENCE IN SPANISH UNIVERSITIES

DISSERTATION IN SOCIOLOGY

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who always took a stand in favor of the victims,
who never gave up the fight against gender violence in universities,
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who contributed to safer universities,
and who made it possible for me to present this work.

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so that those who come after me find a safer place in universities,
and someday students will find universities with heart.

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INTRODUCTION

Gender violence at universities is a major social problem that has recently drawn the attention of the main international newspapers and media reporting on cases of sexual violence on different US campuses. In this regard, diverse sexual offenses involving members of the university community have become public as well as the fact that presumably universities fail to resolve these situations. On May 1, 2014 the US Department of Education released a list of 55 higher education institutions that are under investigation for infringing Title IX, the article that protects from discrimination on the grounds of sex (Kingkade, 2014). According to the Campus Sexual Assault Study (Krebs et al., 2007), 19% of college women have experienced completed or attempted sexual assault since entering college. Yet, violence against women at universities is not a recent phenomenon, nor is it confined to the US. Rather it is in the US where this problem has first been tackled in the late 50s with pioneer research on this issue, achieving greater breakthroughs in the 80s. Since then, gender violence at universities has become an issue in many different countries and research has spread evidencing its existence at universities across the globe. At the same time, ever more studies and from more disciplines are researching this issue for the serious consequences for the victims and for society. The main findings and conclusions at the international level suggest that broader perspectives and approaches need to be implemented to effectively tackle this problem (Brener et al., 1999; Harris, 2013; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987). However, resistances to face this problem persist around the world and the case of Spain is an example of this, where the struggle against gender violence in higher education is relatively recent and still encounters myriad oppositions. In spite of this, a pioneer research conducted on violence against women in Spanish universities (Valls, 2005-2008) revealed that this phenomenon also occurs in this country. One of the main findings in this research was that 65% of students of Spanish universities stated that they know someone or have themselves suffered some kind of gender violence at the university. These numbers highlight the magnitude of the problem which not only affects women but society in general, representing a major public health issue that needs to be resolved (Potter, Krider, & McMahon, 2000).

The persistence of the problem has redirected current research focusing mainly on the prevention of violence against women and the evaluation of diverse prevention and awareness raising programs implemented at different universities. However, as Banyard and her colleagues (Banyard et al., 2005) have already highlighted, the incidence rates have not decreased despite the efforts made to prevent gender violence in higher education. For this reason, special emphasis is put on developing effective prevention strategies. In this line, the most salient approach is the denominated bystander intervention that shifts the focus on the community rather than on the victim or potential aggressor. It is thus the whole university community and beyond, that needs to get involved in the eradication of gender violence in higher education (Banyard et al., 2010; Burn, 2008; Potter et al., 2009). However, prevention is still a prominent issue in research and attempts are made to constantly improve in order to find solutions. It is in this regard, that the present research focuses on contributing to this part of the international research agenda.

The overarching concern of the present research is to contribute to the scientific knowledge on gender violence prevention with some hints for developing pathways in the prevention of gender violence in the Spanish higher education context. By doing this, the research will contribute to develop strategies to tackle the elevated incidence rates of gender violence that appear in Spain and across the world. The main objective of the research is to contribute with recommendations for the prevention strategies in Spanish higher education. In order to achieve this aim, I draw from promising approaches in gender violence prevention that have proven to be successful in defining strategies for prevention, which is the analysis of communicative acts (Soler, 2006-2008; Soler & Flecha, 2010). Hence, the overarching research question that is guiding the present research is how the analysis of communicative acts can contribute to preventing gender violence at Spanish universities. The main objective is to analyze those communicative acts that either enhance gender violence or those that are able to challenge this problem and contribute to overcoming it, in order to define recommendations for the development of prevention strategies.

The analysis of communicative acts focuses on the smallest unit of social action which is where gender violence takes place - in the daily interactions between individuals. Thus, one of the major concerns in research on gender violence prevention in higher education

is the lack of identifying violent situations. In this regard, the approach of analyzing communicative acts is promising to contribute to define elements that increase awareness on violent and non-violent interactions taking place among the members of the university community.

Another crucial element for the present research is to take into account the very roots of the problem of gender violence, which according to Gomez (Gomez, 2015) lies in the socialization in attraction towards violence. In the context of Spanish higher education, this can be translated to an attraction towards violence but also towards the prevailing power structures. In order to tackle the roots of gender violence, Gomez suggests the approach of preventive socialization, referring to putting particular emphasis on socializing people in attraction towards non-violent personal relations. Preventive socialization has already been implemented in diverse educational and other social domains, proving its effectiveness in gender violence prevention (Oliver, 2014; Padros, 2014; Puigvert, 2014; Valls, 2014).

The devastating consequences of gender violence in higher education on the health of the people affected has also drawn the attention of diverse disciplines and has thus been identified not only as a major social but also a major public health problem (Potter, Krider, & McMahon, 2000). Therefore, the present research also draws from successful approaches in public health to attend the myriad elements that interplay in the problem of gender violence in higher education. The contribution of health literacy developed by Rudd (Groene & Rudd, 2011) emphasizes the importance of overcoming the barriers that hinder the navigation in an unfamiliar environment, such as a hospital. Applied to the university context the health literacy approach is then crucial in order to tackle the lack of identification of gender violence since it is closely linked to the difficulties of navigating the hierarchical university structures and the prevailing power relations as a newcomer to these institutions putting them at greater risk for experiencing gender violence.

In order to develop a rigorous analysis and obtain valid results to contribute to social transformation and to the prevention of gender violence in Spanish higher education, the communicative methodology is used. This research methodology has been acknowledged internationally and recommended by the European Commission (2011b) for the research with vulnerable groups. It has been applied in a variety of research

projects funded by major European and Spanish funding schemes. Moreover, research on gender violence as well as research on gender violence in Spanish universities has used the communicative methodology reporting excellent results in terms of scientific contribution, but especially, in terms of contributing to the transformation of society and, thus, to the prevention of gender violence (Duque, Vidu, & Schubert, 2013; Soler, 2006-2008; Vidu et al., 2014). Hence, the present research builds on these evidences in order to enhance the impact of this study.

The present research is divided into five chapters that gather the information obtained throughout the process of investigation. The first chapter reflects the current understanding of the problem of gender violence in higher education. In this sense, the international context as well as research conducted on Spanish universities is introduced. A part from research, the main elements that have contributed to the prevention of gender violence in higher education, such as social movements, institutional changes and prevention programs, are analyzed. In chapter two, the theoretical framework that underpins the present research is developed highlighting, in the first part, the theory of communicative acts, then the approach of preventive socialization, and finally, the perspective of health literacy is presented. The third chapter explains the methods that have been used to conduct the present research, including the research question, the objectives of the research, as well as the design. Finally, the analysis of data is described.

The last part of the present research focuses on the presentation of the results which are divided into two separate chapters. Chapter four gathers the contributions of the present research that are related to gender violence in Spanish higher education in communicative acts. Thus, in the first two sections the evidence of the presence or not of violence in communicative acts is explored, while the third and fourth sections center on the communicative acts that either enhance gender violence in Spanish higher education and those that contribute to its overcoming. Finally, chapter five explores the prevention strategies for gender violence in Spanish higher education that can be drawn from the research conducted. The results are presented in three separate sections: first, the barriers for prevention are outlined and, second, the opportunities for prevention are explored, and third, the analysis of the first peer support network in Spain - the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities is analyzed.

CHAPTER 1

1. Gender violence at universities

1.1. Research on gender violence at universities

1.1.1. Introduction

Research on violence against women at higher education institutions is widespread and yet it indicates that gender violence continues to be a persistent issue at universities. In a national study of the US, Koss and her colleagues (Koss et al., 1987) find that 53.7% of female students have suffered sexual violence. Braine and her colleagues (Braine, Bless, & Fox, 1995) revealed that 38% of the students at the University of Natal in South Africa involved in the study have experienced some kind of sexual harassment. Valls and her colleagues (Valls, 2005-2008) have found that 62% of the participating students in their research in Spanish universities have experienced gender violence. Comparing sexual harassment of students with employees at a southeastern US university, Kelley and Parsons (2000) highlight that 30% of staff, 22% of faculty and 43% of administrators have suffered gender violence, regarding 19% of students. In brief, research across the globe agrees on the high rates of prevalence of sexual violence in universities. In this literature review research from diverse countries are taken into account, although the greatest parts of research has been developed in the US.

This chapter provides an overview on the research on gender violence developed on an international level with special emphasis on the most prominent issues. In that sense, the first section focuses on the pioneer researches that primarily evidence the existence of gender violence in higher education institutions and report on its prevalence and nature in the samples analyzed. Another main issue in research on gender violence at universities is the effect that it implies for the victims, the university community and the larger society. Then, a brief outline is shared on the violence that is perpetrated in the context of power structures, as for instance by faculty towards other women faculty or students, being both in a more vulnerable situation. Last but not least, the main features of research on gender violence among students is presented. The section concludes with the main ideas of this research to be taken into account for the purpose of the study developed here.

1.1.2. Existence and definition of gender violence at universities

Research on gender violence in universities is conducted in the context of a more general feminist movement to overcome violence against women on a societal level. This struggle implies breaking with deeply rooted social boundaries and especially it implies breaking the silence on situations that so far have been considered an untouchable male privilege. In that line, pioneer research in this field represents one step forward in breaking the silence on violence occurring among those composing the intellectual elite of our societies and especially it represents facing those people who are directly involved with situations of violence in the higher education institutions (Baker, 2008) .

The first studies have been developed in the late fifties in the United States. However, it is not until the eighties that research on this issue is developed in a broader sense and also spreading to other countries. The focus of the pioneer research on violence against women that takes place at universities is centered primarily on evidencing its existence. Already in the 1950s, Kirkpatrick and Kanin (1957) provided evidence on the existence of sexual aggression of men towards women in the US university context. The analysis conducted by Benson and Thomson (1982) focuses on sexual harassment of university women at Berkeley and shows that 30% of the interviewed women have experienced unwanted sexual advances. Similar numbers from a more recent study conducted at a southeastern US university (Gross et al., 2006) confirm these rates with a 27% of participating students indicating to have suffered sexual violence.

However, it is difficult to compare data as the definition of sexual harassment, especially in the first stages of research on this issue, has been unclear. Benson and Thomson (1982) for instance emphasize the lacking concepts to actually verbalize and address sexual harassment which makes it not only very difficult for researchers to study sexual harassment but also for lay people it is difficult to identify situations of violence against women that might be happening around us. The lack of identification of gender violence in universities makes it even harder to tackle this issue.

As a result, initial research has focused on examining a definition of sexual harassment. In 1980, Till (1980) suggested a definition of sexual harassment divided into 5 categories:

1) Generalized sexist remarks or behavior, related to the female gender of the victim; 2) Inappropriate and offensive, but essentially sanction-free sexual advances; 3) Solicitation of sexual activity or other sex-linked behavior by promise of rewards; 4) Coercion of sexual activity by threat of punishment; and 5) Sexual assaults (p.7/8).

Benson and Thomson (1982) provide a description of experiences of sexual harassment perpetrated by professors towards women in university distinguishing between verbal advances, invitations, physical advances and undue attention. In a similar vein, Rossi and Weber-Burdin (1983) analyze the definition of sexual harassment, the seriousness of different acts of violence and the agreement of the university community with the definitions developed by higher education institutions. The authors state that sexual harassment can refer to a great range of situations including physical violence such as rape, sexual assault, and abusive and intrusive behavior as well as verbal violence expressed with dirty jokes and leering (Rossi & Weber-Burdin, 1983). Lott and her colleagues (Reilly, Lott, & Gallogly, 1986) make a similar distinction between forced physical contact defined as sexual assault, intimidation and sexual insults.

In the study with 2599 students from 2 universities in different regions of the USA, Fitzgerald and her colleagues (Fitzgerald et al., 1988) depart from the definition of sexual harassment provided by Till (1980) and evidence that 50% of the women from one university and 76% of the women from the second university analyzed reported having suffered some kind of sexual violence during their enrollment at university. The most frequent forms of sexual harassment refer to sexist remarks and inappropriate and offensive advances, whereas severe situations of sexual harassment were reported by 5% of the female students. Yet, only 5% of the students indicated that they felt they had been sexually harassed and only 3% had made an attempt to formally report these situations (Fitzgerald et al., 1988). These numbers raise concern as they indicate a lack of identification of the problem and the underreporting of sexual harassment at universities.

Whereas research has drawn on legal definitions of sexual harassment and departs from studies on sexual harassment in the workplace to guide their inquiry, the university community still has major difficulties in identifying and acknowledging situations of violence against women. In this regard, research has introduced a specific element to

measure the lack of acknowledgment by asking first for experiences of specific situations that would be defined as violent and afterwards asking directly whether they have been sexually harassed (Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Reilly et al., 1986). Bondurant (2001) highlights that 64% of the women involved in her research did not acknowledge the rape they had suffered. Numbers evidencing the identification of sexual harassment range between 9% (Kalof et al., 2001) to 26% (Cortina et al., 1998). Shepela and Levesque (1998) evidenced that students identify situations of sexual harassment as inappropriate yet they would not label it as sexual harassment. In that vein, 79% of women state that they have experienced inappropriate behavior by faculty and at the same time state that they have never experienced sexual harassment. Research distinguishes among the likelihood of undergraduate, graduate, and working women at university (faculty, staff and administrators) to identify sexual harassment and state that undergraduate students are the least likely collective to be aware of violent situations (Fitzgerald et al., 1988). Pryor and Day (1988) highlight that, when asked to evaluate specific situations of sexual harassment, students are more likely to consider them as sexual violence when they feel empathy for the victim.

The lack of identification of sexual harassment is one of the elements that contribute to low numbers of formal reports of these situations (Dey, Korn, & Sax, 1996). A salient concern of the people interviewed by Bagilhole and Woodward (1995) is 'where to draw the line'. Dey and his colleagues (1996) thus emphasize the need for a common understanding among the university community of what situations constitute sexual harassment in order to overcome this lacking identification and to help victims vindicate their burden and claim their rights. Yet, underreporting is not only due to a lack of identification, but it is also closely related to the university structures marked by power relations and male dominance. In a hostile environment towards women, it is less likely to report situations of gender violence. Bagilhole and Woodward (1995) argue that the fact of being men those who have a greater voice in a university context and in the processing of claims of sexual harassment puts women in a highly vulnerable situation to report their experiences. Moreover, reporting implies facing all those people who perpetrate and support sexual harassment in university as well as those who passively become accomplices. Women might fear not to be taken serious with their claims, feel

ashamed for what they have experienced, or they attempt to avoid trouble or being seen as a troublemaker (Choate, 2003; Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Sable et al., 2006).

Another element to influence the low rates of reporting sexual harassment is the denominated victim blaming, referring to the fact that victims are often blamed for provoking the situations suffered (Gross et al., 2006). Oftentimes, victims directly assume the responsibility for their assault and therefore do not dare to share their experience or consider it worth reporting (Sable et al., 2006). The Campus Sexual Assault Study (Krebs et al., 2007) further highlights that instead of turning to formal reporting victims disclose about their experience to friends or family members. As previously mentioned, reporting sexual harassment is one form of breaking the silence on a taboo issue and if the institution does not fully support the victims to report those cases it takes a lot of strength to come forward.

Research shows that those who dare to take this step have to face contrary reactions such as retaliations (Dey, Korn, & Sax, 1996) or second order harassment of those who support victims in their claim (Dziech & Weiner, 1990). Jordan and her colleagues (Jordan, Wilcox, & Pritchard, 2007) analyze reporting behavior of stalking victims and evidence that those victims who were frightened by their aggressor were four times more likely to report the situations. Yet, knowing the perpetrator greatly reduced the odds of reporting to the police.

1.1.3. Measuring gender violence

In the beginning of the eighties, several concepts and measures to identify and quantify violence against women in society were elaborated and later applied to the analysis of violence against women in universities. Among these conceptualizations the *Rape Myth Scale* and the *Adversarial Sexual Belief Scale* developed by Burt (1980) are noteworthy. Burt studied the cultural myths on rape to promote social change in a more efficient way. Hence, he highlights that people having a more stereotyped vision on gender roles are more likely to accept interpersonal violence and accept the existing myths on rape. Burt emphasizes the need for a change in values in the American society in order to prevent the acceptance of these myths.

Lott and her colleagues (Lott, Reilly, & Howard, 1982) contribute to the research on violence against women with a different measure, the *Tolerance for sexual Harassment Inventory*, which consists in a set of questions on the beliefs on situations of sexual harassment. In this line, their research is inspired by the pioneer studies and they develop a series of research projects related to violence against women in intimate relationships between people belonging to the university community, especially analyzing the sexual harassment exerted by university professors towards students and particularly female students (Reilly et al., 1992; Reilly et al., 1986).

In order to provide an instrument to measure the frequency and types of sexual harassment at higher education institutions, Fitzgerald and her colleagues (1988) developed the *Sexual Experiences Questionnaire* (SEQ). This tool distinguishes five levels of gender violence (gender harassment, seductive behavior, sexual bribery, sexual coercion, and equal assault) based on Till's definition (Till, 1980). This instrument is especially valuable as it introduces a particular item to contrast specific situations of gender violence with a final question 'I have been sexually harassed'. As a result, the SEQ allows for striking results in this field. With this study it is possible to evidence that much more sexual harassment takes place than the students believe; in this case, 50% of the students report at least one of the situations included in either of the 5 levels, but only 5% of the students confirmed that they had been sexually harassed (Fitzgerald et al., 1988).

Concerned about the criticism of statistics on sexual violence claiming that numbers are exaggerated and the difficulties to compare data reporting about incidences of gender violence, Belknap, Fisher and Cullen (1999) develop a comprehensive measure. Therefore, they built on diverse measures and instruments as well as on different approaches to tackle this issue. Finally the authors define their measure as broad and deep as it enables researchers to obtain numbers of a great variety of situations defined as sexual violence (rape and attempted rape, sexual assault, sexual coercion or bribery, verbal sexual coercion, other physical sexual contact, stalking, verbal sexual insults, and visual sexual insults) as well as it provides detailed information about specific incidents.

1.1.4. Consequences of gender violence

One of the first elements to be analyzed in relation to gender violence at universities are the effects that this phenomenon has on the victims. Research on violence against women in general has already evidenced the devastating effects it has on women (Oliver & Valls, 2004), so the dimensions that this problem can have in a higher education setting are investigated. In this regard, research highlights that the effects of gender violence in universities are multiple and refer not only to the victims' health but consequences are tightly related to the academic consequences for the victim and the institution. In their pioneer research on sexual violence among university women, Kirkpatrick and Kanin (1957) already highlighted the feeling of anger, guilt, disenchantment and fear experienced by the victims. The authors further analyzed how women face these situations: 34% avoid the aggressor and 27% keep it a secret; only 29% inform their friends or other people about these situations and only 5% report it.

These blank numbers sum up a variety of elements that interplay in cases of sexual violence at universities. Later research highlights that the coping strategy of avoiding the aggressor used by victims of gender violence at universities varies in the extent of avoidance required. It can thus imply dropping courses, changing majors, transferring to another university, and even abandoning the academic career (Cortina et al., 1998; Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Krebs et al., 2007). According to the Campus Sexual Assault Study (Krebs et al., 2007), this kind of behavior can also lead to further social isolation. Research agrees that sexual violence leads to reduced academic performance; victims often question their academic competence (Huerta et al., 2006). Further consequences are loss of self-esteem, disenchantment with the university professors (Benson & Thomson, 1982), loss of motivation of women to study conventionally male degrees, and a retarding personal development (Reilly et al., 1986). Cortina and her colleagues (Cortina et al., 1998) also emphasize the hostile environment on campus towards women, as victims feel less respected and accepted.

For this reason, Albaugh (2005) recommends to provide a combined counseling service for victims of sexual violence as it is related to decision self-efficacy of the victim. On the other hand, attention to victims of gender violence at universities not only requires academic, emotional and legal counseling but, in case of sexual assault it might require medical and psychological care. Whereas the physical consequences, i.e. direct injuries

or sexually transmitted diseases, only concern sexual assault victims, the emotional distress leading to mental health problems related to alcohol and drug abuse is experienced by victims of sexual harassment as well as sexual assault (Richman et al., 1999).

Focusing on the consequences of rape, Brener and her colleagues (Brener et al., 1999) demonstrate that rape victims are more likely to engage in health-risk behaviors than their peers who have not suffered this experience. All these dramatic effects of violence against women contribute to the fact that it can no longer be considered individual issues, but instead it is considered a major public health problem (Krebs et al., 2007; Richman et al., 1999). Yet, consequences of sexual violence at universities go beyond the individual and involve higher education institutions which are responsible for safeguarding the well-being of the university community and to provide a learning environment free from violence (Krebs et al., 2007). Any violation of these principles can be legally prosecuted and, as recent cases demonstrate, even the most prestigious colleges in the United States are facing charges (Kingkade, 2014).

1.1.5. Power structures

Another salient issue especially common in pioneer researches refers to the power structures inherent of the universities that enhance sexual harassment. In the United States as well as in Canada the first studies focus on the abuse of power positions by those people with more authority inside the university structures which is expressed through the sexual harassment towards women of the academy as well as towards students (Osborne, 1995; Reilly et al., 1986). The authors further highlight that the university context is marked by power structures that enhance sexual harassment and abuse perpetrated by people in power positions in university. The prevailing power structures in universities at that moment are controlled by men and they decide on the success of female students (Rossi & Weber-Burdin, 1983) and, thus, a hostile environment against women is created that stigmatizes those who suffer sexual advances by professors (Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957).

These power dynamics do not only make sexual harassment possible, but contribute to silencing it, which makes it even more difficult to report these kind of situations or

speaking up against the aggressors (Morley, 2011; Thomas & Kitzinger, 1997). Dowler, Cuomo and Laliberte (2014) have emphasized the role of power dynamics in perpetrating violence in the university context and in its persistence. Eyre (2000) argues, that violence is not the problem of specific individuals, but it is the naturalization and tolerance of violence perpetrated by some individuals that create this hostile environment towards women on college campuses. The authors (Dowler, Cuomo, & Laliberte, 2014; Eyre, 2000) highlight that a distinction needs to be made among the diverse interests that the different parties in a case of sexual harassment might have. In that sense, faculty unions serve the interest of professors, whereas the university institution needs to demonstrate that they are complying with their policies and make the required effort to solve the situation. However, the interest of protecting the victims is not necessarily the primary interest of either organism.

In this line, the hostile environment set forth in higher education institutions goes even further than that. According to Dziech and Weiner (1990), the hostile environment not only affects the victims of gender violence but all those people who support the victims and then become second order victims, since they themselves receive attacks against them for their supportive actions. The authors denominate this effect the *second order of sexual harassment* and the people who suffer it *second order of sexual harassment victims* (Dziech & Weiner, 1990). Eyre (2000) further emphasizes that in sexual harassment the problem is the institution rather than the sexual harassment, since the institution, made up of people who reproduce sexism, makes this deviant behavior of some of the institutional members possible. Thorne-Finch (1992) denominates these people as *reinforcers of the status quo* and identifies them as “one of the most difficult obstacles” (p.217) to overcome gender violence in higher education. DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1998), Canadian researchers who strongly devoted to overcoming gender violence in higher education, have stated that “virtually anyone who studies violence against women and supports feminist conclusions has stories to tell about being attacked by ‘reinforcers of the status quo’” (p.128). The authors therewith highlight the hostility that the university structures and those people who defend these structures have and how it affects the victims and the second order victims in their engagement in university.

In what follows, an example is provided of the extent that the attacks against women who started to break the silence around violence against women in universities and to speak up against the male prevalence had to face. According to Osbourne (1995), on December 6 in 1989 Marc Lepine, armed with a weapon, entered a classroom in the Polytechnic School of Montreal, invited all men to get out and shot 14 women to death. This depicts an extreme form of male resistance to progress made by feminists, but less severe attacks have been frequently reported by women and male supporters of women in academia and especially those who dared to break the silence on gender violence (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2015; Osborne, 1995).

Some research has emphasized the implications that the power imbalance has on sexual relations among the university community. Fitzgerald and her colleagues (Fitzgerald et al., 1988) for instance, evidenced that 25% of the faculty participating in their research had engaged in sexual relationships with their students. The authors argue that the power relations that prevail in the context of higher education institutions blur the line between consent and sexual harassment. In their research with students labeling situations of social interaction involving sexual harassment, Bursik and Geffer (2011), found that students are more prone to consider certain behavior as sexual harassment if power relations are involved. In that sense, identical situations with differing social status of the participants led the students to consider the situation as sexual harassment. It is thus highly necessary to take the social context and the power imbalance that mark the academic environment into account in order to properly address gender violence at universities.

1.1.6. Dating violence

Whereas pioneer research puts special emphasis on gender violence perpetrated by faculty, another strand of research focuses specifically on gender violence among students. In this regard, Williams and her colleagues (1992) emphasize that this shifting focus is due to the increasing cases of gender violence among the very students, whereas violence perpetrated by faculty against students is comparably less in numbers. Hill and Silva (2005) outline that a possible reason for higher numbers of sexual harassment among students is the fact that they compose the largest group on a college

campus. In that sense, research also starts to focus on more specific aspects of violence against women, providing an in-depth analysis for the previously mentioned aspects. In this vein, different research interests can be distinguished: Dating violence that takes place in the dates among students (Makepeace, 1981), the role played by fraternities and sororities (Boeringer, 1999; Copenhaver & Grauerholz, 1991; Kalof, 1993; Yancey & Hummer, 1989), and the correlation of alcohol and substance use or abuse with gender violence (Franklin, 2010; Gross et al., 2006; Krebs et al., 2007; Nicholson & Maney, 1998). As the purpose of this dissertation is to analyze prevention of gender violence at universities, in the following only some of these issues will be briefly outlined.

Yancey and Hummer (1989) introduces the importance of fraternities and sororities when explaining violence of male students towards university women. The author explains that in some of these organizations it is common to hold hostile attitudes towards women and to normalize violence against women, especially in sexual relationships, that enhance these relations to be violent and forced. According to Yancey and Hummer (1989), sexual abuse and harassment by members of the fraternities is considered a game of competition among them. Copenhaver and Grauerholz (1991) support this thesis and contribute with a quantitative study on the knowledge of violence against women at American universities focusing on fraternities and sororities. Almost half of the women interviewed inform to have suffered sexual coercion, with 24% who have suffered attempted rape and 17% who have actually been a rape victim. Great part of these violent situations have occurred inside the fraternities or sororities or in events related to these (Copenhaver & Grauerholz, 1991).

In this line, Kalof (1993) analyzes in more detail the factor of belonging to these fraternities or sororities. The author identifies that these organizations are related to conservative and traditional attitudes on gender, sexuality and rape (Kalof, 1993). Also, the author highlights that women of sororities are more likely to be involved in situations of sexual harassment than women who are no members of it. The probability of becoming a victim of sexual harassment in these contexts increases with alcohol abuse. The author concludes that sororities represent an institutional element that provides the sexual complement to the fraternities, since in these spaces the conception of women as sexual servants is promoted and in the sororities these stereotypes of conservative gender roles are reproduced that enhance the vision of women as subordinated to men.

At the same time, the influence of the fraternities on violent attitudes are explained by the social pressure that some groups of fraternities and sororities manage to put on individual action, promoting the use of violence also among less violent men and the acceptance of it by women that question these situations and stereotypes (Boeringer, 1999).

In line with these research results the concept of *rape culture* is increasingly spreading the definition of violence against women as a cultural feature of the American society that is reproduced in specific contexts of the universities such as the fraternities and sororities. Boswell and Spade (1996) distinguish between safe places and dangerous places at university. Fraternities and sororities refer to the latter places where the interactions are more marked by gender stereotypes and violence towards women. The authors recognize that violence against women is a deeply rooted social problem in the culture of our society.

1.1.7. Brief conclusions

The pioneer research on gender violence in higher education across the globe has shed light on an until then uncovered reality that represents a major social and public health problem. It is in part, due to these initial researches that the silence on this reality had been broken and progress could be made. The great extent of research that has been conducted since the pioneers published the first results in the late 1950s (Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957) evidence the extent of the impact of this problem, affecting not only the victims of gender violence but the larger society as well. Research has thus focused on contributing to overcoming this problem by developing elements to better understand its reality. Therefore, a concrete definition has been elaborated in order to help identify the problem. Also, diverse measures have been developed to make a diagnose of the situation that people from the university community experience. Further research has contributed to explore the roots and address the problem.

Additionally, research has also evidenced the devastating consequences of gender violence in higher education, potentially leading to an abandoning of the academic career and in some cases even alcohol and drug abuse. Yet, one of the most relevant aspects for the purpose of the present study is the analysis of the role of power

structures in the higher education system. The research conducted has challenged the power structures as they made this behavior and these common practices of a hostile environment public. As DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1998) put it, those who research on gender violence in higher education have to face the power structures. This picture of the pioneer research and the brief introduction on the issues that have been investigated afterwards aid to explain the process that Spanish higher education institutions are going through and especially it introduces the findings that have been made in pioneer research on gender violence in the Spanish university context as well as in the present research.

1.2. Research on gender violence at Spanish universities

1.2.1. Introduction

Research on gender violence at Spanish universities is in an initial stage and has so far made a similar trajectory to pioneer research on this issue in other countries and social contexts involving a process of breaking the silence and facing major resistances to make this major problem visible to society. Hence, the pioneer research focuses on similar issues which will be presented in this section. In this regard, the main contributions of the research conducted in this field are introduced starting with first data on the existence of this phenomenon in the Spanish higher education settings. Also, the resistances and the feudal nature of the Spanish university context is emphasized as well as the resistances encountered to tackle this highly delicate issue and break the silence. Finally, research on the advances that have been made in Spain and its higher education system are introduced.

1.2.2. Breaking the silence on gender violence

Similar as in other countries, gender violence at Spanish higher education institutions is a major problem for students, faculty and service and administration staff. However, in Spain, the reality of this issue, has only recently been revealed to the larger society through the pioneer research projects developed by CREA - Research Center in Theories and Practices that Overcome Inequalities and CREA's Women's Group

SAPPHO. Although members of CREA had started to discuss the problem of gender violence in universities years earlier (Oliver & Valls, 2004), the pioneer research to uncover this issue was not developed until 2005, which is when funding was finally received. The projects initiated in the same year are “Violence against women in Spanish universities” (Valls, 2005-2008) and “Gender-based violence in universities? Realities, characteristics and overcoming it” (Valls, 2005-2006). The first project was funded under the national RTD plan by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. The latter is a research project funded by the Agency for Administration of University and Research Grants (AGAUR) by the Government of Catalonia. These pioneer research studies represent the first step in breaking the silence on gender violence in Spanish universities and pave the path for further research and changes in the university to implementing preventive measures (Valls et al., in press.)

One of the capital contributions of this research was to provide evidence of the existence of gender violence in Spanish Universities. In this regard, the nationwide research conducted a survey with 1083 students at six Spanish universities, whereas the Catalan study involved 367 students (Duque, Vidu, & Schubert, 2013; Valls, Puigvert, & Duque, 2008). In line with international research (Fitzgerald et al., 1988), students in Spanish higher education institutions had difficulties to identify situations of gender violence. In this regard, both projects included a direct question on the experience of gender violence and afterwards students were asked for their experience of specific situations that are defined as gender violence. These situations include: physical aggression; psychological violence; sexual aggression; pressure to have sexual-emotional relationships; kisses and caresses received without consent; feeling uncomfortable or afraid because of comments, looks, e-mails, notes, phone calls or having been followed or observed; rumors about sexual life; sexist comments about the intellectual abilities of women or their role in society with sexual connotations that were humiliating or degrading.

The percentage of students answering affirmatively to the first and more direct question on their experience with gender violence was only 13% of the participants in the nationwide study and 14% of the Catalan study, whereas 87% of the students answer “no” to the question whether they knew someone or had experienced gender violence themselves. However, when asked for specific situations of gender violence an

additional 52% of the participants in the Spanish research and 44% of the ones in the Catalan study acknowledged that they actually knew others who had suffered some of these situations or had experienced them themselves.

The data, thus, evidences, one, that gender violence is highly extended with a majority of 58% to 65% of students, in the Catalan and Spanish sample respectively, who know of someone who had suffered gender violence or have made these kind of experiences themselves; and two, that students do not identify violent situations. The results of the nationwide research further show that all collectives -faculty, students, administration and service staff- are affected by this problem. Moreover, 92% of the people interviewed do not know whether measures to prevent or resolve violence against women exist in their university. This fact evidences the importance to contrast the national and international context concerning the measures and practices implemented to eradicate violence against women from higher education institutions. It is also noteworthy that all the collectives of the university consider that measures to address the problem of violence against women at universities need to be implemented (Valls, 2005-2008).

Vidu and her colleagues (Vidu et al., 2014) highlight that the communicative nature of the aforementioned research projects makes possible to not only shed light on the incidence of gender violence at Spanish universities, but also aims at social transformation. The research focuses on both studies included getting to know the reality as well as finding venues to transform this reality into a context where violence against women is recognized, prevented and resolved. Thus, both research projects attempted to combine the international scientific knowledge on violence against women at universities and the measures of prevention and resolution with the knowledge on the reality of the people interviewed and to jointly reflect about the possible forms of transforming the context in order to increase safety at Spanish universities. In this dialogue students were provided with all this knowledge as well as with a safe space to talk about these issues. Students, in this regard, showed their gratitude for bringing this issue up and took their chance in the surveys and the communicative daily life stories to report about situations they had experienced as well as to just appreciate the work done in this research due to the value it takes as well as the great need that society has of it. Students felt very much empowered with this research as they finally had a voice and the opportunity to talk about this issue, to learn to identify violent situations and to reflect

on the potential measures to be implemented to address gender violence at universities (Vidu et al., 2014).

1.2.3. Resistances to tackling gender violence

The pioneer research also highlighted the hierarchical structures that are prevailing in Spanish higher education and that make progress in terms of overcoming gender violence in its institutions very difficult. In that line, Duque and her colleagues (2013) emphasize that both, faculty and the institution itself, refuse to acknowledge the problem and therewith set impediments to creating safer universities. At the same time, any kind of situations that might occur to shed light on this issue is silenced. Valls and her colleagues (Valls et al., in press) extensively explain the code of silence in Spanish universities. In hand with this code of silence on gender violence goes the impunity that aggressors enjoy and the tolerance that the university community has regarding gender violence, normalizing many violent situations. If some cases finally do see the light then , similar as in international research (Gross et al., 2006), victims usually have to assume responsibility for what occurred, as the university community oftentimes blames the victim for having contributed to provoking the situation.

These persisting feudal structures are further enhanced by the Organic Law 10/1995 of 23rd of November, Criminal offenses against honor (1995). According to this law, the offenses against the honor of other people in the sense of accusing someone of perpetrating gender violence can imply the criminalization of victims reporting their experiences as this can be considered as a will for defamation. Valls and her colleagues (Valls et al., in press) highlight that this law prevents many victims from reporting because of the uncertainty of receiving legal protection or being condemned for bringing forward their cases. Consequently, victims are afraid to make formal reports, as they fear retaliations for speaking up. Also, there is a perception that reporting does not change anything, neither the situation suffered nor has it any positive outcomes for the future rather than being publicly blamed and marked.

Similar to the experiences internationally, when breaking the silence in Spanish universities, attacks against those who dare to speak up against the feudal and dominant structures are made. These attacks are directed not only towards victims of

gender violence who dare to report their cases, but also to all those people who take a stand in favor of the victim or who attempt to change the university context. Dziech and Weiner (1990) refer to people as second order victims, when they are not directly suffering gender violence but are being attacked for their positioning against the feudal order. In Spanish universities this hostile environment towards victims is a very poignant reality that prevents victims from reporting the violence they suffer and it further fosters a lacking solidarity with victims (Valls et al., 2009).

However, resistance goes even further to the extent that every effort is made to avoid the implementation of policies and prevention measures. In that sense, the pioneer research (Valls, 2005-2008) shows that there either are no measures to take in case of a potential report or the existing measures are unknown to the university community. The research (Valls, 2005-2008) highlights that participants in the study claimed that a homepage exists on the issue of gender violence, but there is no real structure behind the web that would make it possible to implement potential measures. Other participants emphasize that the people who attend victims of gender violence are very distant and do not inspire much confidence to report or feel comfortable reporting their cases. Thus, if there are measures or instruments to address gender violence at Spanish universities, it is questionable to what extent they actually respond to the needs of the victims, as they are either not publicized so that students or victims would know who to turn to or they are designed or implemented in a way that does not contribute to bringing this issue forward and promote the struggle against gender violence in higher education (Cantalupo, 2012).

In this regard, another research conducted by the CREA SAPPHO women's group highlights this phenomenon. The research project *Impact of the Comprehensive Law against Gender-based Violence in Initial Teacher Training* (Puigvert, 2008-2010) sheds light on the reality of universities that fail to comply with the Organic Law 1/2004, of December 28, on Comprehensive Protection Measures against Gender-Based Violence. According to this law, universities have the obligation to provide training in gender violence prevention and early detection of family violence in all those degrees of future professionals in education. The findings evidence that universities fail to comply with this law and do not provide this initial teacher training on gender violence prevention. A similar research was conducted concerning the Catalan region. The project *Training in*

Gender-based Violence Prevention in the Initial Training for Educators (Puigvert, 2008-2009) refers to the Law 5/2008, of April 24, on the right of women to eradicate violence against women that mandates specific training in prevention of gender violence and early detection of violence in the family context for those who are to become professionals in education. Both projects evidence, that higher education institutions do not provide the mandatory initial teacher training on gender violence prevention as the law rules, but simply ignore the legislation.

1.2.4. First steps to overcoming gender violence

The highly feudal structures that characterize the Spanish higher education have been intimidating the university community not to break the silence on gender violence occurring inside its institutions. However, once the silence was broken and the first research studies were developed on this issue, advances have been made to change the university structures and make them a safer place. In that sense, the pioneer research has been crucial to pave the way for the struggle against gender violence in Spanish universities. Given so, this research is listed on the Social Impact Open Repository and stands out for its political and social impact beyond the scientific impact (VAW_U, 2015).

Especially, the communicative methodology that oriented the research has contributed to amplifying the impact of discussing for the first time this major social problem that had been silenced for so long. One of the outcomes of the pioneer research in this sense is the need for implementing measures and policies in universities that the participants of the study claimed for. Comparing the policies and measures that the highest ranked universities in the world have, in Spain, we need to claim for changes that make it possible to introduce mechanisms to respond to gender violence, resolve potential cases and prevent others. Some of the elements that participants in the pioneer study outlined are related to very basic human aspects such as confidentiality and to creating confidential spaces in which victims can feel safe to explain their situations and get to know the possibilities of handling the situation (Valls, 2005-2008). The participants highlight that these measures or offices that are going to be implemented should be composed of people representing the whole university community. Hence, victims,

students, staff from the administration or services, as well as faculty should be involved in the implementation and maintenance of these measures.

The research team concludes the project with a guide on prevention and addressing violence against women at the universities which includes the following measures: 1) an institutional policy on sexual, academic and labour harassment that defines the situations of violence against women and the measures and the protocol to be followed in these situations, 2) prevention, training and awareness raising activities, 3) offices for sexual harassment prevention and reporting, 4) advisers, 5) flyers and informative documents, 6) web pages, 7) participation of all the university community in the development of measures of prevention and resolution of violence against women (Valls, 2005-2008).

Vidu and her colleagues (Vidu et al., 2014) have highlighted the social and political impact of the pioneer research and the changes that, subsequently, have taken place so far. In this regard, the research results have been taken into account by the some members of the Spanish Parliament who discussed the results in a meeting with researchers from CREA SAPPHO. The parliamentarians then committed to suggest changes that would mandate universities to create mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of gender violence. The commitment became effective in the Law for the Effective Equality Between Women and Men (2007) that mandates the creation of Equality Units at every public university in Spain and the elaboration of a protocol to guide the procedures for cases of sexual harassment as well as its prevention.

This legislation is the first of its kind to directly tackle gender violence in Spanish higher education. The implementation of Equality Units and the corresponding protocols represent the first mechanism through which victims can formally report cases and situations of gender violence. Since the conclusion of the research project in 2008 to the present, sixteen universities in Spain have elaborated and implemented a protocol for the prevention, detection and action against sexual harassment (VAW_U, 2015). The first protocol to be applied to a case, was at the Business School of the University of Barcelona in November 2011, when the first formal report of sexual harassment perpetrated by a professor was filed. The protocol is based on the research results of the pioneer research and draws from the measures proposed (Vidu et al., 2014).

In this line, also other kinds of measures have been developed at different universities. The University of Lleida for instance has approved a declaration of zero tolerance toward gender violence and harassment in their institution¹. At the University of Valencia an awareness program and training for students and professionals have been implemented as part of the first Equality Plan that was approved in December 2009. Conferences on gender violence have since then been organized, such as the conference entitled Successful Actions in the Prevention of Violence against Women in Universities and organized by CREA SAPPHO at the University of Barcelona in November 2010.

The social impact that derives from the pioneer research has myriad facets. In the first place, students participating in the research had the chance to discuss a highly sensitive issue that is of major concern to them. Vidu and her colleagues (2014) highlight, in this regard, that some students began to be more active in the fight against gender violence in Spanish universities. Also, the research as well as the mechanisms that were to be implemented as a consequence encouraged victims to feel empowered and report their experiences of violence, often perpetrated by professors who had enjoyed impunity for their activities for many years.

However, the Spanish context of higher education is far from easily acknowledging the problem of gender violence in its institutions. Thus, the progress made is essential to continue breaking the silence and make universities a safer place in the future. In this line, formal reports that have been filed still represent bravery on the part of the victims and facing resistances and retaliations at the same time as it is a further step in breaking the silence. In order to face these situations, victims have united their forces and have created a *solidarity network*² that aims at providing the moral support to victims of gender violence at Spanish universities as well as to second-order victims. It has been

¹ Declaració Institucional de la Universitat de Lleida de Tolerància Zero Envers la Violència i L'assetjament per Raó de Gènere [Institutional Declaration of the University of Lleida on Zero Tolerance toward Violence and Harassment because of Gender]: <http://www.udl.es/serveis/oficina/documentos-premsa/declaracioUdLtoleranciazero.pdf> (accessed on March 13, 2015).

² Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Red-solidaria-de-v%C3%ADctimas-de-violencia-de-g%C3%A9nero-en-las-universidades/834367176577567> (accessed on: March 14, 2015)

the solidarity among the victims and those who supported them in hard times that made them go forward and not bend to the institutional pressure (Vidu et al., 2014).

The efforts made by CREA SAPPHO to break the silence on gender violence at Spanish universities through the pioneer research as well as all the other venues they have found to pave the way for creating safer universities has been well acknowledged by international scholars working in the field, such as Sarah Rankin, the former director of the Office of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response at Harvard University. In 2009 she stated the following: “CREA’s efforts to lay this foundation by breaking the silence surrounding gender violence is inspiring. Future generations of students and faculty will undoubtedly have a very different classroom experience because of their work” (Giner, 2011, p.312). The present research study is the result of all these efforts, since it would not have been possible to develop a dissertation on preventing gender violence at Spanish universities if the silence had not been broken before. Also the present research is framed in the previous studies and oriented by the excellent work done by CREA SAPPHO. In the light of what has been achieved up to this point, this dissertation study represents another milestone in the struggle against gender violence at Spanish universities.

1.2.5. Brief conclusions

Research on gender violence at Spanish universities highlights some of the elements that characterize the country specific higher education settings. Among these, the strong feudal structures that are slowly taken down and the inaction of the institution are prominent. Nevertheless, also the lack of identification of violent situations that participants in the study belonging to the university community show is a salient issue. As a departing point for the present study, both elements will guide the research developed, but in different ways. As outlined in this section, pioneer research has been crucial for making the first steps in overcoming gender violence at universities by breaking the silence and making it a public issue and opening up spaces in which conversations on this problem can be held. In this sense, the continuation of research on gender violence in Spanish higher education contributes to tearing down the walls that maintain the feudal structures. However, the present research mainly aims at tackling

the second element, the difficulties to identify gender violence. In order to overcome this barrier guidance is needed that can help to identify potential violent situations and to prevent them. Therefore, different theoretical approaches will mark the research conducted: the approach of preventive socialization combined with the analysis of communicative acts and the approach of health literacy in order to identify and distinguish those interactions that involve violence and those that are free of violence to contribute with prevention strategies that will, lastly, help in the progress to make universities a safer place.

1.3. Gender violence prevention

1.3.1. Introduction

In the previous sections research on different aspects involved in gender violence in higher education has been presented. A variety of elements are highlighted that evidence the resistances encountered to overcome gender violence but also the opportunities and possibilities to introduce changes and transform universities into safer places. However, the struggle has a long history and violence is still a notorious reality in higher education. Thus, it is necessary to look at those elements in this struggle that made it possible to advance in changing the situation that made violence against women in universities possible. According to Benson and Thomson (1982) these changes are partly due to the increasing recognition of the problem and the recommendations made by the previous research, such as promoting zero tolerance of violence against women at universities. While research on gender violence at universities has provided groundbreaking evidences to put this issue on the social and political agenda, there are some more agents and pathways to be explored that contributed to achieve progress in the prevention of gender violence in higher education. As highlighted in the previous sections, not only was the existence of violence against women at universities evidenced, but also recommendations have been provided even in these initial analyses, highlighting the need for creating an environment that does not tolerate any sexual harassment on campus (Benson & Thomson, 1982; Reilly et al., 1986).

Oftentimes, there is this one case that becomes public and the reference for change; the one case that mobilizes society to take action and make pressure to achieve political

support. The empowerment that this process can involve for the victim or the supporters of the victim often also leads to develop specific initiatives of their activism for the cause. This summarizes very well how progress has been made so far in the different countries. In that regard, the present section focuses on research and other documentation that explores and evidences how progress in overcoming major social injustice has developed. Therefore, the role of social movements for social change is analyzed, as well as the actions taken by the institution - be it the university institution or the local, regional or national government to take action - and some of the diverse initiatives that have emerged in different higher education institutions. Last but not least, the most prominent theoretical approach in gender violence prevention is discussed.

1.3.2. Social movements

One crucial actor in promoting social change that contributes to overcoming gender violence in higher education have been and still are social movements and student activism. In that sense, Bird (2002) emphasizes the importance of the social context of diverse social movements such as the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement that had major influence, especially on the university context in the United States. Student activism in US higher education in that time period of the late 60s and 70s played a major role in decision-making in universities. Bird (2002) highlights that contrary to the university context in the United Kingdom, in the US, students were in control of universities and even in control of the curriculum. Thus, in a more democratic higher education system social and students' movements had major possibilities in shaping their university context. In her paper on the Women's Liberation Movement and its impact on the implementation of women's studies, Bird (2002) evidences that the students themselves were the ones to introduce courses in women's studies in the university context. Graduate students prepared and taught courses on women's studies which were finally taken into account by the university and rewarded with a certain number of credits. However, in the UK, the students' movement did not have the same effect. Bird (2002) argues that higher education in the UK was addressed to the elite and not to the masses as in the US. Hence, there was no need to address and tackle situations that were of major concern to the masses which had no access to university. For this reason, in the United Kingdom, female studies have been implemented rather

by Women's Centers that emerged in the cities. The analysis provided by Bird, evidences that social movements contribute to changing the reality of the university context, in the US and Canada as well as in the UK, although at a different pace and in varying manners.

Also Freedman (2013) emphasizes the importance of social movements in the historical context to promote social change. In her analysis of the legal changes of the definition of rape in the United States she emphasizes the role of social movements in pressing for legal changes in diverse social aspects. The author therefore mentions a variety of movements that have contributed to a more comprehensive definition of sexual violence. The author departs from the original definition of rape in the British Law as the theft of a woman's virtue which was adopted by the American statutes as "the carnal knowledge of a woman when achieved by force and against her will by a man other than her husband" (p.4).

In her work, Freedman (2013) not only evidences the contributions of the diverse social movements to the narrowing of the legal definitions of sexual violence in the United States, rather she demonstrates the changing value of women in society opposed to the privilege of white men and its relation to the status and citizenship of the diverse social groups in society. For this reason, social movements claiming for the human rights of different social collectives are so essential in advancing the overcoming of sexual violence. It implies lowering the social status of the privileged and equalizing the underprivileged. In that vein, the women's rights movement made an attempt to hold white men responsible for the sexual violence they had perpetrated. However, the legislation rather judged white men for criminal seduction instead of rape. Contrarily, black men were easily judged for rape (Freedman, 2013).

The radical free lovers movement claimed for the recognition of marital rape and raising the age of consent to sex. However, the progress made in narrowing the definition of rape also implied major resistances. In this sense, rape continued to be considered a black crime that threatened the lives of white women, ignoring the sexual violence perpetrated by white men and against black women. It was not until the anti-lynching movement, that black women were considered as victims of sexual violence. Freedman (2013) emphasizes the importance of the press to bringing this social claim forward. The media increasingly reported about rapes of black women by white men and finally, in the

1930s, the first black woman was recognized as a victim of rape and white men were prosecuted for it.

The next step in advancing the definition of sexual violence was achieved by the anti-child-abuse movement that focused on making the abuse of children visible, both girls and boys. That was greatly contradicting the existing legal definition that only contemplated sexual violence in heterosexual relations, ignoring homosexual rapes. In that sense, this movement managed to shed light on incest cases also including white males as perpetrators rather than migrant males only, which were commonly more easily prosecuted for homosexual crimes and in society considered as a threat to American children. The link between the social status and the definitions of sexual violence becomes clear and highlights also the argumentation used by the privileged social groups to maintain their higher social status. In that sense, the analysis provided by Freedman (2013) is crucial to the understanding of progress in terms of legal definitions of sexual violence. She highlights the cardinal elements that contribute to overcoming resistances and narrowing the definitions in order to account for more violent situations and reverse the injustice that has been done for so many years.

The analysis provided by Freedman is of great value to understand the present struggle of violence against women at higher education institutions as it sheds light on the core elements of promoting social change which are the social justice movements in combination with the social pressure represented in the media. At the same time, her work indicates also the major resistances to making progress which lie in facing those social groups in society that enjoy certain privileges and who insist on maintaining them. Moreover, Freedman (2013) also highlights the importance of specific cases that set a precedence in addressing certain issues, such as the case of the first black woman being acknowledged as a victim of rape perpetrated by a white man.

In regard to gender violence at universities, it is worthy to highlight that similar situations occurred. McMahon (2008) explains how the movement that emerged around the case of Jeanne Clery, a student at Pennsylvania University who died as a victim of gender violence, managed to introduce changes in the US legislation. In her paper, McMahon (2008) indicates that the incidence has led to changes in Pennsylvanian legislation mandating higher education institutions to report crimes on campus. But not only changes on a state level were achieved; according to McMahon (2008) it was due to the

public persistence of this movement that the Student Right-To-Know Act and the Campus Security Act were passed in 1990 mandating the higher education institutions in Pennsylvania to report crimes that were happening. Later on, in 1998, and in memory of Jeanne Clery this act was named the Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics. Again it is one case that reaches society and achieves a major social movement that claims for safer universities urging politicians as well as universities to take action.

1.3.3. Institutional changes

In line with the previous example of the Jeanne Cleary case, the subsequent social mobilizations and political changes, initial research has emphasized the importance of developing and implementing clear policies that imply actions to be taken against any perpetrator of violence. In case of university policies, research has highlighted the importance of overcoming the hostile environment through creating an atmosphere of zero tolerance of gender violence in higher education (Bryant & Spencer, 2003; Nicholson & Maney, 1998). Having a closer look at the legal regulations formulated in the United States of America, the first country where the issue of gender violence in higher education was dealt with, it becomes clear that several actions have been taken. Legislations have been passed from the 1970s onwards to regulate sexual discrimination and violence.

Simultaneous to the Women's Liberation Movement that was introducing women's studies in universities across the country (Bird, 2002) and the atmosphere of struggle against sexual discrimination that was reigning at that time in US higher education (Kelley & Parsons, 2000), in 1972, the Educational Amendments were revised. In particular, Title IX was reformulated and since then mandates the prohibition of sexual discrimination in any public higher education institution. Thus, universities and colleges receiving public funds can be sanctioned if they are not in compliance with Title IX. Currently, 55 colleges in the United States, and among them some of the most prestigious universities are facing charges for not complying this article (Kingkade, 2014).

Since then, in the 1970s, the legislations have been revised in order to contribute to an improvement in the campus climate. In 1990, the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act was passed with the purpose of mandating higher education institutions to disclose statistics on sexual violence on campus (Coker et al., 2011). In the amendments of 1992 of this act, special emphasis and obligation is put on the development of specific measures to guarantee prevention including campus sexual assault programs, procedures to be followed once a sex offense has occurred, and outline possible sanctions that may be imposed if the investigation found a verdict of guilt (Potter, Krider, & McMahon, 2000). Later, in an amendment made in 1998 the act was renamed the Clery Act, in memory of Jeanne Clery. Due to the persistence of gender violence on campus, the Campus SAVE Act (2011) was passed in 2013 mandating universities to develop prevention and awareness raising programs in order to finally prevent these cases from happening.

Still, research has emphasized that mere mechanisms are not enough to fight gender violence at universities. Rosenfeld (2008) emphasizes that even with the existing policies there are ways to maintain the power structures that allow for sexual violence to occur in higher education, since the legal steps taken in a case of charges against an institution for not being in compliance with Title IX depend on the legal interpretation of the situation and several paths have been found to avoid the conviction of the institution.

Thus, it is necessary to facilitate that the particular problems in resolving specific situations can be overcome; referring to the low numbers of formal reports filed. In order to properly address gender violence, these situations need to be reported, but the burden cannot be on the victim alone, and especially not if the environment does not support the victim. In this sense, Cantalupo (2012) does an exhaustive analysis of the existent laws in the United States and points to possibilities for overcoming these gaps. She highlights that the legal regulations do not encourage colleges to have reports filed since it criminalizes the higher education institutions putting them in a bad light with news about sexual violence occurring inside its community.

Therefore she proposes a variety of mechanisms that could prevent this criminalization of the universities response to gender violence and at the same time take the burden off the victim to bring this issue forward. One of the measures she suggests is to implement compulsory surveys in every school implemented by the Education Department. The

data resulting from the survey would then be provided to the colleges helping them improve their responses to preventing gender violence. But it would also be provided to the larger public, in order for families to have objective criteria at the moment of deciding for a college to send their children to.

In this line, McMahon (2008) indicates that not only the legal mechanisms have been achieved to mandate higher education to resolve the social problem of gender violence occurring in their institutions, but also actions have been taken to make sure that colleges actually comply with the legislation. The author highlights in this regard that the National Institute of Justice has initiated an exploration of indicators to find out to what extent higher education institutions are in compliance with the law in relation to four specific aspects: to (1) make public their on-campus crime statistics, (2) publicize prevention and actions designed to respond to crime, (3) institute crime logs, and (4) demonstrate that the rights of victims of sexual assault are preserved (McMahon, 2008).

As a result of her exploration nine elements in a university policy were identified to provide information on the extent of institutional commitment to defying gender violence in their institution. These are: (1) a definition of sexual assault that includes verbal and behavioral definitions of consent and sexual assault, (2) specifics of a sexual assault policy, (3) who is to be trained to respond, (4) methods for students to report assault, (5) prevention efforts and victim resources, (6) review for methods or policies that prevent reporting, (7) methods or policies that encourage reporting, (8) methods for investigating and punishing victimizers, and (9) an area that contains methods to evaluate effectiveness of current policies, including methods that enhance reporting (McMahon, 2008).

However, these examples highlighted by McMahon and Cantalupo evidence that policies are essential to make progress, but they need to be improved over time, with the several amendments that have been made so far and will be made in the future. Also, their analysis emphasizes the need for complementary measures to enforce the effective compliance with the law and that these are provided by external entities that do not belong or depend on the higher education system.

While legislation related to gender violence prevention in higher education has been widely analyzed in research in the United States, in other countries these advances

have called less attention to researchers. Nevertheless, progress in policies and laws have been made in most countries. Thomas (2004) reports on the Sex Discrimination Act passed in 1975 in the United Kingdom and the posterior acknowledgement, in 1986, that sexual harassment constitutes an act of discrimination by sex. The evidence of higher education institutions to not to adhere to these standards called for the development of an equal opportunities policy at all universities. Although initial recommendations for these policies took sexual harassment into account, Thomas (2004) indicates that it was not until the 1990s, when the European Commission put special emphasis on the dealing with sexual harassment, that this topic has not been part of the equal opportunities policies and were neither considered an issue of major importance.

As mentioned in the previous section, also in Spain advances have been achieved in terms of legislation. The fact of building upon the results of the pioneer research on gender violence in Spanish universities has made it possible to include an article in the Law for the Effective Equality Between Women and Men (2007) mandating public administrations, and as such the public universities, to establish Equality Units and to elaborate a protocol for the procedures of the handling of cases of sexual harassment as well as its prevention (Vidu et al., 2014).

It is thus important to focus on further institutional actions that can be taken in order to continue and enforce the struggle against gender violence in higher education. In this regard, Rossi and Weber-Burdin (1983) have already in the 1980s acknowledged that the increasing awareness of gender violence at higher education institutions has led to the establishment of institutional policies implemented in diverse colleges to respond to this situation. Also Williams and colleagues (1992) highlights that universities have drawn from research to develop institutional mechanisms such as deterrence policies, attention to victims, grievance procedures and educational programs as a means of raising awareness and prevention of gender violence.

Moreover, the authors describe the actions taken by one university during the late 1980s, when several cases of sexual harassment by faculty against students were brought forward. The university reaction was not to dismiss any of the tenured faculty, however a stand was taken against the violent behavior and as a result some of them resigned from their position. Williams, Lam and Shively (1992) state:

The university was making it clear to faculty, staff, and students that there was now a sexual harassment policy, that certain behaviors constituted sexual harassment, that such behaviors were wrong, that action would be taken against faculty or staff members who violated the policy, and that offices were available to handle complaints. (p.55)

This statement is crucial, since it evidences that in part the prevention and especially the implementation of deterrence-based policies is only effective if the university community can be sure that these policies are not mere words but are translated into action to protect victims of gender violence and act upon the perpetrator.

Potter and his colleagues (2000) have conducted an analysis based on the policies on violence against women and sexual harassment and other prevention measures and programs of 100 universities in the United States. The research reveals that the greatest part of these measures is punitive, whereas others aim at reducing the risk and opportunities for violent situations, promoting zero tolerance by publicly denouncing violence against women and enhancing the responsibility among men for the violence perpetrated towards women. According to this research, only few measures highlight sympathizing with the victim as a preventive measure to solve the problem of violence against women at universities (Potter, Krider, & McMahon, 2000). Hence, the explanations given by Cantalupo (2012) on the lacking incentives for universities to encourage victims to report their experiences of gender violence evidence the need to provide additional measures to assure that existing policies are implemented.

In a similar vein, Bryant and Spencer (2003) argue that it must become a social norm that these policies are implemented to actually create a victim friendly environment and encourage them to report their cases. Williams and her colleagues (1992) further reports that in this university during the time of implementing and publicizing the new policies and grievance procedures, more cases have been brought forward and in those cases where the faculty had been found guilty of the accusations a stand had been taken for the victim. As a consequence, Williams and her colleagues (1992) identify a decrease of sexual harassment in the university, since faculty was very well aware of the consequences of sexually harassing and students were aware of the resources they had in case of experiencing some kind of gender violence. Still, she highlights that the preferred mechanisms to report were not the formally established ones but rather

informal mechanism (Williams, Lam, & Shively, 1992). It thus becomes evident that the measures and policies alone are not enough to prevent gender violence or to tackle this problem properly. Rather a clear commitment by the institution to eradicate this problem is needed in order to truly implement all the existing measures.

Hence, policies and institutional measures to tackle the problem of gender violence are crucial and represent a major progress in the prevention of this problem, but the impact of these policies and measures are tightly linked to the commitment of the university community to properly implement them and respond to cases of gender violence. However, research has also emphasized that victims rather turn to informal measures to report their experiences of gender violence instead of filing a formal report in the institutional body designed for this purpose. Kelley and Parsons (2000) for instance highlight that although knowing this tendency of preferring informal mechanism, the university analyzed in their paper did not include informal options to report cases of gender violence. However, in most universities and colleges informal mechanisms such as peer-to-peer activities and networks have emerged to address this problem and to complement the institutional mechanisms in regard to gender violence prevention. In the following some of the diverse ventures will be discussed.

1.3.4. Prevention programs

Simultaneous to the implementation of university policies, a variety of awareness raising, prevention programs and campaigns have been developed and implemented by concerned faculty and students at universities, especially in the United States. These programs have been evolving throughout the years in correspondence to the research conducted on sexual assault prevention at universities.

Initial contributions to preventing sexual violence suggest implementing educational programs to tackle this issue (Boeringer, 1999; Fonow, Richardson, & Wemmerus, 1992). These programs range from more focused on awareness raising about the seriousness of this problem, to demystifying rape as a crime that can actually occur in an academic context, to include peer-to-peer initiatives and thus involving the entire university community to both prevent and end up with sexual harassment. This latter approach implies to implement a bystander approach to tackle gender violence.

Whereas Boeringer (1999) insists on programs to demystify rapes and to changing the perception of sexual coercion as a criminal offense, Fonow and her colleagues (1992) put special emphasis on framing these sessions in the predominant social structures allowing for violence against women. The research study conducted by Fonow and colleagues (1992) departs from a first analysis of rape cases at American universities and from a second research that measures the acceptance of rape myths. These scholars highlight that 54% of rapes take place in dates, this meaning that the victims know their aggressors, contrary to the myth that women are kidnapped by a stranger. Moreover, the authors evidence that 35% of university students would commit rape if it was not penalized. With this data as a basis and taking the relation between violence against women and the socialization in traditional gender roles into account, the authors evaluate an educational program on rape to prevent violence against women. They conclude that education on rape manages to modify the students' beliefs, but not the general conception of the context. According to them, an in-depth analysis on rape as one of the many elements that constitute the control of men over women is needed for the preventive education to be effective (Fonow, Richardson, & Wemmerus, 1992).

Another prevention program in line with the educational prevention approach, is the 'Men Against Violence Model', which addressess male university students and especially aims at demystifying rape among men and therewith challenge group pressure for using violence against women (Choate, 2003). However, the research of Choate (2003) highlights that intervention with the students belonging to fraternities is done through the legal definition and the laws on rape, as has already been mentioned. This study states that acceptance of rape myths can be reduced in that way. However, this program attempts to go beyond the awareness raising on violence against women and influence the gender roles that define masculinity as violent. A similar conclusion is held by Forbes and colleagues (Forbes, Adams-Curtis, & White, 2004) who highlight that violence against women is related to the hostility of some men towards women and not to the beliefs of rape myths. In this regard, authors suggest implementing programs that focus on promoting solidarity and empathy with the victim and to reduce hostility towards women.

More recent research point at changes in the prevention measures, emphasizing a more communitarian model of prevention and the importance of the people that have

witnessed violence against women. These are known as the 'bystander intervention' approaches (Burn, 2008; Potter et al., 2009). According to these studies, the resolution of violence against women falls on the community, and thus, the existing prevention measures should be complemented with others aiming at raising awareness of all members of society. Thus, emphasis relies on the involvement of the bystander to alleviate the heavy burden of prevention from the individuals such as the victim and aggressor. But it stress the social responsibility of this social problem (Banyard et al., 2010).

A more general evaluation of the prevention measures implemented in the universities is the research conducted by Banyard and her colleagues (2005) who repeat the analysis carried out in a research from 1988 with a sample of 2000 university students after diverse prevention and resolution measures had been implemented at the universities where they study. This investigation reveals that the results are similar in both studies and thus demonstrates that the prevention measures are not enough to reduce violence and other situations of sexual harassment and abuse in universities. Hence, Banyard and colleagues (2005) conclude that prevention should be aimed at identifying the reasons for not reporting situations of violence and at promoting the support of the rest of students and members of the university community. Indeed, this is very consistent with previous findings of international research on gender violence, which state that fostering trust among peers as well as creating an atmosphere of dialogue and foster interactions among equals are basic elements for both identifying and reporting situations of gender-based violence (Bondurant, 2001).

In this regard, Burn (2008) highlights that education in prevention of violence against women as bystanders should include precise actions for risk situations, both "physical" actions as well as the language to be used so that people can overcome the existing barriers. For instance: "You're coming with us. We can't leave you here and put you at risk for sexual assault" or, "Sorry, she's too intoxicated to provide consent." Or, "Don't let a few bad men hurt the reputation of all men. Intervene when another man is at risk for sexually assaulting".

As observed, the bystander intervention perspective holds universities responsible for taking action in preventing and resolving sexual violence on campus, but they also demonstrate that universities alone cannot tackle this issue (Banyard et al., 2005).

Scholars defenders of this position suggest that the whole university community is needed in order to end with violence on campus, pointing at the role of the bystander as an active agent in preventing sexual violence (Banyard, Moynihan, & Plante, 2007; Coker et al., 2011; Gidycz, Orchowski, & Berkowitz, 2011; Katz, Heisterkamp, & Flemming, 2011; Foubert et al., 2010). Thus, according to them, developing a more communitarian model of bystander intervention for preventing gender violence would have implications for providing better services to survivors, for instance, at the time of enabling mechanisms for telling someone the occurrence of the unwanted sexual experience (Foubert et al., 2010).

In line with these approaches, most of the awareness raising and prevention programs developed at diverse universities already implement bystander intervention in their prevention strategies with a special emphasis on including the students as key actors in prevention and assistance to victims. In this regard, the University of Wisconsin-Madison (n.d.) has introduced the community intervention into the sexual assault policies, making every bystander responsible for taking action to prevent and respond to sexual assault. For instance, the initiative of the Promoting Awareness Victim Empowerment program (PAVE) is a student advocacy group from the University of Wisconsin-Madison (n.d.) committed to ending sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking through education and activism. This group operates through different social networks such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram; through these social networks they provide support to the victims and develop an important task of awareness raising. PAVE UW-Madison constitutes a good example of bystander intervention among the campus community, since it is an additional element to the formal institutional measures. Another experience is the 'Tell Someone' initiative deployed at Harvard University (n.d.). This campaign puts special emphasis on encouraging victims to explain their experiences and that these things are important. The campaign involves the university community and offers individual and community resources, as well as university services in order to provide for help in case that students need to report any case of sexual violence.

In a very similar vein, the bystander intervention approach is also present in the campaign "Not Alone" launched in 2014 by the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault (White House, n.d.), which is also having a major impact on media. This campaign is aimed at preventing and responding against sexual assault

at all different educational realms: from elementary schools, to secondary schools, colleges, and universities (White House, n.d.). The US government has elaborated and published a wide set of materials and different kind of resources aimed at tackling sexual violence. The campaign is based on the best available evidence that research on the causes of sexual violence and evaluation of prevention efforts has provided, which points out that bystanders are an essential agent for prevention and so far the most promising approach to effectively tackle this reality. It focuses its efforts on involving bystanders as a key asset, for instance, promoting actions that include the following ideas: awareness raising, fostering the sense of responsibility among students, training people on weighting the cost and benefits of getting involved in a risky situation, creating an atmosphere of confidence so people take action and help; among other elements. In this sense, some of the prevention resources developed are about empowering bystanders to act by developing materials such as bystander-focused prevention of sexual violence; preventing sexual violence of college campuses; establishing prevention programming, strategic planning for campuses; rape prevention and education (RPE) programs; etc.³

Existing evidence has also pointed out the role of students for peer-to-peer intervention as a main strategy to overcome gender violence on campus. In these prevention and awareness raising programs the students themselves engage in and develop actions to put this struggle forward (Mitchell & Freitag, 2011). For instance, Mitchell and Freitag have studied the Forum Theatre for Bystanders approach to gender violence prevention as practiced by social change groups, remarking its usefulness and efficacy for ending men's violence against women. Similarly, Ahrens, Rich and Ullman (2011), analyze the impact of the InterACT Sexual Assault Prevention Program, an interactive, skill-building performance based on the Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed. Authors remark the effectiveness of the bystander approach to sexual assault prevention as it provide a proactive role for all participants, and beyond this, it engages a virtual army of engaged citizens in the fight against sexual violence (Ahrens, Rich, & Ullman, 2011; Banyard et al., 2005). In this kind of initiatives students act as peer advisors bridging the gap

³ Bystander Summary. Not Alone Official website of the United States Government: <https://www.notalone.gov> (Accessed on April 29, 2014).

between the institutional services provided and the students' needs (Grauerholz et al., 1999; Williams, Lam, & Shively, 1992).

Coker and her colleagues (2011) emphasize the importance of targeted recruitment of the students selected for bystander training. The Green Dot Program reported by the authors has implemented the Peer Opinion Leader strategy that helps to identify the most influential and respectful peers to promote prevention of gender violence (Coker et al., 2011). They conclude that the training sessions in raising awareness have enhanced a more active bystander intervention yet no results could be found on the actual reduction of violence against women (Coker et al., 2011). Another experience reported in the literature is the "Sexual Harassment Adviser's Network" as an alternative that provides support to the victims which cannot be provided by the hierarchical and patriarchal university institutions (Grauerholz et al., 1999).

These initiatives and approaches address the concern highlighted in previous research (Gross et al., 2006; Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957) showing that official reports of situations of sexual harassment or abuse are very low, since the atmosphere denotes low confidentiality of the reporting system and victims are usually held guilty for the aggressions experienced, blaming them for provoking the situation or having participated in it. Thus, the implementation of less formal measures to report violence against women at universities is necessary.

Many efforts have been invested in assessing these prevention programs but still no research has proven that they help to decrease the numbers of sexual assault on campus (DeGue et al., 2012). Nevertheless, the most promising prevention strategies are community-based and include especially students in peer-to-peer training programs.

From a feminist perspective, Senn (2010) states that the focus on prevention has been too much centered on preparing women to reduce the risk instead of highlighting the threat that some men represent for women. She suggests a program of resisting threatening behavior of men. She goes beyond the program developed by Rozee and Koss (in Senn, 2010) called *Assess, Acknowledge, and Act Framework* and she adds the emancipatory education in sexuality for women. Therewith, women can consciously develop their sexuality without being influenced by social pressures or the sexual relations that they have had. However, Senn (2010) concludes that this program is not

enough and that it even has contrary effects. For this reason, the author insists that more efficient prevention programs need to be elaborated and that these need to be based on feminist values and elements.

However, the theory of preventive socialization developed by Gomez (2015) emphasizes that the values promoted at the university should not necessarily be feminist but positive that do not allow for violence against women. Like other educational institutions, the university has the obligation to foster preventive socialization to educate people in order that violence against women is neither reproduced nor permitted. Jacobs and colleagues (Jacobs, Bergen, & Korn, 2000) highlight this element in the struggle to end with violence against women at the Medical Schools that train future doctors and that should instill positive values that do not allow for sexual harassment. Moreover, the authors define the atmosphere of the medical schools as very propitious to violence against women due to the hierarchic and patriarchal structure.

Tharp and her colleagues (Tharp et al., 2011) defend that many programs to prevent sexual harassment and abuse at American universities are not effective and, furthermore, that researchers who implement or analyze them do not use scientific criteria for their evaluation. For this reason, the authors expose the nine principles of violence against women prevention programs identified by Nation and colleagues (2003) as effective: the principles recommend that effective prevention programs are comprehensive, use varied teaching methods, are theoretically driven, promote positive relationships, are appropriately timed in development, are socioculturally relevant, use outcome evaluation, employ well-trained staff to ensure adequate implementation, and are of sufficient dosage to create behavior change (Nation et al., 2003). Tharp and colleagues (2011) say that given that these criteria are not taken into account, the research on prevention programs can hardly provide evidence of the efficiency of the implemented programs. It is essential to conduct research in this regard and to insist on the scientific quality of the results.

Precisely, Tharp and her colleagues (Tharp et al., 2011) criticize a violence against women prevention program implemented and analyzed by Foubert and colleagues: 'The Men's Program', addressed to increase the awareness on sexual abuse (rape) of men and to influence the behavior and attitudes that they have towards women and towards victims of sexual abuse in general. The critique of Tharp and colleagues points to the

short duration of the intervention, one hour, and the lack of scientific criteria that demonstrate their efficiency. On the other hand, Foubert, Godin and Tatum (2010), in his analysis of interviews conducted two years after the intervention, highlights that a significant number of men had changed their attitudes and behavior regarding situations of violence against women. Big part of the changes are related to a greater consciousness when consuming alcohol combined with sexual relations and the consequences that this has, which coincides with the high numbers of rapes that occur in situations in which alcohol is consumed.

In Spanish universities the greatest part of violence against women is not related to alcohol consumption, and for this reason prevention should be developed from a different perspective. Moreover, Foubert and colleagues' perspective (Foubert, Godin, & Tatum, 2010) is in line with previous research that are more focused on individuals, referring less to a change of the university community or the society, but to a change of particular men towards situations of violence against women. In this way specific improvements can be made but not on a global level.

1.3.5. Brief conclusions

Having recognized the difficulties of identifying sexual harassment at the university and the role of power structures in this phenomenon, prior research indicates that the following elements can make a difference in transforming such structure and advance toward the overcoming of gender violence at higher education institutions: the mobilization of students, institutional and changes, and preventive programs that depart from a communication approach such as the bystander intervention. Among those, the research reviewed indicates the importance of student mobilization and social activism for assuring a university free of gender violence. In this regard, students' organizations can carry out different actions, inform and support policies, and even develop informal mechanisms in order to prevent and respond to any situation of sexual harassment on campus .

Overall, the role of peers and the university community is fundamental to speak up about gender violence, to defend human rights and women freedom in society. Going beyond concrete actions, students' activism means a pressure for the institution to take a stand

and to act avoiding any case of harassment, as well as overcoming the existent resistances of recognizing the problem and acting coherently against it. In this chapter, different examples in which the involvement of the larger society and the university community has challenged and altered the existing context of power relations at universities which favors gender violence. In this vein and in line with recommendations by pioneer research (Benson & Thomson, 1982), the silence can be broken when the entire community is committed to solving this social problem by building a context where violence is not tolerated but denounced. This community mobilization can achieve institutional changes that advance towards a safer academic environment, to stop that victims of gender violence abandon their academic careers, and to contribute to developing a university context that can better meet its scientific and social aims.

In brief, research on gender violence in higher education has contributed to evidence this major social and public health problem, indicating some of the main implications, such as the lack of identification of violence related to very low rates of formal reports filed and the devastating consequences for the victims, the universities and society at large. Research on gender violence in Spain has confirmed the international data for the national context, illustrating the presence of gender violence in Spanish higher education as well as the impact of breaking the silence and progress that has been made. Moreover, the cardinal agents in contributing to prevention of gender violence have been the social movements, institutional changes and prevention programs. In relation to these findings the present dissertation attempts to add to the prevention strategies through the analysis of communicative acts to define elements to tackle the problem of the lack of identification. Moreover, the role of social movements and peer to peer networks in the prevention strategies launched in Spain will be evidenced and contrasted with these previous experiences.

CHAPTER 2

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Introduction

Literature and previous research have evidenced that sexual violence at universities is a major problem with devastating consequences for the victims as well as for the universities and the general society. At the same time, it is an issue that is increasingly discussed in society and research has demonstrated that, in some countries more than in others, great progress has been made to tackle this problem. However, the high numbers of sexual violence incidences make it evident that we are still far from eradicating violence against women in universities. For this reason, the purpose of the study is to contribute to the existing literature and intervention practices with some more hints to prevention of sexual violence at universities, and does so employing three main areas of knowledge.

The aim of knowledge building is addressed by walking on the shoulders of giants (Merton, 1965), all the accumulated scientific knowledge on how to overcome gender violence in institutions such as universities, and combining three main theoretical approaches: communicative acts, preventive socialization and health literacy. Particularly, such task is undertaken employing a very innovative and promising approach to overcoming gender violence: the analysis of *communicative acts*. This approach analyses the “smallest unit” of where gender violence takes place, which is in the interactions of the individuals. Social interactions are a crucial element to be analyzed, as they can promote either dialogue or violence, and because it is in the interactions and the communicative acts among people where gender violence can be strongly identified and prevented. The analysis of communicative acts for gender violence prevention builds upon the approach of preventive socialization developed by Jesus Gomez (2015). According to Gomez, gender violence is linked to the socialization in different kinds of relationships and models of attraction. The author states that love is social, something that we learn throughout our life. As a consequence, prevention of socialization in violent relations is possible. A strand of research initiated by CREA has thus focused on the prevention of gender violence in analyzing communicative acts

among adolescents (Soler, 2006-2008), as well as communicative acts among men (Soler, 2008-2011).

Also, this dissertation study builds on the scientific knowledge in public health and especially departs from the approach of *health literacy* (Groene & Rudd, 2011) to tackle the problem of a lacking identification of gender violence at universities (Dey, Korn, & Sax, 1996; Duque, Vidu, & Schubert, 2013; Fitzgerald et al., 1988). This approach was developed to bring medicine and medical services closer to the lay people who might not have the knowledge that is required to navigate in a health care setting. The entrance in the university setting can be regarded as a similar context in which specific dynamics mark the way. Yet, it takes some time for students and those who enter newly to higher education institutions to learn how to navigate in this unfamiliar setting. Not much guidance is provided in this regard which contributes to making it easier for some people to harass others on campus. Thus, literacy in how to navigate higher education institutions and relations among the university community will be analyzed as a way to improve the problem of lacking identification of gender violence at universities.

The following sections shed light on each of these approaches and their contribution for the prevention of gender violence at universities.

2.2. Communicative Acts

In order to identify how communicative acts both contribute to violence against women in universities and how they can aid its overcoming, I review the main contributions on the communicative acts that frame this approach, including the works of Austin, Searle, Habermas and CREA.

2.2.1. Speech Acts

For the philosophy of language, Austin's contributions have been crucial for the further development of linguistics as well as for the social sciences in general. His work "How to do things with words" (Austin, 1962) has greatly contributed to the linguistic turn in social sciences in the 20th century (Searle & Soler, 2004). Austin states that words are not

mere utterances, but they gain meaning and action. The author denominates these kind of utterances performative sentences to indicate that they do not only provide an explanation of an action but that they also effectively represent an action. Some of the examples he mentions are the sentences “I name this ship Queen Elizabeth” when baptizing a ship or “I do” spelled out in front of the registrar or altar (Austin, 1962, p.5). The latter sentence refers to getting married, to create an institution as Soler would say in the debate with Searle (2004) about Austin’s work. Thus, Soler and Searle (2004) conclude that with words we construct the social reality, in the sense of Berger and Luckmann (1966). Austin continues his analysis of speech acts and the use of a sentence and suggests a distinction of three different kind of speech acts: locutions, illocutions and perlocutions. His definition of *locutionary acts* refers to the meaning or sense of an utterance, whereas *illocutionary* speech acts are those that include a certain force that represents an intention. Finally, the *perlocutionary* speech acts can be defined as acts that achieve an effect by being said. Yet, this definition of speech acts has sparked a debate in the circle of communication research.

Searle, who was a student of Austin, does not agree with Austin’s distinction of speech acts. But, Searle (1969) insists on the fact that every speech act, and as such every sentence or uttering, has an illocutionary force. According to Searle’s definition there are no locutions, but locutions are actually illocutions. Instead, Searle distinguishes between propositional content and illocutionary force. In that sense, similar illocutionary acts can have the same propositional content but the illocutionary force behind them differs. To provide an example: ‘Would you like to go for a coffee?’ and ‘Let’s go for a coffee!’ have the same propositional content, yet the illocutionary force is different (Searle & Soler, 2004). Moreover, Searle states that what Austin considered as perlocutions are in fact the effects of an illocutionary act. According to Searle there are no perlocutionary acts, but only the effects of illocutions. Hence, the agreement to an illocutionary act can result in a perlocutionary effect.

Another crucial element in Searle’s work on speech acts is the analysis of intentionality (Searle, 1998). He therefore departs from consciousness which is represented in the mind of an individual. Then, he outlines language as a result of the subjective consciousness that implies the intentionality of an individual. When the individual intentionality is shared by more people and serves as cooperation among these

individuals, Searle (1995) defines it as collective intentionality. Still, emphasis is placed on the fact that shared meaning is constructed by the individual rather than in a collective action of individuals sharing their individual intentionalities. It is in this collective intentionality that social reality is constructed as a complement to the physical reality. Hence, institutions such as universities or money only exist due to the collective intention of its existence (Searle, 1995).

2.2.2. Communicative action

One of the main contributions to sociology and especially to the theories of communication is the Theory of Communicative Action developed by Jürgen Habermas in 1984. Habermas is the most cited contemporary philosopher and sociologist and has introduced a major shift in social theory by elaborating a theory that combines two opposed perspectives, the systemic and the subjectivist approach to society. His theory is developed in a moment of change in society which have greatly contributed to modifying social relations. As discussed previously the social change motivated by social movements has pushed for more democratic structures in society as well as they have allowed for a more individual personal life. Suddenly, the individual has much more freedom to decide on his or her life and to challenge traditional structures.

But according to Beck (1992), the risk society also implies that we must make decisions on issues that were previously taken for granted. This implies a certain risk and we must assume the responsibility for the choices we take in life. Still, this shift in society has also lead to greater negotiation and interaction in our personal lives and especially in our love lives (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994). In his Theory of Communicative Action, Habermas (1987) makes an analysis of society departing from the communication among individuals understood as a predominantly intersubjective process. In order to construct his theory of communicative action and to overcome the limitations of the previous approaches, he considers, on the one hand, those perspectives focusing on the systems of society, and on the other hand, those social theories that focus on the subject and the individual.

In this sense, Habermas draws from Popper's definition of the three worlds, "the physical objects and events, mental states and episodes, and semantic contents of symbolic

formations” (Habermas, 1987, p.77) to develop his conception of these three worlds in which the individuals move. The objective world represents the totality of all entities about which true statements are possible; the social world refers to the objectivities that are constructed in social interaction; and the subjective world defines the world that is only accessible for the individual itself (Habermas, 1987, p.100). In line with social interactionism developed by Mead (1934), Habermas (1987) suggests that the subjective world is constructed in the external world, both the objective and the social worlds which are shared in society. In this process of intersubjectivity people create meaning through language and this is where Habermas centers his attention. Thus, his theory of communicative action is an intersubjective approach going beyond the perspective of communication as a matter of individuals.

Habermas (1987) defines different types of action including *communicative action*, on the one hand, and the *strategic action*, on the other. These actions are then related to the speech acts developed by Austin and Searle. However, Habermas misinterprets their conceptualization and does not make any distinction between the locutions and illocutions suggested by Austin and neither between the propositional content and illocutionary force suggested by Searle. Instead, he puts them on the same level, understanding the propositional content of Searle as equivalent to Austin’s concept of locutions and the concept of illocutionary force as equivalent to illocutionary acts defined by Austin. Finally, Habermas (1987) proposes yet another distinction than those of Austin and Searle between illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts. To him, illocutionary acts are those speech acts that build on truth and validity claims, whereas perlocutionary acts imply a hidden objective. The latter are linked to the strategic action and the illocutionary speech acts refer to those used in communicative action that are aiming at reaching understanding and agreement.

In Habermas’ ideal type of communicative action (Habermas, 1987), language serves as a means to achieve a necessary understanding to reach consensus and to coordinate action among people. Therefore communicative action builds on communicative rationality in which knowledge is used to understand each other and reach agreements instead of an instrumental use of knowledge according to ends. The instrumental rationality originally is part of the world of systems, whereas communicative rationality refers to the lifeworld. A necessary criterion for this action to be communicative is that it

is based on the use of *validity claims* instead of *power claims* (Habermas, 1987). That is, in the communicative action no physical or symbolic power is used to influence the understanding, the only force of argumentation is the validity of the arguments provided by the different actors involved in the communicative action. The people involved in the communicative action are willing to have a dialogue in which their own perceptions can change if more valid arguments are provided. Habermas (1987) suggests communicative action as the action that people should strive for rather than actions that are based on power relations. Yet, he acknowledges the fact that communicative action can be considered as an ideal type, as no relation in society is completely free from power relations. In this sense, in a communicative action based on validity claims, the role of the people involved in the action might influence the process of reaching understanding and might favor the fact that the arguments given by a socially higher ranked individual prevail over others regardless their validity. Nevertheless, Habermas (1987) encourages individuals to be aware of this reality and to approach the prevalence of validity claims over power claims.

2.2.3. Communicative Acts

The concept of communicative acts developed by CREA builds on the previous conceptualizations of Austin (1962), Searle (1969) and Habermas (1987) but includes only those aspects of each theory that have greater utility to construct a concept that can help us to address theoretically and practically problems in society such as gender violence. The previous conceptualizations represent a major progress in the analysis of language and in social sciences, however they also present gaps to properly analyze social interaction which hinders getting to the roots of the problem of gender violence in communicative actions. In the debate between John Searle and CREA on the different definitions of speech acts, Marta Soler (Searle & Soler, 2004) emphasizes the need for a definition that allows us to analyze interaction for the presence or not of violence in these interactions.

‘(...) we consider that in the present society, on a theoretical and practical level, it is highly important to be able to distinguish with most accuracy possible dialogic interactions from power interactions. In other words, we need to be able to

distinguish, for example, when (and according to what) a speech act (or a communicative act) refers to a suggestion based on freedom and when it refers to sexual harassment.' (Searle & Soler, 2004, p.12).

One essential element in the definition of communicative acts is that they do not only refer to speech acts, i.e. verbal communication, but also to non-verbal communication, to all those signs of communication that people use in their interactions such as body language, tones of the voice, looks, gestures, etc. All these signs provide further meaning to the speech acts and are part of the communication. Therefore, they can indicate intentions beyond the words that are pronounced (Soler & Flecha, 2010).

A second feature of the communicative acts is the distinction between illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts related to the aim to identify those communicative acts which represent violent situations and those that are based on freedom. Therefore, Soler and Flecha (2010) draw from Habermas' concern to distinguish speech acts according to the power or validity claims, but they differ in the sense that the undesired effects of a perlocutionary act can be explicit, they do not need to be hidden as Habermas would state. Consequently, Soler and Flecha (2010) make the following conceptualization of illocutionary and perlocutionary communicative acts and distinguish them according to their aim of consensus for the first and action for the second.

Illocutionary communicative acts include the search for an agreement between the speakers rather than aiming at an action as a result from the communication. Taking the example provided by Soler and Flecha (2010) a male student who invites a female student to have a coffee together only wants to go for a coffee with her if she truly wants to. He is not looking for the action to take place, but he is looking for the agreement of the girl to his invitation. In case of her agreement, he would probably love to go for a coffee with her. In order to reach this agreement, she must have the conditions to decide freely to go for a coffee with him or not. Rossi and Weber-Burdin (1983) have made similar analyses regarding nonviolent actions taken by males toward females and which may acquire different meanings depending on the context and upon the past history of the relationships between the men and women involved.

Therefore, the communicative acts must be free from any kind of coercion and they must be based on sincerity. These are the basic elements for an illocutionary act to be

distinguished from a perlocutionary act. Furthermore and most importantly, Soler and Flecha (2010) refer to the perlocutionary effect resulting from this interaction not to the agreement, as Searle would call it, but they refer it to the decisions that are taken in agreement. In that vein, with his invitation for a coffee the student does not aim at the girl to meet him, but he wants her to take the decision to meet him. On the contrary, in a perlocutionary speech act with the same invitation, the aim of the student would be to go for a coffee with her by any means, if she wants to or not. Both, the illocutionary and the perlocutionary acts can have perlocutionary effects, yet the illocutionary communicative acts aim at an agreement to the action suggested, whereas the perlocutionary acts only look for the action to be taken with or without agreement.

Soler and Flecha (2010) highlight that not only the intentions of looking for agreement or action and the sincerity in these intentions are relevant in social interactions, but also the context. Thus, the power relations that compose our society affect the interactions that we have and make a difference in communication, even if intentions are clear. In that regard, power illocutionary acts can be motivated by the fact of having unequal social status. Since this is an overarching issue, we cannot easily eliminate these power attributes from interaction. Instead, we need to take it into account and act accordingly.

In that regard, in the debate between CREA and Searle (Searle & Soler, 2004), it becomes clear that, in order to prevent situations of sexual harassment to occur, the individuals must have a Weberian ethics of responsibility, referring to the fact that the individual with a higher social status should not only make the intentions clear but be aware of the influence that his or her status can have on the interaction with someone in a more vulnerable position. That means, that a higher social status can influence the person in a more vulnerable position to feel coerced into something. In that regard, dialogic illocutionary acts can be defined as an ideal type, in a Weberian sense. They do not exist, since all interactions are influenced by societal structures of power. Yet, we should approach this ideal type of interactions, but always being aware of reality. Soler and Flecha (2010) point to the fact that a higher social status can refer to an unequal professional relation but also to those people who are socially regarded as more relevant such as a doctor, professor, or even the leader of a rock band. If these power relations created by differences in social status are not taken into account, the more

vulnerable person might feel pressured to accept the proposal of the person of higher status and lead to situations of sexual harassment.

In brief, the theory of communicative acts involves more than just the mere speech acts and can therefore account for more elements that interplay in the smallest unit of social interaction. This link between communication and social equality or inequality stands for the multidisciplinary approach of linguistics and sociology to address the myriad facets that are underlying social interaction. Soler and Flecha (2010), thus, distinguish between power and dialogic relations and between power and dialogic interactions. Both need to be taken into account in order to approach dialogic communicative acts free from any power constraints present either in the communicative acts or the social relations. Table 1 represents these crucial elements of the communicative acts, evidencing that only dialogic interactions taking place in dialogic relations can guarantee dialogic communicative acts free from any power constraints.

Table 1. Two dimensions of analysis of communicative acts according to dialogism and power

	Dialogic relation	Power relation
Dialogic interaction		
Power interaction		

2.2.4. Non-verbal acts

As outlined before in this section, with the theory of communicative acts, non-verbal acts which refer to different elements such as body language, tones of the voice, looks, gestures that are produced in people’s interpersonal communication are a crucial element that needs to be taken into account. This aspect has historically been analyzed by scholars who emphasized how these acts are also determining people’s socialization processes (Austin, 1962; Goffman, 1987; Searle, 1969). Goffman (1987), in his sociological analysis of people’s every-day life, also explores in detail the words and kinds of languages used by people. He argues that our daily behavior is directly constructed by non-verbal acts, so people can express feelings also with silences,

exclamations and onomatopoeias. This means that the understanding of people's actions consider how other people read other people's signs. Within these signs Goffman (1987) underlines specific dimensions which interfere in communication like gestures, looks, warning signals, the touch, the social position and situation of participants, etc. Reich (2011) discussed theories on communicative acts developed by Austin (1962), Goffman (1987) and Searle (1969). Her hypothesis is based on the premise that communicative acts, including nonverbal ones, can be understood as proposals for the receiver to develop a cooperative reply. However, in her analysis she concludes that this approach can complement the previously mentioned. From the perspective of developmental psychology, Bucciarelli, Colle & Bara (2003) studied the children's learning of speech acts and communicative gestures connected to their comprehension of ironic communicative acts. The authors affirmed that children follow equally well these kinds of acts when speech acts and communicative gestures are performed.

In the framework of gender issues there are an important amount of studies which explore the effect of non-verbal acts in some aspects linked to gender inequalities. For instance, Kelly and colleagues (1999) explore the non-verbal behaviors of men when interacting with subordinate females. The authors distinguish men in two different typologies according to the likelihood to sexually harass (LSH) in the categories *high* and *low*. The findings illustrate how the first typology of men articulates more dominant non-verbal behaviors, so the persistence of sexual harassment is widely discussed. Likewise, a similar research team used the same perspective to investigate men's non-verbal behaviors in the workplace and their effect on women. Results highlight the existence of a close connection between dominance and sexually harassing behaviors (Kelly et al., 2005).

From a different perspective there are other analyses which focus their attention on communicative acts and their influence on gender inequalities. These analyses build on Soler and Flecha's (2010) work on communicative acts. In this line, Rios and Christou (2010) provide a profound exploration of communicative acts in young and adolescents' sexual and affective relationships. They insist on the relevance of social context in the construction of verbal and non-verbal languages which could attribute attractiveness to specific male models of masculinities. In their analysis the authors unveil specific

communicative situations where non-verbal language contributes to foster dominant attitudes. As argued by Rios and Christou, this dominance is perpetuated due to the existence of power relationships between boys and girls where aggressive people with higher social status are promoted. However, their study also presents a transformative dimension of the communicative acts among youth. In this regard, these interactions and acts based on solidarity are fostering relations where girls are facing sexual and affective relationships marked by violence. Flecha, Pulido and Christou (2011) reached analogous conclusions in their exhaustive analysis of verbal and non-verbal communication among youth in relation to their attraction models, the authors identify the communicative methodology as a tool to understand how youth construct their desire through communicative acts. In addition, they also corroborate that this type of methodology contributes to creating spaces of dialogue with young people where a critical reflection about verbal and non-verbal language is developed.

2.2.5. Brief conclusions

Research on the use of language as a tool to interact with other people represents great progress in social sciences. We now know that that we can do things with words (Austin, 1962), i.e., that words stand for much more than just words but contribute to constructing a social reality around us. However, we also know that social interaction does not exclusively refer to language with words, but it implies the use of great variety of means for communication that do not need any words. That is, the social position of the people involved in the interaction, their intentions, their body language, the social context in which the interaction takes place, to mention some of the elements that influence social interaction. The theoretical approach previously outlined evidences that it depends on the interactions that we have with other people whether the communication among us entails violence or not. We, thus, need to understand how social interaction works to identify patterns of prevention of violent communicative acts.

2.3. Preventive Socialization

In this section light is shed on the differences between social interactions that involve violent situations and their reproduction, and those interactions that are marked by their egalitarian character and by limiting the reproduction of violent situations. Therefore, the approach of communicative acts is embedded in the theory of symbolic interactionism developed by George Herbert Mead (1934) and then complemented with the revolutionary contributions of Jesus Gomez and his theory of love in the risk society (Gomez, 2015) which represents the seed of a broader research agenda developed by CREA.⁴

2.3.1 Social Interaction

Using a theoretical approach of the use of language to analyze the prevention of gender violence at universities, might seem surprising if we consider that violence goes beyond words. But the analysis of communicative acts, does not necessarily refer only to speech acts, and is an innovative approach to analyze the phenomenon of gender violence in the 'smallest unit' (Kandel, 2006). Sexual violence takes place in social interaction, therefore, we can analyze the elements that compose these interactions in order to distinguish those elements that promote gender violence and those that contribute to prevent it. Therefore, in the first place, we need to understand how social interaction works. One of the most influential authors on this subject is George Herbert Mead

⁴ Since 2011 CREA Research Centre has conducted several research investigations on preventive socialization, among them are the following: *Espejismo del ascenso y socialización de la violencia de género*. [The mirage of upward mobility and socialization of gender violence]. RTD Project. Ministry of Science, Spanish Government. (2010-2012); *Miratge de l'Ascens Social i Amor ideal*. [Mirage of upward mobility and ideal love]. Study funded by the Catalan Institute of Women, Catalan Government. (2010-2011); *Impacto de los actos comunicativos y nuevas masculinidades*. [Impact of the communicative acts and the new masculinities] RTD Project. Ministry of Science. Spanish Government. (2010-2012); *Incidencia de la Ley Integral contra la Violencia de Género en la formación inicial del profesorado*. [Impact of the Integrative Law Against Gender Violence in Teacher's initial training]. Study funded by the Spanish Institute of Women, Spanish Government. (2007-2010); *Youth4Youth: Empowering Young People in Preventing Gender-based Violence through Peer Education*. DAPHNE III" European Commission. (2007-2013); *La formació per a la prevenció de la violència de gènere a la formació inicial de les persones professionals de l'educació*. [Training in Gender-based Violence Prevention in initial Teacher Training. AGAUR, Agency for Administration of University and Research Grants. (2008-2009); *ACT-COM. Actos comunicativos y superación de las desigualdades sociales en las relaciones de género*. [Communicative acts and overcoming social inequalities in gender relationships. RTD. Ministry of Education and Science.

(1934) and his theory on the self and society. His work is considered as the foundation of the theoretical strand of *Symbolic Interactionism* which was used both in psychology as well as sociological theory. The author emphasizes the social character of the human being and the fact that we can only evolve our personality within society.

Mead's theory, elaborated in the early 20th century, analyzes how the individual constructs his or her personality, what Mead calls 'self', in the process of social interaction. A person develops his or her personality in a process of the inclusion of the attitudes of others which then become part of the 'self'. Mead therefore distinguishes between the 'I' and the 'me'. The 'me' would be the collection of attitudes of others that are incorporated during social interaction with other human beings and consist basically in our experience. The 'I' could be defined as a spontaneous reaction that an individual takes in a certain situation which is to a great extent based on the attitudes recollected in the 'me'. During the interactions of an individual with other individuals, the 'I' reacts on the given situation, and is then able to reflect on this action taken by the 'I'. Also the 'me' incorporates this experience in its collection of attitudes, but the 'me' not only includes the attitudes of others, but is able to reflect on its own attitudes adopted by the 'I'. This implies a constant dialogue between the 'I' and the 'me' which represents the 'self' and which is responsible for the individual to have a self-consciousness. According to the author, self-consciousness is being aware of one's own actions and the thought on these. At the same time, it is what enables the individual to construct a certain personality by reflecting our social settings and our own actions in society. If by social interactions with members of the society we construct our personality, what is it then that makes us incorporate certain traits and deny others? What is it that makes us experience or perpetrate violence in social interaction and in the very communicative acts?

2.3.2. Socialization

The process of construction of our personality is a result of our social background as we can learn from Mead. Berger and Luckmann (1966) define the process of socialization as the internalization of social life which every individual passes and that defines our personal traits. The authors distinguish between primary and secondary socialization.

The first corresponds to the unquestioned learning process of social life during early childhood where the main agent according to Berger and Luckmann (1966) is the family. The secondary socialization refers to the process of getting to know new and different elements in social life and the possibility to choose between them. Agents of secondary socialization would be family, school, peer groups and media. Considering the changes in social life and the fact that the traditional model of family described by Parsons (1964) has been largely abandoned, this strict definition of socialization is not the one that I am going to refer to in this research. Instead I refer to socialization as the social background that a child has and that influences it in his/her personal development and, thus, has great influence on the construction of our personality and on getting involved in violent or nonviolent situations. Agents of socialization are therefore all the persons that a child considers as a reference, this includes the whole educational community, which is of course the family, but also the nannies, the kinder-garden teachers, and whoever takes part in the early years of childhood and in the course of life. The definition of the construction of our personality never comes to an end, but, as Mead (1934) would say, is a continuous process of adjustment of one's own behavior to the social attitudes through thought on both. Can we then conclude that we can have certain influence on the actions we take and on the actions that other people might take? Is this the door to tackling gender violence in communicative acts? If so, how is that to be understood?

2.3.3. Models of attraction

The contributions of Jesus Gomez (2015) are revolutionary in a variety of senses. In the first place, his work is one of the very few scientific approaches to analyze love, a central issue in human life, but commonly not regarded as a central question to be scientifically analyzed in social theory. Most contributions on love refer to it as a chemical or biological issue and in any case an irrational experience that we cannot influence. Second, in his analysis of sexual and affective relationships among adolescents, Gomez evidences that love is social. This means that we learn to love, and we learn specific patterns for love that depend on the socialization we have and, hence, on the interactions we have with people and especially those who represent a reference in our lives. Third, he demonstrates that there is a trend in socialization to promote attraction towards those people who do not treat us well. These three elements are crucial for the

analysis of gender violence since they provide scientific evidence that love has a social nature and that socialization shapes our preferences for love and as such these preferences can be changed. But most importantly the author highlights possible pathways for prevention of gender violence by providing an alternative model. This is essential for the prevention of love relationships based on attraction to a violent person but also to the prevention of gender violence in a larger sense.

In his analysis of love relationships, Gomez (2015) goes to the roots of our motivations which is to be loved by others. In the search for social approval, we tend to look for the appreciation of those who enjoy greater social attraction. However, those who are considered desirable commonly represent the values of a “bad” person, values that contradict those of a “good” person, ‘who treats us well, who loves us, loves peace and solidarity, is always available to come to our aid, gives rather than receives, etc.’ (Gomez, 2015, p.54). Gomez states that socialization encourages the existence of two sexual affective relationship models, in a Weberian sense of ideal types: one, the traditional and, two, the alternative model. The first model is based on a socialization that links desire, attraction, and excitement with those people who might use violence, whereas affection, friendship, and stability are separated from attraction making the combination of both dimensions in one person rather rare. Based on this dichotomy two kinds of relationship can be distinguished in which an attractive relationship is understood as a passionate and irrational (passion without love) versus a relationship that entails stability but without passion (love without passion). To these two kinds of relationship models Gomez (2015) opposes the alternative model that is based on egalitarian relations that unite ‘affection and excitement, friendship and passion, and stability and madness in the same person’ (p.77).

It is essential to take this process of socialization into account as it is one of the elements that maintains our patriarchal society. It is precisely for this reason that there are some women defending men who sexually harass other women. Although they might even call themselves feminists and would like to overcome the patriarchal structures, attraction towards violent men prevents them from breaking the silence on gender violence (Flecha, Puigvert, & Rios, 2013). This approach therefore provides an explanation of the social reality around gender violence, and more importantly, it provides us with pathways, such as preventive socialization to overcome it. Preventive

socialization consists in counteracting against the mainstream socialization giving prominence to those people who represent positive values and passion. Gomez (2015) suggests, for example, educational programs in schools to discuss about love and attraction in which diverse competencies are developed to tackle the mainstream socialization in attraction towards violence. These include, among other elements, the capacity to critically reflect on the messages transmitted in the social media in the sense that one is able to distinguish socialization in attraction towards violence from socialization in attraction towards passionate but non-violent relations.

Gomez's theory (2015) not only includes changes in our thoughts on social reality but changes in our personality by incorporating positive values in our actions. In this vein, he suggests to take a stand in front of people who employ violent or disrespectful behavior. These two elements are crucial for the analysis of preventing gender violence in Spanish universities, since the context of silence around this topic makes it necessary to open up a debate and reflection on this issue and encourage those people who do not agree with the mainstream society to feel empowered to respond and counteract to those people who embody it. Yet, Gomez (2015) insisted on the fact that this social and personal transformation needs to take into account those things in life that truly motivate us. For this reason, further research has been developed on the distinctive effects of *language of ethics* and those of *language of desire* which need further attention to investigate possibilities for the prevention of gender violence at universities (Flecha, Puigvert, & Rios, 2013).

The approach of preventive socialization departs from the basic elements in social interaction to effectively tackle gender violence. Hence, language as the main instrument to express our thought (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978) is further analyzed. Therefore, research developed at CREA (Soler, 2006-2008; 2008-2011) explores the communicative acts that interfere in the sexual and affective relationships in order to combine the perspectives concerning communication and gender violence prevention (Puigvert, 2014). Therewith a new field in research on the overcoming of gender violence through the analysis of social interaction and communication is initiated (Gomez, Munte, & Sorde, 2014). But the studies in this line reveal that not only communicative acts need to be taken into account but also the attitude of the communication is crucial. It is not the same to take an ethical standpoint, which might be necessary in any case for specific

situations, or to include desire in this perspective. Taking as an example one quote of a 15 year-old girl published in a prominent magazine for adolescents, Flecha and Puigvert (2010) make it clear that language of ethics does not necessarily prevent us from getting involved in potential violent situations. The quote states: “My parents tell me to marry a good boy, and I really listen to them. Until I have to get married I’m having fun with bad boys” (Flecha & Puigvert, 2010, p.170). If there is attraction towards violence, it is not enough to express its inconvenience but we need to transmit that it is not desirable (Flecha, 2014). In this regard, Flecha, Puigvert and Rios (2013) suggest the distinction of three ideal types of masculinities that reflect the interplay of language of desire and language of ethics in the discussion of preventing gender violence.

Whereas the Dominant Traditional Masculinities (DTM) and the Oppressed Traditional Masculinities (OTM) both contribute to maintaining the social structures that favor a socialization in attraction to violence, the so called New Alternative Masculinities (NAM) can be regarded as a successful model in contributing to the overcoming of gender violence. According to Connell (2012), violence is perpetrated by men belonging to the dominant traditional masculinities, yet not all men that correspond to this type of masculinity are violent. Nevertheless, the violence perpetrated by some of these men serves to oppress women but also men, who would then fall into the category of the oppressed traditional masculinity. The latter men are characterized by positive values and stand out for their egalitarian attitude in relation to women, but they subordinate themselves to dominant men instead of questioning them in public for their disrespectful behavior. For this reason, they cannot be considered an alternative to the DTM but rather a complement (Diez-Palomar, Capllonch, & Aiello, 2014).

Contrarily, the new alternative masculinities stand out for their positive values, but moreover, for their ability to question the dominant traditional masculinities and for taking a stand in front of violent situations, be it related to sexism or racism or any other kind of social injustice. Men falling into this group can be considered as brave men, because they tackle dominant social structures, and at the same time they treat other people well and do not need to employ violent attitudes to be successful in achieving the primary motivation of being loved by others. In that sense, instead of telling young girls to marry a ‘good’ boy, it is necessary to transmit them that only those men who are brave enough to question dominant men or social structures and social injustices are worth of our

attention and love. But most importantly, only with these men satisfactory sexual-affective relationships are possible (Pulido et al., 2014), both in sporadic as well as in long-term relationships. The analysis of communicative acts among adolescents and in regard to masculinities reveals to contribute to the overcoming of gender violence, as the issue is being discussed with people from diverse backgrounds in spaces in which the use of language and communicative acts to talk about desire for men that show traits of NAM versus desire for men using violence are debated (Ramis, Martin, & Iñiguez, 2014).

2.3.4. Gender violence prevention through communicative acts

The persistence of gender violence in all social domains, including academia, evidences the need of continue researching in order to prevent and provide scientific evidence to overcome this social problem. In this regard, the research ACT-COM. Communicative acts and overcoming of social inequalities in gender relations funded under the national RTD plan (Soler, 2006-2008) analyzed the communicative acts that occur in sexual-affective relationships among adolescents, identifying how these acts can either influence on both the generation and perpetuation of gender violence, or contribute to its overcoming.

The analysis of communicative acts that occur among people from the university community in order to prevent gender violence constitute a field which remains underexplored by the international scientific community. At the same time, the analysis of the ACT-COM project sheds some light on data and elements that are essential to go further in the study of communicative acts that contributes to advance in the prevention of gender violence in Spanish universities. For instance, the centrality of not focusing just on the speech acts but also taking into account at the time of analyzing communication, body language, and other extra elements of the context.

The ACT-COM project (Soler, 2006-2008) identifies five dimensions of the communicative acts which are relevant for the analysis of gender relations: verbal language, non-verbal language, social context of interaction, intentions of speakers and responsibility for communication. The fieldwork conducted in ACT-COM (Soler, 2006-2008) has evidenced the importance of differentiating among language of desire

(which includes elements such as aggressiveness or domination) and language of ethics (which includes elements such as normativity or morality) for the overcoming of situations of gender violence among adolescents (Flecha, Puigvert, & Rios, 2013). The socialization in a double standard is very extended among adolescents (as well as among adult people). Thus, when some girls explain using the language of desire how they feel attracted to boys that treat them with disdain, they confess to feel attracted to those that they call “the bastards”. At the same time, other girls explain how they do not feel attracted by those boys who are “good”, those incapable of hurting them, referring to them using the language of ethics and hence, emptying these boys from sexual attractiveness.

In that sense, the research has demonstrated how the ‘nice guy’ has been considered as ‘boring’ and with no sex appeal (Flecha, Puigvert, & Rios, 2013). This stereotype can only be overcome developing a twofold work. On the one hand, fostering interactions and communicative acts that associate attractiveness and desire with people who have positive values, who are egalitarian; and on the other hand, refusing those people who exert power, who abuse, batter or despise other.

Besides including the analysis of the communicative acts derived from verbal language for approaching gender violence, the other four dimensions that integrate the communicative acts need to be considered in order to broadly comprehend sexual harassment. Among them, the non-verbal language plays a key role, as many of the situations of physical and sexual harassment do not occur just through verbal actions, but they are exerted by means of non-verbal language.

In addition, the potential of interactions to either preventing or overcoming gender violence is closely linked to the social context where they take place. The social position of people who intervene in the communicative processes, their social status, together with the social pressure of the peer-group are determinant factors for the decisions that are taken among the sexual-affective relationships, and thus, mark the future of many adolescents to experience relationships free of violence (Valls, Puigvert, & Duque, 2008).

The social status is often a factor that determines who can be the most attractive. However, there is a big difference among girls and boys in this regard. While boys gain

status when they 'hook up' with girls, girls lower their status when they behave the same. Girls acquire a bad reputation, they therewith become the 'easy' ones, while boys end-up being the 'winners' among their peers. This phenomenon has been conceptualized as the "mirage of the upward mobility", and developed in-depth in the RTD research investigation funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation The mirage of upward mobility and socialization of gender violence (Oliver, 2010-2012). Indeed, this is a mistaken perception that girls and women have when associating a particular sexual/affective relationship when that occurs, –with boys/men who have negative values– with an increase in their status or attractiveness, when actually what happens is that their status and attractiveness decreases.

Pressure among peers is very strong and determines many of the decisions taken by youth. The dominant model, the one of the boy who exerts power and treats others with despise, gains followers if the peer-group agree to his jokes and behave permissive towards situations of harassment, either through verbal language or non-verbal language. Linked to this is the very fact of the status, that is, if the dominant boy who exercises his power is desired by the rest, the group further increases desire generates towards him. Thus he gains more desire, which in turn leads to situations of pressure to and coercion of people who feel rejection to that dominant boy.

Analyzing the phenomenon of the mirage of upward mobility has been of major relevance in order to overcome these situations of pressure that are caused due to the status linked to power and domination. Thus, girls who are aware that 'hooking up' with those 'bad boys' decreases their attractiveness is positive for them, because when they face situations of harassment and pressure they can positively react against the aggressors. Interactions that would lead to harassment are thus transformed, becoming more egalitarian and leading to positive relationships, in which dialogic communicative acts prevail over those based on power communicative acts (Valls, Puigvert, & Duque, 2008).

The ACT-COM research has evidenced that in order to transform interactions and thus advance towards relationships that are free of violence it is necessary to include a final factor that directly influences interactions: the intentions and the responsibility which are inherent to each communicative act. ACT-COM distinguished among two types of intentions, the manifest and the latent intentions. Evidence found proved that very

commonly, in adolescent relationships there are latent intentions which are hidden behind the manifest ones, which would be entirely strategic. For this reason, the investigation emphasized the responsibility of everyone involved in any communicative process for telling the truth, and thus not hiding latent intentions behind his/her verbal and non-verbal language.

In all, ACT-COM has generated important insights for educational intervention with adolescents from the analysis of communicative acts. One of the main tasks that arise resulting from its analysis is the need to provide young people with positive models that help them to differentiate between those communicative acts that strengthen and lead to relationships free of violence from those communicative acts that can lead to establishing violent relationships.

2.3.5. Brief conclusions

The combination of these research perspectives of communicative acts and preventive socialization to tackle gender violence reveals to be very innovative and at the same time efficient in achieving its aim. For this reason, this approach is useful for the analysis of preventing gender violence at Spanish universities. It allows for the analysis of a broad spectrum of violence perpetrated at higher education institutions ranging from the deepest rooted questions of gender roles to physical sexual violence accounting for the importance of the complicities by all those people who do not take a stand against gender violence in universities. This approach is also promising in the sense that it provides tangible results of preventing gender violence in diverse social contexts, among adolescents but also among men in educational and professional environments. I thus consider the use of the combination of preventive socialization and communicative acts to identify possibilities for the prevention of gender violence at Spanish universities as enlightening to orient the present research.

2.4. Health literacy

Research on gender violence at higher education institutions highlights the devastating effects on public health, affecting not only the victims but the whole university

environment as well as society at large (Potter, Krider, & McMahon, 2000). For this reason it is highly relevant to take the perspective of public health into account in order to construct research on gender violence prevention that aims at possibilities to overcome this issue. Whereas the approach of communicative acts and preventive socialization are especially helpful in tackling the social structures present in the social interactions among people and for this analysis people belonging to the university community, the approach of health literacy presented in this section aims at providing a means to tackle the problem of lacking identification of violent situations.

The conceptualization of health literacy stems from the evidence on the relation between literacy skills and health of people. In this regard the Matthew effect becomes visible again, since those people who already suffer social inequalities and cannot access the literate world see their inequalities further enhanced by suffering worse health conditions. Research has evidenced that the language used to provide health information is of high levels of complexity that requires at least the level of high school degree to understand it. This implies that great part of the population does not have the necessary skills to properly understand health-related information which in turn affects their personal health (Groene & Rudd, 2011).

Rima Rudd (2011) introduced the concept of health literacy environment to emphasize the need to take into account that health information is not an easily understandable issue, but that it requires a certain kind of learning to understand health-related information as well as to navigate health care institutions. One needs to become literate in health care to properly care for one's health. Groene and Rudd (2011) define the health literacy environment as the 'words used in clinical discussions, in formal or casual conversations with staff, or overheard in the hallways' (p.228). Research developed by her and her colleagues has centered on identifying literacy-related barriers to promote health for everyone. In this sense, it is crucial to remove literacy-related barriers to reduce the disparities in the access to health care. Furthermore, health literacy also has two more aims that are crucial also for the present analysis of preventing gender violence at Spanish universities. These aims are: fostering navigation skills to move along health care environments and supporting agency of the very people who suffer illiteracy in terms of health-related information.

Regarding the first element, enhancing navigation skills, it is noteworthy to highlight that it is essential in overcoming these health-related barriers, since it is what enables people to get along in an unknown environment. Illiterate people find alternative ways to navigate societies without using written language. But if that is not possible, the fact of not having the skills to understand the literate world is comparable to being an 'immigrant' to an unknown world (Purcell-Gates, 1995). Literature on literacy emphasizes this idea of literacy being much more than words. Whereas the definitions of literacy provided by UNESCO and national organisms refer to the ability of reading and writing simple sentences, Levine and his colleagues (2012) use the term 'academic literacy' to refer to basic reading skills. The term 'literacy' is used by them to denominate the capacity to understand information and messages to move in highly literate societies (Levine et al., 2012). The authors highlight that schooling is a means to transmit not only literacy in a literal sense, but also literacy in terms of Weber, as a bureaucratic experience that enables us to navigate bureaucratic societies. This understanding of literacy is especially helpful to understand the barriers related to health that people with low educational levels experience. But it is also useful to understand the lack of identification of sexual violence in universities, which is one of the prominent issues that research on this problem highlights.

The entrance into a higher education institution is similar to entering an unknown world. Usually one gets there on their own and no role models or people of references who can help us navigate the institution are available. It might be difficult to get along in first place, since there is no orientation, no guide that explains how relations in this setting work. Moreover, one is expected to be able to navigate these unknown settings. Thus, the lacking literacy in social relations at higher education institutions places 'foreigners' in these places in a more vulnerable situation. In that sense, universities where gender violence is an outspoken issue and information on offices for prevention and resolution of sexual violence is provided from the very beginning of the time at university, literacy skills are enhanced and, as a consequence, higher in comparison to settings where no information is provided or where a great silence is placed on the issue. Being provided with this kind of information from the beginning is a way of raising awareness of the things that happen in higher education settings. It prepares people to a certain extent for the navigation in an unknown world.

In relation to the second element that health literacy aims at, the promotion of the subjects' agency, it is important to highlight that this notion is greatly influenced by Freire's (Freire & Macedo, 1987) concept of empowering people through literacy. In his terms reading the word is reading the world. In this vein, Rudd and Comings (1994) elaborate the approach of participatory materials development. With this approach learners or participants become active agents in overcoming the barriers they encounter to access health information and take care of their health. In order to address the low health literacy and the complex language used in health environments, learners were in charge of developing health-related information materials. In this process the learners engaged in dialogue about health related issues with diverse social agents as well as end-users and professionals in the field. Yet, an important aspect of the process is that the learners were present throughout the whole process and were also part of the final decision-making (Rudd & Comings, 1994). Their participation in this project not only served as a means to approach health-related issues but it represented a possibility for empowerment as they had become subjects of their learning process. Moreover, not only the participants in the project had taken benefit from it, but also the larger community as the materials developed were much more accessible to the average lay community (Roter et al., 1981).

Also, in other health-related settings, the fact of creating spaces in which health problems as well as the conditions, such as social inequalities, that lead to disparities in health can be discussed is crucial to overcome these situations of marginalization. Villarosa (1994) reports about empowering black women and highlights that the existing resistances to make certain issues public combined with a large silence on it, makes it very difficult for victims to overcome their situation and especially to overcome the effects it has on their health.

In an environment, such as Spanish universities, where sexual violence is only recently spoken out there is still great need for creating 'safe places' to which victims can turn to in order to speak about their experience and gain the strength and power to continue struggling for overcoming the barriers they encounter. These spaces also lead to empower those people who participate in them and foster their conditions to become activists and fight for their well-being on larger levels. Rudd and Comings (1994) also emphasize this element as an outcome of learner participation that leads to greater

involvement in social movements and enhances the learners' role as an activist. These spaces are, thus, an example for overcoming health-related barriers as specific problems can be discussed, be it in relation to direct health problems as well as to the overcoming of difficulties to access health care.

A third element from the health literacy approach to be taken into account for the purpose of the present research is the use of 'plain language'. As previously mentioned the language used to transmit health-related information exceeds the average skills of the population and as such is only limited in its utility of providing health information. One claim posed by defenders of health literacy is to provide information in plain language, so that it is accessible to a greater variety of people. Rudd and her colleagues (2004) emphasize in this regard that common words, everyday phrases and format should be used rather than professional jargon and complex sentences. This can be crucial for improving the health for many people and can also be very helpful to be applied to different spheres of public health such as the prevention of gender violence at universities.

In brief, including the health literacy approach into the analysis of possibilities for gender violence prevention at Spanish universities provides highly relevant elements to tackle the main difficulties in overcoming this social and public health problem: the lack of identification of violent situations. It is necessary to analyze the Spanish universities for the need to provide literacy in how to navigate the higher education institutions in order to prevent gender violence. The possibility of providing materials developed by and for potential victims of gender violence together with the main stakeholders, will provide much better and more understandable materials. Furthermore, it can promote the involvement of diverse profiles in the struggle against gender violence as it furthers activism.

CHAPTER 3

3. Methods

3.1. Introduction

In the present section the methodological construction of the research is described and explained. Therefore, the overarching research question that guides the research is presented together with some specific questions that contribute to finding answers to the general research purpose. Then, the objectives of the study corresponding to the research questions are outlined. Third, the definition of the term gender violence that is used in the present research is clearly explained in order to avoid any misinterpretations in comparisons with findings of other studies in this field. The section then continues with an explanation of the methodology that has been chosen for the purpose of this research, which is the communicative methodology. The main principles and postulates of the communicative methodology are exposed as well as its adequacy for the present research. Next, the research design is explained as well as the data collection techniques that are employed and the profiles of the participants involved in the research. The chapter concludes with an outline of the data analysis, specifying the analytical categories that, corresponding to the research questions and objectives, guide the analysis of the data obtained in the empirical fieldwork.

3.2. Research question

As already pointed out in the previous sections this research aims to explore the question how the analysis of communicative acts can contribute to preventing gender violence at Spanish universities? With this investigation I attempt to prove that some communicative acts, verbal and non-verbal acts of communication, among the university community contribute to enhancing gender violence at Spanish universities, whereas others help facing these kind of situations and in the long run can contribute to preventing this from happening.

Considering the high incidence rates of gender violence at higher education institutions across the globe and the persistence of this major social and public health problem that

research indicate, the question of how to properly tackle this issue has increasingly gained importance and in the US it has become a top priority on the political agenda (White House, n.d.). Whereas in the US and in other European countries prevention efforts in form of specific state legislations and institutional policies have been developed, in Spain the university context is still marked by a hostile environment towards any kind of changes to end gender violence in its public universities. The pioneer research on gender violence at Spanish universities confirms similar levels of incidence and highlights the very hostile environment and hierarchic structures that hinder efforts of breaking the silence. Even compliance with the Law for the Effective Equality between Women (2007) that obliges universities to have Equality Units and protocols for sexual harassment prevention and resolution is not guaranteed for by universities. Yet, the many years of struggle led by researchers of CREA and CREA Sappho have paved the way for the first case of gender violence at a Spanish university that was concluded in favor of the victims to become public.

Nevertheless, the persistence of this problem and the situation that we experience in the Spanish university context call for attention and especially for solutions. In this regards, research on gender violence prevention in higher education institutions emphasizes the need to build on the participation and collaboration of the whole university community to prevent violent situations from happening. The contributions of the *Bystander Intervention* are crucial as they shift the focus of responsibility to resolve this issue on the all the people who compose the university community, rather than on the victim or on the perpetrator or on men as potential perpetrators. This perspective has been recommended by the US government as the strategy to be used in gender violence prevention at US colleges. In the present research it is the starting point for the theoretical framework that guides the analysis conducted.

As Gomez (2015) has outlined, the root of gender violence is the trend of attraction to violence. Departing from this basis, efforts of prevention have highlighted that it is possible to change this trend of attraction from violent models to egalitarian models. One strand of research, therefore, focuses on the analysis of communicative acts to and their potential to contribute to enhancing communicative acts that are based on equality and freedom, rather than those that indicate a violent relation. According to Habermas (1984), human interaction should be based on communicative interaction based on the

use of validity claims by the people involved in the action, rather than using the force to impose our will to other people. CREA has emphasized that we can distinguish communicative acts based on this principle stated by Habermas from those acts of communication that involve power, either in their social relation or in their intentions that can be made explicit or not. In regard to gender violence prevention, the fact of using communicative acts that promote relationships based on freedom and discredit the use of power is crucial in overcoming this social problem (Rios & Christou, 2010). It thus depends on the bystanders who take a stand in front of violent interactions rather than tolerate them and contribute to the persistence of the gender violence. However, as we have seen in the literature review even for victims of gender violence it is difficult to identify the situations experienced as violence against them (Potter, Moynihan, & Stapleton, 2011).

For these reasons, the present research analyzes the interactions among the university community with the aim to identify elements that indicate violent communicative acts and those elements that we can promote to overcome violent interactions. Finally, this research also analyzes how literacy in healthy relationships in the university context can be promoted based on the case study of the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities in order to overcome the difficulties in navigating universities and identifying potential violent situations.

The analysis of the contributions of communicative acts among the university community to prevent gender violence in higher education institutions represents an innovative and promising approach to fill this gap in literature and more importantly to contribute with specific data on how progress towards universities free of violence can be made.

In order to achieve this purpose and find an answer to the overarching research question, several specific questions oriented the research conducted. These are:

1. Which elements indicate the presence of gender violence in communicative acts?
2. Which kind of communicative acts promote gender violence at Spanish universities?
3. Which elements of communicative acts can counteract or contribute to prevent gender violence in the Spanish higher education settings?

4. How can these definitions of communicative acts and their distinction into violent versus non-violent communicative acts contribute to preventing gender violence at Spanish universities?

These questions all attempt to guide the research to adequately respond to the overarching the following research question: *How the analysis of communicative acts can contribute to preventing gender violence at Spanish universities?*

3.3. Objectives

In order to conduct the research of communicative acts that are present in the interactions among the people belonging to the Spanish university community, the research has the following objectives.

Objective 1

Identify elements that indicate that a communicative act involves power relations that can point to gender violence in the Spanish university setting.

Objective 2

Analyze those communicative acts among the Spanish university community that allow for or even promote gender violence among the students and faculty.

Objective 3

Analyze those relations among the people composing the Spanish university community that are based on communicative acts that are able to counteract or overcome gender violence in order to identify elements for the transformation of the Spanish university context.

Objective 4

Define recommendations how to enhance those relations that are based on communicative acts that contribute to the overcoming of gender violence in Spanish universities.

These objectives are the guiding principle for the research design and the methodology applied in the present research.

3.4. Definition of gender violence

For a clear understanding of this research on the possibilities to prevent gender violence at Spanish universities through the analysis of communicative acts, a brief definition of how the main concept of gender violence is used is provided in this section.

In previous sections, it was already highlighted that a common definition of violence against women in higher education institutions is lacking which makes it much more difficult to compare the results of the different studies reporting on the phenomenon of gender violence in these social settings. It is therefore necessary to provide a definition of what is referred to with the term gender violence so that the data provided can be contrasted with other research results. The terms gender violence, or gender-based violence, violence against women are all used to refer to violence that is perpetrated by men against women. According to the definition provided by the United Nations in Article 1 of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women,

‘the term “violence against women” means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life’ (United Nations, 1993, 48/104 art.1).

This document continues, in Article 2, with a definition of specific situations that can be considered as gender violence distinguishing between physical, sexual and psychological violence that occurs in the family, community or is perpetrated by the State.

The present research departs from this definition as well as from the situations reported in the research of the international scientific community on gender violence in higher education. These include verbal violence such as sexist and humiliating remarks, undue or unwanted attention, inappropriate and offensive sexual advances such as kisses and caresses without consent, intimidation and leering, bribery and physical violence including abusive and intrusive behavior (Benson & Thomson, 1982; Reilly, Lott, & Gallogly, 1986; Rossi & Weber-Burdin, 1983; Till, 1980;). This definition of gender violence is further complemented with the perspective provided by Jesus Gomez (2015) and Flecha, Puigvert and Rios (2013) in the theoretical background that indicates that

violence against women is not only the violence perpetrated by men or institutions over women. Rather it is the domination of the model of dominant traditional men who oppress women and men in their actions and attitudes in daily life. In this regard, the present study uses the term gender violence to refer to all these possible situations that indicate a violent attitude or acts of violence by men over women that is perpetrated against women and men.

3.5. Methodology

For the purpose of the research on the contributions of analyzing communicative acts for the prevention of gender violence the communicative methodology of research (Gomez et al., 2006) is employed. The communicative methodology responds to the current social and scientific challenges through their principles, techniques of collection and analysis of the information, as well as its own communicative organization by developing the construction of knowledge from intersubjectivity and reflection. With a special emphasis on those interactions and social dimensions that cause exclusion and/or social transformation, this methodology has as the main aim the explanatory understanding and transformation of social reality (Gomez et al., 2006).

This methodology has been employed under a variety of competitive social sciences research projects funded under national or European Union research programs. It is internationally acknowledged and has been recommended by the European Commission, especially, for the research with vulnerable groups (European Commission, 2011b). Projects using the communicative methodology are diverse in the issues that are dealt with but present consistent outcomes: the improvement of society with social transformation of the realities analyzed and especially related to addressing the targets of the specific funding schemes under which they are developed. The SOLIDUS project, funded under Horizon 2020, focuses on exploring conceptually and empirically the expressions of European solidarity. The IMPACT-EV FP7 project is developing a system for the evaluation of social sciences and humanities research in regard to their impact on three different levels: scientific, political and, most importantly social impact (Flecha, 2014-2017). The FP6 *INCLUD-ED. Strategies for Inclusion and Social Cohesion in Europe from Education* (Flecha, 2006-2011), has been selected by

the European Commission under the ten success stories of the research funded under the Framework Programs and among the ten projects it is the only one in social sciences and humanities (European Commission, 2011a). The FP5 *Workaló. The creation of new occupational patterns for cultural minorities*, has been striking for the political impact achieved with the formal acknowledgement of the Roma community as people of Europe (Flecha, 2001-2004).

It is also noteworthy to highlight that the pioneer researches on gender violence in Spanish universities (Valls, 2005-2008; Puigvert, 2007-2010) have applied the communicative methodology of research and have achieved major social and political impact apart from the scientific impact of publications in the highest ranked scientific journal on gender violence in the Journal Citation Report, namely Violence Against Women (Valls et al., in press). Moreover, special issues about the diverse research projects that have been developed using the communicative methodology have been published, such as one on gender violence and preventive socialization in Qualitative Inquiry (Q2 in Interdisciplinary Social Sciences).

These positive results of the communicative methodology draws on the orientation of the research to improve society. Thus, all the research developed with this orientation aims at overcoming certain barriers and at social transformation, responding to the social needs of the European society. In this regard, the research on the evaluation of the impact of social sciences and humanities research is crucial in promoting the positive social impact of research funded under this scheme and therewith contributes to respond to the goals set by the European Union.

The distinction between the scientific, political and social impact refers to the different domains that scientific research should affect. In the first place, scientific impact reflects the impact that researchers or their projects and publications have and is rather limited to an academic sphere. The political impact describes the extent to which research in social sciences and humanities is taken into account in policy making and in policy reforms. The social impact refers to the improvements in society related to the EU targets that have been achieved by the research in social sciences and humanities. In this vein, research not only needs to focus on publishing the outcomes but it needs to aim at translating the results from the research into policy action and social transformation to respond to society's needs (Aiello & Joanpere, 2014). This is in line

with the idea of making public sociology promoted by Michael Burawoy (2005). He states that we need to give knowledge back to society from where it comes from by making private problems a public issue. Therefore, rather than competing with critical and professional sociology we need to draw from all the evidences that they provide to make sociology that serves the civil society. In order to achieve this goal, Burawoy suggests to engage people in a conversation based on the criteria established by Habermas of communicative action. Burawoy argues that even though consent is not achieved in these conversations, we need to create these spaces and engage in them (Burawoy, 2005).

In this line and contrary to other research methodologies, the communicative methodology includes the voices of all the agents affected by the research for the analysis of those strategies that will contribute to overcoming their social inequalities. The purpose of this methodology is to go beyond a diagnostic of reality, and contribute to its transformation throughout the research process. The success of the communicative methodology lies in the intersubjective creation of knowledge in spaces for egalitarian dialogue among the different social agents involved in the reality under study and throughout the whole process of the research. Thus, researchers, researched people, people from the administration, representatives of third sector associations, and policy makers, to mention only some profiles, all participate in this dialogue on an egalitarian basis. This means, following Habermas' thesis, communication is based on validity claims rather than on power claims. People are regarded as social agents that are able to use language and take action; they have capacity of argumentation and communication and can thus perfectly engage in egalitarian dialogue and, especially, about the issues that concern them directly (Habermas, 1984). It is this dialogue between the subjects' voices and the scientific knowledge that contributes to the creation of new knowledge as well as to the transformation of their very social context.

The communicative methodology overcomes the methodological hierarchy that distinguishes and separates the researcher from the person that is researched who is commonly considered the research subject rather than a social agent with a voice and knowledge to contribute to research. Under the communicative methodology the people that are affected by the research are taken into account as active participants in the social transformation of their reality. The dialogue that is established among the

researcher and the researched for this purpose breaks with this hierarchic structure and provides a context in which the researcher contributes with the accumulated knowledge from the international scientific community and the people from the researched reality contribute with their knowledge on this reality. Together a reflection is made on how the scientific evidences for transforming the social reality can be developed in the specific reality that is analyzed. Hence, new theoretical contributions can be made as well as tangible outcomes of improving social reality.

The creators of the communicative methodology defined seven postulates that provide orientation for the implementation of the methodology in social sciences and humanities research (Gomez et al., 2006). In order to understand in depth the communicative orientation of the present research these postulates will be explained, in the following.

1. Universality of language and action - Drawing from Habermas' contribution (Habermas, 1984) that all people are capable of language and action, the communicative methodology suggests to explore and use methods that guarantee that all voices affected by the research are taken into account in the whole research process that is conducted.
2. Individuals as transformative social agents - According to the communicative methodology, people are considered as social agents rather than mere objects unable to rebel against dominating social structures. As social agents they can reflect on their social situation and act upon it.
3. Communicative rationality - Contrary to the instrumental rationality that only pursues personal interests, the communicative rationality put forward by Habermas (1984) aims at reaching understanding and consensus among the people involved. Thus the best means to achieve a collective aim are agreed upon.
4. Common sense - This postulate departs from Schütz' (1967) idea that people interpret the world based on their beliefs and knowledge built upon our life experiences.
5. No interpretative hierarchy - Since dialogue is based on validity claims, there is no hierarchy among the participants of the dialogue and on the interpretations made of the social reality. The interpretations of all the people involved, regardless of their

social status or background, have the same validity as long as arguments are provided.

6. Same epistemological level - Following the previous postulate, the researcher does not have the last say in this dialogue, but equal to the rest of the people involved in the dialogue has to provide arguments for his or her interpretation. Moreover, the researcher in this dialogue has the duty to provide scientific knowledge, whereas the people whose reality is researched provide their knowledge and interpretation on this very context. Hence, the different voices enrich the common interpretation of the social reality.
7. Dialogic knowledge - The communicative methodology departs from the conception that knowledge is created in intersubjective dialogue; through the sharing of different interpretations by the subjects and the researchers' dialogic knowledge on a specific reality is created. This conception is opposed to traditional positivist or interpretative perspectives that states that knowledge stems from an objective process or a subjective interpretation made by the researcher, respectively.

The postulates serve as a guideline to orient the research process and the techniques that are employed throughout the process. However, it is not necessary to comply with all the postulates to conduct research considered as communicative methodology. Instead, research can be defined as communicative whenever its orientation is communicative. However, the more the postulates are put into practice with the corresponding data collection techniques the more the research can be considered as using communicative methodology (Gomez, Racionero, & Sorde, 2010). In this line, the outcomes in terms of social transformation of the research carried out using the communicative methodology are related to the extent of complying with the postulates. The more we approach a communicative approach, the better research can be informed by the civil society through their engagement in the research, the better these results can be taken back to society and result in a process of social transformation.

All these features of the communicative methodology of research, the international acknowledgement, the special recommendation by the European Commission for the research with vulnerable groups, and the high potential for social transformation rooted in the seven postulates described here, make this methodology the perfect tool to

research the possibilities of preventing gender violence in Spanish universities by analyzing the communicative acts among the people belonging to the university community.

3.6. Research design

In order to obtain data to respond to the research question posed in the beginning on how the analysis of communicative acts can contribute to preventing gender violence at Spanish universities, a series of research techniques have been employed according to the communicative methodology and its postulates. However, the framework of this research as a dissertation allows only for a limited implementation of the potential data collection techniques suggested under the communicative methodology. Nevertheless, the mechanisms to maintain the communicative orientation are ensured. In this section, the diverse steps of the research conducted are described in relation to the theoretical background of the methodology used and the adequacy of the techniques to fulfill the research objectives. The present research, thus, builds on a review of the existing scientific literature as well as a review of the documentation related to the context of gender violence occurring in universities and, especially, in Spanish universities. Then, the qualitative research methods which have been employed to obtain in-depth data on communicative acts that take place among the university community will be explained together with the sample.

3.6.1. Literature Review

In line with the communicative methodology, that puts special emphasis on the scientific excellence that needs to be provided in research in order to contribute to social transformation, the first step to approach the study of gender violence at universities is through the review of scientific literature. Therefore, the most relevant literature has been reviewed and the gaps in literature could be identified. Once a broad picture of the research on gender violence in higher education institutions was drawn, a more focused search in the databases and the most cited journals in gender studies on the prevention of gender violence as well as scientific contributions on communicative acts for

prevention of gender violence has been conducted. Therewith, the issue of the present research could be confined and centered to represent an innovative contribution to this field of research. The literature review was then complemented by reading the most relevant theoretical contributions of the main authors in diverse disciplinary fields, such as sociology, linguistics, social psychology and public health in order to provide a solid theoretical framework for the research to be developed.

The scientific excellence of the present research is pursued by selecting only the most relevant contributions. Thus, the main data base that was consulted is Thompson and Reuter's ISI Web of Knowledge. The results were then refined to identify only those articles that were published in the highest ranked scientific journals, such as *Violence Against Women*, *Sex Roles* and *Gender and Society* (all three are among the first quartile of the Journal Citation Report).

However, this search in the most relevant scientific literature has been complemented with the search in different data bases, such as Sociological Abstracts, SCOPUS and Psycinfo, focusing on publications on gender studies and women's issues. Access to these data bases was possible, because of the research stay that I had the opportunity to make during the months of March through June 2014 at the Harvard University. Through the library access I had the chance to consult the most relevant publications both in ISI Web of Knowledge as well as further data bases including publications from all over the world and publications that were not digitalized. Moreover, the research was carried out with the help of a librarian.

In this vein, the literature review was complemented with the scientific contributions that were also relevant for the purpose of this research although they had not been published in the main scientific journals. Examples of these cases are publications on breaking the silence on gender violence in universities in the diverse countries as well as dissertations on this issue. This exhaustive review of scientific literature outstanding in diverse terms, made it possible to gain a broad perspective on the current understanding of gender violence at universities across the world, its implications and the possibilities for preventing it.

The keywords that guided the search referred to gender violence, prevention, higher education institutions, and communicative acts. However, results were not that straight

forward and very diverse terms and combinations have been used. The main keywords referring to each of these fields are listed in the Table 2.

Table 2: Keywords used in the search for the scientific literature

Gender violence	Higher Education	Prevention	Communicative Acts
sexual violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment	universities	violence prevention	speech acts
violence against women	college / campus	prevention strategies / preventive socialization	body language
gender / women / female + harassment / power abuse / discrimination	students / faculty	bystander / activism	communication

The search for the most relevant scientific literature was complemented with the review and study of the most important theoretical contributions of authors from different fields of research. In this vein, the present research stands on the shoulders of the giants (Merton, 1965) as it builds on the theories of Jürgen Habermas, considered as the most important contemporary author in sociology; George Herbert Mead (1934), considered as one of the founders of the field of Social Psychology; John Longshaw Austin (1962), who is renowned for his contribution to linguistics; Jesus Gomez (2015), regarded as one of the initiators of the revolution of the 21st century with his contributions on love and preventive socialization of gender violence; and Rima Rudd who made a groundbreaking contribution to public health with her approach of health literacy (Rudd et al., 2004), to mention only some of the authors that have been consulted.

The study of all these fundamental contributions to social theory ensure the scientific foundation of the present research and make it possible to shed light on verbal and non-verbal communicative acts that can help to prevent gender violence at Spanish universities. The giants were not only consulted in relation to the theoretical framework but also regarding the methods to be used in the present research. In this regard, Jesus

Gomez and Ramon Flecha can be considered as the fathers of the Communicative Methodology that is praised for its contribution to social transformation as well as for the high scientific standard set forth.

A third source for scientific information for the present study is the CREA Research Center in Theories and Practices to overcome Social Inequalities. The work developed by the academics and professionals belonging to this research center has been available for the purpose of this dissertation. In this regard, I had access to the research results of all the relevant research projects developed on gender violence prevention as well as those projects conducted on communicative acts. Moreover, the present research is embedded in the work developed at CREA and thus counts on the scientific contributions of the previous research but also on the academic excellence for the counseling to conduct the present study.

3.6.2. Review of documentation

As the communicative methodology suggests different perspectives need to be taken into account and the data and information needs to be contrasted to make sure that the research actually responds to the social reality and the appropriate scientific resources have been reviewed (Gomez et al., 2006). Hence, a review of documentation that refers to all those kind of materials that are not regarded as scientific literature, but that can provide insights to the research issue and help to respond to the questions that orient the present research. In that sense, under this research diverse materials have been reviewed, ranging from documentation provided by universities, to legal documents and newspaper articles reporting on gender violence at universities.

Among university documentation different materials have been consulted both from Spanish Universities as well as universities with international acknowledgement. Hence, university policies and resources for students and victims are consulted as well as any kind of prevention measures that have been implemented. Legal documents refer to the diverse legislation on national or regional level that have been implemented, especially in the United States and in Spain.

It is further important to take into account the echo that the issue of gender violence at universities had in the press as it represents a way to show the impact on society. In this regard, especially in the United States the press has been reporting on diverse cases of gender violence at universities across the country as well as the steps taken by the US government to tackle this social problem. These advances made in the US and recently also in Canada have reached the press all over the world. In Spain, only recently the first case of gender violence with a positive result for the victims came to become public. All these advances are crucial in the analysis of gender violence prevention at Spanish higher education institutions and are therefore rigorously reviewed.

Moreover, the analysis of a specific case of gender violence implies the need to study all the related information. In the present study the case of the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities is analyzed in depth. Therefore, diverse material is consulted including personal communications between the victims and aggressors as well as material related to the profile at Facebook has been studied. Finally, the different angles of this major social problem of gender violence at universities can be contrasted and provide a solid foundation to conduct the present research and interpret the data obtained.

3.6.3. Data collection techniques

Whereas the communicative methodology contemplates different methods and techniques that combine both qualitative as well as quantitative measures to gather data, for the purpose of the present research only qualitative data collection techniques are employed to explore in depth how the communicative acts among the people belonging to the university community influence gender violence at Spanish higher education institutions. In that sense, the techniques employed follow the example of the pioneer research on gender violence at Spanish universities (Valls, 2005-2008). Thus two techniques are developed: communicative daily life stories and in-depth interviews with communicative orientation.

In-depth interviews

Semi-structured in-depth interviews with different profiles of people belonging to the community composing the public universities in Spain were carried out. On the one hand, interviews were conducted with institutional representatives and especially those representatives of gender-related university bodies; on the other hand, interviews with faculty that has been supportive of victims of gender violence at universities and has a trajectory of actively participating in the struggle against gender violence at the higher education institutions were conducted. These interviews have been carried out following the communicative orientation. In that vein, the conversation was not only directed at obtaining answers to specific questions but to engaging in an egalitarian dialogue on the problem of gender violence at Spanish universities, and how the analysis of communicative acts can contribute to preventing these kind of situations.

Therefore, the interviews with the representatives of institutional bodies attempt to shed light on the communicative acts that take place in the more institutional relations to handle and address gender violence resolution and prevention. This perspective will help to provide insights to the barriers held up by the institutions and the pathways to introduce changes in the university structures in order to respond to the social need of providing safe environments in Spanish higher education institutions. The interviews with the faculty that took a stand for the victims and against gender violence and its perpetrators is crucial in order to identify both the communicative acts that represent the difficulty to bring this issue forward and those communicative acts that make it possible to overcome violent situations and contribute to changing the hostile environment that perpetuates this problem.

Communicative daily life stories

This data collection technique consists of conversations held among the researcher and the person belonging to the collective involved in the research. It has a narrative orientation, in which the researcher and the participant interpret together the participant's life story in relation to the issue analyzed. Thus, in the present research the communicative daily life stories are conducted with victims of gender violence at Spanish universities as well as with institutional representatives. In the dialogue of the

participants and the researcher, both contribute to the interpretation of the situations experienced by the victim in order to identify those elements that indicate communicative acts that promote gender violence and those communicative acts that help to overcome these situations. Whereas the participant contributes with his or her life experience, the researcher introduces the knowledge of the scientific community. This means that the data found and explained in previous sections is taken into account in these dialogues, both by the researcher as well as by the participant who can then reflect on the experiences and contrast them with the scientific evidences and together interpret the reality discussed. This procedure is crucial to obtain a less biased interpretation of the situations and to contribute to identifying elements for the prevention of gender violence at Spanish universities. These dialogues are the spaces that make it possible to go beyond the dichotomy of subjective or objective interpretation of life experience, but makes an intersubjective interpretation possible. Since this intersubjective interpretation is based on scientific knowledge the possibility to go beyond this existing knowledge is the opportunity to contribute to the gaps in science. Additionally, elements that have proven to be successful in other social contexts to overcoming gender violence at higher education institutions, can be brought into the conversation and their recreation in the present social reality can be discussed (Gomez et al., 2006).

The delicacy of the issue dealt with in this research implies that the participants in these communicative daily life stories, and especially the victims, need to feel free to explain only those experiences they feel comfortable with and only if the conversation about these issues contribute to a greater well-being of the participants, rather than being detrimental to them. Therefore, confidentiality and an egalitarian environment were attempted to provide an atmosphere in which participants were enabled to openly talk about the situations they had experienced. In order to reassure that this dialogue is contributing to their well-being, the participants were informed about the content of the dialogue and the reflections that might come up previous to their consent to participate. Only those participants who felt comfortable to participate and were willing to recall the violent situations they had experienced were included in the present study. Vidu and her colleagues (Vidu et al., 2014) have emphasized that the success of the communicative methodology used in the pioneer research on gender violence at Spanish universities

lies, among other elements, in the creation of a safe environment where students felt comfortable to disclose their experience.

3.6.4. Sample

The data collection techniques described in this section evidence the scientific rigor that underlies the present research. The combination of communicative daily life stories with victims and institutional representatives, and the semi-structured in-depth interviews with supportive and committed faculty and institutional representatives related to gender issues are representative for the different voices of the university community in regard to violent situations occurring among the student and faculty collectives. In total 20 data collection techniques have been employed:

- 8 communicative daily life stories, 6 of them with victims of gender violence in Spanish higher education and 2 with former institutional representatives of the equality unit at their university.
- 5 in-depth interviews with institutional representatives, and
- 7 in-depth interviews with supportive faculty.

Therewith, the communicative acts occurring in different spheres of the Spanish university settings are disclosed and shed light to those communicative acts that promote gender violence in the higher education institutions and, on the other hand, those communicative acts that contribute to preventing gender violence in this context.

The sample is composed of participants belonging to five public universities in Spain that are located in diverse cities and are of different size. In this regard the universities are grouped into small, medium and big size, defined by the number of students. Thus, a small university counts less than 15.000 students, whereas a medium size university has between 15.000 and 40.000 students and among the big size universities we count those that have more than 40.000 students (Eroski Consumer, 2015). The sample of institutional representatives includes both, male and female, members and former members of the equality units, as well as one participant who holds several power positions.

Regarding the profile of the victims participating in the communicative daily life stories diversity in myriad aspects has been maintained. Although women are more affected by gender violence, both women and men were interviewed, since gender violence also affects men who suffer aggressions by dominant males (Flecha, Puigvert, & Rios, 2013). The situations of gender violence they had suffered in university relate to violence among students as well as violence by a professor toward students. Also, the moment of the aggression is taken into account as well as the moment of the report filed. All of the victims have suffered gender violence in the beginning of their bachelor or master degree, and only half of them reported while they were still inside the university contexts.

The following tables (Table 3 to 5) describe in detail the profiles of the participants.

Table 3: Profile of participants who had been victims of gender violence in university

Pseudonym	Gender	Relation to aggressor	Academic moment of the aggression	Academic moment of the report
Irene	Female	student-student	initiating master	during the master
Sofia	Female	student-student	initiating master	during the master
Maria	Female	professor-student	first academic year and master	during the master
Rafael	Male	professor-student	first academic year	once he finished his academic career
Carlos	Male	professor-student	first and third academic year	once he finished his academic career
Gemma	Female	professor-student	first academic year	once she finished her academic career

Table 4: Faculty who support victims of gender violence

Participant	Gender	University size
Pilar	Female	Big
Isabel	Female	Big
Julia	Female	Small
Luisa	Female	Small
Joan	Male	Small
Alba	Female	Big
Susana	Female	Small

Table 5: Profile of participants that were or are representatives at a university

Participant	Gender	Technique	Position	University size
Inma	Female	Communicative daily life story	Former director of the Equality Unit of the university	Medium
Pedro	Male	In-depth interview	Member of different institutional bodies	Big
Roser	Female	In-depth interview	Member of the Equality Unit of the Faculty	Big
Lucia	Female	In-depth interview	Former member of the Equality Unit of the university	Small
Sara	Female	In-depth interview	Former member of the Equality Unit of the Faculty	Big
Paula	Female	In-depth interview	Member of the Equality Unit of the Faculty	Big
Begoña	Female	Communicative daily life story	Former director of the Equality Unit of the university	Small

3.6.5. Ethical dimension

The delicate nature of gender violence at Spanish higher education institutions as a research topic requires fulfilling a maximum ethical standard. As outlined in previous sections breaking the silence on gender violence at universities, implies facing institutional resistances that can take myriad forms. In order to avoid any type of retaliations or negative effects towards the participants of this study their anonymity needs to be maintained. This is guaranteed with the codification of the interviews conducted and a confidential handling of the data obtained. The names used in the present research to refer to the participants are pseudonyms and thus maintain their identity unknown. In this regard, also the universities included in the present research are not revealed except for the approximate size in numbers of students.

Moreover, the sensitivity of the issues discussed, especially during the communicative daily life stories, requires further attention. In that sense I offered the victims to get back to me at any time if they wish to continue talking about this issue, as well as to clear any doubts or questions that might emerge. The participants were informed about the content of this research and the conditions of their participation in a consent letter that they were free to sign. According to the agreement taken with this consent, the participation in this research was voluntary and the informants were free to share the information they considered relevant and they felt comfortable with. They were free to decide to not answer any of the questions I had posed. Furthermore, the data obtained from the communicative daily life stories and the interviews can be used for the present research as well as for future publications that might derive from this dissertation (Gomez, Racionero, & Sorde, 2010).

3.7. Data Analysis

The analysis of the data gathered during the review of the documentation, the communicative daily life stories and in-depth interviews will also be carried out under the paradigm of the communicative methodology. This mainly implies focusing the analysis on two dimensions: the exclusionary and the transformative dimension. The first dimension refers to all those elements and interactions that represent a barrier to identifying violent situations, to overcoming gender violence at universities or to

exploring pathways for prevention. On the contrary, the transformative dimension of the data analysis focuses on situations and interactions that make social change possible and contribute to a transformation of the reality under study.

In this regard, several categories have been established to code and analyze the data obtained in the interviews and communicative daily life stories. The categories that were established correspond to the research questions that guide the present research and the objectives set out in the beginning. Thus, a distinction is made between the elements that indicate the presence or not of gender violence in communicative acts, between the communicative acts that either contribute to the perpetuation of gender violence and those communicative acts that promote its overcoming, and last but not least, a distinction is made between elements that facilitate prevention of gender violence at Spanish universities and those that represent barriers to it. Table 6 illustrates these categories, which will be explained below.

Table 6: Categories for the data analysis

	Exclusionary	Transformative
Presence of gender violence in communicative acts	1	2
Communicative acts related to gender violence	3	4
Prevention of gender violence	5	6

The category *Presence of gender violence in communicative acts* basically refers to the distinction of communicative acts in an interaction between people belonging to the university community that denote either power communicative acts or dialogic communicative acts. The data obtained in the codification according to this category contributes to defining specific elements that can help to easily identify when a situation experienced among students and/or faculty contains violence or not. Those interactions that contain violence are then coded with number 1, whereas elements pointing to relationships free from gender violence are coded with number 2.

As a continuation of the previous category, the category denominated *Communicative acts related to gender violence* helps to identify what kind of interactions contribute to reproducing gender violence in Spanish higher education institutions, referring to power communicative acts according to the theory of communicative acts (Soler & Flecha, 2010) outlined previously. At the same time, it helps to evidence also those interactions that contribute to overcoming the use of power communicative acts and instead promote dialogic communication.

The category *Prevention of gender violence* thus encompasses situations, and venues that either hinder the prevention or resolution of gender violence or represent an opportunity to promote prevention. The elements identified under this category contribute to define specific pathways for the promotion of gender violence prevention in Spanish universities drawing from the knowledge of the scientific community, the international references and the cultural intelligence of the university community participating in this research. Thus, through the egalitarian dialogue intersubjective knowledge on the impediments and opportunities for the prevention of gender violence is constructed.

The analysis of the data was developed with the Atlas.ti software for qualitative data analysis. This program makes it possible to follow the previously established codification determined by the communicative approach as well as it allows new categories to emerge from the interviews. In this vein, I have codified the interviews according to subcategories that came from the participants' contribution which were then grouped in the six pre-established groups. This codification has been crucial for the subsequent divisions of the chapter on the results. The Atlas.ti software allows the analysis of audio data, thus, data was coded in the audio file and only the quotations that were finally included in the present work have been transcribed.

3.8. Brief conclusions

The main ideas of the methods section in the present study aims at evidencing the highly scientific nature of the research developed. The choice of the communicative methodology represents a promising approach to successfully find answers to the research questions outlined in the beginning and which respond to a major social need

in Spain as well as abroad. In line with this methodology, a solid scientific foundation is the basis for the research and provides a strong theoretical background for the research conducted. Moreover, strong and adequate data collection techniques are used in order to achieve a maximum of social transformation and contribute to preventing gender violence in Spanish higher education institutions. This is further underlined through the combination of different sources and voices which guarantees the triangulation of the results.

Additionally, the data is put into a comparison with international scientific knowledge and is intersubjectively interpreted by the researcher and the participants and therefore it is possible to provide excellent data and contribute with new knowledge to the scientific community. Also, in line with international high-ranked research standards, the present research complies with the international ethical standards and therewith further proves the scientific evidence that underlies the whole research process. Last but not least, the analytical framework that corresponds to the research questions provides the basis for the results obtained, but also counts with the final contributions of the participants who had suffered gender violence in university to present excellent results in the following section. Both the methodology chosen for the research conducted as well as the purpose of the research are lastly oriented to the transformation of the Spanish university context in order to make universities a safer place.

CHAPTER 4

4. Communicative acts and gender violence in Spanish universities

With the aim to respond to the research questions of the study, this chapter presents and analyzes the results in relation to gender violence and communicative acts obtained from the communicative daily life stories and the in-depth interviews with victims, institutional representatives and committed and supportive faculty. The analysis represents an interpretation of the contributions of the participants according to the findings of the international scientific community in this field and the theoretical foundation. The chapter attempts to respond to the research questions 1 to 3 outlined in the previous chapter and the corresponding objectives 1 to 3 which refer to: 1. the identification of elements that indicate the presence or not of gender violence in communicative acts among members of the university community; 2. the identification of those communicative acts that allow for or enhance gender violence in the Spanish university context; 3. the analysis of those communicative acts that are able to counteract gender violence in Spanish higher education in order to provide insights in the possibilities for prevention of gender violence through enhancing these communicative acts.

The present chapter is divided into four sections. The first two sections correspond to the first research question and indicate the presence or not of gender violence in the interactions of the university community. The first section sheds light to those communicative acts that indicate the presence of gender violence and evidences the main findings about its existence in higher education, in accordance with international research as well as with the Spanish pioneer research (Valls, 2005-2008), since it also is a common reality for the participants of the present research. The second section points to an aspect that has been less emphasized in previous research on gender violence in higher education which are elements that indicate communicative acts that are free from violence, those that should be fostered in order to approach more dialogic relations in the university community. The two last sections of the present chapter focus on the analysis of how the communicative acts used by the university community either enhance gender violence or contribute to prevent it or make it stop. Therefore, in section three the main interactions that contribute to promoting gender violence confirm the

findings of the international scientific community on breaking the silence on gender violence in higher education. The results presented illustrate that the phenomenon of gender violence in higher education include the same unpleasant elements regardless of the cultural background or the territorial location. This implies that power relations prevail and those who are holding power or who attempt to reinforce the status quo do whatever needed to maintain the hierarchical university structure (Duque, Vidu, & Schubert, 2013; Valls et al., in press). Nevertheless, the last section sheds light on the possibility for overcoming violent communicative acts as well as how to counteract those communicative acts that promote gender violence. Many of the strategies developed by the participants and people from the university community correspond to the strategies that have been implemented in higher education settings internationally and which have been reported in the previous chapters (Banyard, Moynihan, & Plante, 2007; Banyard et al., 2005; Boeringer, 1999; Bryant & Spencer, 2003; Burn, 2008; Choate, 2003; Coker et al., 2011; Fonow, Richardson, & Wemmerus, 1992; Foubert et al., 2010; Gidycz et al., 2011; Jacobs et al., 2000; Katz et al., 2011; Mitchell & Freitag, 2011; Nicholson & Maney, 1998; Potter et al., 2009).

The present chapter attempts to evidence the implications of gender violence in Spanish universities and its reproduction in the daily interactions of the university community, emphasizing the possibilities for transforming these interactions in order to create a safer environment in higher education institutions.

4.1. Presence of gender violence in communicative acts

The research developed with the participants, especially as a result of the daily communicative life stories developed with people who had been victim of gender violence in the university context involving both students and faculty as aggressors, have been highly informative to distinguish specific elements that indicate the presence of violence in communicative acts. The situations reported in the present section correspond to the findings outlined in the literature review of violent situations taking place in the university context (Benson & Thomson, 1982; Lott et al., 1986; Rossi & Weber-Burdin, 1983; Till, 1980). In turn, the definitions provided by these same authors about gender violence in the university context have been taken into account.

Furthermore, the definition of the United Nations (1993) of gender violence as any act or threat of physical, sexual and psychological violence, has been the guiding definition for the consideration of the communicative acts presented here. In this regard, the situations reported by the participants of this research were distinguished in verbal violence understood as sexist and humiliating remarks or behaviors, undue or unwanted attention, inappropriate and offensive sexual advances including leering, intimidation, bribery and physical violence including abusive and intrusive behavior.

4.1.1. Verbal violence

The situations reported by the participants of the present study indicating the use of verbal violence range from typical chauvinist remarks about the intelligence of women which is especially damaging in a higher education context where everybody is supposed to be considered as equally intelligent and discrimination in this regard should not be present. However, Paula, one of the coordinators of the equality unit, states that these kind of comments are most salient at her school.

The comments that we can have here are not so much uncomfortable comments, but rather comments such as ‘women are less intelligent as men’ I mean we are in the degree of [a typical male degree] here. *(Paula, institutional representative)*

Another set of comments are those that made students feel uncomfortable due to the imbalanced power relation between student and professor. For instance, Irene felt estranged by a comment that one professor did the day of the presentation of the master she was initiating, a context in which the new students get to know the faculty and the subjects of the program.

then this professor came and gave us some papers or an article he just published and then he looked at me and asked ‘are you teaching or studying?’ and I answered ‘No, I’m a student’ and he said ‘Ah, the thing is that nowadays the teachers are so pretty and young that I cannot distinguish them’ and of course I was like ‘wow how strange that a professor tells me that’. *(Irene, victim)*

Considering that this situation took place at the welcoming reception of the new master students, who might not have the skills of how to navigate the power structures present in that institution, this comment can be interpreted as a strategy of making sexual advances towards those who have less resources or skills to deal with the situation. This would also fit into the kind of situations analyzed by Bursik and Geftter (2011) to highlight that the power imbalance in higher education is crucial in ambiguous situations. For this reason, it is important to depart from the approach of health literacy, since it evidences the need for being able to read the relations in Spanish higher education to identify this kind of situation as gender violence. Therefore it is further necessary to build on the theory of communicative acts that takes the social context and the power imbalances into account as well as the gestures, looks and intentions. Irene, explains also further gestures from that encounter which evidence that this comment was not an innocent gesture made by a professor towards a student the first day of the master degree but it was a very conscious sexual advance of a harassing professor.

However, the students also reported comments that made them feel uncomfortable and which were mainly present in emails that were exchanged between the professor and student. Some of the participants mention ambiguous language and hidden intentions, but also the fact of finishing the email with 'kisses' which was striking them. In other cases very clear and straight forward sexual advances were made, such as inviting the student to his home for a massage and dressed in tanga. While the number of examples that could be given for the purpose of illustrating verbal violence, only some comments will have to serve this purpose, avoiding the most severe examples. In that sense, Rafael said that in one email the professor mentioned the underwear that he had been wearing which was bewildering to him. On the other hand, in the quote of Maria the use of ambiguous language becomes evident.

then, in emails, he made comments about my underwear that had been showing a little bit (*Rafael, victim*)

It became clear that what he wanted was to say something about me. Something like 'I liked your participation in class' or 'you make very good contributions in class'. It wasn't about the content of the class, or 'you didn't understand this concept' or... you could see that the email wasn't about the content of the class but it was to talk about me. Now I remember the sentence from the email! It was

'I liked you in class' like ambiguous, leaving open whether he meant to say 'I liked you in class' or 'I liked your comment'. (*Maria, victim*)

Sofia, another participant in this study and victim of a classmate reported on the humiliating behavior the student showed, especially when she had to present in class, he tried to disconcert her bursting out in laughter.

he started to laugh his head off, he was crying of laughter and I didn't explain anything funny. (*Sofia, victim*)

In this line, the fact of breaking with social norms is a common trait in the communicative daily life stories with victims of gender violence at Spanish universities. The participants inform that the harassers tried to call the attention by showing an attitude of superiority that takes the form of breaking with the existing norms or the common behavior. Irene, another student, explains the behavior of a professor at her university who is known for his constant sexual harassment during the presentation of the master degree she was just starting.

all the professors were sitting down at the table to talk, because the tables were put in form of a U and all of them were presenting the subjects that they were teaching and that's it, seated at the table in front of us. But then the harassing professor stood up and went into the middle of the U with his publication and started talking about his article, and well I thought how blatant to get in the middle and well. (*Irene, victim*)

Irene, identifies very well that these non-verbal communicative acts were meant to cause an impression on the students and implied hidden intentions, rather than transparency and equality. In line with the theory of communicative acts (Soler & Flecha, 2010), the present situation evidences that the professor uses his power position to approach the students but attempting to show his superiority to the students as well as to the rest of the professors that were present.

Yet another way of showing superiority is especially important taking into account that the relations among the people belonging to the university community in a highly hierarchical institution as the Spanish universities are marked by imbalances due to the different positions that the individuals occupy in this structure (Flecha, 2008; Puigvert,

2008; Vidu et al., 2014). In that sense, the participants in the present study highlight these differences in the social status and how these imbalances can be used to emphasize the power of occupying a higher social position. Participants explain how a professor known to be an aggressor attempted to foster his image of a powerful person in the institution in order to impress students and pave the way for future abusive relations.

He always told us how important he was by saying that he has a lot of meetings, that he is important and travels a lot, that he goes to conferences and holds high positions, or he made us read his books, or the first day in class he told us that he had written 20 books, or I don't know how many, to make clear that he had a position high above us. (*Maria, victim*)

4.1.2. Undue or unwanted attention

Among the situations that the victims who participated in the communicative daily life stories remember there are also a variety of examples that show the unwanted or undue attention they had received from a professor and which made them feel uncomfortable because they did not know how to handle the situation. Gemma, for instance, explained that she had many doubts about the behavior of her professor but she did not know who to ask and she felt ashamed, because she knew what the answer to her question would be.

he behaved as if he was a friend of confidence, and this was also violating because I didn't know, especially in the beginning, to what extent is it normal that a professor in the first year of the degree when I had no experience beyond the teachers I had for 16 years in school, to what extent is it normal that a professor treated you like he was a friend and he worries about you and even calls you on the phone? (*Gemma, victim*)

It is striking that she emphasizes the fact of making this experience in her first year when she had no idea of navigating the university context and the relations. In this situation people are most vulnerable, because they do not know how things work in this new environment and neither do they know who to turn to and ask for help (Benson &

Thomson, 1982; Fitzgerlad, 1988; Kalof, 1993). The harassment that she suffered from this professor went on for months and involved serious sexual advances and bribery as analyzed in the following sections. The need for introducing literacy in how to navigate the university structures is thus evident. However, she remembers even little gestures that made her be terrified in class. For instance, one day several people had to present in front of the class and when it came to be her turn the professor sent her a note in front of everybody which she was awaiting with shame and horror.

he send me a note and I was freaking out it said 'Gemma, it's your turn' but the fact that he send me a note in front of everybody it was like 'what is he going to say now' R: What did you expect was the message? - Anything, I expected that he was able to put any kind of message after all the things he had said in the emails and the calls... I expected anything horrible. (*Gemma, victim*)

Rafael found himself in a similar situation and emphasizes that his professor took advantage of his situation of being at home due to a violent incident he had experienced to visit him without asking him for his consent to come and visit.

I couldn't go to classes for two weeks, and since I already had kind of a connection to this professor from some mails or something like that, I wrote to him to say that I couldn't come to classes because of what had happened [he had been beaten] (...) so he came to see me with a classmate at home, he didn't come alone, but with a mate. (...) he took advantage of my situation of weakness. (*Rafael, victim*)

Rafael further mentions the many gifts, letters and notes he received, some of them with ambiguous sexual connotation. He did not ask for this kind of attention and neither wanted it but he did not know how to make the professor stop.

I and also other victims of the same professor received a lot of gifts, like books with notes inside. Those that I remember most were... well the professor was a visiting scholar in Denmark and he went to the erotic museum and then he send the flyer of the museum or he went to a hotel and took the sign that you would put outside the door meaning 'don't enter, occupied' and send it to me. (*Rafael, victim*)

4.1.3. Inappropriate and offensive sexual advances

Concerning those ambiguous advances that are inappropriate and offensive but at the same time sanction free, according to Till (1980), the experiences of Irene will perfectly illustrate similar situations taking place in a Spanish university. In a very strategic manner, the student that was harassing her used to look for ways to be close to his victims as for example trying to sit next to them and then disturb them.

in the beginning of the classes he always tried to sit next to us, he always entered late into the classroom to find his spot. Well he always entered first, before anyone else got there and left his bag, but then he entered the room the last one, because like this he always had a seat reserved for him and then he could decide where to sit. (*Irene, victim*)

Once he had managed to sit next to his victim he started to bother her in order to make her feel uncomfortable. The participant especially points to one incident that occurred when she had to present in class.

Once I had a presentation and he sat down next to me, during all the time before the presentation he was doing things to bother me, like banging against the chair, making comments to me. Then, shortly before presenting he took out a notebook and looking at me he started to draw vaginas and naked women, but well looking at me, and well this completely destabilized me and I remember that I got up to make the presentation and he continued drawing, and well I was standing there straight and this guy is drawing me and he is drawing me without clothes. (*Irene, victim*)

Another element that is crucial in gender violence is leering. The scientific literature on both, gender violence at universities (Rossi & Weber-Burdin, 1983) as well as on communicative acts (Soler & Flecha, 2010) have put special emphasis on the looks of people and their influence on perpetrating violence. The looks and leering is a salient issue in the communicative daily life stories. With a look we can transmit a great variety of meanings and cause effects and actions on other people. The following quotations make it clear that it is crucial to be aware of the effects of looks in social interaction, because they are not innocent gestures but, in this case, are frightening and making the victims feel bad. In this sense, Irene continues her explanation.

he was looking at us and well I felt very uncomfortable and I thought there is a problem here, because he was looking at us with a look of desire and then laughed. (...) His looks, rather desire transmitted the idea that he wanted to harm us, it was somewhere in between desire and violence and it was really frightening this face and his smile was as if he was thinking things... (*Irene, victim*)

Irene further identifies a certain opacity in the behavior of the student and also in relation of the student to another professor. She felt that their leering involved hidden intentions.

the relation between him and the harassing professor, it seemed to me that it wasn't transparent, that there was something, I don't know, there was something weird about it, and well, they were looking and laughing and making comments among them. I thought it's very blatant that they are talking about us right in front of us. (*Irene, victim*)

Whereas Irene identifies this behavior as inappropriate, it is more difficult to identify it as gender violence, as these situations can oftentimes be normalized or trivialized in higher education. Yancey and Hummer (1989) highlight this normalization of gender violence among US university students. These evidences underpin the need for helping students to acquire skills to identify where to draw the line in these situations, to distinguish what is appropriate and what is not. Her interpretation departs from the social context in which the situation took place -the first day of the master degree-, the social relations -power imbalances of a professor and student towards her-, the looks and gestures that insinuated hidden intentions.

4.1.4. Intimidation

The participants in the present research also inform about situations in which they felt intimidated by the harasser. Sofia explains that in one occasion, the harassing student used a knife to intimidate the classmates and enhance his superiority over them and even the university authorities. One could say that he was only peeling an apple, but the situation reported here is not about using a knife to eat an apple or not. Rather it is the use of this gesture to intimidate and disconcert the victims and the people around him.

This attitude of violating the social norms and the people around him with his looks and gestures is very well explained in the following quotation.

This guy, one day he took out a knife and he spent quite some time to let the whole class know that he had a knife... he took out the knife, looked at it and looked at the classmates, and we all looked at each other like 'what is he doing?!' and then he took out an apple and peeled it. (*Sofia, victim*)

A part from the previous non-verbal communicative acts that might indicate an act of violence, the participants also informed about very clear signs of perpetrating power over somebody. Rafael, who has been victim of the sexual harassment perpetrated by one of his professors, explains that the said professor locked the door of his office with a key to prevent anybody from entering the office. This act is a clear demonstration of restricting the freedom of the student.

it was in an office that he had in a part of the building to which students had no access, it was a research office that he had and we entered and he closed the door. - R: with the key? - With the key right after entering so that nobody could enter. (*Rafael, victim*)

4.1.5. Bribery

Another salient issue in research on gender violence in higher education is sexual bribery or the so called 'quid pro quo' (Benson & Thomson, 1982). Professors reward students with good grades or advantages in their academic career and expect sexual favors in return. Gemma and Carlos explain that with some professors the grades were determined by the relation the students had with the professor implying that if you wanted to have good grades you had to be one of his favorite students.

the grades were not given according to your academic merit but for your behavior with him and about how he behaved towards you. (*Gemma, victim*)

you could see in the way he treated some people, in his way of talking to people, he showed more affection and attention to his favorites, and ignorance as if they

wouldn't exist towards the rest that he'd consider as not of his interest, complete indifference. *(Carlos, victim)*

In this situation, the non-verbal communicative acts expressed by a professor that are reported by the victims imply disdain towards students he did not like or that he felt he could not harass. The power that his position as a university professor confers used in this way against his students evidences the presence of power communicative acts that pave the way for gender violence. If as a student you do not know how to handle these kind of situations it can easily happen that in order to pass the subject you try to be one of the favorites. However, if gender violence in Spanish higher education was an outspoken reality and mechanisms to report this kind of situation were available and known by the students, and end could be set such behavior. Unfortunately, at present students do not know who to turn to, or feel that their concerns are not taken seriously, which is why more efforts need to be done to assist students in these situations.

Rafael one of the victims of sexual harassment by his professor informed that after a severe incident of sexual harassment by his professor he stopped attending his course. However, once they met in the hallways of the university the professor insulted him and threatened to fail him if he did not hand in a paper.

he said don't be an idiot and fail my subject, so hand in something. *(Rafael, victim)*

However, as the participant continues this threat goes hand in hand with a common practice of this professor to bribe the students. In order to keep the students in silence he rewarded them with good grades so that they would not report.

I didn't see him until a conference I went in September or October, so I met him there and he shook my hand and wouldn't let go off, we have been shaking hands for two minutes and he said 'well I put you a good grade', well reminding me that he gave me a good grade so that I wouldn't report or say anything (...) well in this moment I think he got scared, moreover he saw me at the conference, well, if someone goes to a conference it means that one gets into the academic track beyond doing a degree, and I think he was kind of scared. *(Rafael, victim)*

Rafael also mentions that some people agree to share a hotel room with their professors in academic contexts (e.g.: conferences). The fact of doing so is not at all a perpetration of violence. However, it is necessary to be aware of the fact that the imbalance in the student - professor relationship can influence the freedom of the people involved in these situations to decide on consenting or not. Keeping in mind the different constellations of interactions and relations, only dialogic interactions in dialogic relations can overcome power communicative acts. For this reason, specific explicit communicative acts would be necessary to overcome the power relations and leave no room for trivial interpretations of these kind of situations so that students can truly feel free to decide whether to share a room with a professor or not. According to the information provided by Rafael, the professor instead of diminishing the power relation, used to emphasize his power over the students.

there was something he used to do a lot in class, which is explain the influence he had, and he did so, I suppose, for several reasons, he wanted to give the image of eminence, but another [reason] was to offer help, but oftentimes, help was tricky, later on we found out that people who got involved in working with him, doing research, and they shared a hotel room when they went to conferences etc. That was well known, but it is something different because it is a situation that is consented. The problem here is that they are not equal in the relationship, rather it is a profit situation to get something in return. (*Rafael, victim*)

4.1.6. Physical violence

Another crucial and very evident element in perpetrating violence in communicative acts is the fact of raising the tone of voice as a means to place oneself as superior to the other. In the case of a student harassing several peers, his behavior and the fact of shouting instead of talking normally had a major effect on the victims but also on the whole classroom and the general atmosphere in class.

the climate in class had become very tense, in the beginning we used to debate a lot and everything fine, but at some point we didn't debate anything anymore because this guy didn't know how to debate, he shouted and he was very

derogatory like 'You, shut up, you have no idea what you're talking!', he got up from his chair and shouted 'You, shut up!'. (*Sofia, victim*)

These elements are probably the most easiest to be identified by the university community as violence, although even these clear examples have not been enough for the institution to acknowledge the behavior as deviant or as problematic for the learning environment inside the higher education institution.

However, Sofia also explains that his harassment was not always that straight forward but rather subtle, showing his attitude as a macho man transmitting superiority and violence in his behavior.

it was also his attitude, (...) he was tilting the chair, and stayed seated only on the two legs of the chair and looked at you from above like a tyrant, I don't know like cocky, this attitude of a macho man 'you'll come to me', because he never said anything, but I think he expected us to go after him. (*Sofia, victim*)

This attitude of provoking in order to draw the attention of women aligns with the theory of a tendency of attraction towards violence which is used by the traditional dominant masculinities and unfortunately (Gomez, 2015; Flecha, Puigvert, & Rios, 2013). According to this theoretical approach, as long as these men are successful with their strategies, there is no need for them to change their behavior. Thus, the preventive socialization suggests in this regard to focus on changing the model of attraction, so that this kind of behavior is considered as something not only unacceptable, but as something unattractive, something boring and frustrated (Flecha, Puigvert, & Rios, 2013).

Further elements that represent an abusive and intrusive behavior is the fact of following another person, or controlling and watching over another person's life. In this regard, Sofia and Irene explain that the harasser used to show up next to them when they did not expect him to be there which made them feel very uncomfortable and frightened as he also followed them outside the university building. They felt that he was trying to take advantage of specifically vulnerable situations for his appearances such as when they were alone or following them on their way home.

he always appeared next to you in the university, if you went to do photocopies he suddenly appeared next to you, if you went to the toilet, he appeared there. (...) It's not only that he appeared but he came in silence, he always scared you. (...) and he appeared in places where this was frightening, I said at the copy shop, but where he always appeared was near the toilet, the ones that are down here in the back [of the building], and even if he didn't appear, this is not a sympathetic place. *(Sofia, victim)*

he always tried to look for moments when we were alone to appear, for example one day at the library he appeared in the hallway. *(Irene, victim)*

He always got off [the metro] at one of our stops, well, he usually got on the same metro but the next wagon and when he saw that one of us got off, he got off, too. *(Irene, victim)*

Although the interaction might apparently not involve any kind of violence. Nevertheless, it is considered internationally as gender violence and thus criminal behavior. Moreover, the fact that the victims experience emotions like fear are crucial in drawing a line between violent and non-violent behavior. Irene explains the fear she experienced during the time of being harassed.

I was alone at home and started to imagine tons of things, and I was so afraid, suddenly I saw him all around, it was like, he will appear, for sure, he knows where I live, of course, since he always followed us and it was horrible. (...) When I was walking in the hallways [of the university] my legs were trembling. *(Irene, victim)*

Also, Gemma had these kind of experiences due to the harassment by one of her professors. She felt that he was controlling her life and that she had to justify her actions and decisions about her life to him, because if she did not reply to his requests they would only become more intense. According to her explanation shared by other informants, there was no possibility of saying no, because the professor would insist on what he had suggested. Otherwise he would send even more mails and insist on knowing why she did not answer his emails or did not come to class.

I felt watched, not only in the university but in my personal life, I felt that I had to give explanations about my personal life. When he organized a party and I said I couldn't come he would ask 'But why can't you come?' He was following me and wanted to know everything about my personal life. It was horrible. (...) During all this time [of harassment] I had to go to his classes and I didn't want to. And if I didn't go to class he called me afterwards to ask me why I hadn't been there (...) in his emails, for example there were three very large paragraphs that were out of line, very dirty-minded, so what I did was to answer the email ignoring all those parts that I considered inconvenient. Because if I didn't answer his email he'd send it three times or he'd write asking why I didn't answer. (*Gemma, victim*)

This explanation of the situation that Gemma had experienced evidences the lack of illocutionary communicative acts, that are defined as a search for agreement (Soler & Flecha, 2010). Her interpretation evidences that the professor is not looking for her agreement to meet him, but he is only concerned about his personal interests. The interaction narrated by Gemma indicate a complete lack of dialogic communicative acts. There were no dialogic interactions, or a dialogic relation, but the interactions were plagued by perlocutionary acts.

To provide an idea of how verbal violence and harassment linked to the abuse of the power position of a professor who had been gaining the students confidence over time turns into severe physical harassment, the experience made by Rafael is relevant. Although more severe situations have occurred in higher education in Spain, it is not necessary to provide further details. This quote sheds light to the scope of physical gender violence at Spanish universities. Rafael explains that he expected to meet his professor at the office, but then after an invitation to lunch he ended up in a private office and being victim of sexual advances.

There was something [he used to do] that was very clear 'let's have a drink and we will do so where I want to and in a place outside the university' (...) Once I went to his office, because I thought he wanted to discuss something, and he said 'hey let's have lunch!', and he took me, well we took his car, and went to a place near his office. He had a private office outside the university. And that day everything became very clear, he got out the heavy artillery, this cannot be included in the 'let's have a coffee', this was something completely different

because he started to show me books of Japanese pornography, or Japanese erotic books and at the end he suggested to masturbate together. (*Rafael, victim*)

As a conclusion of this section, it is worthy to highlight that the communicative daily life stories with some victims account for most of the diverse forms of gender violence reported in the numerous studies on gender violence in higher education conducted by the international scientific community (Benson & Thomson, 1982; Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Lott et al., 1986; Rossi & Weber-Burdin, 1983). Additionally, the examples provided by the participants shed light on the myriad facets of the presence of violence in communicative acts, which can range from very subtle violent interactions to very direct forms of perpetrating power over somebody. But, the examples all evidence the prevalence of perlocutionary acts over illocutionary acts. One element that accompanies violence is the effect that violent communicative acts cause on the victims, which is feeling uncomfortable, violated or scared of the person one is interacting with. Thus, an indicator for violence could be the intuition. However, due to the major lack of identification of gender violence, it might be necessary to train the intuition in listening to feelings when fear and unease are involved in order to guess correctly.

4.2. Communicative acts free of gender violence

Whereas the previous section addresses the elements that denote violence in social interactions and in the communicative acts, the present sections focuses on those elements that indicate greater freedom from violence in communicative acts. The theory on communicative acts (Soler & Flecha, 2010) postulates that social interaction itself is marked by the position in society that the participants in the interaction hold. This means that dialogic interactions that are supposed to be free from violence can be (and usually are) subject to power relations. In order to overcome this power relation and achieve the ideal of a dialogic interaction free from power constraints some people take specific actions on this purpose, emphasizing the use of illocutionary communicative acts. The participants in this research evidence some of these actions that they have taken or experienced. Some of these elements will be presented in this section to clearly highlight the possibilities of reaching dialogic interactions in social contexts embedded in power structures, as it is the case of the Spanish higher education.

One of the key aspects to overcome power relations is to make these relations more egalitarian. This means that in the situation of holding a power position in society, as it would be the case for the professor-student relationship, the professor attempts to diminish this divide. Victims explain how some of their professors acted in specific situations, which they would appreciate and identify as crucial to later on be confident with these professors and explain their experiences of sexual harassment. In this regard, Maria explains that one of her professors would not criticize the students if they made mistakes or misinterpretations, rather he would start a conversation on the issue so that they could provide different perspectives and arguments on the issue in question and the mistaken idea could then be clarified in this conversation.

He put himself on our level. - R: How did he do that? - Speaking in a very egalitarian way, transmitting trustworthiness, like understanding, or being promotive, like 'what you say is good', he doesn't criticize or make you feel bad or inferior or correcting you, but talking about it, so if someone in class said something that didn't make much sense he wouldn't say 'You didn't get it' but he'd say 'Let's talk about it'. (*Maria, victim*)

This clearly evidences the concept of validity claims set out by Habermas (1987) as the key to communicative action. The validity claims prevail over power claims, so the professor does not use his power position to impose his perspective, although it might be the correct one, but he gives students the chance to agree upon the issue through egalitarian dialogue in which each person provides arguments. With this example we can see that illocutionary communicative acts are used to emphasize the search for agreement, in this case the learning of the students, and the lack of power or violence in the interactions.

In a similar vein, another student, Irene, considers this attitude as being professional and as contributing to a confident climate in class. This is especially important because the sexual harassment that she had experienced was by a classmate and the professor discussed the issue of gender violence at universities in the class in a highly professional manner, providing scientific literature on the issue to debate about it and about the prevention strategies.

she was speaking openly about everything and I mean we were doing the subject 'Gender violence'. So we did it from a very professional perspective but at the same time she was very close like 'I'm sitting down with you and discuss the text with you and I'll never say that you're doing it wrong, but that you're analyzing it in a different way.' And well this creates a climate for confidence. *(Irene, victim)*

Another crucial element to create egalitarian and dialogic relations is respect. Maria explains that one of her professors was very explicit about establishing egalitarian dialogue with her through verbal and non-verbal communicative acts. To provide some examples, he would leave the office doors open or mark a physical distance to make her feel comfortable and secure, or let her decide at any point what to tell him and what not. At the same time as he provides information about the basis for success in the academic career, he insists that she decides which actions to take based on her criteria.

He was very respectful, he was always taking into account his students, and that they only explained what they wanted to explain and he would say that. For example when I was talking about something in class he would say 'if you don't want you don't need to explain it, whatever you want' he gave you the freedom to... or regarding the conferences, he would say 'there are these conferences, if you want to you go there if you don't want to you don't go there'. *(Maria, victim)*

He always left the office door open or he marked kind of a distance, even physical distance, he respected you very much and made you feel very safe and calm. *(Maria, victim)*

Irene adds another aspect that contributes to diminishing the divide in power relations, which is through closeness. She explains that her professors remain humble in spite of their obvious international recognition in the sense that they show themselves very close to the students.

I was amazed by them in classes, because they were talking about international authors and they said that they knew them! and everything was very near, you know, it wasn't like bragging about it. So they were transmitting a lot of trustworthiness. *(Irene, victim)*

Contrary to the examples provided in the previous section on a professor using his position as a full professor to emphasize the power he had, the present situation evidences that the power imbalance can be diminished and close to dialogic relations although an imbalance in the social status exists.

In the sight of gender violence at universities these elements are crucial to contrast the violent reality and evidence that also positive relations exist in this context. In that sense, some professors were especially successful in creating an atmosphere of confidence and trust, which made it possible for the victims to feel that their experiences of sexual harassment would be taken seriously. Irene states that in the classes of this professor she felt recognized as a person having voice and that her ideas and concerns were taken seriously and were discussed in class.

With my professor I felt trustworthiness, because I saw that she maintained a certain distance of well 'I'm the professor', but at the same time she talked to us in the same way as we can be talking. (...) Contrary to other classes, in her classes it was like, well, here I have voice and vote, you know, and I can say things and even better, what I say is taken into account and I think that this created a very good climate of trustworthiness. (*Irene, victim*)

Sofia, another student who has been victim of gender violence at a Spanish university adds to that the fact of taking a stand in front of gender violence as an element to be trustworthy of disclosing the experiences made.

Because of their attitude we knew that they would be on our side. He was the only professor who was able to tell him [the aggressor] to leave the class or to defy him. (*Sofia, victim*)

Also Carlos, another student victim of sexual harassment, has emphasized this idea as crucial to explain his experience to his peers, years after the incident. While he had felt ashamed of what a professor had done to him, when he learns that other friends from university filed a report he finally felt free and comfortable to explain his situation and add his testimony to the formal report.

I knew that she wouldn't laugh at my situation, because she was fighting against these kind of situations, it would have been absurd to be the one who is fighting

against harassment and then laugh at someone who is being harassed. (*Carlos, victim*)

Moreover, this trustworthiness is closely linked to transparency by those who provide support to the victims of gender violence. Both professors who have supported victims as well as the victims themselves highlight transparency as an essential element to distinguish relations based on communicative acts that in spite of being marked by power relations stand out for their dialogic character. Isabel, a supportive professor, highlights that transparency is crucial for students to have confidence in the person who supports them. This is especially important considering that victims might fear to get in the middle of diverging personal interests.

If students trust someone to defend them it's because they know that this person doesn't have any personal interest or that there is nothing hidden, that there is transparency and they know that things won't turn against them. (*Isabel, faculty*)

In this regard, Irene appreciates the transparency of some of her professors about the implications of filing a formal report, because it helped her to take a well informed decision.

Well I think we decided to take that step very consistently in the sense that [the professors] had made it very clear to us what could happen if we do so. And I think that was very good for me, like I'm taking a risk but I know the odds. (*Irene, victim*)

These explanations of trustworthiness and transparency are closely linked to the freedom to decide on anything related to diverse aspects of one's life. In that sense, for instance in case of gender violence, a professor or the person responsible for attending these cases offers help but the victim decides whether to take benefit from the offer or not and to what extent. To provide an example for that, Alba, a professor committed to overcoming gender violence at Spanish universities explains her reaction to a victim of gender violence who opened up to her.

I told her that she could come and talk to me whenever she wanted to, but at all times letting her decide what she wants to do. (*Alba, faculty*)

This attitude reflects the basic elements of illocutionary communicative acts which are free from any kind of coercion and based on sincerity (Soler & Flecha, 2010). This freedom is not only relevant in situations of gender violence and can be present in any kind of interactions in the university context. Maria describes how one of her professors would make this freedom clear in diverse situations and conversations by offering his help and availability at all times, but letting the students decide whether to take that offer and when, contrary to situations outlined in the previous sections, in which similar offers of providing information on the academic career for instance were expressed in perlocutionary communicative acts and linked to insistent invitations to meet the students not allowing for the option to reject the offer.

other professors would say if that interests you we can talk about it in office hours (...) or he would say, let's have a coffee, and talk about the subject, about this author or the doubts you have regarding the degree' but it was like 'I'm here for you' like 'if you have doubts I'll be there, if you have questions you can come and ask me'. (*Maria, victim*)

The elements highlighted in this section evidence the possibilities for approaching the ideal of dialogic communicative actions in the higher education context based on dialogic interactions in which power relations, although existent, are reduced to a minimum, so that all participants in the interaction can feel free to express themselves. Currently these interactions seem to be isolated cases of very committed professors and very committed institutional representatives in charge of attending victims, especially in cases of gender violence. However, these actions can be taken by everyone and in daily interactions both inside the university context as well as outside in the interactions with family and friends. Dialogic communicative acts reflect a will for democratic and egalitarian relations and interactions based on positive values in society. According to the theory of preventive socialization (Gomez, 2015) not only changes in the people's thoughts on social reality are necessary, but also changes in our personality that include positive values that guide our actions are crucial elements in promoting healthier relations. The present analysis of dialogic communicative acts provides some insights in how to put the theoretical concepts into practice.

4.3. Communicative acts that promote gender violence

According to the literature, one essential element in the existence of gender violence at universities is the hostile environment towards the victims that makes it very difficult for the victim and those who support the survivor to shed light on the problem experienced (Dowler, Cuomo & Laliberte, 2013; Dzeich & Weiner, 1990; Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957; Morley, 2011; Thomas & Kitzinger, 1997). This hostile environment towards the victims of gender violence implies a high tolerance of violence in higher education institutions and as such the impunity that those who perpetrate this violence enjoy among the people that compose the university community. Thus, impunity ranges from tolerance and inaction, to accomplices, questioning or blaming the victim and even attacking the victim and supporters for raising this issue, the denominated second order harassment (Dziech & Weiner, 1990). At the same time, literature on the prevention of gender violence emphasizes the need to take not only the victim and the aggressor into account, but also the bystanders which contribute with their actions or inactions to an either hostile or supportive environment (Banyard, Moynihan, & Plante, 2007; Banyard et al., 2005; Burn, 2008; Potter et al., 2009). The present section is organized according to these elements highlighted in the scientific literature and, thus, addresses the hostile environment, the retaliations against victims and the retaliations against their supporters -the second order victims.

In order to distinguish the different spheres in which gender violence is promoted, the interactions with diverse profiles of people are differentiated according to the role they have in higher education. As such interactions with people belonging to the higher education institutions, referring to the faculty, service and administration staff, classmates as well as those members of the university who hold positions that represent the institution, such as members of the equality units, heads of department, deans, university rectors, to mention only some, represent a specific context in which interactions that enhance gender violence occur and are contemplated in the following as the university community. Another social sphere in which gender violence in universities can be promoted through communicative acts is the social context of the victim and the people belonging to the university community. Although this context is not part of the university community it is necessary to take the interactions taking place in

this context into account for the present analysis, as they can also contribute to legitimizing violent behaviors taking place among the university community.

4.3.1. Hostile environment towards victims and their supporters

4.3.1.1. Communicative acts among the university community

Scientific literature has demonstrated that one of the cardinal problems to overcoming gender violence is the impunity enjoyed by those who perpetrate violence in the higher education context (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998; Dzeich & Weiner, 1990; Eyre, 2000; Thorne-Finch, 1992). Therefore many prevention strategies depart from the slogan zero tolerance (Bryant & Spencer, 2003; Nicholson, 1998). It refers to the fact of breaking with this impunity and implies taking a stand in public as an institution or a collective not to tolerate any kind of violence. However, in the Spanish context of higher education the situation has not yet reached a common claim for zero tolerance of violence by the institutions and for them. Rather the opposite would describe the current situation. Rafael, one of the victims, points to this situation explaining how the institution continues to support a professor who has been acknowledged by the state attorney and even by the very dean of the faculty to have committed sexual harassment over decades while he has been teaching at the institution.

Now this person doesn't teach but he continues to be paid a large salary by the university and that after all he has done. (*Rafael, victim*)

This explanation summarizes the impunity reigning in the Spanish higher education institution in which sexual harassment is not only possible to be perpetrated for several decades but it is tolerated and even financially supported by maintaining a contractual link between this person and the university.

The impunity or hostile environment towards victims of gender violence can be broken down into different aspects of silencing the voices of change. One element would be the mere inaction or passivity of people belonging to the university community when encountered with situations of gender violence. The fact of not taking action against gender violence is widespread among the university community and thus affects all collectives in the sense that among all the diverse groups of the university community

violence is commonly tolerated. Thus, all the people who participated in the present research have informed about these kind of experiences of not taking action. Sofia, one of the victims, for example highlighted the inaction of the professors in front of the violent behavior of the classmate who had been harassing her.

the professor came to talk to us in a break and said 'I don't know what to do about this guy, he might be dangerous, I don't know how to stop him'. I thought, another one who let's him do what he wants to, I felt like everyone was afraid to face him so let's just let him go with it and see whether he calms down. (*Sofia, victim*)

This kind of behavior by the faculty is one of the reasons that demotivates students who experience gender violence. As outlined in the literature review, the consequences of gender violence are devastating, even leading to abandoning the academic career to avoid the situations of harassment (Fitzgerald et al., 1988). In her statement, Sofia expresses her resignation from receiving help to face the situation by the faculty. Also Gemma pointed to this lack of action taken by the institution the case was concluded with a recognition of the harassment that had occurred over decades.

they said that they couldn't do anything because he's a state servant, and there was a law for state servants. So to me and to the rest of the persons involved it was unconceivable that the university couldn't do anything and knowing what had happened all these years and that this could continue to happen and it could even be happening right now and still they decided not to take any action. That really hurt. (*Gemma, victim*)

However, even the very people who are coordinating the equality unit and leading an investigation of gender violence face the inaction of the institution to resolve the cases, especially when these involve a well-known professor who is perpetrating violence. In this sense Begoña, former director of the equality unit at her university claims that the institution did not act according to the recommendations given by the equality unit she coordinated to resolve the case even though the perpetrator had not denied one single accusation. Rather the opposite was true as one of the actions taken were against the victims by allowing the professor to go as a visiting scholar to the closest university

nearby to which the victim had changed in order to finish her master degree without the influence of her harasser.

we asked him about the facts that she had reported and he doesn't deny it at any point, but said that he was only joking! So, I don't need any more evidence, not me and neither the other three members of the unit do we need any evidence, because he did not deny the facts but gave another interpretation of the facts. But obviously the interpretation of a harasser never is that he is harassing, but 'she is exaggerating!'. That is why our conclusion was unanimous. And I insist that something that we never understood was the action taken by the university on this regard [not to protect the victim and sanction the professor]. (*Begoña, institutional representative*)

While these examples represent isolated situations that the participants in this study have experienced, the reality shows that they are tightly connected through a code of silence that rather promotes inaction and passivity than taking action against aggressors and against those who follow and protect the aggressor. One of the participants, Julia, a professor who has supported the struggle against gender violence in universities, explains the reactions of some people belonging to the university community when the pioneer research in Spain is discussed as aiming at silencing the issue which, in their perspective, should not be made public.

the reactions of denying the problem, this is the people saying 'well this doesn't happen here' and especially they say so in public spaces such as departmental meetings, conferences or in any other occasion that is not just face to face of two people. And it's funny but commonly the same people get back to you after two hours or the next day saying 'well we all know these cases but we also know that these issues are not discussed here and we don't work on it either'. (*Julia, faculty*)

One of the informants who had been a member of the equality unit at her university, Lucia, evidences that silence is a common practice when it gets to gender violence at universities. She explains that there are no answers to spreading the news about cases of gender violence at universities which are published in the newspapers. Whereas these news receive huge support by the society in the academia silence prevails.

When the case came out in the news, I send it to everyone [in the university] but there is no answer to that, but there are no bad reactions [to me] either. (*Lucia, institutional representative*)

However, the code of silence is not only maintained by the faculty and staff who are the most stable collectives of the university community. Silence is also used by students who follow the footsteps of the professors who they aspire to work with. Maria explains how the students shifted their positions toward her according to the shifts in the power relations that the report she had filed was producing.

One guy for example, the first time that I told him what I was working on [gender violence in universities] he was very empathetic, like ‘Oh really, wow, what happened, poor you’ and then later he stopped talking to me and each one of us we went our own way. (*Maria, victim*)

It thus becomes evident that the code of silence is a prevailing reality in the Spanish university context and is only comparable to the situations explained by those who fight against gender violence in different university contexts abroad and which have been displayed in the literature review of this research (Baker, 2008; Flecha, 2008). Yet, there is another crucial element to make sure that silence can be guaranteed. This is to put ‘trusted’ people in decisive positions to keep these issues quiet. Paula, one of the coordinators of the equality unit at her faculty is unable to understand why the university could name as the director of the university-wide equality unit someone without qualification that enables her to properly direct this body.

there were serious impediments among them the woman directing the equality unit with very limited abilities, with very good intentions but limited abilities, in the sense that she is no expert in the field and as she herself declared she was in this position because the rector had trust in her but that she actually doesn’t know anything about gender issues. And well you ask yourself what is that... I mean the woman had very good intentions to resolve cases but limited abilities due to a lack of training in this issue or preparation for the position. (*Paula, institutional representative*)

Yet, this silence and the inaction also represents an action, especially in terms of communicative acts, the fact of not acting upon violent situations represents a tacit

approval of that situation. In this sense most of the participants in this research agree that those who do not take any action in favor of the victims of gender violence but rather try to be at good ends with the aggressors automatically become accomplices of his actions and actively contribute to the hostile environment at the higher education institutions. Inma, the former director of the equality unit at her university brings it to the point.

In these affairs, like in many others, you have to take a stand, and if you want to remain on the margins you become an accomplice. (*Inma, institutional representative*)

In that sense, the participants define the being an accomplice as all those people who pretend not to take a stand. Joan, a professor who has supported the struggle against gender violence at Spanish universities, denounces that colleagues kept on accepting a harassing professor in their department.

like when he [accused professor] came and made a joke, or once he came to present his newborn son people sucked up to him, people talked to him, there was no explicit rejection like 'we do not talk'. (*Joan, faculty*)

Oftentimes the motivation for the silence and subsequently the support of aggressors is rooted in personal power struggles to maintain the positions one has achieved among a highly hierarchical and patriarchal structure. Susana, a professor who has also been supporting the fight against gender violence, denounces this guilty silence.

Even inside the university and the very feminist groups, in order to maintain their position, a position they had achieved, they reproduce certain attitudes or make them invisible... there is a way of consenting that is called the guilty silence, as many people have said before me. According to that some things are silenced to maintain certain positions and this means to act against what we defend the equality of people regardless of their sex, origin and gender. (*Susana, faculty*)

In addition to the guilty silence and the fact that passivity acquires the status of accomplice, some people from the university community have a strong interest in silencing this issue which is why they actively discourage any person who dares to break the silence by either reporting or researching on gender violence. Isabel, one of the

professors who first dared to break the silence on gender violence emphasizes that people are afraid that their inaction in front of these situations becomes known.

When someone poses problems it's because that person is involved in it. Acknowledging that a situation of harassment or gender violence has occurred implies that he or she did nothing or even worse that he or she acted against the victim. So in front of this possibility the reaction of the person you are asking for help is to discourage the victim to take any action against the aggressor. Because this person is afraid that his or her name appears as involved in the case. *(Isabel, faculty)*

Examples of discouraging those brave people who dare to break the silence are endless, but in order to mention one the following quote of Irene will serve this purpose. She explains how the director of the equality unit limited her attention to the victims to evidencing only the negative aspects of filing a report with the aim to discourage them from finally doing so.

In a meeting previous to one in which she [the president of the equality unit] would call the testimonies to explain their experiences she explained all the things that might happen. That obviously the aggressor would know who had been reporting him. Well the same monologue she gave us for two months. (...) It was an explanation of all the negative aspects, there was nothing positive about reporting. *(Irene, victim)*

Another reason to keep the voices of the dissident quiet is the erroneous perception of the institution that news about gender violence in higher education is damaging the public image of the university in question. However, the best image a higher education institution can give is that of an institution that is concerned about the well-being of the people that compose it. In that sense, the fact of publicly recognizing that gender violence also occurs in these social domains and to take a stand and act against those who perpetrate violence is considered to be the best publicity (Cantalupo, 2012; McMahan, 2008). At this moment of the struggle against gender violence in Spanish universities, the institution is still trying to cover these cases up instead of overtly tackling them. In that regard the testimony of two representatives of equality units explain actions taken by the institution to maintain the impeccable image rather than

addressing gender violence. Paula, put special emphasis on the fact that the institution is put first and the people composing the institution are considered as secondary. Hence, everything that could damage the image of the institution is avoided, even if that implies to take action against the victims.

[talking about the meetings of the Equality Unit of the university] the perception that I had of the actions taken by the institution based on these meetings was that, not that they were acting as a guardian of the people but rather that the institution would not be harmed. So there was a first barrier, like of course we will take care of that issue but that the institution is not, that people don't talk..., well I think that is very serious because for me the institution are the people and not the structures. *(Paula, institutional representative)*

In the case of Begoña, the former head of the equality unit denounces that the university not only tried to silence the news about the case but attempts to clean the image of the harasser who did not even consider necessary to deny the violence he perpetrated.

I have seen a huge interest in correcting the image of this man with institutional resources of the university, he and his team appear constantly on the head news of the university homepage. *(Begoña, institutional representative)*

One of the victims, Gemma, mentions this concern for the image of the university shown by the dean and the head of the equality unit once the victims had taken the situation to the press and news on this case spread all over the main media. She interprets the reaction of blaming the victims because now their inaction was made public.

they blamed us [for making it public] because it damaged their image and because light was shed on the fact that they, as a university, didn't know how to effectively respond to the situation. *(Gemma, victim)*

Further interactions which promote gender violence at universities are those that are trivializing the issue, that do not take it seriously. This is also a salient issue in the scientific literature on the initial steps of breaking the silence, when mostly men would mock about those who fight against gender violence, and especially about the women involved (Bryant & Spencer, 2003; Nicholson, 1998). In that sense gestures such as the

one described by Pilar or the comment given by Julia make this mocking attitude of the university community clear.

they did ridiculous things, like a professor that I met in the hallway who sent kisses through the space and then asked 'What? Is that also gender violence?'.
(Pilar, faculty)

it seems like the woman that claims about these issues is a radical feminist who experiences everything like... she takes everything personally and seriously
(Julia, faculty)

Also Sara, former member of the equality unit at her school, mentioned funny comments as a reaction when gender violence or related issues came up. Nevertheless, in the situation that she refers to the fact of not taking it serious actually played in favor of progressing in overcoming gender violence. Sara explains a situation that happened in the meeting of the faculty board when the protocol against gender violence was approved. According to her explanation, the approval was easy since nobody actually took it serious and seemed to be aware of the scope that this protocol could have.

in the board of the faculty, the things that really matter are those about the departments, about positions, this issue was something that they didn't see the scope of it, but there were some comments by the members of the board, men in this case, like mocking, like 'these exaggerating women'. Then there was a comment by a female professor and member of the board who defended the importance of having measures in this field. But there were laughs, I think because they were not aware of the scope of what we were presenting. *(Sara, institutional representative)*

In line with the international scientific literature, also the present research registered victim blaming as one of the most common reactions to telling someone or even reporting situations of gender violence at universities. In this regard the victims highlight the different dimensions that victim blaming might take. Whereas Sofia comments about a situation that she experienced during a presentation she had to give in class and in which the professor would shout at her instead of telling her harasser to stop, Rafael refers to a case in which a PhD student was unable to defend her dissertation because she did not give in to the sexual favors that her supervisor asked her for but reported the

situation and brought him to court. The case trial ended in favor of the aggressor and blaming the victim.

I was presenting and he [the aggressor] was breaking out in laughter and I stopped and the professor would shout 'but continue, there is nothing going on here' and I was like what do you mean with nothing is going on, he is laughing to tears. Or he was drawing intimate parts and you saw it and the professor instead of saying stop drawing they would just tell us to continue. (*Sofia, victim*)

there was another quite well known case in which the victim was blamed. A women who had registered her dissertation and her supervisor blackmailed her with sex, and afterwards people said things about the woman 'she was slutty' or whatever. (*Rafael, victim*)

The interactions and the communicative acts mentioned in this section provide insights and evidences of the hostile environment that victims and those who support victims and dare to break the silence suffer.

4.3.1.2. Communicative acts among the family and friends

According to the scientific literature prevention strategies need to take the whole community into account, not only the bystanders from the university context but also the social environment of the people who compose the university community (Banyard et al. 2005, 2010; Burn, 2008; Potter et al., 2009). If gender violence can be prevented from these social contexts, then it is also worth to look at how it contributes to enhancing gender violence in Spanish higher education. Research emphasizes that victims primarily turn to peers, to friends or family to disclose about the violent experiences they have made (Krebs et al., 2007). In this section, light will be shed on those reactions by the people representing the social context that extend the hostile environment towards the victims from the university context to the social sphere by showing themselves as tolerant to the use of violence in higher education. Responses are similar to those received in the university context but have different effects since the relations of the victim to the person of trust and the social context differ. One of the professors who supports the struggle against gender violence puts special emphasis on the influence

that reactions of questioning the victims has to enhance the hostile environment. It is one of the keys to hinder the identification of gender violence which has been outlined as a major difficulty to tackle this issue (Benson & Thomson, 1982; Duque, Vidu & Schubert, 2013; Fitzgerald et al., 1988).

the problem also is that when I want to tell someone that the professor is doing things that make me feel uncomfortable and I'm telling him no but he insists and insists and the reaction that I receive from my friends is 'Come on don't take it so seriously. You take it way too serious, calm down and don't worry about it.' the answer is to be questioned and questioned and not taken seriously, obviously it's difficult to identify gender violence. But that's not a problem of not knowing what the concept means but a problem of a very hostile environment. (*Julia, faculty*)

In that regard, some of the victims did not even dare to explain their experiences to anyone and let alone their parents. Gemma comments in this regard, that she felt guilty for the things that happened to her and that she was ashamed to tell anyone. This is a very common reaction of the victims that has been widely analyzed in scientific literature and it has inspired measures taken by universities and the people who attempt to transform these situations (Ahrens, Rich & Ullman, 2011; Coker et al., 2011; University of Wisconsin, 2015; White House, n.d.). One example would be the Harvard campaign 'Tell someone' that aims at encouraging people to talk about the situations they suffer and to let them know that whatever concerns they have, they will be taken seriously and that there is no reason to feel guilty for what one experiences and that they are not alone with these experiences. With similar mechanisms in Spanish higher education, probably it would have been much easier for Gemma.

I felt guilty for receiving these things [unwanted attention] and I felt bad every time I received it and I felt that I didn't know how to make it stop, I didn't know and I was ashamed to tell people. (*Gemma, victim*)

Still, other victims report different reactions by their family and friends that contribute to the impunity of the perpetrators and the hostile environment that reigns in Spanish higher education. In the case of Irene, the first reaction of her parents was to recommend her to quit her studies rather than showing concern for her or supporting her to not bend under the power structures and take action against the perpetrator. This

reaction made her feel bad because she felt that she should not be the one to pay the price of being sexually harassed.

Well the reaction [of her parents] was ‘abandon the master, after all, it doesn’t matter, leave it and nothing happens, you’ll find something else’. (...) it made me very angry because they didn’t say... I wanted them to ask me how I felt, not that I should abandon the master (*Irene, victim*)

Also, the people in the social context of the victims had questioned them, questioning the severity of the aggressions, the innocence of the victim in the situation and even the support given by other professors. In that sense the following quotations of Sofia, Carlos and Irene reflect these reactions by their families and friends.

My parents asked ‘but what did he do?’ and he hadn’t done anything! - R: but he made you feel frightened, he scared you. - Yes but people ask you ‘but did he touch you?’ (*Sofia, victim*)

‘And it wasn’t you who provoked this situation? If he send you this message, or if he said something about your décolletage, or if you went home with him and he touched you, there is a reason for it’ (*Carlos, victim*)

Some people said, take care because maybe those [the supporting professors] want you to be against the other professor, in order to profit from it. They would constantly repeat it, take care, maybe they want something in return. (*Irene, victim*)

Similar to the reactions by the people belonging to the university community, also family members and friends made comments that would trivialize the situation. Irene explains that her father thought that if she decided to continue her studies the situation cannot be as severe as he might have thought.

My father understood it as, well, if they continue the master it can’t be that bad. (*Irene, victim*)

Both the fear or shame that some victims felt to open up and the hostile reactions encountered by other victims underline that the hostile environment is not only accepted by the university community. Also the social context and the interactions that people

have with their friends, family and social environment contribute to enhancing the hostile environment and therewith to perpetuating gender violence in universities. For this reason, most recent prevention strategies suggest to take also these interactions into account and include the whole community in the attempts of preventing gender violence in higher education (Banyard et al., 2005).

However, this is only a small part of what the hostile environment implies. In the following section, an analysis of the retaliations that all those people who get engaged in the struggle against gender violence at Spanish universities are encountering.

4.3.2. Retaliations against victims

The struggle against gender violence and, especially, the first steps that are taken to break the silence have been identified in the scientific literature as moments of attacks against those who dare to speak up. The present research evidences the similarities of the Spanish context to the experiences made on an international level in the 80s and 90s when the silence was first broken in the US or Canada (Reilly, et al., 1986; Osborne, 1995). As Valls and her colleagues (in press) have pointed out, retaliations and attacks on the faculty who dared to break the silence with a pioneer research have been fierce. The main aim of these attacks is to silence these voices, and the means employed to reach this aim range from discrediting the authors of breaking the silence to making the academic career impossible. In the following, examples of the retaliations that brave people received are presented and display the inhumanity that the feudal structure of the Spanish higher education institutions –the Spanish elite– is capable of bearing inside. The quote of Irene, one of the victims, summarizes this climate.

Those things that came afterwards [after reporting] were worse than what he [the aggressor] did. (*Irene, victim*)

Among the victims of gender violence there are three major retaliations that stand out as the most salient: to be subject of ridicule, to be questioned, and to have academic punishments in form of lowering the grades or failing subjects. After filing the report against her classmate who had been harassing her, Irene suffered under the constant mocking of some of the professors who subjected her to ridicule in class. For example,

one day during a presentation she had in class, the professor continuously interrupted and then ignored her.

I started talking and then she [the professor] stopped me and said 'well what she wants to say is this and this and that. But well as she doesn't speak Spanish very well' (...) The third time that she stopped me she did so for one hour and a half, and well I was sitting up on the dais for one hour and a half, and she downstairs with the rest of the class. And people were seated in a U and she closed the circle turning her back on me. R: But you were speaking in Spanish? - Yes, I did the presentation in Spanish, because if we didn't the students got annoyed, and then she said 'Oh I'm sorry but it's very hard for her to speak Spanish.' (*Irene, victim*)

Maria recalls the declarations she had to do in front of the different judges in the frame of the university investigation as moments of great distress. She explains that rather than being heard she felt interrogated about her academic position and personal relations to those who had reported her testimony. Moreover, she was forced to sign the notes of that declaration in a rush although she had serious objections. According to her, the notes did not reflect her words but were rather an erroneous interpretation of her words twisting the reality.

He [the judge from the university legal services] didn't ask me at all about how I had felt or the situations of harassment that I had lived. It was all about my academic environment and the relations that I had in these power structures. How I got to know this professor, why he reported instead of me, what kind of relation I had with him, why he was the supervisor of my dissertation, like a series of questions that were questioning me as a person to find out whether I had any purpose for being against the accused professor. (...) The person who took notes of this meeting printed them and gave them to me so that I could sign them, but there were things that I didn't say, or that I hadn't said like this, so I corrected some things, she checked them and printed them again, and I started to read and there were things that I didn't agree, but the judge made me sign it, like 'Come on quickly, we have to go, we have to talk to other people, we have already spent too much time with you' well is that a manner to treat a victim who

is telling you the situation of harassment that she had experienced? It was not humane at all, not to talk about ethics either. (*Maria, victim*)

A part from these attacks against the dignity of the victims, they also suffered retaliations in regard to their academic file. One of the former directors of the equality unit at her university explains the situation lived by one of the victims who had reported her professor for sexual harassment.

she [victim] was a master student and she was trying to pass the master program. So subjects that she had already passed, this man [harasser], we don't know what his purpose was, but he tried to modify the grades. That happened during the investigation of the case and we, as well as the administration staff, suspect that this could be an attempt of some sort of retaliation. (*Begoña, institutional representative*)

Another type of retaliation that student and victims of gender violence experience is rather common among the faculty or institutional representatives, but this example only makes it clear that the feudal structures and the functioning in these structures is reproduced among the student body. Irene was the student representative but the increasing tensions among the students and her due to the report of the sexual harassment by her classmate forced her to quit from that position.

I had to quit being the student representative because of the pressure of the rest of the classmates. (*Irene, victim*)

Also, students participated in questioning the victims and blaming them for the situations that resulted from the harassment they had received in the first place. In this vein, Sofia explains how bad she felt when students were blaming her for denying access to a student, her harasser, who might suffer a psychological problem.

the class took the standpoint of 'well he has a psychiatric problem, we need to make sure that he takes his medication' at that point I was like, it was overwhelming because if he has a psychiatric problem, which I don't know and I don't care, and if he doesn't take his medicine it's not my problem! I don't have to control who is taking his medicine and who doesn't, what I know is that I am feeling bad. And that's when they said that I wasn't acting in solidarity, that

everybody had the right to study. That made me feel horrible. It's against my principles I want that everybody gets to university... and they accused me of being an egoist... (*Sofia, victim*)

In these examples it becomes clear that the communicative acts used are not illocutionary, looking for understanding among the participants and based on respect and transparency. Rather the diverse interactions among the victims or supportive faculty and institutional representatives with those people who question or ridicule them are marked by perlocutionary communicative acts that have hidden perlocutionary effects of making the victims or second order victims feel bad.

4.3.3. Second order victims

The attacks and retaliations toward the faculty that support victims are in a similar vein but have a distinctive feature in the sense that they become the target of direct attacks for speaking up against the feudal structures. Dziech and Weiner (1990) refer in this sense to the second order victims who are those brave people who support the victims in fighting against the violence they are experiencing as well as those people who dare to break the silence in diverse manners as for instance through research on this issue. The results also evidence that retaliations are directed to those who dare to speak up, regardless of their position in the university structure. In this sense, participants from the three collectives interviewed have experienced retaliations. There are lots of cases to evidence the inhumanity of the people that compose and try to reinforce the feudal structures, but for the purpose of the present research only some examples are provided and contextualized to get a broad picture of the reality that victims and second order victims live inside the Spanish higher education.

One kind of retaliation that especially those people from the faculty body who are in most vulnerable positions suffered are the inventions made by diverse people in power positions to make them lose scholarships or opportunities to apply for funding or accreditations to continue their academic career. Julia explains that the head of the department to which she was linked at that time denied his signature on a bureaucratic document to accept the scholarship she was awarded with and even specified the reasons for his denial - the struggle against gender violence.

So, in the situation of being awarded with a scholarship by the Spanish ministry, the head of the department denies me his signature and his argument was, literally 'I don't have a problem with you, but with the people you work, change your company and you won't have any trouble' this means I'll translate it 'change your research agenda and you won't have difficulties in the university, if you continue working on this you will have problems'. The difficulties did not wait, this person did not sign the paper and I lost the scholarship. *(Julia, faculty)*

Isabel, one of the professors who initiated the struggle against gender violence, explains that retaliations were not only directed to her but also to her students who were subjected to ridicule in class or failed subjects and even the master project and dissertations. The consequences of these retaliations are not only the psychological distress but also economic, since students have to pay registration fees for the failed subjects or even reprint the dissertation, as well as they imply a delay in decisions on the personal life as another year to finish a degree needs to be taken into account.

They suspended the thesis of my first master student, so that she couldn't access the PhD program. (...) they either gave them [my students] bad grades or harassed them directly in class, like 'You're a bad student, you don't know how to write'. That happened to three students of mine. *(Isabel, faculty)*

Another of the pioneers in breaking the silence in the Spanish university context, Pilar, explains that her participation in any kind of departmental activity has been rejected although her academic curriculum would allow for that. Further retaliations are taken against her such as denying any kind of information or assigning a shared office rather than her own office like all the other members of her department holding similar positions than she has.

Since the pioneer research in my department I have been taken out of any commission of the department, when I say none, I mean not one, not even the stupid ones on spaces, in none. I am in an office that I love, but it is the office of the associate professors and I have a permanent position. I am not part of the PhD commission, but from time to time they have to give me some information because I am the principal researcher of a consolidated group but I am not in the commission although I am one of the few people who has a consolidated

research group in the department. I don't get any kind of information, I have the complete boycott of silence, they make it clear that to them I am downgraded.
(Pilar, faculty)

Another very severe example of second order harassment had been perpetrated against Jesus Gomez who was devoted to transforming the *heartless universities* and always supported victims of gender violence in higher education. The lobby of harasser did not exempt Jesus Gomez 'Pato' from the campaign of defamation and a trial made against the people who had spoken up about a case of gender violence. He was devoted to changing the world to a better place and to have 'universities with heart' and was a beloved friend, father and husband of those who put this struggle forward. He was suffering from a disease that required rest and calm but the fierce attacks against him and his beloved continued. Under the distress of the situation his disease flourished and ended his life. (Flecha, 2008, p.5)

These are probably the most severe retaliations for breaking the silence on gender violence at Spanish universities with devastating consequences for the people involved, which Isabel remembers as a moment in which some wanted to abandon the struggle, which they did not.

people thought that we would abandon, and in fact some of us were about to do so. (Isabel, faculty)

The retaliations experienced by those who represent the institution and especially those who are part of the equality units only confirm that there are no limits to the fierce attempts to silence the increasing voices that make gender violence in Spanish higher education visible to the public. It is noteworthy to mention here that of the six representatives of equality units four are no longer part of this institutional body and in the case of three of them their dismissal coincides with the resolution of investigations. On the question whether she had suffered retaliations, Sara, former member of the equality unit at her school, mentions her dismissal from the unit.

I am no longer member of the equality unit, yes there have been retaliations.
(Sara, institutional representative)

In a similar vein to the faculty, also the representatives of the institutional bodies report to have been subject of defamations as well as they received threats and even had to deal with scratches in the car. In spite of their position they could not count on the protection from the institution. Begoña explains the defamation and discredit of the equality unit and the lack of the institutional protection.

They [members of the harasser's research center and testimonies in the case] sent an email saying that they had been called to testify in this case and that the [equality] unit didn't work well, (...) they wanted to shed light on potential formal defects of the development of our work to question what we were doing. (...) they turned against the unit and the university did not do anything about it, not even a message from the rectorate saying that the unit has acted impeccably, following the protocol in its exact terms and doing its job, refrain from saying anything while the process is still ongoing, well no one stood up to defend the unit and to be honest this was quite obnoxious. (...) They scratched my car. (...) We didn't see any reaction from the university government, but we had expected them to act, because in the protocol we established that nobody involved in an investigation had to be subject to any kind of harm due to the person's implication in this process. (*Begoña, institutional representative*)

This example clearly evidences that the university instead of defending the equality unit and the victim, is tolerating the violence perpetrated and the hostile environment. This behavior is contrary to what Williams and colleagues (1992) explain about the university analyzed that was making it very clear to students and faculty that no such behavior would be tolerated and remain unpunished. Unfortunately, the evidences here indicate that some Spanish institutions still do not take that step.

In a similar vein, Inma reports the threats and discredit she received from colleagues and superiors from her department for her action taken as the director of the equality unit in her university. In front of public accusations towards a professor, she pronounced that the equality unit of the university would investigate the case. She found evidences that the accusations against the professor were true but the head of the department wanted her to sign a document saying the opposite of that conclusion.

So it was the head of the department, and two permanent professors [one of them accused] and me with a vulnerable position in a trap. And then he [the head of the department] threatened me that if I, as the responsible of the Equality Unit, do not sign the paper, he would take this issue to a meeting of the department. (...) He told me 'Don't be like this, you have to be more flexible!', so they tell you that you are nobody, that you are influenced by the feminist lobby, that you know nothing because they have a permanent position and you don't'. (*Inma, institutional representative*)

The interactions described by Inma, illustrate the use of power communicative acts in diverse facets. Although she was the head of the equality unit and, therewith holding a power position the conversation was held with her colleagues from the department and pressure was made on her by her superior of the department in which she is in a much more vulnerable position. The comments made against her are degrading and with the purpose to attack her.

Begoña and her team of the equality unit were also subject of intimidation by the professor who was accused of harassment. This evidences the impunity that aggressors have in the Spanish higher education. Even in the situation of a report filed against him, he does not hesitate to intimidate the whole equality unit.

we were altogether in my office, all the members of the unit and we gave him [the accused professor] a copy of the report filed, and he came with his Curriculum Vitae and he said that he wanted to hand it in as proof for our investigation. We accepted it only not to... and he started to explain, just in case we weren't aware of it, his international reputation as a researcher. It wasn't relevant at all and I believe, well we believed at that moment that what he wanted to do was to make clear that we were a university body that... like a routine and he was a highly important person and he was somehow intimidating us. (*Begoña, institutional representative*)

In this example the importance of taking the social context into account becomes evident. Despite the higher power position of the equality unit, the harassing professor considers that he is high above this institutional body and attempts to mock and intimidate the members of the equality unit.

As a result of these retaliations experienced by the diverse collectives who participate in the breaking of the silence on gender violence in higher education in Spain, people belonging to the university tend not to report. This is in line with international research that highlights that only very few students actually report the situations they experience and lose confidence in the institution itself (Choate, 2003; Gross et al. 2006). This fact is confirmed by the victims of gender violence participating in the present research. Sofia emphasizes the fear that is predominant in Spanish university and Irene highlights the lack of confidence in the institution to actually take action upon the situation.

the only professor who supported us, told us what to do and said don't ever say that I explained it to you because I can lose my job for that. And she was also afraid of this student. She didn't calm me down at all, I was so afraid then. It was like 'I know what it means, I've been through this and be aware that in this institution nobody will listen to you'. She said that but she also said that we had to do it [to make a formal report]. (*Sofia, victim*)

We had a meeting here at the university with the Dean, one person from the police, a professor who came with us, and the girls from the library. So, when we finished the meeting, we ended up thinking that there is nothing we can do about it. That's the way it is, there are lots of girls being harassed and that's it. (*Irene, victim*)

Finally, the retaliations that the diverse members of the university community suffer for bringing this issue up and taking a clear stand against gender violence, represent a cardinal element in promoting gender violence. The communicative acts that are presented in this section are marked by violence that is perpetrated in order to maintain the feudal structures that tolerate the use of violence of some of the people composing the university community. The striking aspect is, however, that contrary to gender violence which is only perpetrated by an aggressor, retaliations for denouncing gender violence are done by many people who under other circumstances would not engage in violent acts. The fear of losing power in this feudal higher education system for many people is stronger than any ethics or morals. Thus, when a stand needs to be taken some choose to fight against gender violence and others choose to support the aggressors to maintain their position and engage in power communicative acts that represent the inhumane activity of the power structures that prevail in Spanish

universities. Carlos summarizes this idea very well when he defines the actions taken by the dean.

she had the good will to help, but I felt that she didn't know very well how to do that, I had the perception that she was kind of kidnapped, I felt that she was aware that morally bad things happened and that something had to be done, but she was tight by the chain of the university and saw that it was very difficult to act against that man, so I think she was kind of kidnapped by the university and its norms. (*Carlos, victim*)

To conclude this section it is worthy to highlight that the results of the present research evidences a great variety of interactions that contribute to enhancing and perpetuating gender violence at Spanish universities which correspond to the findings of the international scientific community. On the one hand, we have all those acts of not taking action that are identified by the participants in this researchers as a positioning in favor of the aggressor and the predominance of violence. Thus, those who try to avoid their implication in the problem of gender violence by looking away and denying this reality which they considered as an issue of those who perpetrate it and those who become victim of it are actually taking a stand. They are taking a stand against the victims and against those who support the victims. This is what makes it possible that violence can be perpetrated without further consequences and that their followers can put retaliations on the victims and also victimizing those who support the struggle against gender violence. The attacks against the latter are contemplated in the literature as the second order victims in this struggle (Dzeich & Weiner, 1990). The results presented in this section also evidences the inhumanity that can occur in the higher education institutions in Spain. Contrary to what anybody would expect to happen among the Spanish elite, the university community has demonstrated to be capable of bearing cruel situations without any negative consequences for the people responsible for these situations. It becomes clear that gender violence is not due to the power structures but to the people who want to maintain their power positions in these structures, since the hostile environment is put forward by people from all collectives of the university community and even by people from outside of this context. At the same time, the struggle against gender violence is also put forward by people from all collectives, from people holding

power positions to the most vulnerable which are the students and they all receive reprisals for their actions of speaking up. Irene summarizes in one of her comments that she encountered myriad impediments to fight against the sexual harassment she experienced.

The aim was to end this issue, well to expel this student and to continue with this struggle, right, but I found lots of impediments. One was my parents, another impediment were my classmates who at some point decided to ignore the issue, and another impediment was the university itself. (*Irene, victim*)

4.4. Overcoming violent situations with communicative acts

As explained in the previous sections in this chapter, gender violence is not only the act of violence itself but it turns into a hostile environment that further victimizes the person who has been or is suffering gender violence and also all those people from the university community who support the victim becoming second order victims. In this line, the present section focuses on interactions that contribute to overcoming violent communicative acts itself as well as those interactions that perpetuate the existence of gender violence. There is one overarching element that is crucial to overcome violent situations through communicative acts which is support. The first steps to contribute to overcoming these kind of situations is, in broad terms, to support the person who is suffering gender violence. The support provided can take a great variety of forms and can come from diverse agents from the university context and from the social context. These diverse forms of interactions that help to overcome situations of violence will be discussed in the first part of this section through the contributions provided by the participants in the present study. Although support is crucial to overcome violence in communicative acts, we further need to pay attention to overcoming also those communicative acts that perpetuate gender violence outlined in the previous section. In this vein, in the second part of the present section special emphasis is put on communicative acts that can contribute to overcoming the hostile environment that allows for gender violence to flourish.

4.4.1. Specific situations of gender violence

Whereas the previous section sheds light on all those actions or inactions that contributed to enhancing gender violence, the participants of the present research make it evident that another kind of reactions are possible, helping to overcome violent situations and even the hostile environment that exists in Spanish higher education. Therefore, for the victims it is crucial to explain their experiences and in order to do so, to feel safe in telling their stories. One of the campaigns developed at Harvard University is called 'Tell someone'⁵ and is meant to encourage survivors of gender violence at university to open up to someone and get help to deal with the situation. In that line, many initiatives have been taken by diverse collectives and at many higher education institutions across the world to facilitate victims to take this first step, such as offices or initiatives developed by peers.

Similar as on an international level, the victims who participated in this research appreciated the fact of telling their story to someone and find people in a similar situation to share this experience and not to be alone. Sofia defines this step as crucial to handle the situation.

a lot of time passes by until you find someone who is in the same situation and I was lucky that the person I found was a very close friend. But I've been thinking if the same would have happened and it wouldn't have happened to her as well I don't know what I would have done... (*Sofia, victim*)

Also Irene identifies the interactions with other victims as a great motivation to continue her struggle against the situations she was experiencing, because she finally saw that she was not alone and that victims can still continue with their life and academic career.

One professor told me to get in touch with the victims, and I thought what does that mean... but that day [when she met other victims] I was overwhelmed in a positive sense (...) also because I saw them more as equals not like [her professors] who I saw as my professors. (*Irene, victim*)

⁵ *Tell someone*. Responding to sexual harassment and sexual violence at Harvard Kennedy School: http://www.hks.harvard.edu/ocpa/pdf/HKS_TellSomeone.pdf (accessed on January 18, 2015)

Another reaction that is commonly taken by the victims is to find strategies to avoid the harasser or the violent situations. Previous research in this regard has evidenced that students developed myriad strategies to achieve that aim, some of them are changing subjects or even universities, but also to abandon the academic life (Cortina et al., 1998; Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Krebs et al., 2007). In the following quote Maria shares her strategies to avoid the harassment by one of her professors.

I always tried to be talking to someone you know like developing strategies to avoid him not to talk to him. So I always tried to talk to someone when he entered class. Or I always took notes, I remember I took a lot of notes so that I didn't have to look at him. Well sitting in the first row it was difficult, I could've changed and sit down in the last row, but he would've noticed that it's because of him and I was afraid he would get mad at me and give me bad grades. (*Maria, victim*)

However, the main focus in communicative acts to overcome gender violence is not on the victims but rather on the bystanders. Currently, the most prominent preventing strategies all focus on the inclusion of all the members of the community and are termed 'bystander intervention' (Banyard et al., 2005; Coker et al., 2011; DeGue, et al., 2012). Hence, responsibility on overcoming the problem of gender violence is not reduced to victims and potential aggressors but relies on the community and especially on all those people who are testimony of violent situations. It is in this regard that the previously outlined perception of the participants in this research that not taking action is also a manner to adopt a position in favor of violence, acquires meaning. In order to overcome situations, those people who experience violent situations or potentially violent situations as observers, are called for action and to take a stand against violence and those who perpetrate it. In that sense, it is necessary to have a proactive attitude to help overcome violent situations. Julia, one of the supportive professors explains the following:

If I have a classmate who is experiencing situations of harassment and she doesn't identify it, but if I am a person that supports victims I won't think 'it's her problem, she'll manage it' but I will have a proactive attitude and talk to her and say 'listen if you don't feel well in this situation you can report it and if you consider that this situation is overwhelming you, you can talk to other people, you can talk to me and I will help you. (*Julia, faculty*)

The interviews and communicative daily life stories shed light on diverse situations in which people from the university community as well as from the social context of the victim take a stand against violence and give support to the victim. Inma, the former head of the equality unit at the university to which she belongs, explains how students and friends of a victim of online harassment made her aware of the humiliating comments that were made about her anonymously and supported her in taking action to stop the harassment through reporting the situation to the dean, who then called Inma.

the positive interactions have been the friends who as soon as they saw it [humiliating comments on twitter] told her [the victim] and the unanimous support of the class, except from probably those who send the information to the twitter account, but the support was almost unanimous. (*Inma, institutional representative*)

Sofia explains another example of stopping violence. Whereas most of her professors remained silent in front of the harassment by her classmate, one professor took a stand and faced the student to make him stop.

one professor dared to take a stand, and told him [aggressor] to sit down and said 'if you don't agree you leave the class' and he didn't come anymore or only very few times to the classes of this professor. (*Sofia, victim*)

If more professors would have taken a clear position and would have told the student to stop harassing in class, the case could have taken a different direction instead of victimizing the victims over and over again during the course of the investigation and during the master degree itself. This example evidences that a clear positioning of zero tolerance of gender violence, as most universities internationally do and also some in Spain, can be enough to avoid these situations.

Further actions are related to the attention to and support of the victim. These actions can also come from the diverse people that surround the victim from inside universities and from the diverse power positions, as well as from outside the higher education context. Since the key to tackling this issue is to 'tell someone', this someone needs to be there in the social environment of the victim. In that sense, a first action that can be taken is to listen to the victim and to take the issue seriously without making judgments about the situation, the victim or how the situation is being dealt with. In this regard,

when asked about what had helped her to overcome this situation of sexual harassment, Sofia answered the following.

support and to be available to listen and not to judge you. The fact that a professor tells you after finishing the class 'come to the office let's have a coffee'. I know that he has a lot of work to do but he's giving me one hour or two or the hours that I have spent in his office until he saw that we had been empowered. I remember that day as very special. (*Sofia, victim*)

Sara, former member of the equality unit at the school she is working at, emphasizes the need to take all the situations and experiences explained by the victims seriously. In the case that she explains, the institutional representatives were reluctant to acknowledge the seriousness of the situation, whereas a policewoman consulted in the course of the investigation did not hesitate in considering the facts described by the victims as serious acts against their integrity.

For example the librarian said that when he took his ID he always tried to touch her hand and she felt uncomfortable with that. So the police officer thought that this was important, contrary to the representatives of the institution. (*Sara, institutional representative*)

Another way to support the victim is to be there when she or he needs you and according to the specific needs in every moment. Irene explains that one of her friends and classmate was very supportive and always attentive to help her when she needed. The example provided evidences that no words are necessary to understand the situation of Irene leaving class ten minutes earlier to get her train and the harasser getting up to leave right with her.

I was so afraid so I turned around and looked at a classmate thinking 'get up and leave with me!' Well I left the class and he [aggressor] right after me and I was hoping that the classmate would come as well, and he did, after three seconds he came and said 'hey let's go, I'll take you to the train'. (*Irene, victim*)

We can see that it is possible to contribute to changing this hostile environment by being attentive to the situation and taking action. In this case, the classmate understood the

social context and that it is not safe for the victim to leave alone with the harasser leaving with her, so he offers his help.

Outsiders of the university community can also provide this kind of support. Gemma opened up to her brother and her friends and they all supported her in her decision to file a report, rather than question the experience she had made or blaming her for it.

I talked to my brother and some friends telling them ‘this happened to me and I am thinking of doing that, join this initiative [to file a report] and go for it. And everybody said ‘Yes do so and if you need anything I will support you’. (*Gemma, victim*)

According to the literature, victims of gender violence primarily turn to friends or a person of trust to open up about the experiences of gender violence (Krebs et al., 2007). One reason for that is the fact that victims need to trust the person they talk to and feel their story is safe. In that line Begoña, the former head of the equality unit of the university where she is working, explains that a major concern of the unit was to make sure the victim felt safe and comfortable.

we tried to make her feel calm (...) also, she had anxiety problems and difficulties to walk so she needed to be accompanied by someone who made her feel safe, so we allowed her mother to come. Her mother didn’t interfere at all, but at least she knew that she was there, we gave her chocolates and we tried to make her feel comfortable and told her ‘you can tell us everything, we are here to listen to you and prepared to hear anything’. (*Begoña, institutional representative*)

Another way of directly supporting the victim and acting upon a situation of violence is to provide information about the resources and mechanisms that exist in university and beyond to help the victim deal with the situation. This is highly appreciated by the victims and is also helpful in overcoming the lack of identification of gender violence. Irene states that the first day of classes one of her professors explained the institutional resources for victims of gender violence and this is what made her reflect on the issue and be aware of what she was about to encounter.

[one professor] told us the first day in class 'if you ever have any problem of sexual harassment there is an equality unit at this school' and well I thought if he says that there's a reason. (*Irene, victim*)

Also Alba, a supportive professor, explains that in response to a victim disclosing her situation of sexual harassment by a classmate and lacking support by her friends, she decided to discuss gender violence at universities and especially prevention strategies in the next class. She made sure that the victim had all the material for the next class in advance as well as all the resources to get support and take action if she wanted to.

I told her [the victim] that we would discuss this issue in class, that it would be based on evidences and with respect but that it might be tough for her and that I would send her all the material for the next class in advance so that she had all the resources and could decide whether to come or not to the class. So before this class I sent her all the material. (*Alba, faculty*)

The examples provided evidence that the communicative acts used are illocutionary and aim at helping the victim. They are based on respect and sincerity and aim at the well-being of the interacting people.

Contrary to the explanations given by the head of the equality unit that investigated the case of Irene, some of her professors supported and motivated her to file a report and to continue the struggle this would imply by telling her not only all the negative consequences of reporting but also the positive ones that will come afterwards, such as a positive atmosphere.

They [supportive professors] explained everything that could happen, but also, imagine how things will be afterwards, right, imagine how it will feel like to have taken this step, imagine the great atmosphere or the good you will feel and self-secure when you will go to classes. (*Irene, victim*)

However, another supportive professor, Isabel, emphasizes the importance of knowing the constraints inside the university system to take action against the aggressor and fight against gender violence in Spanish higher education. She refers to the fact that it is important to motivate the victim to report if he or she wants to but only if the victim can be properly protected.

We don't put them [victims] in a situation in which we cannot make sure that we can protect them. (*Isabel, faculty*)

The support to the victims can also go beyond attending her immediate needs, since one of the main consequences outlined in the scientific literature is the disenchantment of the victims to follow their academic involvement, it is also crucial to foster their academic career (Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957). Irene explains, how one of her professors managed to lighten her perception of the master up and even opens up the possibility to consider an academic career for her future.

the professor told me 'today I called you but we won't talk about any of this' and I thought 'wow, that's great, because the only relation that I have with you is because of this issue and it is very negative'. So we started talking about the paper, the emotions by Jon Elster and it really motivated me and I felt that he really appreciated the work I had done. I remember that day as very positive, like there are also good things here. (...) Then he told me that I could present the paper at CIMIE and he explained what CIMIE was and I was just enlightened!
(*Irene, victim*)

Concerning the actions that can be taken by the equality units or the institution, it becomes evident that measures can be taken to take a stand and to make violence stop. In that regard, Inma, the former head of the equality unit at her university states that she immediately after knowing about the case and having the evidences proving the harassment she took a stand in favor of the victim in public, since the harassment took place on a public sphere through a twitter account.

the dean of a faculty called and told me that a student came to see him with some screenshots of Twitter called university hook-ups [including the name of the university] in which we could see that a student was harassed anonymously. So I quickly talked to the university rector and send a tweet to that account saying that the university knows about the violence that is being perpetrated and that we would try to make them close the account. (*Inma, institutional representative*)

Also Paula, the head of the equality unit at her school, did not hesitate to respond to the claim posed by some students about abusive situations at a university party. As soon as

she knew about the situations that had been produced she told the dean to prohibit any similar activities at university parties that need the dean's permission. Her disposition to the students becomes evident, as she is available and takes their concerns seriously responding to them with ease.

some students came to me and explained what happened at the party of the faculty where the students organized a 'sexual alcoholic competition' (...) it was an institutional mistake to allow these things to happen, because these kind of competitions should not be done in a university. (...) So what I did immediately was to go to the dean and tell him that this competition, these things happened and they will not happen ever again. And now the students asked us, because this is already decided and it will not be allowed ever again, but they asked us to make a communication to explain this so that everybody knows what happened and that this will not happen again. *(Paula, institutional representative)*

Paula is a very committed person to overcome gender violence at her school, but she is also aware of her lack of training to respond to these situations, as she is not an expert in solving cases of gender violence. For this reason, when students came to her to report a case of gender violence she turned to those people, members of another equality unit, that she was sure would know how to act in this situation. She is reaching out to experts in order to learn how to handle gender violence at her institution and to overcome also her personal limitations in this field.

I called members of another equality unit that I knew had experience in this issue and I asked them what they did in these cases. So they explained the protocol they follow and the structure of everything and I tried to do the same. Well, I mean in these situations, very sensitive issues, and we are no experts in them, but we have to be because that's what the protocol says, that we have to act in these cases, so I used the strategy of asking those who know better. *(Paula, institutional representative)*

Another crucial element in addressing and solving situations of gender violence is external support and, especially, international support. The institution and those who attempt to maintain the feudal university structures sometimes only bend to external pressure and, especially, if this pressure comes from a prestigious university. When the

first report filed by one professor against another professor, the equality unit and the dean denied its importance and rejected to investigate the case. Nevertheless, as Sara, then member of the equality unit, explains the institution changed opinion when they learned that the director of the Office of Sexual Assault Response and Prevention at Harvard University sent an email to the dean adverting her of the misuse of the name of Harvard University by the accused professor.

when I present the case [the report to the equality unit], the letter of the professor and the emails as evidences it is denied, because it is considered as only emails, it is not considered as something important, as harassment. But when the dean feels threatened [when the director of the Office of Sexual Assault Response and Prevention sends an email indicating that the accused professor is using the name of Harvard University] that's when the equality unit decides to investigate the case and the protocol is approved. *(Sara, institutional representative)*

The analysis of the examples provided by the participants in this research evidences that many actions can be taken in the acute situation of gender violence in Spanish higher education and that they correspond to actions and initiatives developed at most universities internationally, as well as they correspond to the actions highlighted in the scientific literature on the issue. Still, more can be done to overcome not only violent situations but also the hostile environment that enhances gender violence in higher education.

4.4.2. Overcoming the hostile environment

In order to overcome institutional resistances to properly address the problem of gender violence and the hostile environment towards victim, in which the aggressors enjoy impunity, bystanders tolerate violence and a generalized atmosphere of questioning and blaming the victim prevails, it is necessary to make this reality visible to the society and to create an environment in which taking a stand against violence is the most desirable thing to do. One of the professors who supports this struggle, Julia, explains that most of the people belonging to the university community actually prefer universities free from violence but bend to the pressures of the hostile environment to avoid becoming a victim themselves.

the majority are those who are not comfortable with this situation and want to change it, those who are aware that this situation is no longer sustainable. But what happens? The others, to make it simple, scream louder, their voices are louder, so it seems as if they were hundred and we were twenty-five, but that's not true, it's the other way around! We are hundred and they are twenty-five, but as they scream louder they are more visible. (*Julia, faculty*)

In this section then, light will be shed on those communicative acts that can contribute to make the voices of the majority heard and reduce the voices of those who defend violence to their actual volume. Therefore, the silence on gender violence needs to be broken and support and legitimacy has to be given to the victims and those people who dare to speak up. According to the literature everybody of the university community and even outside this context can contribute to overcoming gender violence at universities, because the silence can be broken in many different ways and spheres and by people with diverse backgrounds (Banyard et al., 2005; DeGue et al., 2012). The fieldwork conducted in the present research evidences very diverse actions taken by the different actors in the Spanish university context and beyond to break the silence.

Breaking the silence implies to explain the phenomenon of gender violence to those who are not aware of it, this can be students, faculty, institutional representatives, but also families and friends and the society in general. Also, diverse actors can lead these activities of breaking the silence, thus, it can be victims who explain it to other students, to family members who are students, as well as their friends or in a workshop on gender violence at a high school, like Sofia explains:

we told them that we knew about a case at the university, in which a guy made the girls feel badly and he didn't hit them and he wasn't the partner or anything. I remember their faces, it broke with their perception like 'we thought this was something very private, and you're telling us that this happens in a public place with a lot of people'. (*Sofia, victim*)

But it is not only the task of the victims to explain it, but also faculty and especially those who represent institutional bodies need to make this issue an outspoken reality in their university. In this vein, as a faculty member gender violence at universities can be discussed in classes and information on the mechanisms that the university has to

respond to these situations can be provided. Several participants in this study have informed about the activities they develop and, especially, the outcome that addressing this issue in class has. Several professors explained that as a result of speaking about this topic, students feel encouraged to tell them their stories. Alba, one of the professors who talks about these issues in her classes, tells that after the class a victim of sexual harassment by one of her classmates approached her to reach out for help.

provide the information to students, in my class, particularly, who had not been given any information, on the equality unit, nothing! So they were very surprised in class, which is a common reaction. (...) In class we were talking about preventive socialization and related to media and at the end of the class a student came to talk to me and she told me that she had suffered gender violence outside of the university and that she was currently experiencing harassment inside university by a classmate. *(Alba, faculty)*

Also Luisa, another committed professor to overcoming gender violence, speaks about gender violence in her classes. She explains that her students consider her as the person they would turn to when they needed advice regarding situations of gender violence, since she had shown herself as sensitive about this issue.

sometimes in class we work on gender violence and when I ask them who would you turn to if you had any problem they all say 'to you because you told us in class'. *(Luisa, faculty)*

Julia, also a committed and supportive professor of victims of gender violence at universities, emphasizes that information on gender violence such as the slogan 'Tell someone' derived from the campaign carried out by the University of Harvard can be given in class but also in many other spaces.

'tell someone' is what you tell a 4-year-old child, but it's also what you tell your students, not only in the subject of gender violence but in everyday life, you tell them when they come to the office *(Julia, faculty)*

In addition to the faculty who deals with gender violence and explains the existing mechanisms at their university in class, the representatives of the equality units in the Spanish universities also organize events to discuss about this issue and make it visible

to the larger university community. For instance, Paula explained that she invited the Solidarity network of victims of gender violence at universities to her school in order to open up the debate about this reality and raise awareness among the students.

when I invited the girls from the association [solidarity network of victims of gender violence] to a conference it was like looking for the cracks [in the power structures], I mean we can say what a disaster and that's it, but no, let's look for the cracks and to find out what is happening and transmit something. I guess when people explain that some kind of prevention or something in your brain is a little bit more prepared to act in these situations. This invitation was not a coincidence it was especially on purpose. *(Paula, institutional representative)*

At the same time, some institutional representatives and especially representatives of the equality units in Spain have been working to advertise their functions and the mechanisms they have implemented to respond to gender violence in the higher education context. The fieldwork carried out in this research evidences some of the initiatives developed. Among the common measures is to distribute leaflets with information concerning the equality unit. Roser, the head of the equality unit at the school where she is working, highlights the concern to make the information on the unit visible and especially to students who are just starting their career and time in university.

We are trying to make the equality unit visible and explain it to the students, what we do, and what they can do if they have an issue, especially to the students of the first year. We also included the information and a bookmark of the equality unit [in the materials provided to the students] *(Roser, institutional representative)*

In a similar vein, Begoña explained that they did not manage to reach students with common measures like informative conferences on the equality unit. For this reason they started a specific publicity campaign targeted to the students.

we made a campaign to advertise the protocol, we organized conferences in the different schools, (...) we started a campaign with drawings and things, it was a funny campaign of publicity on the tablemats of the cafeteria. *(Begoña, institutional representative)*

Another crucial step that can and needs to be taken by the representatives of the higher education institutions and especially of the equality units is to take a stand in public against gender violence and in favor of its victims. Pedro, a member of different institutional bodies, explains a situation in which it becomes clear that the institutions are made up of people who take a stand even against the institution. In the case of an accusation of gender violence by a student against a classmate after a fight in the university and after death threats were pronounced against her and other people protecting her, the case was brought to the courts. While the university did not support the victim in front of the court, Pedro and his colleagues granted her their support on a personal behalf if she decided to appeal the sentence that absolved her aggressor.

[after the university did not take a stand in favor of the victim and the accused aggressor was absolved] We told the student [victim] that she could appeal and that we, well we on our personal behalf, as professors we would support her. *(Pedro, institutional representative)*

Also, one of the former heads of the equality unit interviewed for the present research, Inma, explains that progress to overcoming gender violence in the institution where she is working is in part due to her public positioning to investigate the cases she had received as a representative of the equality unit.

the few steps that have been made are due to real cases and that I have openly tried to resolve without any intention of hiding it. Every time something happened I took a stand in public on the issue. *(Inma, institutional representative)*

Nevertheless, there are myriad kinds of situations in which a positioning is required. Roser, who is directing one of the equality units of the university she belongs to, explains that she took a stand in a government meeting denouncing the lacking commitment that she had perceived by the institution to effectively respond to a report of gender violence that had been filed.

In the previous university government meeting I denounced two situations that I learned from the press. And I remember one just came out in the press 3 or 4 days before the meeting and the rector had made a report. And I went to the microphone and said 'I am used to speaking in public but I acknowledge that I am nervous, because what I am going to say, I'd rather not have to say it' and

then I said that they do some reports but they don't count, this is hiding the reality but it doesn't solve anything. (*Roser, institutional representative*)

Yet another way for the equality units to contribute to overcoming gender violence and the hostile environment is to be open to different collaborations. Paula, who had reached out to colleagues from another school in order to learn how to proceed to solve cases of gender violence, also reaches out to the students themselves to reflect together on these situations. As she explains the equality unit she is directing is open to students who can be part of the unit and participate under equal conditions as the rest of the members.

first, we had a girl [in the equality unit], then she left and another one came, but this guy asked to be a member, but due to the case [a case of gender violence reported by one of the students in the equality unit and friends] two girls more who had come to see me together with him they also wanted to be part of the unit because they had become aware of the issue and they thought that this could be a way, since they had been the ones to report and speak up they wanted to be part of the unit and I said of course! and then two more students asked to become a member. So now we have six students and six professors and two members of service and administration staff. (*Paula, institutional representative*)

Since there is no specific training yet that prepares the equality units and its members for the work they have to develop and especially for responding to reports of gender violence, some units try to overcome this limitation. Before, we have seen the action taken by Paula who asked her colleagues from another equality unit to make sure her actions will be in the right direction. At another university, Lucia explains that the former head of the equality unit invited her to be part of the unit after she had invited her to a conference in which the results of the pioneer research on gender violence at Spanish universities were presented. So, the potential lack of formal preparation to develop this position is addressed including experts in this field in the equality unit.

after I contacted her [the director of the equality unit to invite her to the final conference of the pioneer research in gender violence at universities] when they

established a new equality unit they called me to participate in it, so she didn't reject me but called me. (*Lucia, institutional representative*)

All these examples from the fieldwork with representatives of different equality units illustrate the possibilities for tackling the hostile environment that enhances gender violence in higher education. They demonstrate that it takes courage to position themselves in favor of the victims and denounce violence as well as the inaction by the institutions and some of its members. But, most important, they show that their power position can be used to favor those who are most vulnerable in the university hierarchies and that it can be put at the service to those who most need it.

So far the examples provided shed light on some of the actions that victims, faculty members and institutional representatives have taken to contribute to a less hostile environment towards victims of gender violence. However, the fieldwork has evidenced many more elements that any of these collectives can reproduce or introduce in the daily practice of the university context. Some also highlight the importance of initiatives that they have started together. In this sense, Isabel explains the importance of the support given by one professor to students to report the sexual harassment they had experienced. Instead of the students filing their report individually, the professor decided to file the report himself and call the victims as testimonies in order to protect them from possible retaliations that would end with their academic careers.

One important aspect was that it wasn't one single person who was making the report, but it was a full professor who is not as vulnerable in the academic context, I mean he is vulnerable but not so much, they cannot fire him or fail him in an evaluation, so it was him standing up for the victims, both girls and boys who dared to explain what they had experienced under the support of this professor. So the report wasn't filed by the student, who would have been kicked out like they have done in previous cases. So, I think this was crucial, the collaboration of victims and permanent faculty, for the university to attend the case. And then of course the international solidarity. (*Isabel, faculty*)

Apart from this example of collective action to overcome gender violence, the fieldwork conducted evidences that similar as among the victims, also those who support them need to be supported in order not to be alone in their struggle against the feudal

structures. Luisa, a supportive professor who had suffered a situation of gender violence in the university context, highly appreciates the support that she enjoyed and identifies it as crucial to not bend to the pressure of the institution.

I was always lucky to have a group of people having my back who supported me, but sometimes I think those who do not have this support I don't wonder that they give up the fight. (*Luisa, faculty*)

Myriad ventures to provide support have been found by the participants in the present research, indicating that support goes beyond the people constituting the university community, peers, faculty, and institutional representatives. In the following quotations some examples of support granted by different agents are highlighted. For example Luisa explains that she received institutional support from the legal services department of the university to which she belongs when she reported a violent situation that had occurred among students in her classroom. They helped her to put the report forward and find a solution to the situation.

even at the legal services of the university they took it seriously, I felt that they took it seriously and not that they thought it was some nonsense that happened in class. (*Luisa, faculty*)

Yet, also from outside the institutional walls support can be provided. This was the case for some students who dared to speak up about the sexual harassment they had suffered by one of their professors. After three years of investigation acknowledging the sexual harassment of a professor the university still did not take any action to sanction said professor or protect the students from his harassment. At that point, some of the victims decided to tell their stories to the media in order to find broader social support and put pressure on the institution to finally take action against gender violence. Rafael emphasizes that their experience was of great interest to the media which in a very short while published a series of articles reporting about the situation that was taking place in a Spanish higher education institution.

they invited us to an interview and we went like 5 or 6 and talked to them and it went very well and they told us that were very committed to the issue and that they would make it public and this was like a snowball that expanded to other newspapers. (*Rafael, victim*)

Similar to social support received by the media, also the students initiated a movement to claim for the university to take a stand and to sanction the accused professor. Sofia remembers the day that students had organized a demonstration.

the day that we took the signatures [of the manifest asking the university to take a stand] there were so many people and I felt like this is a problem that affects everyone. (*Sofia, victim*)

Another way to speak up and make the problem of gender violence at Spanish higher education institutions visible is to conduct research on this issue. This has already been evidenced in the scientific literature both on an international scale as well as concerning the Spanish context (Flecha, 2008; Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957; Puigvert, 2008). Also the participants in the present study identify the impact and importance of research to break the silence and contribute to overcoming the hostile environment reigning in higher education. Pedro highlights that the pioneer research not only shed light on this silenced reality but that it also led to legal changes mandating the elaboration and implementation of the protocols for the response to gender violence in public universities.

The research on gender violence in universities was very important because it evidenced its existence. And from that moment on a series of normative regulations have resulted such as the elaboration of the protocols. (*Pedro, institutional representative*)

Moreover, research opens up the opportunity for many people from the university community to initiate changes. From the many people who reject violence but are frightened by the power structures, the research that confirmed the existence of gender violence at Spanish universities and provided information on measures that can be implemented to respond to this situation was an opportunity to take stand against gender violence. Julia, one of the supportive professors defines the responses to the pioneer research and its impact on the Spanish universities in the following way.

those people who say 'it's true, these things happen and it's a shame that we haven't done anything so far, it's a shame that I haven't done anything throughout the years that I am in the university and I know cases. Well what can we do?' Right, to show interest 'Very good, you have done research on this, can you give me the information? What can we do in our universities, who can we

count on to do so?' (...) we received an avalanche of emails from different universities, from people who said 'I'm really interested in all the measures, the summary of measures that you have done on what has been done at other universities, I will try that similar things will be implemented at my university, please provide me with some information'. (*Julia, faculty*)

In the present section diverse ventures that people among the university community have undertaken to overcome the hostile environment that enhance gender violence have been presented. They all show that a different scenario in Spanish higher education is possible. However, the previous section also shows the implications of engaging in these activities, evidencing that it is most likely to receive some kind of retaliation or becoming subject of second order harassment for getting involved. Yet, all these actions demonstrate that a different kind of university is possible. But it takes courage to speak up and to face the institutions. As well as it requires coherence of our actions and motivations to overcome inhumanity amidst well educated humans. The overcoming of gender violence is possible when people have an honest motivation of social justice and when they are brave enough to face the institutional resistances that are still prevailing. Sofia explains that the contradiction of being a feminist and bending under gender violence was one of the elements that made her take action against the situation she was experiencing.

I think I had kind of a conviction and contradiction inside, because I was a feminist and now that I am in this situation I can't just do nothing. (*Sofia, victim*)

Pedro, on the other hand, emphasizes that normative changes need to be accompanied by human action which means that there need to be brave hearts that dare to speak up and fight against the hostile environment and challenge the feudal university structures in Spain.

Another important element is the daring of people. (...) some of us say that the norms don't change on their own. We can have a norm that is well formulated on the paper and they should work, but if there is nobody who applies them, who takes them further, nobody who denounces, then they won't be applied, and they

will remain another norm on the paper that doesn't occupy much space. (*Pedro, institutional representative*)

In that sense, all the actions that participants in the present research have informed about represent an act of bravery as well as a signal that change is possible. Roser says that brave people that dare to take a step forward are necessary to serve as an example for future generations.

another thing that I just thought of are references, I think it is necessary that there are some people at some point that take a step forward, so that others say, 'Wow, we can take a step forward', because otherwise the model that will remain is one of resignation, that there's nothing we can do. (*Roser, institutional representative*)

As a representative of future generations, Irene, a student and victim of gender violence at her university, is inspired by the role models she has. Another victim and founder of the solidarity network of victims of gender violence at universities was explaining their struggle in a debate organized by the students' assembly together with representatives of the equality unit who had been investigating her case. She explains how this experience has convinced her to continue the struggle she had initiated when filing a report against her harasser.

I thought I'm putting many things at risk, but [the other victim] as well. And I thought if [the victim] who is doing her PhD dares to face these people [equality unit] and tell them that they are liars without saying so directly. This means that one can make it. (*Irene, victim*)

Last but not least, Isabel one of the supportive professors who dared to speak up, describes the importance of evidencing the academic success that those who challenge the feudal structures can achieve. She explains with pride the trajectory of one of her students who had been failed in her master degree as an act of reprisal for breaking the silence on gender violence and who has become an excellent researcher and now holds a permanent position at another university. But most importantly, she can walk with her head up high because she has nothing to hide. She has spoken up against the feudal structures and continues to do so.

the student that I had, who they failed, she then did another master thesis on a different issue and she didn't have any problem, she didn't do it under my supervision, and now she has a permanent position at a different university and she has published many articles on this issue, so these are the possibilities, it evidences, it's a non-verbal message that you send out. I think it is one of the keys that people who either have taken a stand or have been victim and who have remained in their position can later after all the things that happened to them say 'it was worth it' because I can look around me without any problem with my head up high not being afraid and hiding something for all my life. (*Isabel, faculty*)

These examples evidence the possibility to transform the relations in the Spanish higher education institutions. In spite of all the attempts to maintain the silence and all the attacks that have been done on those who dare to speak up and that will be done, the environment is changing. There are people who do no longer bend to the pressures to keep silence. With these examples as a reference we can see that it is difficult but possible, and moreover, we can see that it is worth it, as Isabel would say.

people thought that we would abandon, and in fact some of us were about to do so, but the fact of not doing so and to be on the top level in research, continuing in these issues, to have published on these issues, the fact of occupying on an international level leads to the fact that those who some years ago were laughing at us saying 'you will see what will happen to for having started this fight, poor you, you have no idea of what you have done' now they greet us with their face down trying to become friends of us. (*Isabel, faculty*)

4.5. Brief conclusions

The present chapter evidences the importance of analyzing the problem of gender violence in Spanish higher education through communicative acts, since it illustrates how the daily interactions among the members of the university community are plagued by violence or acts that enhance violence. However, the chapter also evidences possibilities to overcoming violent communicative acts as well as the hostile environment

resulting from communicative acts that promote violence. In this sense, the analysis contributes with new knowledge to be taken into account for prevention strategies.

In order to respond to the first of the research questions outlined, it is noteworthy that the scientific literature identifies as one of the difficulties for prevention the lack of identification of gender violence (Bondurant, 2001; Cortina et al., 1998; Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Kalof, 1993; Shepela & Levesque, 1998; Reilly et al., 1986). Hence the first two sections provide examples for specific situations that represent gender violence and corresponds to the findings of international research in higher education. But it also evidences interactions that are free from violence. In order to overcome this difficulty it can be useful to contrast these kind of situations to train people in identifying gender violence in their daily interactions versus the interactions that approach the ideal of dialogic interactions. One of the elements that are striking though is that violent communicative acts commonly result in fear and unease in the person perceiving the interaction. In this sense, it could be positive to train the intuition according to these findings in order to enable people from the university community to identify violence in their interactions and thus, enable them to react upon these interactions.

In relation to the second research question on analyzing communicative acts enhancing gender violence in Spanish higher education, the data analyzed evidences that there are power interactions in multiple settings of the universities in Spain that both support and cover violence against women. The power structures of Spanish universities, characterized by feudalism, are crucial to understand the effects of communicative acts among individuals belonging to groups with different status. Such context plays a central role in producing gender violence. In this sense using the theory of communicative acts to analyze these interactions is extremely useful as the theory takes social context and social structure into account in the analysis of the effects of communication. According to the results obtained in this study, those who perpetrate gender violence in Spanish universities also know well the inequalities of the power structure, and use it to achieve their objectives. But also students know their vulnerability in that unequal structure, as well as other professors –in a less privileged position in the hierarchical system- know that taking a stand against the harassers may imply negative consequences for their career. So, what each of them says and does is mediated by such context. The findings of the present study show that such kind of power interactions, where harassers employ

their power to perpetrate violence, taken on a daily basis, are the ones that create and maintain a hostile environment that is also identified in the international scientific literature. Contrarily, those members of the Spanish academy who engage in dialogic relationships always take care of the inequalities present in the university context when they interact with others, even more if they are professors in a more privileged situation in the power structure. Additionally, they also care about the effects of their interactions, not their intentions, so that their communicative acts never imply coercion.

Also, analyzing these results departing from the theory of preventive socialization of gender violence (Gomez, 2015), sheds light on the importance of language of desire to alter this situation. Specifically, language of desire in the communicative acts of victims and supporters of victims that condemn with such language harassers and place others who defend the victim as brave and courageous is fundamental. The data analyzed indicates the potential of language of desire to create a context of rejection toward harassers as well as to raise the attractiveness toward those members of the university community who stand in favor of the victims and denounce gender violence, that is, those who fight against power, feudal and inhumane structures in Spanish universities.

CHAPTER 5

5. Prevention of gender violence at Spanish universities

Whereas the previous chapter emphasized the communicative acts that are present in the interactions of the people mainly belonging to the university community and how they contribute to either enhancing gender violence or overcoming it, the present chapter aims at defining pathways for the promotion of gender violence prevention in Spanish universities responding therewith to the final research question and objective of defining recommendations for prevention strategies. Therefore, the findings of this research that have already been presented as well as the knowledge from the international scientific community are taken into account and contrasted to contribute with ideas for the development of prevention strategies of gender violence at universities in the Spanish context. In line with the communicative methodology and the previous analysis, the present chapter distinguishes between the barriers and opportunities for the prevention strategies.

Thus, the first section sheds light on the features in the Spanish university context that hinders prevention, which need to be taken into account to elaborate prevention strategies. Next, the opportunities for change are presented departing from those elements that have already contributed to changing the Spanish university context, as well as on those elements that the participants in the present study have identified as essential in transforming the reality which are contrasted with the strategies that have been developed on an international level, such as prevention programs that depart from the bystander intervention. Further emphasis is put on institutional changes and the triggers for these changes which are also in relation to the evolution that was outlined in the Chapter 1. Last but not least, this chapter presents the case study of a unique initiative in the Spanish context of higher education - the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities.

The analysis of this case study evidences the impact for the prevention of gender violence in Spanish academia through a social movement that builds on the scientific evidences of the international community. It is a peer network, similar to those that have been reported by Grauerholz and her colleagues (1990), emerging from the victims who dared to provide their testimony in the first formal report of sexual harassment against a

university professor in a public university in Spain. Therewith, the present chapter will contribute to illustrating pathways to overcoming gender violence in Spanish higher education.

5.1. Barriers for the prevention of gender violence

According to international experiences of breaking the silence on gender violence and the prevention strategies that have been developed since then, there are some pillars that are outstanding: research, education, institutional engagement, peer networks that support victims, and the involvement of the whole university community to tackle this major public problem (Banyard et al., 2005; Cantalupo, 2012; Grauerholz et al., 1999; Nicholson & Maney, 1998; Reilly, Lott, & Gallogly, 1986). Yet, the previous chapter evidences that the Spanish university context is marked by strong feudal structures and institutional resistances which represent a major barrier to actually introduce changes in terms of gender violence prevention. In order to trace some of the main elements that contribute to maintaining this reality, the present section analyzes the lack of mechanisms, legal or institutional, the lack of commitment by the institution to overcome gender violence, and the role of personal interests in these power structures and their maintenance.

The scientific literature on gender violence in Spanish universities has highlighted the first steps that have been made in terms of prevention (Vidu et al., 2014). The pioneer research was conducted between 2005 and 2008 and already in 2007 findings of this research had been included in the Law for the Effective Equality Between Women and Men (2007) that obliges public higher education institutions to address the issue of gender violence prevention. However, four years pass by from the passing of the Law in 2007 until the elaboration and implementation of the first protocols at Spanish universities in 2011. But even at present, most Spanish universities lack specific mechanisms and measures to respond to and prevent gender violence in their institutions. Consequently, arbitrariness occurs in relation to resolving problems of gender violence and the solution depends lastly on the person who receives the notice of the problem. Thus the sensibility to gender violence in the academia of the person in question turns out to be the decisive element in to what extent solutions are aimed at

and found. One of the professors interviewed explains a situation in which the head of the department finds a rather prejudicial solution to the claims of a student who said to have felt uncomfortable with her professor during office hours.

Since there are no precise mechanisms established, the head of the degree program talks to the professor, but not to tell him 'hey what are you doing?!' and to shout at him, I don't know, to tell him 'I will deny you all the tutoring', but he went to tell him 'take care this student has been telling me this about you.' What happens then is that this student the next time she comes to the office, enters begging the professor for pardon. (*Julia, faculty*)

Another common experience in which no mechanisms exist is the fact that reports were sent directly to the rectorate. However, as Begoña for example claims, these reports have gotten lost on their way to the rector and it is impossible to find out what happened to these letters.

Against this professor more reports of harassment had been filed, but they never reached their destination which was the rector. They were registered at the university, the victims who then came to us send us the letter they had sent together with the registration stamp, but up to now we don't know why these letters never gotten to the rector or vice-dean. (*Begoña, institutional representative*)

Pedro, a representative of different institutional bodies, emphasizes that the lack of mechanisms and search for these in an administration such as the universities is equivalent to a lacking will of assuming responsibility for this kind of issues.

In this case [a professor who found a spot under the stairs to look under the girls skirts and went there in the breaks, when students used the stairs] the institution doesn't have any mechanisms. But what the institution said was 'talk to that person so that he will stop doing it'. This 'talk to him so that he'll stop' is a mechanism of not assuming responsibility. (*Pedro, institutional representative*)

These kind of situations evidence the need for institutional mechanisms that render these possibilities for impunity and tolerance of sexual violence at least formally impossible. However, the existence of formal mechanisms alone is no guarantee for their correct implementation. The participants in the present research point to a lack of

commitment to an adequate implementation of the mechanisms. Rather the mechanisms are used to comply with the legislation and to publicly acknowledge that actions to respond to sexual harassment are taken. Sara, one of the former members of the equality unit at her institution explains in this regard that institutional measures are welcome until they actually need to be implemented. In that case, Sara defines the reactions by the institution as empty words and emphasizes the resistances to taking measures and acting upon gender violence.

I think it is all positive until the cases come, so the protocol was accepted, but also because I think that they weren't really aware of what it means. (...) R: Is there in general a favorable atmosphere to resolving these issues in the meetings of the equality units? - No, it's considered as 'How complicated, how difficult!' The president [of the equality unit] said 'Well we're working on the case of one of the faculties for two years now! And I'm telling the rector, and I, and I' but nobody says 'well here we're going to implement a protocol and here everything needs to be external and we need to find a solution'. It's like 'We are doing what we can, and I, I am so feminist that I already try to talk to the rector' This is the discourse 'We already do everything'. (...) It's tough, it's like 'We have a protocol so that's it, we are feminists, for equality'. But what is interesting about it is to put it into practice to take measures. The resistances are in taking measures. *(Sara, institutional representative)*

In Lucia's case, the vice-rector who is in charge of coordinating the equality unit stated that she saw no need in establishing a specific body to deal with gender issues. However, as the current Law for the Effective Equality Between Women and Men (2007) defines these units as mandatory, it is formally maintained but without activity.

They call us for a meeting [of the equality unit] and the vice-rector tells us that there is no need for anything specific for gender [like the equality unit]. (...) It becomes clear that she wants to blur it. But she cannot make it disappear, because it is compulsory that universities have it, so we just don't have any more meetings and there are no activities anymore. *(Lucia, institutional representative)*

In a similar vein, Begoña denounces that the rector of the university where she was directing the equality unit, did not appreciate or value the efforts made. She defines his

public action of attending only the first minutes of the conference of inauguration of the equality unit aimed at training the institutional representatives in gender violence prevention as a tacit declaration to the institution that these issues are of minor importance.

We organized a training conference so that all the people in managerial positions of the university could participate, (...) and two members of the university government, among them the rector, came to do the presentation and left. Tacitly this was to say to the rest that this is not important. I think in something that essential the head of the university has to be there. *(Begoña, institutional representative)*

The lack of commitment to addressing the problem of gender violence in Spanish higher education beyond the compulsory mechanisms, derives in the malfunctioning of these mechanisms. Despite the mandatory character of the implementation of equality units and the protocols for gender violence response and prevention, the development of these mechanisms can be determined by the institution itself and thus depend to a great extent on the good will of the institution and the person in charge of this body. Inma, the former director of the equality unit at her institution, claims that this dependency on one specific person needs to be overcome, and that the equality units need to function regardless of the person who directs them. Moreover, it is recommendable that the person chosen to direct this office has a minimum of expertise in the field.

The equality units should have importance and the development as independent from whom they direct. The director will give it a personal note. But then there is who is directing them, whether he or she knows or not. Right now they have chosen one who doesn't know. *(Inma, institutional representative)*

However, and as already outlined among the communicative acts that contribute to enhancing gender violence in the university context, some participants mention the concern for the public image of the institution which is perceived to be damaged with news about gender violence taking place inside. In that regard, Begoña, explains how she perceived the university to be more concerned about maintaining a positive image of the university than about solving the case of gender violence that was investigated.

Furthermore, she highlights that after her destitution from the position of head of the equality unit, the protocol she had elaborated was modified and is now less conclusive.

the rector, the team, the university, they weren't so much concerned about resolving the issue, but rather about not creating a bad image of the university. (...) afterwards [her destitution], the protocol was modified and is now more vague. (...) now that I can talk, I think this is about not investigating too much. What for? Probably to have inconclusive reports at the end. (*Begoña, institutional representative*)

The lack of mechanisms, of commitment to establish mechanisms and to make them work in favor of the victim, thus, represent a major barrier to overcome gender violence and the hostile environment that enhances violence. For this reason, some of the participants claim for an external body to supervise the actions of the higher education institutions, similar to those bodies that exist for other public administrations. Pedro, an institutional representative, specifies that the universities lack this inspection unit that could raise awareness of the malfunctioning of the higher education institutions.

Something that we don't have in the universities are committees of inspection. We suggested this to the present rector as well as to previous ones, but they don't establish an inspection unit. I mean the university is a public administration, at least the public universities, it would be unconceivable that the judicial system doesn't have an inspection unit, or the police or a public hospital. (*Pedro, institutional representative*)

Another key issue, apart from the lacking mechanisms and lack of commitment, is the role of personal interests that can greatly hinder prevention if these interests are linked to maintaining a position in the power structures of the Spanish university system. One of the victims, Gemma, explains how these diverging personal interests between the victims and the institutional interests have affected the solving of the case she had reported.

we had different struggles and that's not a big deal, that's the way it is. If the university did not know, couldn't or didn't want to support the people who had suffered they remain in evidence because as a university, a public administration they have a responsibility, and to make sure that the students feel safe and that

learning is something nice and that you feel well... they are not achieving this.
(*Gemma, victim*)

Also Joan, a supportive professor identifies that colleagues keep silent because they expect to have more opportunities in the future if they do not take a stand against gender violence.

Because the people, the perception that I had, the less noise you make, and the less you take a stand the better for your future' (*Joan, faculty*)

Sara, former member of the equality unit, emphasizes that it depends on the position and the role one has in the power structures. In that sense, she explains how one professor can be overweighing his actions in terms of his international recognition.

[the professor] knows that we make it all public and that not taking a stand can be very risky for him. It's about what will Harvard think of me, what will the international scientific community think of me, not whether it will be fair or not for the students or victims. (*Sara, institutional representative*)

In similar terms of personal interest, Sara comments the shifting positioning of the head of the equality unit at her school, who in the first place was very keen on bringing the issue of gender violence to the forefront but as soon as she saw her position endangered, she stepped back and became accomplice of the institutional inaction tolerating gender violence and contributing to the hostile environment.

over time her initial positioning of optimism like 'We are going to break with this! We are pioneers in this! Let's shed light on this case, it's really severe!' We had testimonies, we had really awful emails, 'We have to make this stop!' from this initial standpoint, over time you can see that now it's 'Oh we can't do that, we have to first take this step and then the next...'. So the way of doing it, because the president [of the equality unit] puts herself on the side of the dean and they are putting the barriers, instead of facing them to solve this case. (...) I think she had expectations of becoming the director of the equality unit of the university, the one who leads the protocol in the university (*Sara, institutional representative*)

In brief, the fieldwork conducted evidences the lack of mechanisms, together with a lack of commitment and personal interests of maintaining power in the feudal university structures, are crucial barriers to promote the prevention of gender violence in the Spanish higher education. In order to develop prevention strategies it is important to keep these elements in mind as they reflect some of the features of the pathways to successful gender violence prevention.

5.2. Opportunities for the prevention of gender violence

Departing from the scientific knowledge laid out in the literature review on gender violence prevention in higher education as well as from the findings of the present research, in this section the process of change that had been initiated from the first step of breaking the silence to the present is explained, taking into account the different elements involved in making these changes possible. Therewith, it will be possible to identify elements that can be reproduced or fostered to contribute to the prevention of gender violence in Spanish higher education.

Breaking the silence has been cardinal in addressing gender violence in universities worldwide as well as in Spain, since it contributes to raise awareness of this major social problem that people from the university community may experience. One of the professors participating in this research, Joan, summarizes the idea that progress has been made and refers to the case that he had been experiencing during his academic career.

Many things have been achieved, but the initial and most basic element to which people do not react with surprise anymore when you say it, is that violence exists and that when you say that you know several harassers people consider this an important issue that needs to be worked on. I think a lot has been achieved with breaking the silence. It has also been achieved that this professor [harasser] has a bad reputation now, and in the department a group of people for a variety of reasons and strategies but that doesn't matter they have taken a strong stand against this man. (*Joan, faculty*)

The role of research is emphasized as one of the first steps to break the silence on gender violence in the Spanish academia. Second, the institutional measures that have been implemented and those that should be implemented and how these measures can be improved to effectively counteract against gender violence in the institutions are presented. Next, the importance and action of the people is explained, with special emphasis on the empowerment that this evokes in the victims of gender violence and the second order victims. Last but not least, the impact of solidarity shown by very diverse people and institutions in Spain and, also, on an international level is analyzed.

5.2.1. Research

The role of science and research in breaking the silence on and tackling gender violence in higher education institutions is one of the cardinal elements in research on this issue. Vidu and her colleagues (2014) emphasize the positive outcomes of the transference of the pioneer research results on gender violence in Spanish universities to the elaboration of policies on gender equality. Based on these results a specific article in the Law for the Effective Equality Between Women and Men (2007) has been included mandating the institutions of the public administration to establish equality units with a special obligation of elaborating a protocol on how these institutions will resolve and prevent gender violence. It is thus due to this pioneer research and the political commitment to address this reality that nowadays equality units in Spanish universities exist. Before, victims of gender violence had no institutional mechanism to turn to when they experienced any kind of sexual violence. Now, although not all universities have elaborated the protocol, at least there is a formal mechanism in the institution that has the obligation to take care of these cases and where victims can receive attention. This is indeed a huge progress, considering that students before had no possibility of filing a report inside the university institution. Also the participants confirm this progress and the importance of the pioneer research in achieving this outcome. Alba emphasizes that research is one of the elements that contributed to the changes made in overcoming gender violence.

R: How could these changes become a reality? -With a lot of science, in the sense of successful actions, a lot of solidarity among many people, professors,

students, members of the international scientific community and with dialogue, in face of attacks - dialogue. (Alba, faculty)

Among the advances that have been made as a result of breaking the silence, it is important to highlight that diverse people from the university community and all over Spain develop more research on this issue. Therewith the impact of the pioneer research is extended even to those universities that did not participate in this research, but where sensible and committed people do their best to overcome this major problem. Julia, one of the professors supporting this struggle states that much more research activities can be found nowadays.

the change that the universities, for example, start to do more research on this issue, with research I refer to the fact that maybe one highly sensible professor hands out questionnaires in his school, but at least that's something. Oftentimes this has led to the elaboration of protocols, to hold conferences on this issue... If you searched in google now for conferences that have been done on gender violence in Spanish universities since 2008, I wouldn't be able to tell you a number of results, but you won't find only the final conference of the pioneer project, but many more. (*Julia, faculty*)

Paula confirms this trend with the initiative promoted by the equality unit that she is coordinating. In order to make the issue of gender violence and the equality unit itself visible to the students, they distribute questionnaires on gender violence as well as other informative material of the equality unit and its functions. Therewith, as she explains, they also attempt to identify situations of gender violence.

What we did was to make a little survey distributing a questionnaire to the students of all the courses in [this degree] asking two very simple questions, such as 'Has anybody ever told you that you were more stupid for being a woman?' and, 'Has anybody ever made a comment that bothered you?' and put some comments. This is what we are doing now, and we hope it serves as a way to detect some kind of situations. (*Paula, institutional representative*)

These examples evidence the importance of research on gender violence in higher education to overcome this reality. The pioneer research has already contributed with myriad elements to tackle gender violence in Spanish universities, but more research is

still needed to reveal the opportunities for overcoming the institutional resistances in a broad sense and to make the issue even more visible to very diverse audiences.

5.2.2. Institutional changes

In the first place it is important to highlight that, as mentioned previously, research has directly contributed to the implementation of institutional measures through the Law for the Effective Equality Between Women and Men (2007) which mandates universities to create equality units that, among other tasks, account for the prevention and resolution of gender violence. Whereas in some universities, institutional resistances to implement these measures are strong, in other cases initiatives to establish the equality units are supported by the institution. Pedro, a representative of different institutional bodies, explains the initial steps to the creation of the equality unit.

to establish the equality unit and make it visible and there was support for that. We created it, I guess because of a letter of the rector that equality units should be established and we built a team to work on it and we included faculty, service and administration staff and students, and the support was huge. *(Pedro, institutional representative)*

According to the information provided at the Social Impact Open Repository (VAW_U, 2015), so far sixteen universities in Spain have elaborated and approved a protocol regarding the resolution and prevention of sexual harassment. However, and as highlighted in previous sections, institutional resistances oftentimes are not against the measures but against applying them and resolving cases of gender violence that imply taking a stand against a person holding power positions. In this sense, Pedro emphasizes the importance not only of the existence of formal mechanisms but of making these measures work which implies an honest commitment by the people being part of the equality units.

the interesting thing of these measures is that they fulfill their functions, that they mobilize the university community, that there is a rotation of the people who participate, that they worry about people and support them, that they are at the service of the people, to put pressure on the institution so that these issues are

not forgotten. Therefore, it is not enough for the equality unit to exist, but to see how it can be promoted. *(Pedro, institutional representative)*

Nevertheless it is worthy to emphasize that these changes to the feudal structure in the Spanish higher education are imposed by the government, rather than changes emerging from the institutions. According to Isabel, one of the professors struggling against gender violence in universities, this was exactly the strategy taken to initiate the institutional changes. She explains that in front of enormous institutional resistances, it was necessary to reach out for support from outside the university community to pressure institutions to implement changes.

to report and make it visible, not to be afraid, break the silence, well also the context made it possible to change, there is a law that we had been working on. The law doesn't come from nowhere. What we did was if the university is not going to change let's reach out to outside the university so that the university is forced to change. And once this happens we change from the inside *(Isabel, faculty)*

In a similar vein, more changes have been introduced to the Spanish academia that are linked to the dialogic turn in societies that institute more democratic structures in the diverse spheres of social life as well as in the private ones. This would also be in line with the changing environments in international contexts, such as in the 60s and 70s in the US and the Women's Liberation Movement (Bird, 2002). In relation to this changing model of the university, Susana, a supportive professor, argues that gender violence can no longer be sustained in this new and more democratic model of universities.

these kind of issues cannot be upheld, not in the university of the 21st century and neither in a democratic university. It is also related to the model of university that we defend. *(Susana, faculty)*

One of the crucial elements of a democratic university is the system of meritocracy rather than feudalism, which has so far prevailed in the Spanish higher education (Bird, 2002). Hence, the relations among the university community and especially among the faculty are changing, since the decisions about positions and vacancies are no longer only determined by those who hold a power position, but increasingly objective criteria to hiring on the basis of the academic profile are determining the access to Spanish

academia. This change implies a shift in power relations among the university community affecting mainly those who previously were holding power positions. As Luisa highlights, younger generations to enter the university community benefit from these changes.

possibilities for change are those of people who just enter the university who experience more, I don't mean that before they were no victims, but they see it like 'I am here because of my merit I don't have to put up with certain issues' and I think these new people who enter the university, which is not an issue of age but the new way of entering the university, less feudalist, things are changing and also the perspective... well we are also vulnerable but this is something good the fact of passing from a feudal university to the fact that people have to get accreditations, that there are other ways of entering the university apart from being a favorite of the full professor in charge. *(Luisa, faculty)*

Although these changes are slow and power relations are still predominant, the tendency is that of change. In this vein, those who struggle against the power structures and follow the criteria of international research standards, at last are those who succeed in the academia. Joan, one of the supportive professors who had been second order victim, is confirmed in his actions when he is evaluated as the person with best qualifications for a post-doctoral position. Unfortunately, in this case, power structures were still strong enough to give the position to another person.

I was lucky, because I applied for a Post-doc and I was the first on the list, this gave me a lot of strength because it evidences that if you do things right and with rigor and ethics at the end it is what is valued. *(Joan, faculty)*

Further changes that can be observed in the institution are the initiatives taken by some representatives of the equality units to improve these bodies to better comply with the functions they have. In this sense, Paula, one of the directors of the equality unit at the school, explains that the university has been applying for a project to provide training in gender violence to the students.

an application to organize a course on gender violence, the application is to a project funded by the city hall to provide training on gender violence to the students. *(Paula, institutional representative)*

Another example of change inside the institution is related to the commitment and support given by institutional representatives. In order to contribute to the prevention of gender violence in Spanish higher education, a clear commitment by those who represent the institution in terms of the handling of these cases is necessary. Sara, one of the former members of the equality unit at her school explains the commitment that the equality unit had initially in front of a case of sexual harassment by a professor. They committed to resign from the equality unit if no action was taken by the institution to resolve this case. Unfortunately, the unit bent to the power relations and decided not to resign from their position, despite the inaction and barriers to resolve the case that the institution showed. It is still worthy to mention that conviction to make progress exists and an environment that enhances these convictions rather than converting them in reinforcers of the status quo, as Thorne-Finch (1992) would say, is needed.

the commission when this case started said, well the members of the commission said 'If no measures are taken we are going to quit'. There was a commitment that this was important. *(Sara, institutional representative)*

In this line, Paula insists on the importance of commitment and effort and not to bend to institutional pressures in order to resolve cases of gender violence at the university which is necessary on a daily basis in order to contribute to overcoming gender violence.

But you can also see specific cases, such as the equality units from some schools, where severe cases were investigated and where some people took charge of resolving cases in a very diligent manner. So you can see both sides of the coin; the disaster on the one hand and the commitment and effort without any institutional support and sometimes even barriers. (...) I think that imposing things with laws is of relative use, on the other hand, actions taken in the daily life of doing things and provide ideas this is what helps. *(Paula, institutional representative)*

Last but not least, some of the institutional representatives emphasize their duty to help the victim. Begoña, the former director of the equality unit at her institution, perceives this duty as a matter of justice that is above any other value that could prevail in university and Pedro, a representative of diverse institutional bodies, considers that academic power should be used in favor of the victim rather than for personal interests.

It's a question of justice, if there is a person who is suffering, my duty is to do my job. I won't prejudge the man, but I will try to resolve [the issue]. (*Begoña, institutional representative*)

I think the academic power should be at the service of these causes. (*Pedro, institutional representative*)

But more importantly, this is what students expect and should be able to expect from the university institution. Gemma, one of the victims brave enough to report the sexual harassment she received by a professor, explains that the institutional representatives tried to make her feel guilty for what had happened and also for the impossibility of the institution to take action. However, she together with other victims was strong enough to face the institutional representatives and tell them that the actions they had been taking and were taking are not adequate to address this problem. Rather she expected them to take a stand in favor of the victims and against sexual harassment, no matter the consequences that facing powerful people implies.

in that moment we were the guilty ones of the fact that the negotiations [with the aggressor to quit harassing] didn't continue, because they always said 'No! the negotiations, the negotiations' but you mustn't negotiate with these kind of people you have to take a stand no matter what you go ahead and if they file a report due to the law of state servants you have to take the consequences. But you must show an impeccable behavior. I think they didn't have courage in that moment or understanding. (*Gemma, victim*)

The elements highlighted evidence the progress that has been made since the pioneer research was started in 2005 and the present. It is striking that in few years of time, legal changes have taken place paving the way for overcoming gender violence in Spanish universities. Yet, further actions are necessary to transform legislation into institutional practices. The evidences provided here illustrate that there are very committed people who dare to bring these issues forward and do not step back in the light of retaliations or second order harassment but rather do everything in their power to fight against the predominant structures. One element that is still missing and that has been highlighted in the scientific literature are the complementary external organisms that guarantee the

functioning of the Spanish higher education services concerning gender violence prevention (Cantalupo, 2012; McMahon, 2008).

5.2.3. Struggle against gender violence

As highlighted in the literature review, one crucial element in overcoming gender violence is to speak up (Bondurant, 2001; Coker et al., 2011). Cases of gender violence need to be reported and, unfortunately, they need to become public in order to receive the necessary attention to address this issue. So, it is essential that victims dare to explain their situations and dare to report it facing all the barriers and retaliations that this process might imply. This is a heavy burden to carry for the victims and their supporters. Isabel identifies this need to report as well as the burden it represents.

It is important that there are people who dare to file a report, because this is not easy to do in university, and by now only few people have dared to say so, and to say 'I have filed a report' because until now this did not give you much status.
(Isabel, faculty)

In order to dare to speak up, the participants in the present research agree that it takes courage to take this step and face the feudal university structures that will develop its powers to silence any of these issues. Pedro, thus, explains that the legal regulations are not enough if they are not combined with brave people who dare to apply these norms or vindicate for the application.

If there are no people who apply the norm they remain hidden in a drawer. In this line, the attitude of reporting and struggling has been very important. But [it has also been important] to transmit the courage. *(Pedro, institutional representative)*

The positive part of speaking up and facing the institutional barriers is that it is commonly related to an empowerment of the victims as well as of the second order victims. As previously mentioned, the fact that those who struggle lastly succeed, sends a message that change is possible and that one can actually contribute to it by speaking up and that one can even face and overcome the retaliations. In this vein, Sofia, one of the victims of gender violence, finds herself empowered by these messages that other victims transmitted to her.

the empowerment comes because of what I had said before, because of talking to the people and you see that you are not the only one. If the same happened to other people and they managed to overcome the situation, I can do the same.
(Sofia, victim)

Another example for this empowerment is provided by Alba, a supportive professor who attended a victim of gender violence by talking about this problem in her class. In this case, the victim was sexually harassed by one of her peers and when she told her friends, they did not take it seriously. But when the victim opened up to Alba and she decided to explain prevention of gender violence in universities in her class putting special emphasis on the role of bystanders, the victim felt very much empowered to speak up.

In this case, the victim made a comment in class, in front of everyone and she was very empowered then, defending... she didn't talk about her situation but defended very much the [things we had done in class]. *(Alba, faculty)*

Additionally, the participants in the present research also emphasize that speaking up also improves the general well-being of the victim through this process of empowerment. Begoña explains that the victim she had been attending suffered physical problems due to the sexual harassment she had been suffering. She states that her condition improved after every meeting they had.

I always had the feeling, the first time no, but the second and third time that she [the victim] came, that every time she left feeling better than when she came in.
(Begoña, institutional representative)

But also those people who struggle to defend the victims and become second order victims feel empowered by their action of facing the feudal structures although the struggle is tough. Inma, one of the former directors of the equality unit at her institution, recognizes that after all that she had suffered for doing her job diligently she is feeling very well because she knows that she has taken the right decision and the appropriate actions.

all the sadness because I suffered a lot, these months have been very hard, but now I feel that I am better than them, it's not that I feel superior, I don't think that I

am better than them, but that I am a better person. (*Inma, institutional representative*)

The struggle against gender violence departs from those people who have courage to report and to stand up and fight against the injustices, but it also relies to a great extent on the solidarity of other people. There is no experience of a single person trying to fight against the university structures, but there are always some people who provide support, initiate the struggle with diverse strategies or encourage victims to report their situations. This is also in line with the scientific evidences on speaking up and there are even campaigns such as one developed by Harvard University called 'Tell someone' (Harvard University, n.d.) focusing on the importance of speaking about the sexual harassment experiences that victims have suffered. These international initiatives are also in line with the bystander intervention which is the most salient approach for prevention strategies, as it shifts attention from the victim to report their experiences to the community and all the bystanders who live violent situations from the outside without becoming victim of it. In this line, also the participants in the present research emphasize that it would have been impossible for them to take a stand and support the struggle against gender violence if it hadn't been for the group of people that were having their back. Luisa, a supportive and committed professor, appreciates the solidarity that many people transmitted to her.

I was lucky to always be with people who were supporting me, but if you think of those people who don't have this group of supporting people around them I don't wonder that they give up the fight. (*Luisa, faculty*)

However, another crucial element in this struggle is that those who dare to engage in it, do not do so for a personal purpose, there are no personal interests behind these actions. With this we do not want to deny that many people from the university community decide to support victims when the power structures have changed and seem to be more favorable to those who fight against this problem. However, among those people who fight against gender violence, being victims or supportive people, they do it for the benefit of all. Hence, the aim of many of the small struggles that need to be carried out are not done for the personal benefit but to make a larger change in the university structure, paving a path for safer and more just universities. In this regard, Julia, one of the supportive professors who has become victim of second order

harassment, explains her struggle against the institution that made her lose a scholarship, and how her commitment has changed the institution for future generations who want to apply for a scholarship in the same department.

[after losing one scholarship because of institutional resistances to her research object] I had applied for another scholarship and I received the Catalan one, and since this scholarship was awarded afterwards and I had already taken all the steps to claim the denial of the head of department to sign the scholarship and in these steps I received the support [from the union and the rectorate], this person could no longer deny his signature. (...) but I continued fighting until I achieved that the department elaborated a document that established that no head of this department could ever deny his signature to any PhD candidate. (*Julia, faculty*)

She also explains that the reaction of the head of department to her commitment to continue to struggle so that no future PhD candidate had to experience the same was of surprise and incomprehension since she already had achieved her personal interest of receiving the scholarship. He could not understand that she would fight not only for her but for the rights of future generations.

In line with previous research, major changes in prevention have only been possible with the support of many other actors and agents of social change. For instance, the social support and movements that emerged around the Clery family to claim for greater safety for women on campus then led to institutional changes as well as legal changes (Coker et al., 2011). In that sense, also the struggle carried out by different people from the Spanish higher education institutions also received support from diverse agents.

In this regard, the fact of lagging behind the progress made in other countries is favorable because support has been sought in those institutions that are outstanding for having implemented a great variety of mechanisms for the handling of sexual harassment in their institutions. Some of the representatives of the equality units at one university highlight the intervention of the director of the Office for Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (OSAPR) at Harvard University as it was decisive for the home institution to take action in the first case that had been reported. Shortly after, the protocol to establish the handling of gender violence was approved and implemented. In this regard, Paula explains that this sign of support from an external institution with high

international prestige was crucial to progress on a national level with the first case investigated at a Spanish university.

then, in these meetings [of all the equality units of the university] that in these severe cases, the trigger of doing something, well that the institution decides to take an action, was an external intervention. So, it is the institution that has its inertia, and closure that well in the moment that from the outside the public image is attacked, or that another institution [Harvard University] tells you to do something, then something is being moved. (...) If you have these examples of things, when this problem happened and Harvard did this and that, well let's ask Harvard. It's all about internationalization, so use it for something useful and if you don't do it you are guilty! I would go a step further, it's not if someone comes and, if you don't act you are guilty just like the rest. (*Paula, institutional representative*)

The participants in the present study not only received support by the international elite in higher education but also by the larger Spanish society and the very students of the universities involved in these struggles against gender violence. Whereas the victims have received support in relation to the social movement that they have initiated and which will be explained in the next section, the supportive faculty and institutional representatives have also been supported in diverse ways. For instance, Inma, the former director of the equality unit at her institution, highlighted the support she had received by the students at all time.

the best support were the students. The students in all the fuss that was made in the end of July, in the networks they only considered me as a valid interlocutor. The said 'Where is Inma? We only want to talk to Inma!'. (*Inma, institutional representative*)

Pedro who is a member of diverse institutional bodies explains the importance of the social support and the pressure that would go with this support for the decision-making in the university and in this line, the approval of specific measures to tackle gender violence in its institution.

As they continued to say that they wouldn't do anything, what we told them was that we would take it to the press, we'd put it to the knowledge of the press, and in front of this warning they took action. *(Pedro, institutional representative)*

This element of pressuring the universities is also outlined by Isabel, one of the first persons to break the silence in Spanish universities. In her view, the feudal structures and the power relations that are part of it impede a change in the institution if no external pressure is put on the institutions.

the university itself, because of validity claims, will not allow due to its hierarchy that this reality is recognized. This will only happen if the university receives pressure from outside, or when the context is contrary enough so that people see what happens, only then the university will change. *(Isabel, faculty)*

All these aspects confirm the reality described in the scientific literature of breaking the silence and initiate prevention strategies in higher education anywhere in the world. Especially Freedman (2013) emphasizes the importance of social support in the form of social movements and the pressure of the media to effectively face the resistances of the privileged. Thus, it can be regarded as a good sign in the sense that a brighter future will come if we continue these paths that have been paved by those who dared to speak up and did not bend to any power interactions. This will contribute to make the universities a safer place for those people who are still to come and initiate their academic experience.

5.3. The Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities

The present section provides an in-depth analysis of the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities that emerged as a consequence of a case of sexual harassment perpetrated by a professor that was filed inside a Spanish higher education institution. It is thus the first peer support network that has been established in the Spanish university context with the purpose to address gender violence in higher education and primarily to support victims. In order to present this unique experience that reflects the international initiatives in this regard, a brief outline of the network, its first steps and attainments will be provided. Then, the impact that the creation of this

network has achieved will be analyzed which sheds light on the opportunities for the prevention of gender violence in Spanish universities that are opened up with this initiative.

5.3.1. Definition, goals and main attainments

The Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities was established by victims of gender violence and especially by those who dared to speak up against their harasser and filed a report. According to the information provided on their page on Facebook, they define themselves as ‘victims of gender violence in universities in collaboration with second order victims and those who support us and are in solidarity⁶’. Moreover, as the description indicates the network departs from international research on gender violence in higher education. It is thus in line with actions that have been taken by diverse people at many different universities. Generally, the network departs from a solid foundation for a successful recreation of one of the measures that has been highlighted in the literature as essential to alleviate gender violence in higher education, which is community organization. In this regard, the members of this network are inspired by the measures that have been implemented or that have emerged at the most prestigious universities and have proved to achieve excellent results. Among those many successful international experiences that are taken into account is the PAVE (Promoting Awareness Victim Empowerment) program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (Pave UW-Madison, n.d.). So far the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities counts with 1346 ‘likes’ by people from 34 countries (May 17, 2015) and among them there are representatives of equality units from different universities.

In the first meeting they established themselves as the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities with the primary aim of giving support to further victims and second order victims in order to fill the gap in the mechanisms established by the university to respond to the victims of gender violence. Their concern was with the

⁶ For more information visit the Network Facebook website: Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Red-solidaria-de-v%C3%ADctimas-de-violencia-de-g%C3%A9nero-en-las-universidades/834367176577567?sk=info&tab=page_info (accessed on February 27, 2015)

victims who were alone and isolated in their situation of gender violence and even suffering the institutional resistances and barriers all on their own. For this reason the network mainly wants to complement the already existing measures, such as the equality unit and the protocol that was approved. Although they highly appreciate the existing measures, they considered further mechanisms for support necessary. Gemma's statement underlines this need for a different kind of support than the equality unit.

[talking about the importance of the peers as a complement to the equality unit] I appreciated that she [head of the equality unit] was concerned about me, asking me 'How are you doing?' but well she is the head of the equality unit and then there are my friends and that's a different kind of relationship (...) it's a different kind of support. (*Gemma, victim*)

In addition to this primary aim of the newly created network, they also wanted to continue the struggle that the supportive and committed professors had initiated many years ago so that the harassing professor was stopped in his misbehavior with his students as well as other harassing professors so that no more students had to suffer sexual harassment in the university context.

In order to attend these goals they decided on several actions to be taken. Among these, they asked for meetings with institutional representatives. The purpose of the meetings was twofold: on the one hand, they wanted to learn what actions the institution was taking in regard to the case they had reported and, on the other hand, they wanted to offer their support to other victims in collaboration or not with the formal institutional mechanisms. Another of the actions they had in mind then was to make their case and the outcomes public, take it to the media so that the society would know what was happening inside the Spanish higher education institutions and what students might have to face when entering the university.

The victims who participated in this initiative and were interviewed for the present research all explain that this first meeting and the creation of a network of victims, gave them strength. It empowered them as they then saw that there were more people in the same situation and that they had a lot of strength and that this could contribute to preventing other people from suffering the same. After all the isolation and suffering that

the sexual harassment and then the investigation had brought, they now felt that their courage to speak up actually had changed things in university and in their personal lives. Carlos explains that if he would not have taken this step and reported he had probably regretted this decision for all his life.

I would have regretted it [not to speak up] probably for all my life, because it's true, if you don't do anything you are allowing it, the silence allows that others suffer. *(Carlos, victim)*

Regarding their goal of making their case public, the victims and participants in the present research emphasize the support received by the journalists. The empowerment felt by the victims to see their story published in all the main newspapers was huge. That day defined a change in Spanish universities. At that moment, the institution had to give explanations for their inaction during more than twenty years in front of the sexual harassment of this professor. Carlos summarizes the importance of this decision for him.

The victims took the initiative to talk to the media, because we did not accept expired crimes. So we wanted to take this and give a public nature to everything that had happened to us. This means that people who had kept this in silence for years, all this shame, suddenly they spoke up and told the media. *(Carlos, victim)*

The social support that followed was great and crucial for the next months as many journalists showed their interest in the issue and in supporting the victims. As a result many more articles were published in all the main Spanish newspapers. Maria explains that outside the university it was very easy to talk about this issue and people understood their concerns instead of putting barriers. Gemma also highlights in this line that she appreciated the care and concern of the journalists.

We saw that outside the university it was very easy, because people clearly understood things 'if this professor harasses, well he can't be harassing!' there were no institutional barriers or power relations and all these personal interests. *(Maria, victim)*

most of the journalist treated us very well. *(Gemma, victim)*

But social support not only came from the media, but also from the students and from other social organizations such as the Unitary Platform against Violence Against

Women. They all greatly contributed to the struggle that was now extended, from the supportive and committed professors and the victims to the student body and the society in general. Together with the student assembly they organized a demonstration to claim for the dismissal of the accused professor and for clear positioning of the university in front of gender violence occurring in its institution. In only two weeks they gathered around one thousand signatures among the students, faculty and the general society. The claims and the signatures were then handed in to the rectorate but unfortunately they did not receive any answer.

Simultaneously, the victims opened a page on Facebook⁷, providing information on their goals and publishing relevant information and news related to gender violence in higher education. They also use this means to advertise or inform about the activities they develop in terms of raising awareness. The support given by the general society was striking. In only one month after their constitution more than 800 people from 28 countries pushed the button “like” on their Facebook page. Their work has also been acknowledged by the Spanish Observatory against Gender Violence of the Ministry of Work and Social Affairs and co-funded by the European Social Fund of the European Union. After only two weeks of their constitution on Facebook the Observatory included the network in their database on good practices to overcoming gender violence.⁸ Isabel, one of the supportive and committed professors describes the importance of the acknowledgment of the Observatory in the following quote emphasizing that the Observatory against Gender Violence belongs to the Ministry and has thus a higher social status than the universities which subsequently have to acknowledge the network as well.

The impact has been incredible, not only because of their creation but also because the Observatory [of violence against women] which is an organism from the Ministry, acknowledged it. Even if the ministry hadn't acknowledged it, the network would have been equally impacting, but like this it is much more. It is the

⁷ Facebook page of the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Red-solidaria-de-v%C3%ADctimas-de-violencia-de-género-en-las-universidades/834367176577567>

⁸ For more information visit: http://www.observatorioviolencia.org/bbpp-proyecto.php?id_proyecto=180 (accessed on May 13, 2015).

acknowledgement of who does not want to acknowledge it but not the one from the bottom but from the top. So if the ministry acknowledges it, the university institution has to acknowledge it as well, they don't have any arguments to discredit it. (*Isabel, faculty*)

As a result, the victims identified the increasing support by the society and the students as a confirmation of having taken the right decision to make their situation visible to the larger society. They also felt that the burden that they were carrying was finally lifted and due to the actions they had taken the university was forced to react in some manner. In this regard, the university approved additional measures in this moment of major social support.

In addition to their achievements and the wide support they had received, also the Unitary Platform against Violence Against Women united and joined their struggle. They launched a campaign claiming for their daughters' rights to study in universities free of violence and distributed bookmarks and stickers with the specific claims: 'not to be forced to sign up for a course led by a harassing professor'; 'that university always defends the victim and not the harasser'; 'a university free from harassment'; and 'that their learning and training is based on freedom and respect'. Gemma, one of the victims explains how the thought about the future generations or someone beloved who wanted to go to university made her decide on joining with her testimony to the report:

I thought if someday I have a daughter or a son or whatever, a friend of mine or someone close to me, I wouldn't want them to suffer the same and I thought right now I do have the strength to do everything in my power to make this man or these men stop doing what they are doing. (*Gemma, victim*)

The stickers and bookmarks were widely distributed and the victims still give them away whenever they participate in presenting the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities. In the words of Isabel, a committed professor, acknowledges all the efforts that the network has made and the social support that it achieved such as the one given by the Unitary Platform against Violence Against Women.

In all the universities where progress in this regard has been achieved it is because of the fact that the university made this problem visible to society. This also happens in our context, so what the students did or the Platform against

gender violence is very important such as the campaign for the rights of students. But it is also necessary to get to the families to politicians to reach out beyond the university walls. *(Isabel, faculty)*

In this line, another action that the victims develop is to explain their experience and especially how this network has emerged and the reasons for its creation. Therefore, they draw on the information of research on gender violence in higher education internationally and in Spain to contextualize and highlight the need for the creation of this network and for raising awareness among the students. In this line, the network follows the approach of health literacy elaborated by Rudd (Groene & Rudd, 2011) by developing activities to increase awareness and navigation skills to overcome the lack of identification of gender violence in Spanish higher education.

Since the members of the Network started these activities in the school where they had been and are students they have been invited by several directors of equality units from other schools and from other universities to share their experience and raise awareness on this highly relevant issue with students. They have also been invited by social associations and have presented their work and efforts at international conferences such as the Multidisciplinary International Conference on Educational Research (CIMIE). Breaking the silence on this issue is one of the guiding principles for their activities. Correspondingly, the reactions are of great concern and admiration for the value that the victims and the committed professors had shown. They have received support wherever they had gone to present the network and the efforts in breaking the silence. As a result, victims from other cases of gender violence have sought for their support and have joined the network subsequently. Irene explains how the first meeting with some of the victims of the network impacted her in a positive way.

The day that we went to have a coffee with them [the victims of the network] next to here, to me it was like 'wow, there are many people who suffered the same and they managed to get over it and to break with it and continue their personal and professional lives.' *(Irene, victim)*

5.3.3. Impact achieved by the network

The Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities has had a tremendous impact, manifested in three achievements that are essential in the struggle against gender violence in Spanish higher education: 1) raising awareness about the problem of gender violence in Spanish universities which has had a relevant impact on society; 2) challenging the feudal structures of the higher education institutions; 3) empowering the victims as well as many other people from the university community since the network makes a statement that victims are not alone in this situation and that they can overcome this situation. In the following, each of these achievements are analyzed in depth.

The cardinal contribution of the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities is making the problem of violence against women and students in Spanish universities visible to the whole university community but, much more importantly, raising awareness among the wider society. The fact of 'disseminating the truth beyond the rumors', as Rafael, one of the victims, states it, is what makes a difference in universities, among the victims and to the society in general. One of the committed professors, Joan, emphasizes the outreach that the network has in society, reaching different social and even political domains.

The appearance of the Network on Facebook has opened up the debate and especially it made it visible outside the field of higher education. This enhances the debate in diverse areas of society, such as in schools, work. For example the United Platform against Gender Violence that brings together different organizations and political parties in Catalonia, has taken up this issue and has started a campaign... the pressure [exerted] by the victims, through their communications and actions is helping very much in all this. *(Joan, faculty)*

In the same vein, Rafael, one of the victims shows his appreciation of this solidarity and the value it has for the struggle for universities free of violence.

This solidarity between civil society and the university only occurs in rare occasions and we hope that it will grow bigger in the future. *(Rafael, victim)*

These statements underline the previously highlighted achievements of the network, such as the major support on Facebook with more than 1300 'likes'. A closer look on the people supporting their initiative shows that this issue is of great interest beyond our national borders as they come from more than 30 countries around the globe. The greatest part, 78%, come from Spain. Another 3% are from 10 European countries, 17% of the supporters are spread over 16 countries in Latin America in addition to people from the U.S., Asia and Africa. This data reflect the magnitude of this concern as well as its extent, since this bottom-up experience tackling a sensitive issue that affects people from all over the world is capable of gaining their support from near and far.

Furthermore, the network has reached different social domains. Especially collectives working to address gender violence have given their support, as Joan's statement shows some organizations have started a campaign claiming for their daughters' rights to study in an environment free of violence. In this vein, their inclusion as a good practice in the database of good practices in tackling gender violence by the Spanish Observatory of Gender Violence represents a major recognition of their impact on society.

Yet, the impact of the network also affects the very university structures. The victims' stories not only reveal their experience of sexual violence at Spanish universities, but they also uncover the impunity of perpetrators as well as the role of the university as the major accomplice. Reading about these cases in major national newspapers has been crucial to make this reality known and to break the silence that has dominated Spanish universities for so many years. Rafael, one of the victims explains how it affected the university institution.

the impact of the actions [taken] by the network have made the foundations of the code of silence and the complicity in abuse tremble. (*Rafael, victim*)

Also Isabel highlighted the great impact that the network had on challenging the feudal university structures by speaking up about the sexual harassment and the inaction of the university.

we can see the example of a collective of the university community, in this case the students who very explicitly do a campaign against one professor without hiding the harassment, a very direct campaign, just like those done on an

international level. This is something that had never happened in Spain. This helped to say, instead of saying 'take care, we need to be careful because as students we have to be aware because they can accuse us for defamation' this means that they now say 'We are not afraid of them accusing us for defamation, we prefer to tell the truth.' In front of this situation the university does not dare to do anything. *(Isabel, faculty)*

In line with these statements Pilar, another committed professor, adds that the network sent a clear message to the university which is that gender violence in higher education will no longer be hidden. Now that victims and students had dared to speak up against the feudal structures they will not bend any longer to the power relations.

they had a clear impact. First, to prevent which is an obvious goal, and second an impact that the university knows that the victims united, maybe not all, but some victims and that these things will not remain hidden in a box. *(Pilar, faculty)*

Breaking the silence on gender violence at universities implies that it is a well-known problem by part of the university community which builds on the silence and complicity of most of them. This being said, the fact of breaking the silence, represents facing those people and structures that tried to keep this issue unattended and raises the question of the role of complicity in sexual violence at universities. Whereas great part of the university community just turned their back on these kind of situations and succeeded with this behavior, now they have to face questions such as 'Did you know about that?' and 'What did you do to stop it?'. From now on and in line with research highlighting the figure of the bystander to tackle this issue, the actions taken by the individuals composing the university community are no longer neutral, but will be considered as either supporting the victims or supporting gender violence at university, drawing a clear line between victims and their supporters, on one side, and perpetrators and their accomplices, on the other. Many of the people composing the university community might still not be aware of this change in the university structures, yet the university structure will be changing. Isabel, a committed professor, points to the international reference that the network follows and which will precede the changes that the university will have to do in the future.

the university will be approaching the goals of the network, because what the network is doing is very close to what is done internationally. University does not have any other option than to accept these rules of the game, even though these are set by students who don't have any status they will have increasingly more strength. *(Isabel, faculty)*

Another important change that the network represents for universities is that it serves as an alternative instrument to address violence prevention and to support the victims at universities. The attention to victims of gender violence has been extraordinarily limited, with the here reported case being the only one that has been acknowledged by the university and a state prosecutor and the only case in which the victims gained support from the larger society. As research shows, resistances to properly resolve the victims' complaints are a common response in universities where gender violence in higher education is still a taboo issue (Baker, 2008; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998). Thus, the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities attends the need for effective support to further victims, complementing the already existing mechanisms implemented by the universities. Simultaneously, the actions developed by the network to raise awareness are especially aimed at providing the necessary information for students and faculty to identify violent situations and therewith increase their ability of taking action against it. Pilar, one of the committed professors, explains that she regards the network as a role model for other students and potential victims:

[they are] a role model to guide my students, to motivate them to join and support the network and of course to not let any case of gender violence unattended. (...) I can now redirect and create a network for other victims as well as for people who have given their support to victims. At least I can explain this to my students, this exists, there are victims who dared to speak up and they created a network and they can get in touch, so at least I have something to tell them. *(Pilar, faculty)*

Luisa, another committed professor, considers the network as an option for many students, since in her university there still are no measures that protect students from sexual harassment. She explains how the network has been a great opportunity for her students who very much appreciated the information and directly engaged in distributing it and spreading the word about it to more students:

I think it is very positive because what happened to me is that when I talked to students I had to tell them 'well there is nothing you can do, the protocol we have is for faculty only', when the network was created I could explain it in class. There were some students who when we explained it in class, wanted to explain it in other groups in which I wasn't teaching. So it was like... they said 'Let's prepare a presentation ourselves' with the few information that we had but they wanted to explain it in other classes and in their groups in Facebook, because they have a group on Facebook for every class and they wanted to present it. I think they saw it like 'Finally we have something, where things that happen to us and this could be the site where we can talk about it and we are taken seriously'. Well I think this has been a change for the students because they don't have anything else in my university there is nothing for students. (*Luisa, faculty*)

Finally, the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities has contributed to a tremendous empowerment; the empowerment of the victims but also of many other people belonging to the university community, such as students, committed professors and even institutional representatives. In line with the approach of health literacy and the capacity for agency of the very affected people by the intervention, the solidarity network, has been built from the very victims together with second order victims and supportive faculty. So they have turned their situation around from being victims to becoming an agent of social transformation in which they engage with diverse social agents to improve gender violence prevention in Spanish higher education. Similar as the experiences reported by Rudd and colleagues (Roter et al., 1981; Rudd & Comings, 1994) the members of the solidarity network have experienced a great empowerment through this process and have also contributed to empowering society.

Their public appearance of facing and challenging the Spanish higher education institutions, that are marked by power structures and the support that they have received from all the social agents they turned to, made it clear that they were in power of the situation. This is the message that has been transforming the people and the structures themselves. To provide some of the examples of how the participants interpret this effect, the quotations of Carlos and Paula will be representative. Carlos, one of the victims, highlights in his statement that the strength they had empowered them to

continue the struggle and has helped to overcome the situation as a victim to become an active agent in social transformation.

the support network is a place where you feel that we have something in common and it is not the sexual harassment but a common idea which is to stand up and fight against these kind of situations. The network empowers, it gives us empowerment. *(Carlos, victim)*

Paula, one of the directors of the equality unit at her school, emphasizes this power of transformation that the members of the network transmit. She felt overwhelmed by their strength and identified it as a sign that fighting these kinds of situations leads to an empowerment that finally is able to transmit security and joy to other people to fight in their lives for the things that are important:

For me it was very important, I mean it didn't have a great impact in the sense of great audience the day when they presented the network but it was very important and from different perspectives because not only for their action but for their strength and their will, and to me personally it was very helpful and also to other people who I have talked to about it. Personally it is like, it gives security or joy to see how people who have suffered so much had the ability to get over it and struggle against it and to make their way. It motivates you and gives you strength and energy to do many things, because not always you have a good day and you will be hit by this and you say stop now, and on the other hand you see this and it gives you the strength to get over it even though you are feeling bad to say 'we have to continue fighting'. This was amazing and I loved the way they did the presentation, they didn't seem to be victims. *(Paula, institutional representative)*

In brief, the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities has had incredible impact on the lives of many people. First of all, it has changed the lives of the victims who created it. As highlighted, it gave them strength to continue the struggle and their academic career but it also was an opportunity to make sense of their lives, as Carlos highlighted he would have regretted not to have taken actions. But it also changed the lives of other victims who by seeing them realized that it was possible to overcome situations of sexual harassment and thus more victims joined the network.

Moreover, faculty has highly appreciated the creation of the network as they can now refer their students to the network to receive a complementary attention to formal mechanisms provided by the universities. At the same time, also institutional representatives find strength in the network and the energy that they transmit. Last but not least, all the many people who pushed the button “like” on the page on Facebook acknowledge the problem of gender violence in higher education and the importance for having support networks like this one to face this social problem.

5.4. Brief conclusions

To conclude this chapter on the pathways for gender violence prevention in Spanish higher education it is worthy to highlight that the communicative analysis distinguishes between the barriers and opportunities for social transformation. In this regard, the present chapter highlights some of the prominent impediments to gender violence prevention that draw from the findings in the previous chapter. The analysis of the communicative acts that support and cover gender violence in Spanish higher education contributes to the creation of the social reality in which a lacking commitment to this struggle reigns. People from the university community do not want to take a stand in front of gender violence. Moreover the lack of commitment is related to the personal interests of the individuals that aim to succeed in a highly hierarchical university structure. This barrier will soon be overcome, when power is shifted from feudal university structures to a meritocratic system in Spanish higher education. At the same time, participants identify a lack of mechanism as another impediment that hinders prevention. Although the Law for the Effective Equality Between Women and Men (2007) mandates to implement formal mechanisms and protocols for the prevention of gender violence, only some universities have so far made changes. Nevertheless, the participants further highlight that formal mechanisms are necessary but not enough and thus claim for external or alternative measures to the institutional ones.

At the same time the present chapter explores the opportunities for pathways to prevention. In this regard some basic elements are striking, such as the fact of developing research. Several participants explain in this regard that it is important to conduct research on this issue but it is also important to continue the academic career. It

is especially important to encourage those people who get disenchanted with academy due to the experiences they have made. Another crucial element has been the struggle against gender violence in Spain that involves a variety of elements, such as the empowerment of the victim or second order victims, as well as the support and courage to never give up fighting.

The most salient finding in the present chapter is the case study of the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities. Being the first peer-to-peer support network in Spanish higher education, that tackles the difficulty of identifying gender violence in higher education through the diverse actions developed. In this sense, it can be understood as an experience that provides literacy in the Spanish higher education structures to those who might have greater difficulties in identifying these structures. Following the approach of health literacy developed by Rudd (Groene & Rudd, 2011) in order to overcome the literacy barriers in terms of skills to navigate health care institutions, the higher education institutions can be difficult to navigate if one is not aware of the power relations and the social context. Hence, the health literacy approach would suggest to engage illiterate people in terms of health care in literacy activities such as developing learner materials, which has great potential for empowerment (Roter et al., 1981; Rudd & Comings, 1994). Thus, understood in these terms, the solidarity network has engaged many diverse people and collectives in their activities and have developed materials together with these different social actors to challenge the power relations at Spanish higher education. The network has had striking results and it is especially remarkable because it is a bottom-up experience that has emerged from the most vulnerable collective of the university structure and has challenged these structures.

CONCLUSIONS

In order to conclude this study on the prevention of gender violence in Spanish universities, it is worthy to briefly recall the main aspects of the previous findings in the field and to mention the three constitutive axes of the theoretical framework: the theory of communicative acts which has drawn from the contributions of Austin (1962), Searle (1969), Habermas (1987) and CREA (Searle & Soler, 2004); the health literacy approach developed by Rima Rudd (Groene & Rudd, 2011), and the contribution on preventive socialization elaborated by Jesus Gomez (2015) and further developed in the research conducted by CREA. The main results from the research developed in this book are contrasted with the previous findings and theoretical approach.

The main statements of the literature reviewed are that pioneer research on gender violence in universities has contributed to breaking the silence on gender violence in higher education and therewith light was shed on a reality that had never before been unveiled, in spite of the major implications of this phenomenon (Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957). Research has also evidenced the devastating consequences that gender violence has on the victims in the academic context which does not only imply disenchantment from the academic career but can also lead to severe physical problems (Brenner et al., 1999; Richman et al., 1999). The widespread negative effects of gender violence have enhanced research from very diverse disciplines and perspectives that identify its existence in higher education as a major social and public health problem. The persistence of the incidences have turned it now into a top priority on the political agenda of the US government in order to effectively eradicate gender violence in American higher education where this struggle has been first initiated more than 50 years ago (White House, n.d.). In order to contribute to prevention, pioneer research has worked on the elaboration of a definition of gender violence in higher education with the purpose to improve identification of these situations (Fitzgerald et al., 1988; Kalof, Eby, Matheson, & Kroska, 2001). However, the power structures and the hostile environment that characterize higher education institutions at the time when the silence was first broken internationally, and which also characterize the Spanish university context of the present study, represent a cardinal impediment to advance in overcoming gender violence (Duque, Vidu, & Schubert, 2013; Puigvert, 2008; Valls et al., n.d.). Yet, research has emphasized the role of social movements, institutional changes and specific

prevention programs to contribute to the overcoming of gender violence in higher education (Banyard et al., 2010; Cantalupo, 2012; Coker et al., 2011; McMahon, 2008). Thus the attempt of this dissertation has been to add to this strand of literature and contribute with ideas for pathways in prevention of gender violence in Spanish higher education.

Since gender violence prevention through the analysis of communicative acts in combination with the approach of preventive socialization has proven to be successful (Rodriguez-Navarro et al., 2014; Soler, 2006-2008), the present research draws from this contribution to apply this knowledge to the case of gender violence in Spanish higher education. To further enhance the spectrum of this research, the perspective of health literacy is introduced to address the lack of identification that has been pointed out as one of the major difficulties to tackling gender violence in Spanish universities (Duque, Vidu, & Schubert, 2013;).

The overarching research question resulting from the review of the scientific literature is thus: *How can the analysis of communicative acts contribute to preventing gender violence in Spanish higher education?* In order to respond to this question, that has been the reference for the research conducted, four specific questions have been defined to guide the particular parts and steps of the study. In the following, each of the specific research questions will be recalled and contrasted with the findings obtained through the present research. In line with the communicative methodology, implemented in the present study, the analysis of the results distinguishes between the exclusionary and transformative dimensions. For this reason, it is possible to highlight the barriers for the prevention of gender violence in Spanish higher education and, at the same time, the opportunities for transformation.

Research question one inquires about those elements that indicate the presence of gender violence in communicative acts. The corresponding objective, then attempted to identify elements that indicate whether communicative acts taking place among members of the Spanish academia involve power relations entailing gender violence or not. In this regard, the present research based on the communicative daily life stories with victims and the in-depth interviews with faculty and institutional representatives has confirmed the existence of diverse forms of gender violence perpetrated against members of Spanish universities. The power interactions explained by the participants

correspond to those identified in previous research as gender violence in higher education and can be distinguished in the following categories: undue or unwanted attention, inappropriate and offensive sexual advances, intimidation, bribery, and physical violence including intrusive and abusive behavior (Benson & Thomson, 1982; Lott et al., 1986; Rossi & Weber-Burdin, 1983; Till, 1980). With these evidences the present research confirms that the reality explained in the international scientific literature about the diverse forms of gender violence also takes place in Spanish higher education. Moreover, the analysis of these situations according to the theory of communicative acts, which takes into account the social context as well as the social structure in which the individuals interact, helps to shed light on the role of this context in producing gender violence (Soler & Flecha, 2010).

The results suggest that some communicative acts represent gender violence because of this imbalance of power in the hierarchical university structure. Also, the results obtained in this study, illustrate that some professors are well aware of the existing power relations and use their position and the power that it confers in order to produce violent situations against more vulnerable members of the university community. On the other hand, those members of the university community that lack the perspective of the power relations are especially vulnerable to these power interactions. In this sense, the approach of health literacy can be useful. According to Groene and Rudd (2011), the lacking capacity of navigating specific institutions, such as hospitals, is related to suffering worse health conditions.

For this reason literacy in health related issues, including navigation through bureaucratic structures, should be provided. This approach can be applied to the situation of a new member to the Spanish academia, that has not been introduced to the power structures dominating the higher education institutions and thus, has not yet the skills or the literacy to read the interactions in terms of that context. To that new member, the communicative acts expressed by another member of the university community can be difficult to understand.

In order to understand these interactions we need to be aware of the social context, the power relations, the intentions, body language to mention only some elements that are involved in the communication. In this sense, navigating the higher education relations and institutions might be difficult and hamper the proper distinction between power and

dialogic communicative acts which, as the results of the present research evidence, makes such person more vulnerable to unhealthy relations and to suffering gender violence in higher education.

Contrarily, research results also show that at the Spanish universities there are professors of low and high academic power positions who actively attempt to counteract and reduce the power imbalance in their communicative acts in order to approach the ideal of dialogic communicative acts. Among the elements that the participants highlight in order to approach such reduction in power relations we have found the following: egalitarian and dialogic relations with all the members of the university community, respect and trustworthiness, transparency, and freedom to decide on anything affecting the individual. These basic principles are useful to provide an overview of what the ideal of dialogic communicative acts would look like in order to be further aware of those relations where these elements are missing.

Another of the findings related to this research question on the elements that contribute to identify power communicative acts is the feeling of unease and discomfort or fear that the participants in the present research link to power interactions. It could be considered as an element to indicate that violence is taking place. However, depending on the level of socialization in this kind of situations and the normalization that is commonly done and, especially, in the Spanish context of higher education institutions, intuition cannot be the only element to identify gender violence. Rather awareness of the presence of power interactions needs to be raised in order to be able to better identify that a professor or a classmate is actually misbehaving.

The second research question attempts to identify which kind of communicative acts promote gender violence in Spanish academia representing the exclusionary dimension in terms of the methodological approach of the present research. Thus, the objective was to analyze those communicative acts among the Spanish university community that allow for gender violence among students and faculty or that enhance it. The data analyzed evidences that there exist a myriad of power interactions that support and cover gender violence in Spanish universities. The power structures that characterize the Spanish higher education is a central issue for the analysis of the effects of communicative acts among the people of the university community occupying diverse positions in the power structures. The theory of communicative acts (Searle & Soler,

2004; Soler & Flecha, 2010), which includes the social context and the existing power imbalances in this context, represents a useful tool to analyze the problem of gender violence in the power structures of Spanish higher education. Such context is essential in the existence and maintenance of gender violence.

The data analyzed evidences that many people from the university community subdue to such power structures and engage in power interactions. This means, members of the university community that are aware of the prevailing power relations and attempt to succeed in the hierarchical university structure, are reluctant to engage in interactions that imply taking a stand against these structures and that, eventually, have negative consequences for their career. In that sense, each of their communicative acts related to gender violence is mediated by such context and the personal interest in it, contemplating the outcomes of their actions taken regarding the standard set by the power structures. The findings of the present study show that such power interactions, of those who perpetrate violence and those who follow the power structures, play a central role in creating and maintaining a hostile environment.

These kind of communicative acts have also been identified and illustrated in the scientific literature and can be broadly divided into two types of actions: one, those actions that contribute to creating and maintaining a hostile environment towards the victims and those who support them and the struggle against gender violence (Benson & Thomson, 1982; Reilly et al., 1986); two, those actions that are directed to courageous people who dare to challenge the power structures in order to attack them which would then be defined as retaliations against victims (Baker, 2008; Osborne, 1995), and second order harassment in case of those who support victims and are therefore also victimized (Dzeich & Weiner, 1990). Among the specific communicative acts used by the members of the Spanish university community, some are striking for the levels of inhumanity which would not be expected to exist in the Spanish academic elite. Unfortunately, these findings only confirm the reality that has already been illustrated several decades ago in the United States and Canada describing the processes of the pioneer research and actions taken to end gender violence in higher education (Baker, 2008; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998; Osborne, 1995). The findings through the analysis of communicative acts in the present research underpin that the responsibility for the

hostile environment that allows for direct attacks against those who dare to speak up against feudal structures lies on the people.

In this regard, future research, could further explore these feudal structures and their implications. It would be interesting to examine the academic implications of these power structures and the social cost implied. For instance, future research could explore to what extent the feudal university structures hamper the scientific progress of the Spanish university community, analyzing the scientific costs that gender violence implies for higher education in Spain.

Research question three explores which kind of communicative acts are useful to counteract or contribute to prevent gender violence in Spanish universities and, thus, represents the transformative dimension which sheds light on opportunities to overcome the previously outlined barriers. In order to address that question, this research analyzed interactions among the members of the Spanish academia that challenge the prevailing power structures and trigger the social transformation in terms of gender violence of the Spanish higher education institutions. Whereas the answers to the previous research question have evidenced that daily interactions taking place among the members of the Spanish academia are plagued by power communicative acts or by those that allow for violence or even enhance it, the findings from this investigation related to the third research question demonstrate that alternative interactions are possible. In this sense, the data analyzed illustrates that people from diverse collectives belonging to the university community have dared to take a stand against the feudal structures and in favor of the victims in formal, such as classes, and informal occasions, in daily interactions with the members of the university community. These findings correspond to the elements outlined in the international scientific literature on creating an environment of zero tolerance to gender violence through the intervention of the diverse collectives from the university community (Banyard et al., 2010; Burn, 2008; Potter et al., 2009).

From the analysis of communicative acts, in these dialogic interactions the academic power held by institutional representatives as well as tenured faculty can be put at the service of those who are more vulnerable in Spanish higher education structures. For this purpose, the people who dare to stand up against the feudal structures require strength and courage. This in turn, has been evidenced by the data, to empower and motivate victims as well as bystanders to speak up. The theory of preventive

socialization of gender violence (Gomez, 2015) suggests promoting attraction towards dialogic relations in order to overcome gender violence. Analyzing the results of the present research in terms of preventive socialization, the language of desire in communicative acts used by members of the university community condemning harassers with this language and referring to those who defend the victim as brave and courageous can be a powerful tool to trigger a change in the attraction towards dialogic relations. The findings of the present study point to the potential of this analysis to create a context of rejection of the aggressor, while raising attractiveness towards those members in the university community that stand up for the victims and against the feudal structures allowing for gender violence and inhumanities in Spanish higher education. Future research could conduct an in-depth analysis of the use of language of desire to transform the prevailing power relations in Spanish higher education.

Finally, the fourth and last research question builds on the results of the three previous questions and looks into how the previous definitions of communicative acts and their distinction into power versus dialogic communicative acts -the exclusionary and transformative dimension of the communicative methodology- can contribute to preventing gender violence in Spanish higher education. In responding to this question and in line with the research methodology, I have found both, elements that hinder prevention, as well as elements that facilitate it.

One essential element that is striking is that impediments for prevention of gender violence refer to a lack of institutional mechanisms and a lack of commitment related to personal interests of the individuals in a highly hierarchical university structure. The data analyzed point to a normalization of power interactions in these feudal structures. Departing from the theory of socialization in attraction towards violence elaborated by Gomez (2015) for the understanding of the context of Spanish higher education the trivialization of gender violence can be interpreted as a consequence of this socialization in violent models. Therefore, the lack of commitment of those members of the university community who are reluctant to engage in prevention strategies can also be linked to this normalization of gender violence. The lack of commitment as well as the normalization of gender violence represent a common reality in higher education abroad and in Spain (Cantalupo, 2012; McMahon, 2008; Vidu, et al., 2014) pointing to a more

generalized and deeper rooted problem which could be further explored from this perspective of attraction towards violence.

The personal interests that currently orient people in their daily actions to contribute to the hostile environments will change during the process of the dialogic turn which leads to a greater democratization of the Spanish higher education institutions (Beck, Giddens, & Lash, 1994). The data analyzed in the present study indicates that in more democratic university systems power is less related to the position occupied in the power structures, but to the merits responding to international ethical standards that do not allow for gender violence as the great extent of literature on this issue evidences in countries with a more democratic higher education system. Hence, the power 'held' by some feudal professors is vanishing since the process of selection of new members does no longer depend only on the good will of these people but on the curriculum vitae that the applicants provide.

In line with this, another crucial step in breaking the silence and putting the struggle against gender violence in Spanish higher education forward that has been evidenced in this research is to conduct research on this topic. Therefore, some of the actions taken by the participants are to encourage people of the university community -victims, supportive professors, and second order victims- to further examine the myriad of aspects that interplay in gender violence and to further develop prevention strategies. In doing so, participants not only challenge the university structures but also overcome their personal disenchantment with the academy. Moreover, the participants indicate that by doing research that corresponds to the ethical international standards, at the end, is of greater benefit than subduing to violence and acting according to the rules of power relations in Spanish higher education.

The most salient contribution of the present research that represents another pathway for prevention of gender violence in Spanish higher education is the analysis of the unique experience of the first peer-to-peer support network in Spanish higher education. The analysis of the Solidarity Network of Victims of Gender Violence at Universities evidences its huge impact on higher education. The data analyzed illustrates that this solidarity network, departing from scientific evidences on gender violence prevention in higher education for its creation and the actions taken and which was created by the very victims together with other committed and supportive members of the university

community, is capable of finding pathways to raise awareness among the university community on the problem of gender violence in these institutions. They not only contribute to overcoming the lack of identification by raising awareness about the effects of power relations in Spanish higher education and the existing institutional mechanisms for gender violence prevention but they have built their own alternative mechanism which complements the institutional initiatives and fills a gap in Spanish higher education. It can thus be interpreted in terms of health literacy as a pathway of providing literacy in gender violence in Spanish higher education in order to help other members or future members of the university community to being able to read the interactions in the Spanish higher education institutions in terms of power relations and the social context.

Following the approach of health literacy (Groene & Rudd, 2011), stating that health care institutions require an elevated level of literacy to navigate them which negatively affects the health of those who have low literacy skills in terms of health – those who have more difficulties to understand the technical language used in these institutions as well as the bureaucratic structures. Thus, Rudd (Groene & Rudd, 2011) suggests that these institutions need to foster literacy in their institutions to overcome this social and public health divide. Applied to the analysis of Spanish higher education, literacy is necessary to understand the power relations that define the hierarchical structures and allow for gender violence. The approach of literacy to enable people of Spanish universities to navigate these institutions is taken up by the victims but recreated to their specific context. Instead of being a top-down initiative that reaches out to those in need, they created a bottom-up network that flourishes aside from the institutional mechanisms. The data obtained in the present research evidences that the solidarity network, as agents of the social transformation of the Spanish higher education institutions, has greatly empowered the participants involved in the network but also many more people who see that taking a stand and challenging the university structures is possible.

In that sense, the present research evidences that the impact achieved by the network, has greatly contributed to transforming the university reality as well as the personal lives of the people involved actively or passively. They have shown strength and courage to stand up and fight for their rights challenging the feudal university structures. But most striking is that their motivation is not to fight against one person or the system, but to

fight so that other people will not have to experience their suffering. They are fighting for *universities with heart* just like Jesus Gomez did, and many more who followed his footsteps (Flecha, 2008). The social support that they have received for their courage is, thus, evident as well as the changes that will derive from that experience. In this regard, future research, in line with the strand of research evaluating prevention programs could be developed in order to assess the larger impact the network has had.

While the research questions posed initially have been answered through the investigation conducted, new questions have come up to further contribute to the strand of research on prevention of gender violence and the eradication of this problem. Further research could investigate how the process of transformation of attraction towards a brave model of a member of the university community can be enhanced.

In a different line, but with the same emphasis on gender violence prevention, future research could focus on tackling also the increasing tendency in social science and humanities of evaluating the impact achieved by the research developed, for instance, using the approach developed by the FP7 IMPACT-EV research project (Flecha, 2014-2017). The struggle for gender violence prevention in Spanish higher education has already demonstrated to have achieved political impact as well as social impact. The reasons for this impact achieved could be further explored in order to enhance the impact of future research and actions carried out on this purpose.

As a final conclusion, with this research project I evidence that the findings reported in the scientific literature on gender violence in higher education in the country specific context is also confirmed for the Spanish higher education. Gender violence as it occurred in the United States in the 70s and 80s also occurs in present in Spain. Moreover, possibilities for challenging the power interactions that facilitate gender violence in the communicative acts among the members of the Spanish higher education are evidenced. Particularly, the pathway of the first peer-to-peer solidarity network that manages to contribute to gender violence prevention from the bottom of the university structures is analyzed illustrating the high potential for social transformation as it has already changed the lives of many people. As discussed, further research could address a variety of issues. Nonetheless, one of the most promising approaches to continue investigating how prevention strategies can be improved and social transformation enhanced, would be to analyze the potential of the use of language of

desire in the interactions among the university community. This could shed light on how the use of language of desire influences the shift of attraction to courageous people who dare to stand up for the victims and are devoted to make Spanish universities a safer place and, especially, a place with heart.

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