FLIRTING MATTERS

Exploring Material-Discursive and Affective Intra-actions in Flirting Among Teenagers in the Context of the Chilean Feminist Movement

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I confirm that the work presented in my thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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This thesis, not including acknowledgements, bibliography and appendixes is 84.362 words.

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Abstract

Several years have passed since online and offline impactful feminist campaigns against sexual violence towards women like #MeToo, #NiUnaMenos in Latin American countries, and, particularly relevant for this research, Chile's Feminist May in 2018. In this context, this thesis explores the potential impact of feminist activism on flirting among Chilean teenagers who were starting high school amid this feminist upheaval.

Using a feminist posthuman lens, I conceptualised flirting as emerging from material-discursive and affective intra-actions (Barad, 2007; Ringrose, Warfield, et al., 2019; Strom et al., 2019). This approach helped overcome some of the conundrums of flirting produced by humanist conceptions that reproduce monogamous heterogendered norms. Moreover, this lens was key for designing 'pandemic-proof' online methods for intraviewing (instead of interviewing), aiming to co-produce accounts that highlight the material and embodied aspects of flirting.

The study involved three online intraviews with ten 17 to 19 year-olds, between 2020 and 2021. The first encouraged an open exploration of whatever came into their minds related to flirting. The second facilitated a detailed examination of flirting stories sent to me in advance. The third was a semi-structured conversation where they could invite friends, which offered deeper insights into the interplay of feminism, friendships and flirting.

The analysis of this data shed light on how the digital calling out of sexual violence creates fantasies and fear that constrain heterosexual young men's flirting. It also enabled a complex investigation of how feminist ethics like "affective responsibility" shape the flirting possibilities of feminist teenagers. Moreover, this project suggested an understanding of bodily boundaries as co-created in-between bodies and objects in space, challenging the neoliberal individualist underpinnings of affirmative consent and supporting complementary approaches that stress mutuality.

This thesis offers a novel conceptualisation of flirting while it deepens understandings of the impacts of feminism on young people's sexuality, contributing to debates on flirting's ethical challenges.

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Impact statement

This study explored the flirting accounts of teenagers in Chile in relation to feminist public debates surrounding violence. Research questions included: Are *funas*—online public shaming—helpful for changing men's (hetero)sexual violence towards women? How can consent be rethought beyond the neoliberal subject? What does an ethical sexuality look like? The feminist posthumanist theoretical framework of this project enabled new insights into young people's sexuality, offering a complex perspective that emphasises how the interplay of political discourses of gender and sexuality and feminist public debates on sexual ethics are shaping the materiality and affectivity of sexual experiences and relationships.

By foregrounding the porosity of young people's experiences and their co-constitutive affective entanglements with social and material worlds, this thesis contributes to discussions of how neoliberal foundations—like individualism, freedom and choice—and feminist activist artefacts—such as funas, consent and affective responsibility—are shaping the sexual subjectivities, practices and encounters of young people. The thesis aims to reshape our understanding of flirting, sexual ethics, and power dynamics with a lens that obliquely addresses discourses and social categories to emphasise, for example, fleeting and contingent power imbalances that shape youth sexual intimacies—such as differences in sexual interest or expertise—or how the arrangements of material objects incarnate what is commonly known as social pressures.

While shedding light on the impact of feminist activism on the sexual experiences of diverse youth in Chile, this study illuminated the educational implications of feminist activism from a posthuman perspective. Thus, this thesis offers suggestions for curriculum development and educational strategies that promote ethical, affirmative and pleasurable sexual relationalities while encouraging feminist activists to persist in their efforts towards a more just society. It is argued that the insights gained from understanding the interplay between discourses, materiality and affectivity in flirting practices can contribute to more egalitarian, respectful, and fulfilling understandings of sexual practices.

The insights of this thesis extend to other areas of concern in public policies and psycho-education programmes. Some of them are internet-facilitated gendered and sexual violence or the inclusion of trans* and LGBTQIA+ students at schools. These concerns align with my current work in Chile as a school advisor on gender, sexuality and relationships. There is much work to do on these topics, that requires a lens that considers the role of the material and affective in the co-constitution of diverse subjectivities and their inclusion at schools.

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I struggled with the linearity of writing throughout this thesis, but it feels more pressing when acknowledging the crucial role of humans and non-humans in making this research possible and shaping my journey as a researcher. Without each of them, this endeavour will not have been possible or it would have been significantly less interesting and fun.

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Figures and Tables

1. Introduction: Constructing a Beginning to This Research

This thesis explores the potential influence of feminist activism on flirting among young people in the context of Chile's arguably "contentious feminist politics". Errázuriz Besa (2021) employs this term to depict a scenario where feminism pervades society to the extent of triggering contentious debates surrounding feminist initiatives while compelling people to adopt specific positions. Some of these initiatives pertain to topics such as abortion, sexual and street harassment, and sexual and gender diversity. To introduce this research, I initially delineate the key entanglements of the Chilean "Feminist Movement" that inspired this research. Subsequently, I recount the narrative of my journey towards becoming a researcher that supports my choice to focus on flirting and feminism. Following this, I delve into the specifics of this project and expound upon the research questions of this thesis.

1.1 Delineating the Feminist Entanglements That Inspired This Research

Although Chile was the last country in Latin America to make high school sexuality education compulsory in 2010, the past decade has witnessed significant strides towards a more inclusive and equitable society. Notable milestones include the enactment of the Anti-Discrimination Law in 2012 and the Civil Partnership Law in 2015. Furthermore, 2015 saw the beginning of student-led protests advocating for non-sexist education. Since 2017, the Ministry of Education has actively promoted initiatives supporting LGBTQ+ communities within schools (Ministerio de Educación, 2023). In addition, there are laws like the Abortion Law of 2017, which, while insufficient, nevertheless permits abortions under specific circumstances, as well as the Anti-Street Sexual Harassment Law and the Gender Identity Law of 2019, and Equal Marriage and Parenthood in 2021 (for detailed information about these laws, please refer to www.bcn.cl). Each of these laws in some way involved hard-won institutional acceptance of principles associated with feminist activist campaigns.

The achievement of these advances owes much to the arduous work of feminist and sexual diversity activist groups who advocated for and collaborated in the creation of

these laws. Nevertheless, this would not have been possible without these activist groups' entanglements with public spaces, such as streets, squares and social media platforms. These spaces were imbued with the intense affectivity of the people who gathered, feeling connected by their presumably shared frustrations, anger and desire to change the unjust conditions in the country, a concept that Sundén and Paasonen term "affective homophily" (2020). Furthermore, these initiatives intertwine with objects that are crucial to these activist campaigns. In addition to traditional and creative protest signs, social media platforms facilitated a continuous exchange where protests were organised and then extended beyond the physical boundaries of the streets through the digital sharing of videos or pictures captured during those moments, blurring the distinctions between in-person and online activism (Errázuriz Besa, 2019). Some material objects even became icons. Notable examples of this context include the green scarf symbolising abortion rights, the LASTESIS performance video of *Un Violador en Tu Camino* (A Rapist in Your Path), the burgundy sequined balaclavas denouncing sexual violence against women during the so-called "Feminist May", and the infamous feminist funas. Below, I address feminist funas and the Feminist May that took place in 2018 since they best illustrate the influence of feminist activism on the public sphere that was the inspiration for this research.

The word funa derives from the Mapudungun indigenous language and translates to "rot" or "rotten" (Villena Araya, 2017). Initially emerging as a political tool in the 1990s, funas were employed to denounce the impunity surrounding crimes against humanity committed during Pinochet's dictatorship. In response to failed legal proceedings, funas were organised by commissions that called for peaceful demonstrations in order to publicly shame and socially condemn those evading justice. However, in contemporary usage, funa primarily denotes the public shaming of individuals for engaging in actions deemed illegal or unjust, such as failure to pay rent or spousal maintenance, various forms of violence and rape (Schmeisser, 2019). For this PhD project, my focus is specifically on what has been termed "feminist funa", where social media is used to report gendered and sexual violence, mostly against women, while publicly shaming the abuser (Larraín Matte, 2023; Vera Gajardo, 2022).

Unlike their original versions, feminist funas lack collective deliberation, as there are no commissions involved. Instead, they typically commence with individual testimonies that are then disseminated online. Feminist funas can occur before, during or after the pursuit of formal legal justice, although very few reported cases actually reach court (Bonavitta et al., 2020). The reasons for this include the lack of legitimacy and credibility attributed to victims of sexual violence, frequent re-victimisation by the police and a profound mistrust of courts to impact justice and reparation in these cases (Larraín Matte, 2023; Manso, 2019).

Feminist funas gained momentum with the emergence of #NiUnaMenos in 2016, a Latin American feminist movement against femicide. Subsequently, they gained further traction during the Feminist May in 2018 (Aguilera et al., 2021; Zerán, 2018). During that month, feminist students progressively occupied and paralysed universities throughout the country in unprecedented ways. Even universities that had previously refrained from participating in student protests, such as Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, joined in this time. Demonstrations spread throughout the entire country, with students denouncing sexism and sexual harassment from both staff and peers, and demanding protocols for sexual abuse within universities. University buildings were occupied and protesters spilled onto the streets, some bare-chested wearing burgundy sequined balaclavas, or dressed as nuns with short skirts and fishnet stockings. Particularly notable was the intervention of the statue of Pope John Paul II within the Main Campus of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. There is a photograph of this event below, illustrating various intertwining elements of spaces, objects, affects and discourses that contributed to the activist campaigns enabling the enactment of the laws that now facilitate progress towards a more inclusive and just society.

Figure 1. *Protest in the Main Campus building of Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile during the Feminist May. Photograph taken and posted on Twitter by @Maggita78*

In this image, a bare-chested woman wearing a sequined burgundy balaclava raises a clenched fist while standing on a statue of Pope John Paul II. She is surrounded by a group of young people with backpacks, likely students, some of whom wear similar balaclavas while others hold smartphones, possibly capturing and sharing the moment on social media. There is also a handwritten sign that reads "Sister, I believe you", and others are clapping and probably shouting. Thus, this image encapsulates the entanglements involved in this kind of feminist activist intervention, where bodies reclaim public or institutional spaces and reconfigure heteronormative icons while creating feminist ones—symbolised by the burgundy balaclava. The shouting and charged atmosphere probably reverberated among the protesters and onlookers, recorded on the smartphones and disseminated through videos and photos on social media. These entanglements persist if we consider that I discovered this image in a newspaper article featuring the 'photo of the day' from social media (El Desconcierto, 2018), which makes it possible to grasp how this image, initially posted on Twitter along with similar ones, circulated and appeared in the mainstream media, on the covers of academic feminist books (Aguilera et al., 2021; Zerán, 2018) and now features in this thesis, six years later.

Although unprecedented, Feminist May was not an entirely unexpected surprise, it could be argued that pervasive feminist ideas among secondary and higher education students, along with a growing number of funas denouncing sexual violence, had been building up to this for some time. What was surprising was how it transformed the academic university world. It prompted changes in the organisational structures of universities, including the implementation of gender violence protocols and "Secretaries of Sexuality and Gender" to address such cases in every university in the country. Additionally, some universities undertook reviews to identify and address gender biases in their curricula (Blanco & Chechilnitzky, 2018, in Larraín Matte, 2023).

Feminist funas have been entangled with the public sphere since at least 2015, sometimes emerging as a component of student protests against sexist education and sexual harassment within schools and universities (Errázuriz Besa, 2019). Over the last decade, feminist slogans condemning sexual assault, such as "no means no", "the fault wasn't mine", and "sister, I believe you", have become prevalent among teenagers and within schools. Teenagers' sexual practices have also been scrutinised and denounced by funas, both on social media and within school settings (Errázuriz Besa, 2019). Consequently, feminist funas advocate for a reconfiguration of sexual culture by denouncing sexism. They challenge the normalisation of men's overtly sexual behaviour and the pressure imposed on women (Barrientos & Silva, 2014; Rincón Aponte, 2010), highlighting such behaviour as violent and reprehensible. At the same time, funas aim to expose the perpetrator to social punishment and caution other women (Errázuriz Besa, 2019; Larraín Matte, 2023).

After Feminist May, funas played a significant role in Chile's social uprising, or *Estallido Social*, as it is known locally. This social upheaval began in October 2019 when hundreds of secondary students dodged fares in the Santiago Metro system to protest against a 30-peso increase in ticket prices. For years, secondary and post-secondary students had been protesting against the marketisation of education implemented within Pinochet's neoliberal policies, which have largely remained intact despite the return of democracy (Bellei, 2015; Bellei et al., 2014). According to Ball (Ball, 2003, 2012), the marketisation of education extends beyond the privatisation of institutions and includes the logic of performativity and competition, such as the use of vouchers to

allocate public funds. Education, health and pensions are critical areas where neoliberal individualism, competition and inequality thrive. In Chile, quality education and timely medical treatments are only available to those who can afford them, while obtaining a dignified pension depends on an individual's ability to work and save throughout their life. Consequently, an interpretation swiftly emerged, replacing the focus of the protest against the 30-peso fare increase with the 30 years of democratic governments that had perpetuated Pinochet's neoliberal policies and its consequent social inequities, spreading massively: it was not 30 pesos, it was 30 years (Araneda, 2021; Llanos Reyes & Aceituno Silva, 2020). The demonstrations during the social uprising persisted for months, with weekly protests that were not subdued by an agreement to change Chile's Constitution, drafted during the dictatorship, nor by the lockdowns imposed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the context of the social uprising, feminism, funas and rioting converged in November 2019, reaching a climax with the anthem and performance by the feminist group LASTESIS, denouncing sexual violence perpetrated by the State and the police: *A Rapist in Your Path* (Sepúlveda Eriz, 2021). This performance went viral and was replicated numerous times in different places across the country, including within schools. It promoted a surge of reports of sexual harassment between students in schools, with accusations directed at authorities for covering up these cases and failing to protect the victims (El Mostrador, 2019). Therefore, as is evident, feminist activism has exerted a significant influence on Chilean society, intricately intertwining with student and leftist activism. It is deeply embedded within a continuum of online and offline public spaces, mobilising and connecting bodies through shared experiences or sentiments, with the hope of altering embodied relationalities.

1.2 Becoming a Researcher: Assembling a Significant Story

Following this broad overview, if I have to pinpoint a starting point for this research, it would be when, in 2015, I decided to step away from my work as a child and youth psychoanalytic therapist and refocus my efforts towards education. Part of this decision stemmed from my frustration because I felt I was always late on the scene. By the time families sought therapy and the child finally received an appointment, the damage ran deep. I also noticed that many of the issues my patients were grappling with were

entangled with gendered and sexual norms, leading to various forms of violence within both schools and home environments. These issues included normalised, and sometimes encouraged physical aggression among boys, girls being body-shamed for not conforming to beauty standards, boys facing punishment and medication for inattentiveness in class without consideration for their emotional circumstances, tween girls experiencing shame regarding their sexuality and apprehension of growing up, and so on.

At that time, I had, and indeed still have, a strong belief in the critical need for better school-based prevention programs. Furthermore, I also was, and still am, sure that comprehensive and feminist sexuality education is a helpful tool to tackle school-based violence. As academic work emphasises, instances of youth aggression in schools often reflect cultural norms regarding sexuality and gender expression (Payne & Smith, 2012). Behind every incident of mockery, insult, harassment or physical altercation lies a gendered and sexual norm dictating how people should conform or behave. However, schools can also provide refuge for children and teenagers who face challenges within their families. For instance, I once treated a 15-year-old homosexual patient who endured abuse at home but found a relatively safe space within a group of girls who, like him, were passionate fans of Lady Gaga. There is evidence that appropriately implemented sexuality education can contribute to the prevention of school-based violence and the cultivation of safer environments by promoting understanding and respect for diversity, challenging gender norms and teaching about boundaries and skills that facilitate open communication and conflict resolution (Irvin & Tuladhar, 2021; Rollston, 2020).

Driven by this conviction, I underwent training as a sexuality educator in 2014. In 2016, I established a small team to implement sexuality education initiatives with teachers in public schools. Concurrently, I was working as a research assistant at the CIAE, the Advanced Education Research Centre at Universidad de Chile. Therefore, when I began considering pursuing a career as a researcher, studying for a PhD presented an opportunity to integrate these professional facets of myself: the psychoanalytic therapist, the sexuality educator and the researcher.

1.2.1 Why Study Flirting for Sexuality Education?

I chose to focus on flirting for my PhD research because of my 'personal history' with flirting and my experience and reflections on feminist contentious politics in Chile. Regarding my experiences with flirting, I must admit that its ambiguousness and complexity, coupled with its unwritten, rigid and gendered rules, always puzzled and annoyed me. During my time at school and university, as a heterosexual woman, the gendered scripts for flirting felt like a trap where I could never win. However, these scripts also frequently exposed men to rejection and hurt, which they often had to pretend did not affect them. Since my teenage years, I have been mindful of the sexual double standard and discussed it with friends, which in turn piqued my curiosity about how flirting is done, and the dynamics of attraction. Additionally, I have always been drawn to a good and highly detailed story. So, when friends recounted their flirting encounters, I asked them for great detail and descriptions—and indeed still do. Consequently, without noticing, I began to pay attention to the role that material objects played in flirting. In addition to common understanding of how mundane music or a lacklustre meal can dampen sexual attraction between individuals, I gathered anecdotes illustrating how, for instance, a judgemental comment on an unconventional lipstick shade could abruptly extinguish previously held sexual attraction, or how a nonchalant reaction to a drink spilt on the table and their clothes on a first date made a friend realise that this person was 'the one'. Flirting is an aspect of sexuality that has captivated me since I was young, and these conversations with peers fostered intuitions that guided my search for a theoretical framework to address the nuances of flirting that occur amidst materiality, affects and subjects.

In relation to Chile's feminist contentious politics, significant events were unfolding around the time I considered pursuing a PhD. Each year, Facebook reminds me of when, in October 2016, I joined a feminist digital campaign that encouraged women to share an experience of sexual harassment to raise awareness of its pervasiveness. I then joined a group of colleagues and protested on the streets with thousands of women in Santiago, Chile, and across Latin America (BBC News Mundo, 2016). At that time, neither I nor the women in my social and work circles were actively involved in feminist activism, but we felt compelled to join the campaign due to past experiences of sexual harassment. For

me, it was primarily an emotional response to this collective and networked online-offline event. On that day, women came together, united by shared experiences of abuse, and it felt good to be part of this enormous assembly of women, both online and in the streets. The Chilean feminist movement was beginning to assert itself in public spaces. However, I returned to my regular life and barely participated in the subsequent protests.

Then came the #MeToo movement in 2017, shaking the Global North with testimonies of privileged women in glamorous jobs who had experienced sexual harassment or abuse in the workplace. The media scandals triggered an influx of further testimonies, and, as a movement, #MeToo challenged the silence around sexual violence on an unprecedented scale (Mendes et al., 2018), giving other women the courage to speak up, exposing everyday forms of sexism and highlighting the collective, pervasive and structural causes of sexual violence, while also prompting (some) men to reconsider their approach to interactions with women (Reinicke, 2022). The #MeToo testimonies in the media shed light on the impact of power dynamics and gender asymmetries in the workplace, sparking heated debate about conflict of interests, coercion, women's sexual agency and the complexities of consent. It also triggered discussion about the efficacy of tools such as legal prosecution and online public shaming to promote feminist social change.

When #MeToo 'arrived' in the Southern Cone of Latin America, it did not shake it. Instead, it amplified an existing momentum of denouncing violence against women that had gained mainstream traction in 2016 with the emergence of "NiUnaMenos", the Latin American feminist movement against femicide and violence against women, which also spearheaded the protests in which I participated that October (Garibotti & Hopp, 2019). As part of this momentum within the country, particularly notorious events included the revelation of sexual abuses within the Humanities and Philosophy department at Universidad de Chile in 2016 (Ossandón & Tenorio, 2016), the disclosure of frequent sexual abuses in the young music scene in 2017 (Tapia, 2017) and, in line with #MeToo, reports of sexual harassment involving soap opera director Herval Abreu in April 2018 (El Mostrador Braga, 2018) and film director Nicolás López a couple of months later (CNN Chile, 2018). However, of greater interest for this project is the widespread use of

digital testimonies and accusations of sexual violence among high school networks through social media platforms like Facebook since at least 2015, targeting sexism and sexual violence wherever it arises (Errázuriz Besa, 2019, 2020).

In many discussions of these cases, sexual harassment was often intertwined with flirting, resulting in both outrage and confusion. This entanglement is facilitated by the constitutive ambiguity of flirting and its tight scripting by gendered and sexual norms/discourses that compel women into a passive, reactive position to men's predatory sexuality, which is also compelled (Bartlett et al., 2019). Thus, in response to #MeToo's testimonies of abuse, the backlash idea that 'men cannot flirt anymore' peaked with a letter to Le Monde Diplomatique—which also attracted attention in Chilean media (The Clinic, 2018)—by 100 French women critiquing #MeToo as a puritan movement against sexual freedom. A translated excerpt of the letter reads:

> Rape is a crime. But insistent or clumsy flirting is not a crime, nor is gallantry a chauvinist aggression.
>
> (Safronova, 2018, para. 3)

As an observer of the #MeToo phenomenon, I found it intriguing how swiftly flirting seemed to disappear from the heart of these contentious debates. This change may stem from the elusive nature of flirting or from an effort to differentiate these incidents as clear sexual violence, contrasting with the widespread perception of flirting as playful and innocuous (Hoffman-Schwartz et al., 2015). However, as argued by Bartlett et al. (2019), flirtation transcends mere innocent play, and movements such as #MeToo emphasise the need for additional critical feminist analysis.

Flattery, sexual innuendo, touches, nude pictures, kissing, ambiguity, non-verbal communication, silence—these can all be considered elements of both flirting and harassment. As I demonstrate in the literature review, the complexities of flirting first arise from a lack of consensus on any practice or behaviour that can be definitively identified as flirtation. Some scholars have attempted to determine flirting through its intentions (Bianciotti, 2015; Meenagh, 2015; Mortensen, 2017; Pinsky, 2019; Whitty, 2003). However, intentions alone are insufficient to constitute flirting, as they may not

always be recognised as such or might be perceived as harassment (Bartlett et al., 2019). To address these challenges, some academics choose an intersubjective approach (Bartlett et al., 2019), while others draw upon Deleuze and Guattari to conceptualise flirting as assemblages and emphasise the constitutive role of the material context (Brown, 2008; Lambevski, 2005). I choose to extend the latter approaches into a posthuman perspective that enables an understanding of 'intimate' experience not solely as humans situated or embedded in a particular (social, material, geographic, etc.) context, but as constituting and being constituted by specific entanglements of discourses, matter and affects. This approach combines Karen Barad's (2007) theory with various notions of "affect" to challenge notions of discrete individualities with predetermined intentions that exist before an encounter. Instead, it focuses on how each intra-action of elements constitutes a flirting encounter.

In this thesis, I contend that a critical examination of flirting necessitates moving beyond the paradigm of discrete agents and encounters. Moreover, a critical analysis of flirting must transcend the confines of feminism and issues of sexual violence, which covers sexual abuse scandals or the differentiation between flattery and street harassment. It must include power imbalances arising from factors such as age discrepancies, race, class, physical attractiveness and social standing, to name but a few. A case in Chile that supports my argument is that of Katy Winter. Katy was a 16-year-old young woman of Colombian heritage and an elite school student. She took her life in May 2018 following months of threats by her ex-boyfriend to share nude photos and after several days of being intensely harassed online and 'slut-shamed' by her schoolmates for having kissed another young man at a party who had lied about being in a relationship (CHV Noticias, 2018). None of Katy's schoolmates provided testimony during the investigation, and the case was closed. Public discourse surrounding the incident centred on terms such as school 'bullying' and 'cyberbullying' (Senado, 2019). However, shifting the focus to 'bullying' is problematic because it downplays the severity of harassment and gendered violence (Payne & Smith, 2012; Ringrose & Rawlings, 2015). Furthermore, concentrating solely on overt behaviours like harassment fails to address the ambiguous or liminal aspects of how we relate sexually. Consequently, it neglects the complex bodily and digital navigation that (hetero)sexual relationalities demand, particularly for young women.

Instances of femicide-suicide, such as Katy's, where suicides are triggered by experiences of gendered or sexual violence (Mora & Varea, 2021), illustrate the devastating impact of sexual and sexist violence that is not classified as rape. There is a tendency towards hierarchisation of the severeness of sexual violence in the law and its penal consequences (Escudero, 2023), which can lead public opinion to perceive cases like that of Katy as less severe than, for example, that of Antonia Barra. Antonia killed herself at 21 years old after she was raped, not believed and then slut-shamed by her friends and ex-boyfriend (Blasco, 2020). This hierarchical view of sexual violence stems from an emphasis on genital access, which together create a scale of severity that diverts our attention from everyday sexual violence, consequently deemed less significant.

These two cases present different yet equally significant issues. In Antonia's case, the investigation into her rape uncovered security footage that showed her visibly intoxicated and being dragged to the abuser's cabin (24 Horas, 2020), which sparked debates about whether this act of pulling constituted flirtatious teasing or coercion, raising questions about the capacity to consent. With respect to Katy, one might question the possibility of giving consent when crucial information is withheld. Additionally, there is the issue of identifying all the individuals who contributed to her suicide: the extortionist ex-boyfriend and the young man who misled her about his relationship status and took advantage of her. However, we must not overlook the peers who engaged in slut-shaming and online harassment and should address the daunting task of grappling with the cumulative impact of seemingly innocuous 'individual' contributions, such as social media posts, emojis, comments or likes, which can coalesce into a networked violent force that defies simple attribution to specific individuals.

Focusing on flirting enables us to reflect on feminist ethics for sexual relationalities, delving into the conundrums of consent, such as those mentioned above, including the pressures of gendered norms and how these are exerted within peer networks. Moreover, centring our attention on flirting allows us to explore feminist ethics of care, such as '*responsabilidad afectiva'* (here on translated as 'affective responsibility'), which entails being accountable for the emotional consequences of our actions or omissions on others (Alvear Blau, 2020). Thus, it can enhance our reflections and understandings of ethical sexual relationships.

As sexuality educators, I believe we are ill-equipped to address the complexities of flirting, let alone to teach and prepare students to confront these situations. However, flirting among young people has received little academic attention. This could be attributed to the elusive nature of flirting as a subject of study or to the prevailing focus on intercourse and harm in research on youth sexuality. Flirting appears to be a slippery and uncomfortable topic that is often overlooked and supplanted by other 'more urgent' issues.

Accordingly, although the relevance of this project is closely associated with sexual violence, the focus of this thesis is on flirting and feminism. While conducting this research, I constantly had to grapple with the tendency for violence to overshadow other aspects, as observed in the aforementioned examples. As part of this resistance, this study does not seek to examine the experiences of women and gender/sexual dissidents regarding sexual violence while flirting, nor does it explore how feminist activism in Chile has reduced its prevalence. Instead, the aim is to analyse how feminist activism can shape how flirting is done and felt, with the intention of contributing to discussion on feminist sexual ethics and how to teach them.

This thesis emphasises the political significance of flirting as a research subject without attempting to simplify it, but rather engaging with its complexity and exploring the myriad of elements that contribute to each flirting encounter. Furthermore, the political context in Chile provides fertile ground for examining the potential of feminist activism to shape young people's sexuality. Shifting the focus from violence to flirting helps to reformulate ethical topics related to young people's sexuality. Therefore, this study presents a particular opportunity to develop nuanced and critical approaches for sexuality educators in Chile to work with feminist ideas, social media activism and contested topics such as affirmative consent and affective responsibility.

1.3 The Project: Research Questions, Framework and Methods

It is within this contentious feminist context that this research explores the following question:

How might feminist activism be shaping flirting among teenagers in Chile?

To address this question, this research had to find a way to delineate flirting while avoiding oversimplification of its fleeting complexity. As I show in the literature review, some of the challenges when researching flirting emanate from the lack of agreement on any practice or behaviour that can be pinned down as flirtation. Additionally, intentions alone do not make a gesture flirtatious, as they may be misinterpreted or perceived as harassment (Bartlett et al., 2019).

As one way to face these challenges, this project conceptualises flirting as material-discursive and affective intra-actions (Barad, 2007), aiming to grasp its hard-to-define characteristics as relational and contingent co-production of discourses, material objects, spaces, embodied sensations, emotions and actions. Particularly, my approach combines Barad's (2007) concepts with various definitions and figurations of "affect" (Anderson, 2009; Hickey-Moody, 2013; Kyrölä & Paasonen, 2016; Massumi, 2015) and psychoanalytical "fantasy" (Freud, 1919/2011; Glynos et al., 2019; Lapping, 2011).

This approach, that can be called 'posthuman', enables an understanding of 'intimate' experience not merely as human bodies situated or embedded in a particular—social, material, geographic, etc.—context. Instead, it offers a way to think about 'intimate' experiences as constituting and being constituted by specific intra-actions that produce the particularities of each, singular, phenomenon. In this way, this perspective disturbs the notion of context. Instead, it notices the constant interplay of what might normally be taken as context as part-of the same phenomenon.

I refer to this perspective as posthuman because it seeks to move beyond/in addition to the 'human' in different ways. One way is by challenging humanist assumptions that individualise sexuality, desire, subjectivity and agency, thereby portraying 'flirters' as the sole actors involved. Another way, following Barad, is

> By "posthumanist" I mean to signal the crucial recognition that nonhumans play an important role in naturalcultural practices, including everyday social practices, scientific practices, and practices that do not include humans. But also, beyond this, my use of "posthumanism" marks a refusal to take the distinction between "human" and "nonhuman" for granted, and to found analyses on this presumably fixed and inherent set of categories. (2007, p. 32)

A posthuman lens emphasises the role of material objects, body parts, discourses, social media, and other elements in constituting flirting. Additionally, this Baradian perspective provides tools to analyse power imbalances beyond psychic and social frameworks, considering them as more than discursive and more than human. Consequently, power can be mapped as felt sensations, bodily movements, imagined scenarios and material constellations.

This project specifically explores how the Chilean feminist contentious context could shape how flirting is done between teenagers who began high school around 2018, amidst the feminist upheaval. Thus, given that this project is rooted in a posthuman conceptual framework and that its methodology relies on accounts of flirting, the original question can be reframed as:

> How might the material-discursive and affective intra-actions that co-produce the diverse forms of feminist activism shape the accounts of flirting among teenagers in Chile?

In line with this theoretical approach, and considering the contentious feminist climate and the challenges of defining flirting, this research also inquires:

> How can focusing on flirting and feminist activism as material-discursive and affective intra-actions contribute to thinking about flirting and its ethical dilemmas?

To achieve this objective, it was imperative to devise methods that could produce rich and detailed accounts, allowing for the examination of discourses, materialities, embodied sensations, emotions and any other factors at play in the narratives about flirting. My choices on the methods were initially influenced by my psychoanalytical background and my desire for this project to assemble my various professional interests/selves. I was comfortable with free association as a tool that facilitates the patient being placed at the centre, trying not to foreclose what they are saying or doing, with my own experiences or psychological knowledge. I also appreciated the emphasis my psychoanalytic training placed on the value of uncertainty, fostering a sense of

curiosity and remaining open to surprises. I considered these to be helpful research tools and wanted to further explore the benefits of using the free association method in research.

Combining free association with my posthuman theoretical framework involved extending its primary focus from speech to encompass the materiality of words, the body and objects, as originally emphasised by Freud (1901/2011), but this time within research encounters. This also entailed generating different applications of free association and combining them with other interview methods. Consequently, this study also investigates:

> How can a posthuman approach to the psychoanalytic free association method help highlight the material and affective aspects within accounts of flirting?

1.4 Outline of the Thesis

Following this introduction, this thesis continues with a literature review in Chapter 2, titled "Flirting Challenges: A Literature Review on Studies of Flirting and Young People's Sexual Relationalities in the Context of Debates on Feminist Sexual Ethics". The first half of this chapter examines the definitions and research surrounding flirting, delineating the boundaries and focal points of this study. The second half shifts the focus towards feminist discussions on ethical sexuality, which are pivotal in understanding the influence of feminist activism on flirting accounts. I centre particularly on masculine reactions to online feminist public shaming, or the so-called funas, affective responsibility and affirmative consent.

The literature review also lays the ground for the theoretical approach of this research, which is discussed in Chapter 3: "Conceptual Underpinnings to Study Flirting Encounters: Intra-actions, Affect and Fantasy". This approach combines Baradian (2007) "intra-actions", with conceptualisations of "affect" to grasp the embodied felt effects of these intra-actions. It also incorporates psychoanalytical approaches to "fantasy" in order to explore psychic intra-actions with the material-discursive and how affects can manifest as conscious or unconscious imagined alternative—past, present or future—scenarios that can influence what occurs in an encounter or in an account of it.

Applying this theoretical combination, Chapter 4, "Intra-active Methodology and Online Methods: Intraviewing the Material-Discursive and Affective Entanglements of Flirting", presents the methodological intra-active stance of this research and the design of the methods. The latter combines three methods—posthuman intraviews (Kuntz & Presnall, 2012), psychoanalytic free association methods (Holmes, 2013) and interviews on flirting accounts (Mølbak, 2010)—to address the challenges of conducting interviews to elicit as much of the materiality and embodied felt sensations from flirting accounts while working online amid a global pandemic.

After establishing the basis of this research, the subsequent three chapters delve into this study's exploration of how feminist activism may be shaping young people's flirting in Chile and how a material-discursive and affective approach helps address some of the ethical dilemmas surrounding flirting.

In Chapter 5, titled "To Me It's Normal, But if it Bothers Them, It's Not Said Anymore': Intra-Actions of Feminist Funas With Teenage Flirting and Heterosexual Masculinities", I explore how the digital calling out of sexual violence, or feminist funa, has now become an integral part-of the flirting intra-actions of a group of heterosexual young men as a fantasised fear of being called out that reshapes heterosexual flirting and their possibilities to enact masculinities.

In Chapter 6, titled "*Responsabilidad Afectiva*": Flirting's Tensions With Postfeminist Arrangements for Clear Communication From the Beginning", I investigate how affective responsibility, a feminist psychology-infused term that emphasises clear communication as an ethics of care in relationships to prevent harm, influences the accounts of flirting and the opportunities for two teenagers who identify as feminist and LGBTQ+.

In Chapter 7, "Challenging the 'Non-Consensual' Through a Posthuman Mapping of Cis-Heterosexist Affects and Contingent Intra-Acting Bodily Boundaries", I focus on the potentials offered by a material-discursive and affective intra-active approach, and re-imagine bodies and bodily boundaries as ongoingly produced not only by flesh and discourse, but also by objects, space and affectivity, in accounts of repeated instances of 'non-consensual' kissing or hand-holding.

Finally, in the Conclusion chapter, I review the theoretical and methodological contributions of this research project, demonstrating how a posthuman material-discursive and affective approach aids in reconsidering some of the ethical dilemmas surrounding flirting, particularly those stemming from its humanist and neoliberal postfeminist foundations. Lastly, I reflect on the limitations of this study and suggest additional/further possibilities for this research.

2. Flirting Challenges: Literature Review on Studies on Flirting and Young People's Sexual Relationalities in the Context of Debates on Feminist Sexual Ethics

Outline of the chapter

This chapter reviews literature from a wide variety of disciplines and topics to demonstrate how this research is situated among existing work concerning young people's flirting. This review focuses on how to define and study flirting while also exploring and unpacking feminist ethics as a potentially significant influence on young people's flirting in Chile.

The first half of this chapter, namely sections 1 and 2, frames this study's theoretical and methodological foundations. Section 1 examines how flirting has been defined in different academic literature and unpacks definitions of flirting from different disciplines, such as Comparative Literature studies, sociology, psychoanalysis, media studies and phenomenology, to name but a few. It analyses the underpinnings of flirting, informing and situating this study's conceptualisation of flirting, prompting it to look beyond, and in addition to, humanistic understandings of sexuality. Section 2 investigates how flirting among young people has been studied and compiles empirical research from diverse disciplines and theoretical frameworks on flirting, sexual cultures and related practices such as dancing at clubs and sexting. This section highlights the intertwining of discourses and material contexts and their affective impact on the body, which are worth considering when researching flirting. While emphasizing the need to acknowledge the simultaneous and relational constitutive role of discourses, materialities and embodied affects, this section also compares the affordances of ethnographic observation and interviewing in obtaining rich and detailed data for this research.

The second half of the chapter, section 3, reviews feminist discussions on sexual ethics and unpacks two relevant concepts in the mainstream media in Chile: affective responsibility and affirmative consent. This study builds on these critiques to explore whether and how these feminist ethics manifest within flirting encounters. This section

thus provides more information about the political feminist context in Chile while exploring the critiques of these concepts among feminists and some alternative proposals from sex educators and psychoanalysts, setting the foundations for further exploration of the potential intertwining of these ethics with the flirting accounts of the teenagers in this study.

The chapter concludes with section 4, which examines the implications of the convergence of these different groups of studies for this research on how feminist activism may be shaping flirting among teenagers in Chile and how a posthuman approach can contribute to considering flirting and its ethical challenges.

2.1 Flirting Challenges: How Has Flirting Been Defined in Academic Literature?

Defining flirting can be challenging, as a wide range of gestures and practices can be considered flirtatious, and there is no consensus on any feature that can unequivocally define an action or encounter as flirtation. The literature on flirting across various disciplines reflects this diversity, as different actions have been considered flirting: coy smiles and giggling (Oktarini, 2017); compliments and self-praise (Speer, 2017); innuendo and teasing (Meenagh, 2015; Pinsky, 2019); sharing fantasies (Mortensen, 2017); insults, playful banter and sexual improprieties (Korobov, 2011), among many others. The reasons for this broad spectrum of activities may be that flirting is often embedded in other activities to pass as such (Mortensen, 2017), or that it relies on multiple interpretations of the same action (Kiesling, 2013) or the possibility of deniability (Oktarini, 2017). Another possible reason can be found in Freud's (1905a/2011) theorisation of sexuality as capable of eroticising almost anything, especially its regulations (for empirical examples, see Hromadžić, 2015; Osella & Osella, 1998). Consequently, there is a debate among scholars who argue that flirting is inherently implicit or ambiguous (Cameron & Kulick, 2006; Mortensen, 2017; Tavory, 2009), while others contend that flirting is sometimes very much explicit and evident for those involved or for others observing (Pinsky, 2019; Speer, 2017). Thus, flirting remains very challenging to pin down, define or describe.

This section builds a case for a non-humanist conceptualisation of flirting by outlining definitions and unpacking their underpinnings and limitations within a feminist approach, particularly highlighting their implications regarding binary thinking and

power hierarchies associated with gender, sexuality and monogamy. It also addresses the challenges of thinking about flirting based on purposes or human intentions. Lastly, Mølbak's (2010) definition of flirting as a liminal event is reviewed as an alternative to humanist interpretations of flirting that focus on individual intentions.

2.1.1 The Problems With Uncontested Definitions of Flirting as 'Play'

Academic studies on flirting are often grounded in classical sociologist Georg Simmel's 1923 work on flirtation, which problematically defines it as "play because it does not take anything seriously" (1984, p. 147) and he bases his understanding of flirting interactions on positioning women as gatekeepers. As a result, even though current scholars reject the heterosexist assumptions of Simmel's work, their definitions tend to rely on his playful/serious dichotomy (for examples, see Fleming, 2015; Koné, 2015; Phillips, 1994; Pinsky, 2019; Stone, 2015b; Vinken, 2015). And basing the definition of flirting on this dichotomy poses three problems. First, playful/serious is a false dichotomy, as Winnicott's (2010) thorough work on play demonstrates. Second, it overlooks that flirting also involves the possibility of rejection and shame (Bartlett et al., 2019), so flirting is not inherently playful and could be a source of anxiety or harassment (Reinicke, 2022). Third and last, when the playful/serious binary is used to define flirting, it supports understandings of sexuality and relationships where sexual, physical encounters and romantic, monogamous relationships are privileged as the 'serious', building a hierarchy of sexual and intimate behaviours that fixes sexuality around sex and romantic, monogamous relationships, implying that other sexual manifestations are 'just play'. Similarly, one should be cautious with work that frames flirting as a prelude to sexual activity (Cupples & Thompson, 2010), which prevents us from thinking of flirting as a sexual activity in its own right.

2.1.2 *The Dilemma of Intentionality*

Given that no single quality can fully define flirting, other attempts to describe it have focused on the purposes or intentions of the flirting parties. However, these definitions are problematic because intentions are elusive, and there is no guaranteed association between intentions and outcomes. The following two examples illustrate the problems of focusing on individual purposes. The first example comes from a group of

Comparative Literature scholars in the book *Flirtations* (Hoffman-Schwartz et al., 2015), who drew on Simmel and considered flirtation non-teleological, with no aim but itself. According to them, flirtation uses the gestures and performances of seduction, but unlike seduction, it never attempts to access the object of desire (Fleming, 2015; Stone, 2015a). Going further, Fleming (2015) states that flirtation has no consequences since it has no purpose. The latter may have been applicable in the 1920s Western contexts, but it certainly does not hold true nowadays. For example, Bartlett et al. (2019) argue that there is a particular vulnerability when one is approached flirtatiously. Hence, despite playful or non-harmful intentions, a glance, even at a distance (not to mention a touch!), can feel intrusive, objectifying or even harassing.

The second example of why it is problematic to use purposes to define flirting arises from empirical research, where researchers have attributed different purposes to flirting, such as 1) signalling sexual/romantic interest or attraction (Mortensen, 2017; Pinsky, 2019), 2) assessing one's own sexual appeal by attracting the other (Bianciotti, 2011) and 3) assessing the other's sexual/romantic interest (Meenagh, 2015; Whitty, 2003). Since these purposes are not exhaustive and not mutually exclusive, how can one discern the other's intentions? Is it even possible to differentiate between these purposes? Moreover, is it possible to assert that someone can definitively know their intentions for flirting? Psychoanalysis would argue otherwise, and everyday life would concur. As Bartlett, Clarke and Cover (2019) illustrate through the analysis of teenage films, intentions can be elusive even to those involved, as seen in the trope of a couple that initially fakes a relationship only to end up falling in love without realising.

All in all, focusing on purposes to define flirting may prove inadequate to address the complexities of the phenomenon. Simultaneously, it raises other dilemmas, such as: can you flirt without knowing you are flirting? Are you flirting if no one else notices you are flirting? The shortcomings of flirting intentions highlight its complexities, as it involves a relationality that cannot be reduced to one of the parties. This is why others have suggested an approach that considers what happens in-between flirters (Bartlett et al., 2019; Mølbak, 2010).

2.1.3 *Mølbak's Flirting as a Liminal Event*

Mølbak (2010) advocates for an approach that avoids sinking into the vast repertoire of flirting practices or getting lost in the end goal of people's actions. Instead, he proposes conceiving of flirting as a liminal event, wherein it is neither a subjective act nor an objective behaviour but rather an experience that creates each subject through the other. This relational constitution through an event encompasses not only the human flirters but also the material context that is constituted by the event. From his perspective, flirting emerges from the specific and contingent ways in which people flirt, and it is irreducible to conscious acts since it also involves being constituted in and through the actions of others. Consequently, agency would not reside in the autonomous subject but emerges from the interaction. Thus, no human or nonhuman participant can be identified as initiating or being subjected to the activity. Therefore, Mølbak's interpretation of flirting as a liminal event with no pre-existing individual flirters helps us acknowledge the situatedness and contingencies of flirting.

To examine the experience of flirting in depth, Mølbak (2010) designed a method in which he solicited written narrative accounts of flirting moments to facilitate an interview where more details could be explored. This rich data enabled him to create 55 themes which emphasised felt sensations—of uncertainty, touch/being touched, rhythm, being carried away, feeling valued, fearing judgement and so forth—that showed an intertwinement between felt sensations and social norms and their possibilities to shape flirting, such as when promoting stereotypical behaviour to avoid social judgement. Therefore, Mølbak constructed a theoretically informed, detailed description of what could be happening, or what people might be experiencing during a flirting event, illustrating various ways in which flirting may emerge.

Mølbak's (2010) emphasis on felt sensations in his themes is a valuable reminder of the affective and sensual quality of flirting that can sometimes be challenging to articulate in words. However, his focus on flirting as a happening overlooks the power relationalities within flirting. This is because, despite acknowledging that social norms influence flirting and recognising the limitations of his white sample within one US university, he does not engage with the potential roles of gender, age, class and ethnicity in these flirting happenings. Additionally, he misses the chance to analyse how social norms may

have shaped participants' accounts of flirting and the themes he derived from them. Nevertheless, Mølbak advances an approach that expands other intersubjective approaches to flirting that focus on interpersonal negotiations (see, for example, Bartlett et al., 2019).

As demonstrated, it is difficult to define flirting as no single quality captures it. Moreover, conceptualisations of flirting based on individual humanist subjective intentions leave unanswered questions about the current challenges of flirting. These include the slipperiness of intentions, the blurred lines between flirtation and harassment, and gendered power imbalances that exert pressure and restrict the possibilities of the party in the more vulnerable position. Furthermore, contingent and liminal conceptualisations still need to find a way to address power dynamics within relational encounters.

So, how can we research flirting without relying on specific gestures, qualities or the particular intentions of the flirters, while also addressing the power relations at play?

2.2 How Has Flirting Among Young People Been Studied? Focusing on the Discursive, the Material and the Affective, or All at Once

Considering the challenges in defining flirting outlined in the preceding section and the relevance of Mølbak's study in demonstrating the entangled influence of social norms and embodied sensations, this section consolidates a variety of studies from diverse disciplines and topics to explore how empirical studies research flirting with young people through three subsections that build on one another, each highlighting the discursive, material and affective elements of flirting.

2.2.1 *Normative Gendered Discourses on Flirting: Resisting and Reproducing Discourses*

This section reviews ethnographic research that presents flirting and similar practices as being capable of resisting normative discourses. It then focuses on research that centres on gender performativity as crucial in scripting flirting. It addresses the contributions of these bodies of research while also emphasising the importance of exploring beyond discourses.

2.2.1.1 Flirting as resistance to norms

There is a body of literature consisting predominantly of ethnographic studies that considers the ways flirting bends, resists or conforms to social norms within very specific social scenarios like graduation celebrations (Fjær et al., 2015) or Christian festivals in Norway (Trysnes, 2019), separatist high schools in Bosnia-Herzegovina (Hromadžić, 2015), text messages among Mayan teenagers (León, 2017), the streets of South India (Osella & Osella, 1998), electronic music dance clubs in Colombia (Rincón Aponte, 2010) or tango clubs in Argentina (Bianciotti, 2015).

These studies and their particular scenarios highlight the situatedness of flirting and demonstrate the ways in which flirting can reproduce dominant discourses and practices while also resisting or subverting those constraints. Interestingly, some of these studies focus not only on gender and class norms but also on regulations such as inter-ethnic mixing in post-conflict countries (Hromadžić, 2015) or parental surveillance (León, 2017). In this manner, flirting is considered a 'carnivalesque' practice, wherein the dominant order can temporarily be overturned (Hromadžić, 2015; Osella & Osella, 1998). However, this carnivalesque approach is problematic mainly for two reasons. Firstly, mere playing with the rules acknowledges them as rules, thus reinforming their hegemony. Secondly, this resistance must be viewed as a complex mixture in which some social norms are challenged while others are reified.

These studies have contributed to acknowledging the manifold ways in which gendered power is enacted and resisted, indicating potential avenues for social change. However, at the same time, they replicate binary thinking regarding sexuality (e.g., straight/queer, men/women, active/passive), for example, by separating the flirting styles of heterosexuals and homosexuals even though they do not show significant variations (Rincón Aponte, 2010), or by segregating flirting performances by gender, referring to active and passive roles (Bianciotti, 2015; Trysnes, 2019). Moreover, among these studies, some scholars discuss which gender is 'really' taking the initiative as if it is a marker of agentic power, which leads our understanding into rabbit holes that are no longer productive. For example, assertions that women take active roles and challenge femininity scripts by taking the initiative when displaying strategies to insinuate interest or seduce men (Bianciotti, 2015; Rincón Aponte, 2010; Trysnes, 2019) create

the illusory idea of a power shift and obscures that men are still the ones expected to make an overt move, and women are, therefore, still expected to respond to those overt moves, replicating traditional gender norms.

2.2.1.2 Flirting as scripted gender performativity

Several of the social studies on flirting and sexual practices, especially Latin American research, draw from Simon and Gagnon's (1973) sexual script theory (Barrientos, 2006; Bianciotti, 2011, 2015, 2017; Jones, 2010; Maldonado, 2015). This theory, rooted in a social constructionist paradigm, asserts that sexuality is not individual but socially scripted at cultural, interpersonal and intrapsychic levels, defining what is possible, desirable or excluded, as well as conventions for behaviours, emotional responses and even fantasies. Consequently, this theory underscores the interplay among the cultural, interpersonal and intrapsychic as a dynamic continuum to comprehend sexual behaviour within specific social contexts. However, this approach steers the research towards identifying patterns to map the normative, such as outlining the 'new' conventions for digital flirtation among teenagers (see, for example, Pinsky, 2019). It thus provides a sense of general knowledge of a particular community, overlooking the daily microsocial negotiations of actual individuals (Lambevski, 2005).

Feminist studies that focus on the performance of gender while flirting combine sexual script theory with Butler's (2002) performativity theory, which posits that gender is created and maintained by the repetition of embodied acts and expressions. Thus, gender is not inherent but is constantly enacted through the materiality of the body according to social systems that enforce heteronormative gender and sexual behaviours. The combination of both theories enables an exploration of how gendered norms regarding flirting are reproduced, resisted and created anew within their specific sample/field. Two examples of these studies are Diana Pinsky's (2019) research on new digital flirtation scripts across gender and sexuality identities among high school students in the US, and María Celeste Bianciotti's (2015) ethnographic exploration of dance clubs.

Bianciotti's (2015) ethnographic research focuses on two different contexts: dance tango venues and university dance clubs in Córdoba, Argentina. She illustrates how gender and flirting are performatively enacted through the stylisation of the body

according to highly situated aesthetics and norms surrounding masculinity, femininity and 'decency'. She also examines how this bodily stylisation with particular objects is used to accrue erotic capital (Hakim, 2010). For instance, in her study, car keys or expensive watches for men, and stilettos, makeup and revealing attire on women are presented as having a role of enacting sexually attractive gendered traits, albeit being valued differently in these two contexts, particularly in terms of (classed) feminine decency.

Bianciotti's emphasis on the gender performativity of objects also adds to traditional approaches to flirting, where non-human entities and things (like dogs or a strand of hair) are utilised as tools to flirt or to pretend to do otherwise (Hoffman-Schwartz et al., 2015; Simmel, 1984). Nonetheless, her emphasis on the enactment of gender in accordance with heteronormative discourses may overlook embodied sensations and emotions, thereby neglecting questions about the sensory and affective features of the flirting body and the intertwining of discourses, affects and bodies.

2.2.1.3 Commentary: Beyond binary thinking and the primacy of the discursive in flirting

The reviewed research in this section addressed the (social) situatedness of flirting, mainly relying on gender norms, sexual scripts and/or performativity analysis. Thus, it has contributed to acknowledging the manifold ways in which gendered power is enacted and resisted, yet replicating binary thinking on sexuality (straight/queer, man/woman, conform/resist). As a result, this framework inevitably generalises sexuality into social categories and conceptualises individuals as navigating these social discourses, sometimes reproducing and sometimes challenging them.

Regarding methods, it is possible that the emphasis on the enactment and resistance of the discursive in both observations and interview-based studies has diminished the gap between the data and the conclusions reached by both kinds of research. However, Bianciotti's observations did emphasise the role of material objects but, at the same time, its emphasis on gender performativity risks neglecting the body's sensorial and affective features, which are also crucial for flirting. Others have argued for an approach that focuses on the micro-social power dynamics in sexual situations, which includes discourses as they are enacted by material spaces and objects and felt in the sensuous

body (Lambevski, 2005; Tan, 2013). Thus, flirting should be studied as more-than-discursive, as done by the research in the following sections.

2.2.2 *Offline/Online Material Spaces: (Hetero)Sexualised Territories and Networked Digital Spaces*

This section focuses on studies that address the challenges of overcoming the discursive dominance in social research while also considering material space and objects as more than mere social context and as key for creating flirting encounters, both offline and online.

2.2.2.1 Flirting geographies: Conceptualising how 'where' matters

In addition to Bianciotti's study on flirting and dancing at clubs, studies on the geographies of sexualities have made significant contributions to the study of flirting because of their focus on subjects in settings, where settings are considered socially constructed spaces that also form the social processes that constitute them (Craene, 2017). Within this discipline, scholars have attempted to use theoretical approaches to study flirting as constituted by its setting, where the setting refers both to social values and material sensoriality.

Within this body of work, some scholars (Duff, 2016; Lambevski, 2005; Pedersen et al., 2017) draw on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "assemblage", understanding it as a constellation of human and nonhuman bodies that relationally co-produce a (flirting) encounter by prompting some potential developments while precluding others (Pedersen et al., 2017). Thus, assemblage is helpful to think of these subjects in settings not as subjects embedded but co-constituted by discourses, material objects and spaces. One example is the study by Pedersen et al. (2017) with narrative interviews about alcohol use and one-night stands in Norway. In this study, they realised that participants often included detailed accounts of the settings and overall mood that framed and led up to the one-night stand encounter, including broader geographical and cultural contexts. This finding led them to draw on assemblage to conceptualise the coming together of these material arrangements of smoke, lights, lasers, dancing and alcohol—or the backseat of a car—that, added to specific narratives, eased sexual disinhibition and legitimated playful deviance. Consequently, they suggest there is an interplay between

human and nonhuman agencies in shaping the performances and experience of one-night stands where desire "is brought into being in a specific socio-spatial context which results in capacities to feel attraction and act sexually" (Pedersen et al., 2017, p. 164).

These scholars of geographies, and others that also draw on affect theory (Brown, 2008; Tan, 2013), emphasise that spaces and human experience are co-constituted within certain narratives that simultaneously provoke specific uses of the space and objects, shaping what bodies feel and are more inclined to do. For example, Tan (2013) describes how the heterosexualisation of spaces by material arrangements—dim lights, smoke, décor—and the use of intoxicating substances facilitate sexual disinhibition. These studies demonstrate that what bodies do and feel is entangled and co-produced with their social and material context.

2.2.2.2 Flirting on social media

This section includes studies from different disciplines and theoretical frameworks that utilise focus groups and/or individual interviews with young people to explore online flirting and sexting. Only a few studies used participant observation (Race, 2015) and online behaviour observation (Pérez Domínguez, 2020). In contrast to research conducted at dancing venues, social media studies show flirting taking place in simultaneous fleeting, dynamic and overlapping ways when, for example, flirting with someone via Instagram's direct messaging feature while stalking their profile and talking about it with a friend in person or on another platform. This is because, as Meenagh (2015) suggests, young people's online flirting includes behaviours that do not involve the other party, such as grooming, stalking on social media and planning with friends. Hence, online flirting can be viewed as a constellation of asynchronous, interconnected practices, spaces and people. Similarly to research on geographies, most of this work considers that digital devices and platforms mediate sexual encounters in the sense that they do not merely intermediate but also transform what happens, enabling certain activities, relations and practices while obviating others (Alapack et al., 2005; Cupples & Thompson, 2010; Handyside & Ringrose, 2017; Race, 2015; Renold & Ringrose, 2017b).

Across studies on young people's digital flirting and sexting, several agree that flirting online may be less intimidating than face to face (Chambers, 2013; Cupples &

Thompson, 2010; Meenagh, 2015; Pascoe, 2010). The latter might be explained by the asynchronous dynamic, the physical distance that enables the concealment of facial and bodily expressions, and the ambiguity that written communication allows. Among other things, these qualities are assumed to facilitate control over exposure and vulnerability.

Several scholars have suggested that asynchronous communication facilitates what Sims (2007) called "controlled casualness", meaning that the lack of synchronicity enables the careful and strategic crafting of messages to avoid embarrassment or rejection, which might lead to feeling less vulnerable than when flirting face to face (Chambers, 2013; Gómez-Urrutia & Tello-Navarro, 2021; Meenagh, 2015; Pascoe, 2010). However, Pinsky's (2019) work with 14-18-year-olds and Mortensen's (2017) study with adults flirting in chatrooms demonstrate that this perception of protection or reduced risk of embarrassment is illusory since conveying sexual attraction always comes with emotional vulnerability and interpersonal risk of rejection.

In addition to the risk of rejection, part of the vulnerability specific to online flirting has been argued to stem from the persistence, replicability and spreadability of digital content (boyd, 2014). On the one hand, the persistence of digital content can serve as memorabilia (Ben-Ze'ev, 2004; Race, 2015). On the other, due to its easy spreadability, online flirtatious interactions can be shared with others for gossiping, comparison or analysis (Cupples & Thompson, 2010; Race, 2015), which has been argued to create closer peer surveillance or scrutiny from friends (Chambers, 2013; Pinsky, 2019). The latter, on the one hand, has been considered to heighten peer pressure (Chambers, 2013), where part of the anxieties of flirting and rejection involve others knowing about that happening (Cupples & Thompson, 2010) or being exposed for transgressing boundaries (Gómez-Urrutia & Tello-Navarro, 2021; Pinsky, 2019). But, on the other hand, Pascoe (2010) suggests it can create material where friends can discuss and learn from each other. Hence, it is possible to say that the role of friends and peers in online flirting and sexting is increased by the persistence and spreadability of digital content, to the extent that Pérez Domínguez (2020) argues that online flirting should be understood as collective practices.

Among the research reviewed on young people's sexual cultures, more studies address affects that relate to risks and harm than to pleasure or enjoyment. Interestingly, these risks and harms are associated with the challenges of managing the features of the

digital world. For example, the risk of deception or scams (Albury & Byron, 2016; Gómez-Urrutia & Tello-Navarro, 2021) and risks associated with sharing pictures (Albury & Byron, 2016; Renold & Ringrose, 2017b; Ringrose, Regehr, & Whitehead, 2021). There are also pressures to conform to hetero-gendered norms and scripts on flirting, especially when screenshots are shared with friends (Chambers, 2013; Dobson et al., 2018; Pinsky, 2019; Ringrose, Regehr, & Whitehead, 2021). Finally, and particularly in the Chilean context, researchers found that heterosexual men can be afraid of being called out on social media if they are discovered stalking or pestering online, a practice commonly known as funa*s* (Gómez-Urrutia & Tello-Navarro, 2021).

Thus, research on social media highlights the relevance of the material context even when it is intangible and demonstrates how digital interactions can transform flirting, albeit not entirely. Moreover, it is the intangible materiality of the digital realm and the blurring of distances facilitated by online platforms that challenge both notions of presence and the materiality of the body.

2.2.2.2.1 Are you there? Theorising the body in social media sexual practices

Online flirting and dating studies have analysed how the body is transposed, re-presented or extended in the digital realm. Some argue that online flirting is disembodied due to the absence of flirtatious nonverbal cues that must materialise as text, using acronyms, emoticons and other images (Alapack et al., 2005; Chambers, 2013; Race, 2015; Whitty, 2003). Among them, Chambers (2013) nuances her take on flirting as a disembodied intimacy, suggesting a hyperpresence of the body in the photos shared and displayed on social media profiles. Notably, these scholars emphasise the visual aspect of what can be seen on the screen, as if the body were primarily a stylised object to be shown and seen when flirting. Thus, some of them neglect the felt embodied experiences of the 'user of the platform' and may argue that "messages can be dismissed without humiliation if not reciprocated" (Chambers, 2013, p. 124; Cupples & Thompson, 2010). Consequently, some scholars claim that online flirting is harmless (Ben-Ze'ev, 2004) or that humiliation or embarrassment is avoided (Cupples & Thompson, 2010).

However, this theorisation of online disembodiment starkly contrasts with research on violence within digital sexual cultures. Young women report that receiving unsolicited dick pics is felt like an inappropriate touch (Pinsky, 2019), a sentiment echoed by the

research of Jessica Ringrose et al. (2019), where high school students expressed shock, shame and a feeling like they had done something wrong.

A very different approach to disembodiment emerges from EJ Renold and Jessica Ringrose's (2017b) work on digital sexual violence. Drawing on Braidotti's (2011, 2013) posthuman lens and highlighting the material and affective dynamics of tagging and sending nudes, they propose considering these online actions as akin to unwanted sexualised touches with potentially coercive impacts. Furthermore, their posthuman framework challenges the boundaries of the feeling body and the "human agentic self-contained subject in the production, ownership and distribution of the sexy 'selfie'" (p. 5) or any other digital interaction. Their research illustrates how the human body, subjectivity and agency are dispersed within these relationalities, extending the affective capacities and relations of (the commonly understood as) the human body while also dissolving binaries such as "virtual/real digital/material and online/offline" (2017, p. 3). This means no longer thinking about discrete individuals who use and are mediated by digital platforms and beginning to think about the dynamic and entangled co-constitution of subjectivities, including fleshy bodies, technological devices and online platforms.

2.2.2.3 Commentary: Towards agentic, networked and material flirting

The studies in this section reveal the porosity of the human experience of flirting and its co-constitution with the materiality where it takes place. They demonstrate that where flirting takes place has a crucial influence on how it is done, felt and scripted. Moreover, some studies on online flirtation and sexual cultures indicate how these interactions work in a networked context collapse and, thus, how flirting can be tightly woven with and shaped by friendships and peer networks. Most notably, some scholars like Renold and Ringrose question the absence of the feeling-body within online platforms, proposing instead to conceptualise it as an entanglement of human, nonhuman and digital elements that extend the bodies' capacities to feel, touch and be touched. In summary, both groups contribute to considering the body and embodied experiences of flirting beyond the skin as being co-created with the material environment and social networks in a more-than-discursive and more-than-human way.

2.2.3 *The Affectivity of Flirting and the Affordances of Observing Versus Interviewing*

Since there is more to the affectivity of flirting than risk versus pleasure, this section focuses on studies of geographies that explore how flirting is felt, the emotions and sensations surrounding and traversing it, and the challenges of researching these in others' experiences.

In studies of geographies, some scholars investigate their own affectivity within sexual encounters, such as Lambevski's observations of himself and others at gay venues (2005) and Brown's (2008) self-ethnography of gay cruising in London. To capture the specific concreteness of these microsocial negotiations and the influence of material context on bodies, Lambevski conceptualised flirters' erogenous bodies as machinic assemblages of human bodies, substances, music, light and laser machines, video screens, clothes and discourses of gender, class, race and beauty, among others. Thus, he describes the situation as intertwining partial objects that, together, co-produced flirting and his embodied feelings. On the other hand, in his observations, Brown draws on affect theory to explore the sensorial and affective "interactions of bodies in place" (2008, p. 917). This approach allowed him to look into, for example, the "erotic thrill of being where one is not supposed to be" (Brown, 2008, p. 924) or the attractiveness that can arise from how someone moves in space (p. 928). Both Lambevski and Brown's accounts emphasise the entanglement of different objects and bodies in space and their impact on how the body is felt. However, as its name implies, this self-ethnographic approach is limited to the researcher's experiences with others. Thus, obtaining rich, detailed accounts of flirting from other people is a challenge requiring different tools.

This challenge is addressed by Qian Hui Tan's (2013) feminist ethnographic study, which draws on affect theory to explore heterosexual flirting among young adults at straight clubs in Singapore. She observed people partying there and used semi-structured interviews to discuss flirting experiences with attendees and staff. Tan's study explored the felt sensations of others while flirting through accounts given in the interviews that promoted detailed sensuous descriptions of, for example, erotic dancing. In turn, these accounts emphasised how the material surroundings (sensual lyrics, deep bass music, dim lights, decor and smoke) created a mood that allowed bodies to immerse

themselves in a sexualised affective atmosphere (Anderson, 2009) that was felt as contagious sexually provocative energy. Thus, she arrived at accounts of flirting encounters that were similar in level of detail to Lambevski and Brown's self-ethnographic notes, which allowed her to use the data from the interviews to analyse how what she terms "affective (hetero)sexualities" developed in those spaces, meaning "an attunement to the ways in which 'becoming heterosexual' is being felt as affective intensities that are transmitted" among dancing and alcoholised bodies (Tan, 2013, p. 719).

Even though Tan arrived at similar normative gendered performativities while flirting and dancing to those in Bianciotti's (2015) ethnographic research, she contributes with a focus on how these power differentials are felt and played out sensuously, demonstrating that heterosexuality is more than regulatory and constitutive discourses. Heterosexuality would also include felt sensations that are closely related to the material spaces, indicating that affects are always enmeshed in power geometries that are enacted not only in discourses but in material arrangements that facilitate certain tendencies to move (to affect) and feel (be affected), while precluding others. Thus, Tan initiated a path for different questions about researching the sensations and emotions of flirting, such as: What can accounts of flirting tell us about how normative discourses are felt in the body while flirting? What can they say about the influence of materiality on embodied sensations?

2.2.3.1 Commentary: Approaching the affectivity of flirting encounters through accounts

It might come as a surprise that this study draws significantly from studies of geographies of sexuality. Nonetheless, these studies are the ones that most emphasise that the flirting body is not only a body shaped by discourses, which does and is done to, but is also a sensuous and dynamic entity that is constantly transformed and moved by its multidirectional relationalities with other bodies, objects or space. As such, what one wants and feels are neither individual nor autonomous but shaped by discourses, material contexts and power asymmetries. However, researching this felt quality of flirting, rather than what can be observed, is a significant challenge. Therefore, the reviewed researchers utilised self-ethnography (Brown, 2008; Lambevski, 2005), participant observation with in-depth detailed questioning (Tan, 2013) or even

narrative interviews (Pedersen et al., 2017) in an attempt to grasp its ineffable and fleeting textures.

However, of course, self-ethnography cannot be used when researching teenagers' sexuality and there have been discussions on the disruptive presence of having someone observing others' flirting (Rincón Aponte, 2014). Adding to this challenge is the impossibility of accessing the complexity of how one person experiences an encounter, making it more pertinent to investigate teenagers' experiences through their accounts. Moreover, as the data produced by Tan (2013) and Pedersen et al. (2017) show, accounts are also useful in highlighting the role of material objects and context in creating flirtatious affective atmospheres, even though the researcher cannot directly experience those spaces. Additionally, studies exploring materiality through accounts should not forget to include the embodied materiality of the interviews themselves (tone of voice, gestures, proxemics, etc.) as other inputs about the affectivity of what is being conveyed.

2.3 Flirting and Feminist Ethics: Proposals and Critiques on 'Affective Responsibility' and 'Affirmative Consent'

This section reviews some feminist proposals and discussions for ethical sexual relationalities. For this project, these feminist proposals and debates serve as a 'background', framing this study and the teenagers' flirting in my sample, giving this review two purposes. First, to provide specific contextual information for the analysis, and second, to draw out guiding questions for this research by critically engaging with these debates.

I primarily focus on affective responsibility and affirmative consent. The former is a buzz term in feminist media in Chile that emphasises one's responsibility for how one's actions or omissions make other people feel (Alvear Blau, 2020; López, 2019; Mahecha, 2022; Martín, 2021; Rubio, 2022). In the following subsections, the foundations of each concept are unpacked and some critiques are discussed.

2.3.1 *Affective Responsibility: Background on Ethical Non-Monogamies*

Several media associate affective responsibility with the pioneering work of ethical non-monogamies, such as Dossie Easton and Janet Hardy (2009) and Deborah Anapol (2012). However, it is important to note they did not coin the term. In a nutshell and risking simplification, what they did was offer similar guidelines for ethical sexual relationships that mainly emphasise communication, honesty, boundaries and responsibility. In both proposals, clear communication and effective listening are crucial to share our intentions and priorities and thus arrive at mutually agreed-upon arrangements that ultimately minimise the risk of harm. Consequently, they also agree on the foundational role of self-knowledge: knowing who we are, how we feel and our expectations would be a prerequisite for negotiating these agreements. Moreover, both strongly emphasise the relevance of honesty, of being transparent to oneself as in self-knowledge, but also in maintaining "full disclosure" (Easton & Hardy, 2009, p. 110) or speaking the "unedited truth" (Anapol, 2012, p. 76) with one's partners.

Interestingly, these proposals, commonly linked to 'free love', emphasise honesty more than freedom. According to Baigoirría (2010), free love and polyamory[1] are part of a moralist reaction against the well-known hypocrisy, infidelity and double standards of monogamy, where mutual agreements help partners to commit to what they know they want and will be able to do. This would be key to avoid deceptions and the consequent hurt. Similarly, Tenenbaum (2019a) sees polyamory as a way of living a sexuality based on mutually co-created agreements within a relationship(s) to prioritise the *parternaires'* desires and happiness over social conventions, as an effort to counter the heteronormative and monogamous expectations that are perceived as external impositions. In these approaches to polyamory, there is a kind of enhancement of each relationship's individuality against tradition and social paradigms as part of a resistance to conform to dominant social expectations for sexual relationalities. Furthermore, this resistance also opposes the hurt that arises from deception or mismatches (in desires, expectations, etc.). This resistance also carries a moral force that may be rooted in care not to hurt or deceive, protecting both oneself and others, as well as an exalted value of

[1] Even though they are not synonyms, in this text I use polyamory and non-monogamies interchangeably.

complete honesty, as a way to stand together against the social forces that facilitate deception and as a means of avoiding harm.

This emphasis on individuals making ethical choices to protect themselves and others from hurt based on honesty was identified among heterosexual young people in Chile during 2013-2014. Besoain et al. (2017) interviewed 18-25-year-old heterosexuals about their intimate relationships and analysed the ideal mandates, tensions and regulatory practices. One of the mandates was the absence of a predefined or anticipated shape of the relationship, thus necessitating agreement with the partner on the type of relationship. Agreements based on mutual recognition were thus the norm, aiming to regulate the relationship's practices, affects and future conflicts or developments. In this context, honest and transparent communication was necessary to uphold the ethics of agreements, while minimising the fear of being hurt by the other, rendering the other predictable in the absence of a stable normativity that frames and regulates the relationship. This approach helped minimise highly threatening conflicts while also leaving little to no space for uncertainty, doubt or exploration. Interestingly, these scholars also suggest that men considered their masculine sexual desire as a risk of objectifying the woman-other. This was thus regulated by mutual recognition. The latter, even though not stated by the researchers, can be interpreted as an indication of feminist thought permeating new norms of relating sexually among young people in Chile.

2.3.2 Affective Responsibility: A 'New Trend' for Feminist Sexual Ethics

Affective responsibility (AR) is a buzz term associated with feminism and psychology that has become mainstream in media in Spain, Chile, Argentina, Mexico and other Latin American countries, where it is frequently used (and explained) in media such as radio, newspaper articles, blogs, interviews with psychologists and psychoanalysts, and in university events (Alvear-Blau, 2020; Martín, 2021; PUCV, 2019; Rubio, 2022; for a heated debate among Argentinian feminists and psychoanalysts see Kohan, 2019 and LATFEM, 2019). In these countries, feminist concerns about sexual and affective responsibility and ethics have become mainstream to the extent that, for instance, Argentinian feminist philosopher Tamara Tenenbaum's academic book aimed at a

general audience *The End of Love*, cited in the preceding section, has been adapted into an Amazon Prime series (Alonso, 2022).

Discussion about the nature of AR is particularly interesting because, although its origins in polyamory and the books of Anapol and Easton & Hardy have been suggested by the Spanish-language mainstream media (Mahecha, 2022; Rubio, 2022; Tenenbaum, 2019b), there is a significant contrast between the proposals of these two groups of references. This difference arises in the understanding of where emotions reside and who 'owns' them and is thus responsible for them. On the one hand, Anapol (2012) and Easton & Hardy's (2009) ethics can be interpreted as an autonomist understanding of affective responsibility. Emotions are seen as individual responses rooted in our personal history. Consequently, each person is considered to own their emotions and bears full responsibility for them, meaning one must control, reflect on and learn from them.

On the other hand, the buzz term definitions can be interpreted as a relational understanding of AR, where one is responsible for how one's actions or omissions make the other feel (Alvear Blau, 2020; Martín, 2021). Thus, one should consider the impact one's choices have on others' emotional states, which sometimes cannot be predicted. However, similar to the autonomist version, relational AR is based on honesty, care and mutual dialogue (Mahecha, 2022; Vespucci et al., 2022), where open and empathetic communication enables the creation of agreements that help to prevent the unnecessary hurt caused by deceit and emotional games (Rubio, 2022). Hence, even though both perspectives on AR aim to avoid hurt and deception, relational AR would focus more on creating a relational bond based on the mentioned values instead of the individual management of emotions promoted by the autonomist perspective.

Feminist scholars have emphasised the political relevance of AR since it aims to disrupt the current mono-hetero-normative dominant order. According to Mauri (2021), dialogues and agreements based on AR resist the taken-for-granted reproduction of monogamous cis-heterogendered norms, thus offering an alternative to romantic love imaginaries. Furthermore, Tenenbaum (2019a) contends that AR stands against the 'consumption of people' and the idea that if you are not in a stable relationship with someone, you are not responsible for the emotional consequences of your actions. Thus, AR can be one way to resist both traditional hetero-mono-normative norms and the

allegedly emancipatory alternative offered by the neoliberal individualistic freedom of the market of desire (Illouz, 2013).

However, these proposals have an evident issue: they rely on the assumption of a knowing, rational subject with sufficient self-transparency to be aware of their needs, desires and expectations. Moreover, it appears that these needs, desires and expectations are regarded as personal in the sense that they emerge and are bound to an individual. Consequently, 'our' desire could be seen as being voluntarily 'rinsed' of social conventions and expectations, the pressures coming from 'outside', not acknowledging the—at least—social co-construction of desire.

Lastly, in line with the sexual ethics mentioned in the preceding section, and in addition to AR's individual responsibility of clearly knowing one's needs, desires and expectations to effectively communicate them, there is a recommendation that this communication should occur promptly, meaning from the outset. This is because it would help manage each other's expectations, avoiding false illusions and unnecessary suffering (Mahecha, 2022). Similarly, Anapol recommends: "A single person can let partners know about their commitment to remain single and non-monogamous from the start so that there is less room for misunderstanding and disappointment later on" (2012, p. 78). These recommendations, I believe, are based on a static notion of relationships, where knowing agents negotiate their discrete experiences and expectations without considering the porosity of our affective experience and the fact that relationships are built by and transformed through the repetition of encounters.

These proposals for more egalitarian sexual relationalities have been met with some suspicion by other feminist scholars. In particular, AR has been considered to focus excessively on neoliberal individualism and responsibilisation while relying heavily on rational communications between self-knowing subjects. Mauri (2021) problematises the use of 'responsibility' instead of 'ethics', suggesting that it promotes a morality that, akin to penal law, individualises the attribution of responsibility to free and willing subjects who must know what they are doing and be able to calculate the effects. At the same time, Vespucci et al. (2022) argue that through neoliberal individualism, AR can promote a perspective where the other is the one who fails or transgresses, but never oneself. These critiques are also in line with some need for reassurance, a tendency the Argentinian feminist psychoanalyst Alexandra Kohan (2020) contends is part of a

culture where people seek guarantees and expect everything to run smoothly, without misunderstandings, missed encounters and the impossibility of complementarity that are part of any sexual relationship. Furthermore, Kohan (2019) urges us to be sceptical of these 'new' and allegedly emancipatory discourses about how one should live or love, as they constitute new ways of disciplining ourselves, masquerading as 'empowered feminists'.

So, based on both scholarly and grey literature on AR, one can say that the concept encapsulates, among other things, a feminist desire to change the hegemonic normativity and power imbalances in sexual relationships. However, to do this, these ethical proposals rely heavily on individualistic humanist notions of the subject as individual agents capable of knowing and verbally negotiating what they want with all the information they need. Moreover, proponents of these ethics trust that emphasising personal wants can help them stand against social paradigms while avoiding suffering. Additionally, AR and ethics of polyamory may also be grounded in an idealised faith in verbal communication and honesty that could obscure the messy contradictions of sexual encounters, or worse, could burden each subject with the task of keeping them in order, with the suggested potential temptation of blaming the other for not being affectively responsible. This study builds on these critiques to question how and if these feminist ethics (and their critiques) emerge within flirting encounters.

2.3.3 *Affirmative Consent: Feminist Critiques*

Affirmative or enthusiastic consent is defined as an informed, autonomous choice to engage in sexual activities (Gilbert, 2018; Setty, 2022). This approach to consent goes beyond defending women's right to reject sexual advances—no means no. It also resists heterosexual scripts that portray women as lacking sexual desire and needing to be persuaded (persistently) to want it. Instead, affirmative consent celebrates sexual desire, focusing on the free, enthusiastic and positive acceptance of engaging in sexual activity (Carmody, 2015; Gilbert, 2018). It associates clear and articulated declarations of consent with responsibility, dialogue, mutual negotiation and agreement (Hasinoff, 2016). Thus, it emphasises the responsibility of the initiator of the interaction to secure consent with clear, explicit agreements (Gilbert, 2018; Setty, 2022). Therefore, affirmative consent, like AR and other feminist sexual ethics, asks people to know

themselves and what they want, and to possess the skills to communicate it honestly and without ambiguities.

The feminist literature that critiques, but also attempts to work with, affirmative consent has raised several challenges that inspired this study to seek another way of thinking about ethical sexual relationalities. In other words, it aimed to look beyond the model of individual sexual agents who can know and verbally negotiate what they want with all the information they need readily available. The challenge of transcending the individual-centred consent model may be even more pressing for scholars of flirting as flirting itself has been considered a more or less implicit process of testing the waters. Thus, as affirmative consent proposes, explicitly and verbally asking for consent to flirt may be somewhat tautological. It can already function or be perceived as flirtation or harassment (Bartlett et al., 2019).

Similarly to the academic definition, research with young people shows that teenagers define sexual consent as freely given verbal responses or nonverbal behavioural cues to participate in a sexual encounter, without pressure, coercion or the presence of substances that impede people's ability to consent (Beres, 2020; Brady et al., 2018; Marcantonio & Jozkowski, 2021). However, several scholars consider this model of consent unhelpful for young people. This is because it presents simplified sexual interactions that are far from, and in conflict with, young people's accounts of complex, multidetermined and nuanced sexual relationalities that take into account ambivalence, ambiguity, gendered norms and other power dynamics (Beres, 2020; Brady et al., 2018; Bragg et al., 2020; Cense, 2019; Coy et al., 2013; Setty, 2021; Whittington, 2021). For example, Whittington (2021) suggests that when setting aside abstract and legal discussions on consent, the accounts of consent of 14-18-year-olds refer to fluid, embodied and relational experiences involving subtle navigation and interpretation of signals, voice tones and gestures. Hence, from this body of research, a first critique arises: the logic of consent oversimplifies the complexity of sexual interactions.

Linked to this oversimplification and echoing critiques directed at affective responsibility is the second significant concern about affirmative consent: its neoliberal underpinnings. Consent has been critiqued for assuming people are rational, unitary, coherent and self-transparent choosing individuals who can and should always know their will and desires (Brady et al., 2018; Gilbert, 2018; Saketopoulou, 2019). This

promotion of individual autonomy and choice has been argued to gain traction in digital environments, where the absence of physical proximity is believed to mitigate external pressures or coercion (Setty, 2021). Furthermore, scholars like Gilbert (2018) and Ringrose (2013) argue that this neoliberal underpinning has also found support in "postfeminist sensibility" (Gill, 2017), a current hegemonic logic that celebrates a type of mainstream feminism emphasising individual empowerment, freedom of choice and perpetual self-improvement.

Neoliberal individualism as a foundation for consent is considered problematic in at least three ways. First, as mentioned above, it misrecognises and simplifies sexuality as a transparent, communicative and rational experience (Gilbert, 2018). Second, it obscures that choice and possibilities are constrained by social contextual forces, including heteronormativity among others. Thus, it burdens those with less power—usually, but not necessarily, women—with the responsibility to speak up for themselves and give a clear signal despite those power relations (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Holmström et al., 2020; Pérez Hernández, 2016). Thirdly, neoliberal individualism paves the way for victim-blaming instead of challenging it. This is because this freedom to choose comes with the hyper-responsibilisation of individuals, who are expected to always be in control and take the responsibility and blame for the consequences of the choices 'they make' (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Bay-Cheng, 2015 in Cense, 2019; Fanghanel, 2020).

Expanding on the second point about power, feminist scholarship has emphasised that sexual choices, and even sexual desire, are rarely free or individual. Research consistently demonstrates these are shaped and constrained by gendered, classed and raced power dynamics and other contextual factors (Brady et al., 2018; Bragg et al., 2020; Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Cense, 2019; Fanghanel, 2020; Holmström et al., 2020; Setty, 2021; Srinivasan, 2021). Across studies among young people, the power dynamics and social pressures commonly identified as complicating consent include gender norms and sexual scripts, masculinity pressures on men to be sexually aggressive and postfeminist pressures for young women to be sexually active (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Coy et al., 2013; Setty et al., 2022). Also, alongside the intersectional power axes of race, class and ableism (Brady et al., 2018), age differences and lack of sexual experience are considered crucial in creating power imbalances among teenagers

(Holmström et al., 2020). Finally, there is the well-known sexual double standard, victim-blaming and the fear of the gendered consequences of rejecting or accepting a proposal: abandonment or aggression, and rumours and negative judgement, respectively (Brady et al., 2018; Holmström et al., 2020; Maldonado, 2015; Setty, 2021; Whittington, 2021). Research suggests that these social norms and expectations operate through peer pressure. This means that young people can feel pressured to consent without necessarily being pressured by the other interested party (Brady et al., 2018; Holland et al., 1998; Holmström et al., 2020; Setty, 2021). Therefore, several scholars working with young people emphasise the urgency of including these social forces as a crucial part of discussions on consent (Bragg et al., 2020; Pérez Domínguez, 2020; Setty, 2021, 2022).

As a final remark, knowing what we want has been considered fundamental to understanding, respecting and negotiating our sexual boundaries, as well as our preferences and dislikes regarding sexuality: touch, looks, kisses, words and so on (Reinicke, 2022). However, the literature on consent does not conceptualise the body and the role of bodily experience in online and offline spaces. This lack of further conceptualisation might be due to the humanist neoliberal grounds of consent, where it is easy to fall into the idea of subjects as minds that negotiate their body-property-boundaries or because the embodied experience is considered as given. However, a similar argument applies to much of the literature on flirting. This becomes evident when several studies on online flirting (Alapack et al., 2005; Ben-Ze'ev, 2004; Cupples & Thompson, 2010; Whitty, 2003) align with studies on digital sexual cultures (Chambers, 2013; Race, 2015) to suggest the body is missing in online interactions. This contrasts sharply with evidence illustrating the emotional and embodied impact of being a target of digital sexual violence (Pinsky, 2019; Renold & Ringrose, 2017b; Ringrose & Harvey, 2015, 2017).

In summary, feminist critiques of consent primarily focus on its neoliberal foundations, which fail to acknowledge the relational and power-infused circumstances of sexual encounters, thereby overlooking the complexity of the sexual embodied experience. This study builds on these critiques to explore flirting situations and to propose an approach to sexual encounters that transcends individualism, highlights power dynamics and addresses their multidimensional complexity.

2.3.3.1 Looking at feminist critiques of consent vis-à-vis feminist research on (cis-hetero) men's defensiveness towards digital feminist activism against sexual violence towards women

In this section, I examine consent critiques alongside research on masculine defensiveness to help us think from the perspective of cis-heterosexual men rather than against them. By doing this, I am setting the ground for meaningful feminist discussion of young men's attitudes and anxieties regarding flirting instead of simply dismissing them as defensive or anti-feminist.

The first feminist critique I want to address is the one that challenges the myth that sexual violence is caused by misunderstandings. Despite being largely discredited by research, miscommunication theory shapes discourses on sexual violence, sexual prevention programmes and consent initiatives (Beres, 2020; Fanghanel, 2020). Some feminist scholars argue that this myth obscures the fact that sexual violence arises from objectifying the other and not caring about signals, rather than failing to decode them (Angel, 2022; Nussbaum, 2021; Setty, 2021). This is supported by evidence of research with young people showing little disagreement on the indirect and non-verbal signals of refusal of sexual activity (Beres & Farvid, 2010; Brady et al., 2018; Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Coy et al., 2013; Setty, 2021). More critically, since miscommunication is used to justify/cover sexual coercion (O'Byrne et al., 2006), the reliance of consent on clear communication may be working against these efforts to counter sexual violence.

Moreover, miscommunication theory relates to clear and dichotomous understandings of consent and sexual violence, with its seeker/giver, yes/no and violence/nonviolence predicaments. These dichotomies are critiqued as an attempt to rule out ambiguity, not considering the different intensities of sexual violence and how it infiltrates into everyday life (Whittington, 2021). This binary approach has also been critiqued for its risk/harm emphasis and thus not considering pleasure (Darnell, 2019; Fischel, 2019; Gilbert, 2018), failing to leave room for doubt, hesitation, exploration and ambivalence or mixed feelings such as "willingness to try, the fear of trying" (Brady et al., 2018; Butler, 2011, p. 422; Clark, 2019; Gilbert, 2018). Instead, as Clark (2019) and Gilbert (2018) warn us, this rigid dichotomy threatens a strict codification of ambiguous

situations, extending a shadow of shame or illicit potential over lukewarm or ambivalent sexual activities.

With these critiques in mind, the disorientations and confusion that research has found among cis-heterosexual men after #MeToo may find more compassionate grounds. Several scholars on heterosexual men's reactions to #MeToo agree that it has impacted men's lives, particularly since it has unsettled the once solid ground that supported men's actions and identity. Part of this disorientation is suggested to come from men's loss of their (privileged) sense of control and confidence in who they are or in behaviours that once were 'normal' (Reinicke, 2022). This is because the sexual behaviour that was once expected as part of a masculine trait and thus deemed 'acceptable'—or more accurately, silently tolerated—is now sanctioned as violence and might be punished online (Essig, 2018; Flood, 2022; Sharkey, 2021).

It might seem that masculinity is facing a new 'crisis'. However, given that ideals of masculinity have always been unattainable (Connell, 2005; Kimmel, 1996), one could argue that crisis and (hegemonic) masculinity ideals are two sides of the same coin. Scholars who draw on Deleuze and Guattari's work, such as Hickey-Moody and McDonald, advocate for an approach to masculinities that diverges from rigid discursive ideals. Hickey-Moody's (2019) work conceptualises masculinities as assemblages. This implies that masculinities transcend discursive constructions. They are powerful social fictions materially and conceptually produced through an assemblage of performative events beyond the human, around which bodies and subjectivities are organised. Furthermore, employing the concept of assemblage enables Hickey-Moody (2019) to propose that masculinities are not specific to particular individual bodies but are in-between and across them, extending and connecting human bodies and psyches, ideas, matter, objects and so forth. Viewing masculinities as assemblages is useful for understanding them not as pre-ordained, unattainable ideals but rather, as McDonald (2016) suggests, as definitions of what a man embodies that are always constructed retrospectively.

What are the masculinities shaped by feminism after #MeToo? This perspective can also aid in understanding the aforementioned disorientation, considering a lack of 'alternative masculinities' within mainstream feminism. In feminist media, Waling (2023) found that men are discursively depicted as either being essentially good or bad;

victims of toxic masculinity or naïve 'boys' who need women's guidance to undergo these changes. Another possibility is men performing wokeness, assuming allyship roles as protectors and false heroes. With the exception of those portrayed as essentially good, all others are frowned upon.

Similarly, research on masculinity and defensive responses to #MeToo or similar campaigns against sexual violence tend to categorize men into two groups. On one side are those depicted as misogynistic, violent or accused of perpetrating sexual violence. On the other side are men described as feminist allies or those who actively work against sexual violence. Consequently, research focuses on one group of 'bad' men (Banet-Weiser, 2021; Ging & Siapera, 2019; Johanssen, 2022) or 'good' men (Burrell, 2020; Flood, 2022) or on comparing both (Bridges, 2021). Interestingly, overall, this body of research shares the commonality of focusing on discourses that either reinforce male privilege or leave it intact, positioning men as unaccountable and/or lacking agency or, in the best scenario, as unrelated. Thus, there is ample room for more nuanced approaches to men's responses.

However, there is a small group of studies on 'regular' young men and their responses to #MeToo and its associated cultural shift. This research focuses on emotional reactions and has found feelings of guilt, shame, embarrassment or discomfort because of men's privileged position and, thus, the likelihood that they have engaged, either actively or as a silent accomplice, in sexist or misogynistic practices in the past, or the present (Essig, 2018). Additionally, this research highlights denial of the prevalence of sexual violence along with false rape accusations (Horeck et al., 2023a; Ringrose, Mendes, et al., 2021), anger, aggrievance (Keddie, 2022), frustration for being unfairly homogenised as a perpetrator (Horeck et al., 2023a; Reinicke, 2022), and hostility and victimisation for being targeted by a politically correct society (Haslop & O'Rourke, 2021). In addition to these studies, research on consent among young people shows that some young men are genuinely fearful or anxious about being accused of or unintentionally engaging in non-consensual sexual activity (Brady et al., 2018; Holmström et al., 2020; Setty, 2021, 2022).

Below, I review three strategies identified in studies involving young men that are considered defensive since they protect the dominant gendered order by either reinforcing it with misogyny, avoiding addressing it or laughing about it.

First, there is male victimhood and blame-reversal. Banet-Weiser (2021) outlines how men accused of sexual violence publicly portray themselves in the media as victims of false accusations whose lives have been ruined, redirecting the blame predominantly in two ways. First, avoidance: claiming they followed cultural norms and knew no better. Second, blaming the victim: for enticing them to harass them or for falsely accusing them. Crucially, Banet-Weiser notes that 'lives being ruined' not only reverses the blame but also assesses men's punishment relative to their (uncontested and naturalised) privileges, rather than considering the suffering and harm inflicted upon the victim. They are, therefore, poor men who lost, for example, their wonderful jobs or wives, because of women they assaulted who denounced them. This obscures the damage done by these men and mobilises an affective and moral position towards these 'poor' powerful men, or what Manne calls "himpathy" (2017 as cited in Banet-Weiser, 2021).

Discourses of false accusations and victimisation are supported by old tropes of lying women, a powerful myth where women invent allegations for malicious motives that also fuel public fears of boys and men at risk of being falsely accused (Banet-Weiser, 2021; Flood, 2022). Moreover, just as this myth promotes the existence of malicious women, there is another myth at work that individualises sexual violence as perpetrated by evil men or 'rotten apples' (Larraín Matte, 2023).

The idea that sexual violence is perpetrated by evil men fuels our second defensive manoeuvre identified in research on men involved in preventing sexual violence. This response involves distancing oneself from these violent men, portraying oneself as the 'good' guy (Cover, 2019; Flood, 2022; Reinicke, 2022). Significantly, Reinicke (2022) points out that the problem with these distancing tactics is that they enable individuals to avoid critical self-examination of their behaviour, obscuring the fact that sexual violence is associated with how men are socialised and can therefore be perpetrated by any "'good' and 'normal'" man (p. 9).

This defensive tactic has been theorised in different ways. For example, Burrel (2020) theorised it as 'disassociation', where men construct and present themselves as separate from the group of men they frame as the problem. Thus, these men claim they are not like abusive men, cannot abuse women and do not benefit from patriarchal dividends (Connell, 2009). Similarly, Bridges and Pascoe coined the term "discursive distancing" (Bridges, 2021; 2014) to refer to individualising narratives where men disidentify

themselves from 'most men' and portray themselves as being disadvantaged compared with other women or men because of personal challenges. Both theorisations show how this distancing is done by framing violence as an individual choice, in addition to disidentifying with some masculinity traits that distract them from examining the ones they do share.

An intriguing complexity to this distancing can be added with Allan's work on masculinities. He suggests viewing masculinity through Berlant's concept of "cruel optimism", which refers to "the condition of maintaining an attachment to a significantly problematic object" (Berlant, 2011, p. 24 as cited in Allan, 2018, p. 181). This expands the idea that masculinity is an unattainable ideal, as posited by various scholars working on masculinity (Connell, 2005; Hickey-Moody, 2019; Kimmel, 1996). This is because masculinity is not only unattainable but, according to Allan (2018), men must disavow masculinity, which is also an impossible endeavour. Viewing masculinity as cruel optimism is therefore a way to recognise this distancing as an inevitable way of relating to masculinity and not necessarily a defensive strategy.

The third defensive move I want to focus on is humour. Confident joking and banter have been identified as a marker of masculinity among young men (Kehily & Nayak, 1997; Phipps, 2017; Reinicke, 2022). Research with young people shows that joking among men can function as a way to exert dominance over gendered subjects and trivialise women and their demands without facing significant consequences (Haslop & O'Rourke, 2021; Kehily & Nayak, 1997; Lyman, 1987; Pascoe, 2017; Reinicke, 2022). Moreover, Reinicke warns that, among young men, banter can be used to dismiss the consequences of their harassing behaviours while contributing to the social acceptance of sexual harassment (2022). Humour can thus be considered a defensive performance of the dominant gendered order. One example is Barnes' (2012) study on working-class boys' defensive humour at school in Ireland, which suggests the strategic and purposeful use of humour in versatile and creative ways to resist, refuse or subvert direct questioning of the dominant discourse of masculinity. She proposes four situation-specific uses: policing 'acceptable' masculinity, excluding those who do not conform to it, gaining and keeping social status, and diverting attention from the classroom. A similar interpretation with a focus on its affectivity is that of Keddie (2022), who suggests

banter would be a way to reinforce confident masculinity while experiencing the excitement and pleasure of allying with other men to belittle women.

Within this body of work lies the question about the presence of other purposes of this homosocial humour and what happens with jokes and banter that are not openly sexist, misogynistic, homophobic or anti-feminist. As Freud (1905b/2011) suggested, verbal humour and wit can be a way to derive pleasure by circumventing inhibitions and anxieties. This study builds on Freud to propose that jokes among men can highlight less easily addressed concerns and might provide a valuable means to meaningfully explore the affective impact of feminist activism on young men.

Lastly, most concerns and defensive responses reviewed until now are illustrated in Emily Setty's (2022) study on consent education in England with young men aged 12-17. Setty suggests that, across schools, boys tended to create a distance between themselves—considerate boys—and 'bad', irresponsible or careless boys that perpetrate sexual violence. They also expressed concerns about committing sexual violence inadvertently or being accused of committing it, even while insisting they would never have such intentions. This concern was linked to false accusations, because of women lying or because of potential misunderstandings or confusion.

In her research, Setty suggests interpreting concerns about false accusations not only as a defensive reproduction of misogyny but also as an expression of vulnerability. She also warns about the possibilities of these perceived risks of fuelling resistance to change, especially when coupled with the expected pressure on men as initiators. Moreover, across schools, boys said that sexual topics are usually discussed among men through jokes and banter, suggesting a potentially different purpose of homosocial humour. This raises questions about the particular affective experiences of secondary students while navigating sexual encounters, consent discourses and their anxieties. This PhD project addresses these questions by highlighting young men's affective experiences and thus extending Setty's work.

2.3.3.1.1 Concluding thoughts on research on young men's defensiveness

This review demonstrated the complex and varied responses of (cis-heterosexual) men to campaigns against sexual violence towards women. It primarily focused on three defensive strategies: male victimhood, distancing and humour, demonstrating that these

tactics not only defend the dominant order but also masculine identities and (homo)social status. Examining these responses vis-à-vis research and critiques on consent facilitates the identification of the ways in which certain discourses are embraced by different political and affective forces. For example, while the myth of miscommunication drives sexual prevention programmes, it can be used to justify or cover sexual assault, potentially instilling fears among young men who may struggle with trusting their social skills. This raises the question of whether the victim-blaming reversal might simultaneously intimidate boys, especially when combined with the miscommunication myth.

The combination of this literature raises questions that guide this research regarding the specific affective experiences of young men as they navigate flirting, other sexual encounters, feminist interventions against sexual violence towards women and the digital denunciation of sexual offenders. In which ways might feminist activism against sexual violence shape how heterosexual men flirt? And what insights can we gain by considering heterosexual men's affective and discursive responses as more than just defensive?

2.3.4 *Affirmative Consent: Feminist Alternatives and Psychoanalytic Contributions to Considering Consent Within Flirting*

After reviewing the feminist critiques of affirmative consent, we are now able to consider alternative proposals for understanding and teaching consent that address some of the aforementioned pitfalls, as well as to explore psychoanalytic critiques and contributions to further conceptualise consent.

One of the pedagogical proposals to address consent is Whittington's (2021) "sexual agency continuum", which challenges dichotomic approaches and helps consider different nuances of sexual negotiations by including the environmental, material and relational context simultaneously with the social discourses and personal expectations that mediate or constrain consent. Others have proposed focusing on sexual desire and agency instead of consent for ethical sex (Beres & Farvid, 2010; Ge, 2020; Lamb et al., 2021). However, these proposals' reliance on desire and agency does not address the complex, psychosocial and intersecting power dynamics that constitute desire (Srinivasan, 2021). They still function with the unitary and self-knowing subject of

consent, posing a 'struggle' that complicates negotiations between individual desire and social structures.

Moving forward, other scholars in the field of young people's sexuality and relationships education have proposed models for sexual ethics that have relational foundations and are thus broader than consent or sexual desire. For instance, Carmody (2015) presents an ethics rooted in caring for oneself and others, negotiation and reflection, which encourages awareness of our desires and their possible impact on others. Meanwhile, Lamb, Gable and de Ruyter (2021) advocate for mutuality as a complement to consent. They define mutuality as "loving attention", emphasising an attempt to know as much as possible in order to have a "thick" view of the other in a situated way, considering disparities of power and privilege. Similarly and with a particular focus on flirting as a way of testing the waters, Bartlett, Clarke and Cover (2019) emphasise mutuality and consideration for the other as an ethics of care for flirting that creates "space for an awareness of the other person, for learning and listening and paying attention to other people's wants and needs" (p. 91). Acknowledging the individualistic, neoliberal and asymmetric ways in which 'care' can be interpreted (Beasley & Bacchi, 2005), they suggest that it is this recognition of the humanity of the other that can draw the (sometimes fine) line between a look, a flirtation and objectification.

From another perspective, psychoanalysis is at odds with the underpinnings of consent, which assume unitary transparent choosing subjects. It begins with a notion of subjectivity as being other and unknowable to oneself. This opacity and the co-existence of conflicting desires would impede us from being sure about the reasons for our choices. This is not because of a lack of self-knowledge or maturity but rather from considering subjectivity and desire as a social formation, emerging in a relation of dependency (Butler, 2011). At the risk of oversimplifying, this suggests that who we are is never separate from the social ties that make us. Thus, psychoanalysis offers a unique perspective that considers the unknowability of interpersonal encounters and affirms sexuality as mutual and desire as ambivalent and contradictory. Furthermore, when discussing consent, Butler (2011) argues that psychoanalysis helps explore tensions and nuances, such as curiosity, willingness, fear to try, and being moved or surprised, among others. According to Butler, psychoanalysis also reminds us that consent and

agreements do not bind the unconscious or emotions. Neither can control or contain the future unfolding of the situation and accompanying feelings or (re)interpretations.

Given psychoanalysis' stark contrasting foundations with (neoliberal) affirmative consent, it can help us think about these issues from a different perspective. It does not mean dismissing consent entirely but it can offer paths to theorise consent further.

The first proposal comes from Ginna Clark (2019), who begins with a conception of desire as an intersubjective phenomenon. This implies that desire is never individual or exclusive to one person and, as such, it is impossible to comprehend 'on its own' or in advance. Accordingly, Clark (2019) suggests that consent is an unforeseeable intersubjective phenomenon. Drawing from the French and Latin word *consentir* (to feel with), Clark observes that desires rarely align in content or intensity with one's partner. She utilises the notion of seduction to examine what happens when divergent desires converge, and a more confident or determined desire influences a tentative or reticent desire within a context of profound empathic connection and recognition (Benjamin, 1988 as cited in Clark, 2019). This attunement would primarily be proprioceptive: seeing, hearing and sensing micro-interactions to perceive the other's responsiveness in a bodily manner (Clark, 2019).

Clark's conceptualisation overlaps in several ways with the descriptions of consent in Whittington's study (2021), where teenagers spoke about "'feeling it', or feeling and 'sensing' their way through an encounter" (p. 488). This suggests that sexual negotiations cannot be reduced to mere speech acts, but involve "fluid and embodied relational experience" and "reading signals, tones, restrained expressions and advances" (p. 488). Moreover, if desire emerges and is transformed relationally, Clark offers ways to conceptualise desire as reaffirming another's desire or being available to be taken (or borrowed) by the other until they can be comfortable enough to feel it as their own. Considering concepts like seduction, empathy and recognition thus enables us to contemplate desire across various subjectivities and navigate grey or in-between states, leaving space for improvisation, ambiguity, uncertainty and fantasy, away from the constant surveillance of the ego.

This intersubjective perspective on how desire emerges and circulates between subjects can be enriched by Avgi Saketopoulou's (2019, 2023) critique of consent's aversion to

risk and excessive focus on keeping the ego safe, comfortable and the same (Díaz-Benjumea & Sierra, 2022). According to her, 'consent culture' is overly preoccupied with identifying boundaries and not crossing them, resisting novelty and exploring what could feel edgy, but, as such, can also be transformational and rewarding.

Saketopoulou (2019) therefore proposes "limit consent", which is an invitation to play and transgress boundaries rather than rigidly establishing and respecting limits, all within a context of "secure connection, of preestablished safety with the other" (Díaz-Benjumea & Sierra, 2022, p. 8). Limit consent resists dichotomic notions of power positions, emphasising instead the particular vulnerability of each participant and the trust and asymmetric responsibility that facilitate this way of relating. Limit consent thus affirms the polymorphism of sexuality in opposition to rational ego-driven control (Saketopoulou, 2019). This may entail bending one's will to allow oneself to go to places that might be scary. Therefore, Saketopoulou argues that "limit consent" comes with responsibility for the other and embraces risk, contrasting with affirmative consent's attempt to eliminate both.

Both Clark and Saketopoulou contribute to advancing our understanding of consent as an embodied intersubjective co-construction that is felt-with and felt-through instead of something involving more decision-making and negotiation between individuals. Also, and in alignment with the teenagers' accounts in Whittington's study, they emphasise the uncertainty and vulnerability that is part of working out what we want when partaking in any sexual relationality, which is less frequently addressed by shared understandings of consent. More importantly, Clark proposes a theorisation of desire as non-individual, which is at odds with the foundations of consent and may push us to think of other ways to conceptualise ethical sexual encounters. Meanwhile, Saketopoulou reminds us of the transformative potential of encounters with others and also the responsibility that comes with it and, therefore, the relevance of secure and trusting connections that can support asymmetric positions of power and vulnerability.

2.3.5 *Questions for This Study Arising From the Literature on Feminist Ethics*

The concurrent discussion of consent and affective responsibility enables this study to surpass the common circuits of research on consent that, even acknowledging its broad applications, still focus excessively on sex and rape (for exceptions, see Reinicke, 2022;

Ringrose, Regehr, & Whitehead, 2021), taking for granted the extension of the concept's applicability to other sexual encounters, with flirting being only one of them. Furthermore, the literature reviewed in this section elucidates three issues addressed by this study: the presupposition of a knowing, coherent, transparent subject, the importance of considering power dynamics within negotiations and the complexities of what sexual and bodily boundaries can mean when considering the body as more than mere flesh, entangled in a continuum with online/offline worlds.

Regarding the transparent, knowing and choosing subject, the literature demonstrates that this pervasive humanist assumption leaves us with few tools to understand more ambiguous, ambivalent sensations, as well as to deal with uncertainty. It also leaves us with few means to explore the experience of being carried away by a situation or to consider subjectivity as porous and constituted from the outside. This is where psychoanalytic and relational understandings of desire and sexual encounters are of help.

With respect to power dynamics, the literature points out that more people are involved in a flirting encounter than those actually doing the flirting. Despite being intimate and seemingly private, both consent and flirting experiences are highly porous to social norms and peer pressure. However, there is still much to explore regarding how these power dynamics are experienced and felt in the body. Furthermore, there is still much left to investigate about the role of objects and digital materiality entangled with power dynamics in flirting. Additionally, there is a need for further conceptualisation of the embodied experience of sexual bodily boundaries: How can we know where are they when we are not close to touching? And what can now be considered touching? Is the flesh the sole terrain to delineate these bodily boundaries?

2.4 Summarising the Literature Review to Frame This Research Project

This chapter reviewed literature related to the primary questions of this project: What is flirting and how can it be studied?, while also exploring and unpacking feminist ethics as a potential influence on teenage flirting. This final section considers the implications of these different groups of studies for my research project on teenagers' accounts of flirting in Chile.

The first section outlined the challenge of defining flirting without referring to any specific gestures, quality or intentions of flirters, while also demonstrating the need to include power relations in our understanding. The second section asked how flirting among young people had been studied and raised questions about how flirting is done and, more specifically, how to think of the flirting body. These studies thus inspired this research to transcend discursive and binary understandings of sexuality, and to consider that what bodies do and feel is never autonomous, but entangled and co-produced with their social and material context, including the digital world. Regarding the flirting body, research on social media stresses the need for an understanding of embodied processes that blur binaries such as online/offline, individual/social and intimate/public, while also allowing a porous and material-spatial constitution of the embodied experience, as proposed by studies of geographies and the work of Ringrose et al. This study draws upon this literature to conceptualise the body as a sensuous and dynamic entity that is continually produced, transformed and moved by its multiple relationalities with other bodies, objects and space. Lastly, this second section also explored methods for researching flirting, highlighting the contributions of in-depth detailed interviews for exploring the micro-dynamics of sexual encounters of others, particularly among teenagers.

The third section focused on feminist ethics and various feminist critiques of "affective responsibility" and "affirmative consent". This section demonstrated that these feminist ethics heavily rely on individualistic humanist notions of the subject with straightforward and knowable wants and intentions. It also revealed that understandings of consent lack a conceptualisation of the body and embodied and affective experience, raising questions about a potential idealisation of rational negotiation and verbal communication. Furthermore, it left unaddressed how to conceptualise bodily boundaries considering how power dynamics are felt and shape what a body can do.

Considering both the limitations of humanist definitions of flirting that focus on intentions and the critiques on affective responsibility and affirmative consent that caution against humanist conceptualisations of agentic individuals with clear and knowable wants and intentions, this study pays particular attention to various scholars among these groups who emphasise the contribution of conceptualising flirting as a co-

constructed phenomenon emerging from multiple relationalities. Thus, drawing from the different sections of this review, this project conceptualises flirting as a contingent, relational and multiple becoming of norms and discourses, material arrangements and sensuous, affecting and affected bodies. In other words, flirting as simultaneously material-discursive and affective. This definition is informed by 1) Mølbak's (2010) proposal of flirting as a liminal event; 2) studies of geographies exploring flirting at clubs and studies on social media sexual cultures, which emphasise the agentic relevance of the discursive/normative with the material context and the affectivity intertwined with power geometries arising from material arrangements; and 3) critiques of consent and affective responsibility for relying on an individualised, discrete and knowing subject. Thus, this project seeks to address flirting beyond the conundrums of the desiring individual subject, offering a new perspective on certain aspects of the debates surrounding flirting and ethics, while also drawing from some of the contributions of psychoanalytic theory, as this review also did.

This study's approach to flirting, which I will elaborate on as material-discursive and affective intra-actions in the next chapter, allows us to explore the critical role of discourses, materialities and affects within flirting. At the same time, it enables us to consider how flirting is entangled with other political elements, such as feminist ethics or digital activism, and how these factors matter within flirting encounters and whether they shape them towards more equitable relationalities. Thus, in the first data analysis chapter, reviewing critiques of consent in relation to men's defensiveness helped to explore the experiences of young high school men with the digital denunciation of sexual violence, highlighting their anxieties and mapping how feminist activism might be shaping the ways they flirt through their affective experiences and fantasies. Continuing with feminist intra-actions with flirting, the second data chapter builds on the critiqued assumptions of affective responsibility to outline how it emerges within the flirting accounts of feminist-identified teenagers, moving beyond discourses about ethics or 'empowered feminists'. Lastly, the comprehensive review of consent critiques highlights the importance of theorising the body in a way that enables a relational and messy approach to sexual encounters, a focus addressed in the third data chapter by proposing a posthuman material-discursive and affective approach to bodily boundaries and the transformative and affirmative potential of the 'non-consensual'.

Finally, regarding methods, this project also draws inspiration from this body of work, considering the affordances of in-depth and finely-detailed accounts achieved by Mølbak's (2010) interviews on flirting narratives, Tan's (2013) detailed probing interviews from an affective perspective and, to a lesser extent, by the narrative interviews of Pedersen et al. (2017) that revealed the spontaneous inclusion of material surroundings in accounts of one-night stands. The contributions of these methods not only offer manifold possibilities for producing rich data, but are also valuable when researching the experiences of underage young people, where direct observation by the researcher would be at least awkward, if not unethical, but also impossible because of the simultaneous overlapping contexts where flirting occurs. Hence, the methods employed in this study explore various ways of eliciting flirting accounts to investigate what these accounts reveal about how young people flirt, how normative discourses and power dynamics are felt while flirting and whether these accounts can help shed light on contemplating the influence of material factors on embodied sensations.

3. Conceptual Underpinnings to Study Flirting Encounters: Intra-actions, Affect and Fantasy

Introduction

Given the complexities discussed in the previous chapter regarding the study of flirting, the concepts of "intra-actions", "affect" and "fantasy" are chosen in an attempt to account for the somewhat fleeting and difficult-to-articulate experience of flirting. Collectively, these concepts form a relational and contingent framework that guides the methodology and approach of this research. This framework particularly focuses on how micro-practices and intra-actions matter in producing flirting and the critical role of power asymmetries, conceptualised as "immanent relations of force" (Barad, 2007, p. 450), either facilitating or restricting certain possibilities over others. Thus, this theoretical approach acknowledges the diverse ways in which flirting experiences manifest and the myriad of elements and forces at play.

Baradian "intra-actions", Deleuzian "affect" and psychoanalytical "fantasy" come from different theoretical traditions and epistemologies. By combining these concepts, my aim is not to create a coherent theoretical framework, but rather to apply these theories empirically, focusing on their practical implications for reconceptualising flirting events rather than their epistemological foundations.

This chapter maps similar conceptualisations of each term and justifies the conceptual understandings that form the feminist posthuman approach of this project. For "intra-actions", I begin by exploring the contributions and limitations of various approaches that use "assemblage", drawing from theories by Deleuze and Guattari, DeLanda, Bennet and Barad. I demonstrate how feminist scholars' utilisation of Barad's notion of "intra-actions" (Ringrose, Warfield, et al., 2019) enables a focus on the dynamic contingency of both the process of analysis and the flirting scene itself. This approach highlights both as simultaneously material and discursive, while illustrating how power is enacted within intra-actions. Therefore, in this project, I approach flirting from Baradian intra-actions.

I also emphasise the need to include notions of affect to complement Barad's material-discursive approach, as has been done by PhEmaterialist scholars (Strom et al., 2019). Regarding "affect", I discuss different uses of the term to explore how materiality moves us and how power operates in our bodies, influencing what we feel and what we are capable of doing. I primarily focus on the affordances of conceiving affect as a force that instigates changes and the experience of those changes both in the body and in-between bodies. I explore concepts that employ affect as "affective atmospheres" (Anderson, 2009) and "somatic archives" (Kyrölä & Paasonen, 2016), which offer particularly valuable insights when examining flirting. Finally, regarding "fantasy", I explore psychoanalytic definitions that emphasise how it intertwines with discourses and affectivity, its role in articulating reality and its influence on what it is possible to think/do/feel. My interpretation of this psychoanalytic work through material-discursive and affective intra-actions conceptualises fantasy as a means of grasping how potential pasts, presents and futures can shape an event.

3.1 From "Assemblage" to Feminist "Intra-Actions"

The concept of "assemblage" originates from Deleuze and Guattari's work in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972/1983) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980/1987). It has been used by researchers studying young people's sexuality along with Manuel DeLanda's (2016) Deleuzoguattarian assemblage theory to conceptualise their research, the object of research and the data produced as assemblages (Alldred & Fox, 2015; Austin, 2016; Renold & Ringrose, 2017b; Ringrose & Renold, 2014; Sylwander & Gottzén, 2020). The term assemblage comes from the translation of the French word *agencement*, which derives from *agencer*, which can refer both to an ongoing process of arranging heterogeneous components and the result of such action: a constellation or "ensemble" (DeLanda, 2016, p. 1). However, working with both notions of the term, as DeLanda does, can diminish part of the dynamism of the concept as an ongoing process. Therefore, others like Buchanan (2021) prefer to emphasise the agency in agencer, highlighting the process of arranging instead of the resulting grouping. Additionally, the notion of assemblage in Deleuze and Guattari's theory was preceded by "desire-machines" (Buchanan, 2021; Hickey-Moody, 2019), and some scholars have preferred to retain the machinic resonances. Thus, it is common to encounter notions of production,

gearing and plugging/unplugging of machines or components (Jackson & Mazzei, 2023; Lambevski, 2005; Tamboukou, 2008).

In this section, I begin with DeLanda's (2016) definition of assemblage as a base for exploring research on sexuality that draws on his understanding of the concept. I then proceed to examine the uses of assemblage in human geography studies and their decentring of agency and desire within the material context. Finally, I delve into feminist work, which incorporates Karen Barad's concept of "intra-actions" into their understanding of assemblage. I focus on how this feminist approach enables a closer analysis of how humans, objects and gendered power come to matter. For this research project, I adhere to the latter feminist work with "intra-actions" since it decentres and entangles the subject, emphasising the reciprocal influence within flirting encounters and accounts of the material and discursive, the human and nonhuman, and, most importantly, because Barad's intra-actions help acknowledge the specific ways that power dynamics come to matter in flirting accounts.

DeLanda (2016) draws from Deleuze and Guattari's work to define assemblages as "irreducible social wholes produced by relations of exteriority". Assemblages as "irreducible wholes" indicate that the amalgamation of these elements possesses properties that exceed the sum of the parts. Moreover, the properties of these wholes are emergent, are "produced by the interactions between components" and their existence and endurance are contingent, as they are created by the continuity of those interactions (p. 12). In other words, assemblages can be understood as the groupings or constellations of relations between entities, where these entities are simultaneously being produced by these relations. Elements thus do not possess inherent properties, but rather, 'their' properties are defined within and by these relations. Consequently, both the elements of the world and the world itself are contingent; created and recreated again and again. The elements of the world encompass subjects, or perhaps more accurately, thought of this way, the category of 'subject' is disrupted and de-centred so that it is just another element, created and recreated in relation to other elements.

I want to raise three concerns about DeLanda's Deleuzoguattarian assemblages. First, for him, assemblages are non-hierarchical, meaning they are not organised according to a pre-established structure. Thus, it leaves us with few tools to address power dynamics

within assemblages. Secondly, for DeLanda (2016), assemblages are autonomous and, though porous and dynamic, they have boundaries. They can overlap or be nested in larger assemblages and have individual identity and history (DeLanda, 2016). Thirdly, and in line with the latter, DeLanda's assemblages undermine the relational ontology that is supposed to be its foundation. This is because it is more about the enacted process of these relations coming together to produce the whole than the ontological production of the elements themselves. This critique may also apply to machinic notions of parts being plugged in or out, where those parts can exist apart from the machinic assemblage.

I will illustrate these three issues in two empirical studies that draw from DeLanda. Josie Austin's research explores assemblage as "constellations of relations which come together for varying amounts of time to create subjectivities and specific possibilities for sexual bodies" (2016, p. 281). She uses assemblage with the aim of liberating sexual pleasure from common-sense sexual acts, such as kissing, and examining the bodily capacities of young women to feel sexy or pleasure in a wider variety of practices with a focus on contexts. For example, Austin (2016) explored the dancing-assemblage of Sara, a 17-year-old young woman who, through dancing in the school's religion room wearing street-style clothes while being filmed with her smartphone, could re-enact her body as sexy and girly while feeling joy and freedom, reworking the restrictions from her Christian upbringing, school culture and the dominant standards of feminine beauty and body appearance. Thus, Austin's (2016) assemblages operate within the intersection and rearrangement of discourses, materiality and bodily sensations. However, defining assemblages as a "constellation of relations" (Austin, 2016, p. 281) is closer to a collage that considers the constitutive elements as given rather than a contingent co-produced assemblage where the parts do not exist before or apart from their relationalities. For example, in her interpretation, the meaning of the materiality mentioned focuses on social discourses (e.g., 'religious' room versus 'sexy' dancing), overlooking the potential impact of its particular material qualities that are only constituted in the particularity of the act. Similarly, power dynamics are viewed as given by social norms. However, how can we approach social norms not as fixed pre-existing entities but rather as dynamic forces, considering the ways these are produced and perpetuate themselves within these contingent relationalities?

The second example is Ringrose and Coleman's (2013) use of assemblage to explore the production of sexual and gendered bodies through the exchange of nude photos among young people. They draw from Deleuze and Guattari to define assemblage as "the synthesis of heterogeneities as such" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 330) and as "diverse and multiple" connections "between human and nonhuman things" (Ringrose & Coleman, 2013, p. 125), and from DeLanda to state that parts of an assemblage can be detached and plugged into another assemblage, thus having different interactions. However, they add that power relations shape these connections and examine how body parts like breasts or six-packs gain or lose social value regarding beauty standards, desirability and social status. Their study analysed group interviews with 13-16 year-olds, tracing how the desirability felt by girls when asked for a nude can turn into social currency for boys while devaluing and slut-shaming the girls. This research reveals how sharing nudes enacts sexual differences and restricts possibilities to act, demonstrating how where these nudes are 'plugged in' the assemblage, can change the social value of the people involved. Similarly to Austin, in this focus on body parts, or the nude, as an element of the assemblage, Ringrose and Coleman are less concerned about the contingent co-production of the elements in the assemblage. However, in contrast with Austin, they focus on power enactments in different relationalities and the changes in values according to the location of the nude.

In both examples, the material (such as photos, music and body parts) is primarily regarded in terms of its social significance or value, instead of considering the specifics of its material emergence. In contrast, research in human geography has used assemblage to highlight the role of material objects and context in the constitution of subjects. One example is Duff's (2016) research on drug consumption, which has been drawn upon by studies of the geography of sexualities discussed in the literature review, such as the narrative research on one-night stands by Pedersen et al. (2017) and Lambevski's (2005) self-ethnographic research on flirting at clubs.

The primary contribution of these studies lies in their substitution of the subject as the locus of research with the logic of assemblage, which is understood as the relations between heterogenous materialities, forces, spaces, signs, bodies and affects that have agency in producing and maintaining the phenomenon (Duff, 2016). The main implication of this substitution is that both Duff and Lambevski relocate 'subjective'

desire—whether to consume drugs or behave sexually, respectively—away from notions of subjective choice, volition and responsibilisation since desire and pleasure are not properties of subjects but rather emerge from "circumstances which are not of their making" (Urry, 2000, p. 14 as cited in Lambevski, 2005, p. 578). These circumstances encompass contingent spatial and societal contexts from objects like drugs, gifts, alcohol, family and friendship relations, neighbourhood dynamics, money circulation, the clubbing market, public policies and social norms regarding gender and sexual desirability, to name but a few. Lambevski (2005) in particular favours the concept of the "desire-machine", a Deleuzoguattarian predecessor of assemblage. His focus on the partial objects within the machinery of flirting while clubbing allows him to explore the multisensorial aspects of his experience of building up sexual desire while observing, in between the flashing lights, partial objects like eyes, lips, and water bottles, along with feeling the music soundwaves through his body, amidst other smells, gazes and touches that fuel sexual attraction. Moreover, he notes that these contingencies can also impede the emergence of sexual attraction when, for example, the music is dull, the place is too bright or the clothes do not feel right (Lambevski, 2005). Therefore, sexual attraction does not emerge or is sustained solely by subjects but rather by assemblages.

Another contribution of Lambevski is his challenge to the notion that the parts of desire-machines are non-hierarchical (as DeLanda states) since he suggests they have varying values according to hierarchies of sexual desirability, "that particular signifiers of hierarchy of sexual desirability – like handsomeness, whiteness, rugged masculinity, blondness, and lean muscularity – continue to exert their irresistible hold on those who lack these markers" (Lambevski, 2005, p. 577). Thus, he incorporates the productivity of power relations within the relational constitution of both assemblages and sexual desire.

Therefore, these geography studies achieve a tighter focus on decentring agency and desire than the examples that utilise DeLanda, which interpret elements more as components of a system. However, it is conceivable to interpret the concern of human geographies about the role of material objects and places in the constitution of subjects by considering assemblages as mere material and social contexts. In the same contextual vein, Lambevski's utilisation of assemblage does not delve into how particular power

imbalances emerge, as he perceives them as having a pre-existing existence as social asymmetries.

Within educational research, one way to map how power imbalances arise is outlined in Hickey-Moody and Horn's (2022) ethnographic study. They unpack how the discursive material assemblages of an ethnically diverse school in Manchester, UK, contributed to the marginalisation of the students and their immigrant families. For instance, the former war bunker walls of the school limit telephone and WiFi connectivity, effectively isolating them from the wider community. This illustrates how 'at risk' discourses and racialised power dynamics emerge from both discursive and material arrangements.

Turning to feminist scholars and assemblages, it is necessary to consider the productivity of gendered—and other—power asymmetries. Notably, these studies often incorporate or primarily focus on Karen Barad's agential realism theory. They utilise Barad's concept of "intra-action" to elucidate how matter comes to matter, how events unfold. Combining Deleuzoguattarian assemblage with Barad's (2007) "phenomena" or "apparatus" and "intra-actions" is common among these works, in contrast with other scholars' claims that these theories are ontologically "incommensurable" (Hein, 2016, p. 138).

Before addressing this empirical work of feminist scholars, it is important to continue with Barad and the concept of "intra-actions". Barad's theory combines Bohr's physics-philosophy, Foucault's theory on power and the subject and Butler's performativity theory. According to Barad (2007, 2012), intra-actions occur in-between entities that do not pre-exist before the encounter, which is emphasised by the substitution of 'inter' with 'intra'. Instead of using the term assemblage, Barad (2007) employs 'apparatus' or 'phenomena' to refer to certain contingent intra-actions that produce something. Thus, similarly to assemblage, intra-actions highlight the entangled 'nature' of things as part-of-the-world, not as being in-the-world (Barad, 2007). Moreover, "intra-actions" underscore the dynamic becoming of the world; how reality is created, maintained and changed. The full definition of intra-actions is:

> Intra-actions are nonarbitrary, nondeterministic causal enactments through which matter-in-the-process-of-becoming is iteratively enfolded into its ongoing differential materialisation. Such a dynamics is not marked by an exterior

> parameter called time, nor does it take place in a container called space. Rather, iterative intra-actions are the dynamics through which temporality and spatiality are produced and iteratively reconfigured in the materialization of phenomena and the (re)making of material-discursive boundaries and their constitutive exclusions.
>
> (Barad, 2007, p. 48)

Barad argues that intra-actions are causal enactments; they are doings that cause the world. Thus, reality is co-constituted relationally by an "ongoing dynamic of intra-activity" (2007, p. 206). Intra-actions are nonarbitrary because they are not subject to individual determination. They are also nondeterministic because intra-actions always involve excluding some possibilities. In other words, whatever is set aside leaves open the possibility of other configurations of the world.

Furthermore, in the above quote, Barad states that not even space and time pre-exist intra-actions. They are not 'containers' of the world or experience but are produced by intra-actions with matter, or what she calls "spacetimematterings" (2013). In this framework, every intra-action matters, yet it matters differently in creating different phenomena in both senses of the word: relevance and substance. These two senses underline that matter and meaning are entangled and co-constituted. According to Barad, meaning, concepts and the discursive are not immaterial ideas but specific material arrangements that contingently produce the properties and boundaries of entities (2007, p. 196). That is why Barad talks about the material-discursive, as they are inseparable.

Comparing Barad's concepts of 'phenomena' and 'intra-actions' with the uses of assemblage discussed above, it is important to stress that the former are not considered bounded wholes. On the contrary, phenomena "have no intrinsic boundaries but are open-ended practices" (Barad, 2007, p. 15). This is because Barad considers "individuation-within-and-as-part-of-the-phenomenon" (2007, p. 321), meaning any boundary is a difference within relations, a contingently produced "particular instance of wholeness" (2007, p. 197). Hence, there is no overlapping or nesting of assemblages or phenomena since, akin to a Venn diagram, overlapping implies the existence of more or less static boundaries that permit one to discern the overlap. For Barad, overlapping

and nesting create diffractive patterns, and like waves in the sea, one cannot be inside the other without both undergoing change.

Among feminist research utilising assemblages, Barad's theory complements approaches primarily drawn from Deleuzoguattarian assemblages or Bennet's (2010) "agentic assemblage". Bennet (2010, p. 21) defines assemblage as "ad hoc groupings of diverse elements of vibrant materials of all sorts", where agency is no longer solely attributed to and located in human(s), but "distributed across an ontologically heterogeneous field".

Louisa Allen draws from Bennet's definition of "agentic assemblage" to decentre subjectivity and emphasise the role of material and social context in sexual agency, conceiving it as distributed and collective. Consequently, she proposes the sexuality of young people as an assemblage wherein individual subjects do not hold agency but rather it is dispersed within a broad grouping of heterogeneous elements. Thus, for example, Allen proposes reframing young people practising unprotected sex not as a personal issue where they fail or choose not to apply the knowledge they have acquired and, for example, using a condom, but she instead considers safe sex practices as a convergence of influencing factors that include governmental sex education policies, production and distribution of condoms, the teaching of safer sex, school support, the opening hours and geolocation of pharmacies and access to doctors, the embarrassment of buying or asking for condoms, and so on (Allen, 2018, p. 142). However, Allen poses a difficulty with Bennet's flat ontology and distributed agency since it means humans and things are all "equally responsible" (2018, p. 144) for the assemblages in which they participate. However, Allen questions how this distribution would work and suggests that Barad's (2007) theorisation is useful because, for her, agency is not distributed but enacted by each intra-action, thereby emphasising that certain intra-actions (such as those mentioned above) matter more than others in specific moments. This underlines that power cuts across these entanglements.

On the other hand, Mazzei and Jackson's research on voice (2017) combines Bennet's "agentic assemblage" and Barad's "intra-actions". This approach allows them to focus on the material power of voice and sound to shape an encounter. In other words, how gendered power comes to matter and shapes how people relate. For example, how the sound of a husband's arrival alters what a wife can say in an interview in her kitchen,

shutting down the (until then) ongoing challenge to the patriarchal order. Unfortunately, their focus on the impact of the sound (changing the conversation) despite how it was felt—at least by the interviewer—extends the wife's silence by overlooking the opportunity to explore how gendered power is felt by the bodies who were restricted by the sound of the arriving husband during the interview.

For this PhD project, Barad's intra-actions make a significant contribution in comparison to assemblage thinking by emphasising the identification of specific relationalities rather than merely examining the overall grouping of elements. This approach thus facilitates the exploration of the effects of mundane objects and micro-practices in constructing power dynamics and imbalances, as demonstrated in Mazzei and Jackson's study and Taylor's sixth form classroom observations.

Drawing primarily from Barad, Taylor (2019) observed a sixth form sociology classroom conceptualising the space of the classroom as a continual discursive-material recreation of gendered power dynamics and underlining the performative work of mundane, hidden and taken-for-granted elements. For example, how a male teacher embodied a male gaze by occupying a raised desk with a chrome swivel chair that allowed him to move effortlessly while the students remained confined to their static desks and chairs. His authority was further emphasised by his sharp attire, calm voice, and comedic teaching style, along with the posters of the founders of sociology on the walls, manifesting tropes of masculine power, creating boundaries between the teacher's mobility, wit, voice, and knowledge, and the students' fixed attention, laughter, silence, and ignorance. Taylor's meticulous focus on mundane micro-practices is "generative for understanding the agentic force of material objects, analysing the minutiae of bodily practices … apprehending objects–bodies–space as intra-actively entailed material agencies within the assemblage of the classroom" (2019, p. 48).

The last research I want to review involves EJ Renold and Jessica Ringrose's studies with intra-active or posthuman sexuality assemblages (2017b; 2014). Drawing from Deleuze and Barad, they introduce the term "part-icipation" (2017b). This term is used to emphasise that, both in the object of study and the research process, elements are not merely participants but integral parts-of, and thus are formed by, assemblages. Specifically, in their exploration of sexual violence, Renold and Ringrose focus on how power operates within assemblages, building on Ringrose's (2011) earlier work on

"affective assemblages", which conceptualised affect as the "effectuation of a power" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 265). They investigate the creation and circulation of sexy selfies and non-consensual Facebook tagging (Renold & Ringrose, 2017b). In this research, Renold and Ringrose demonstrate how boys gain currency in the 'lad culture' economy when capturing girls' sexy selfies by tagging themselves and being able to use them as profile pictures. However, they also illustrate how the unsolicited tagging of Jak in a photo of a woman's cleavage with his name written on it reroutes the dynamics of boys asking for nudes, making Jak the target of mockery and reworking gendered power dynamics where the girl who takes the sexy photo is typically slut-shamed (Renold & Ringrose, 2017b; Ringrose & Harvey, 2015).

The application of assemblage-thinking and focusing on online pictures and tagging and their capacities rather than on the individuals involved allows the decentring of the human with the relational co-creation of subjects-in-the-world that blurs the human/nonhuman divide. They also explore how power cuts across the intra-actions that create the world and how bodies are affected—how they are moved, shaped by and feel these changes. In subsequent works, these are referred to as "material-discursive-affective assemblages" (Ringrose, Warfield, et al., 2019; Ringrose, Whitehead, et al., 2019; Warfield, 2017).

3.1.1 *Intra-actions for Studying How Flirting Emerges*

Karen Barad's notion of intra-actions and her focus on "how matter comes to matter" (2003, 2007, p. 205) encompasses and surpasses the reviewed Deleuzian-based approaches on assemblages. Barad's emphasis on the productivity of specific relations or intra-actions (rather than on the productivity of the grouping of relations or elements) encourages us to zoom in on micro-processes and seemingly irrelevant materialities to explore their role within the context of study and the research process. Barad's concepts help to dissolve the subject into the discursive and material relations from which the elements always emerge as differences within relations, never discrete or autonomous. This also challenges agency as belonging to or arising from humans while demonstrating that it is not equally distributed within assemblages.

Furthermore, her consideration of exclusions as constitutive and her examination of how power operates stand in contrast to a non-hierarchical or flat approach to

assemblages (Austin, 2017; DeLanda, 2016; Mazzei & Jackson, 2017; Tamboukou, 2008). Barad invites us to look closely to analyse which intra-actions matter and for whom, not because they have a prior social value but because they are made to matter within the specific arrangements of intra-actions. Thus, the feminist work on assemblages influenced by Barad, particularly the research led by Renold and Ringrose, emphasises how bodies are both constituted and felt through the material and discursive, and how power imbalances operate within specific arrangements of the online, offline, bodies, school and so forth. It is from this body of work that I draw the empirical use of intra-actions for conducting research with young people.

Thinking with Barad's intra-action is also thinking with distance, time, touch, gazes, body parts, sweatshirts, benches, emojis and so on. It is an invitation to take a closer look at how meaning and matter are produced. However, Barad's theories fall short in analysing how the body feels while being produced and moved by intra-actions. Therefore, an affective lens is required to complement Barad's intra-actions, such as the one used in Ringrose and Renold's (2014, 2017) work and in the concept of material-discursive-affective assemblages (Ringrose, Warfield, et al., 2019; Ringrose, Whitehead, et al., 2019; Warfield, 2017).

3.2 Exploring "Affect" as Intensities, Atmospheres and Somatic Archives

Exploring the concept of "affect" is a challenging task, even among 'affect scholars', who form a highly heterogeneous group somewhat united in examining the ways in which the world impinges on both human and nonhuman bodies (Dernikos et al., 2020). This is because, to achieve this goal, they conceive of affect in different ways. Some draw on Spinozist's and Deleuzoguattarian definitions of affect as the capacity to affect and be affected (Dernikos et al., 2020; Hickey-Moody, 2019). Alternatively, building upon this same foundation, others consider affect as an immanent social force (Massumi, 2015; Stewart, 2007). Meanwhile, some understand "affect" as feelings (Muñoz, 2000; Ngai, 2007) and emotions (Ahmed, 2014; Cvetkovich, 2012). Moreover, affect has been explored through different figures, such as flows (Alldred & Fox, 2015), charges (Stewart, 2007), forces (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013), intensities (Massumi, 2015; Ringrose & Renold, 2014), sound and vibrational waves (Dernikos, 2020; Henriques, 2010), archives (Kyrölä & Paasonen, 2016) and atmospheres (Anderson, 2009; Leff,

2021; Michels, 2015). In this section, I draw from Massumi's Deleuzoguattarian conceptualisation of affect and certain frameworks applied in empirical studies that prove helpful in approaching the fleeting, sensuous and emotional features of flirting.

The 'affective turn' challenges humanism by conceptualising affect as relational, non-subjective and traversing bodies and things. For example, Massumi's (2015) work, which is frequently cited in research on sexuality among young people, builds on Deleuze and Guattari, and Spinoza's notion of "affect" as the capacity to affect and be affected, defining it as "a felt passage to a varied power of existence" (p. 50). According to Massumi, affect is action, an enacted "transition [that] is felt" (p. 48), capable of producing changes. References to "passage" and "transition" both imply that a change had occurred. For Massumi, this change is enacted by an intensity that increases or decreases bodies' capacities to do, creating a "varied power of existence".

Moreover, the term "felt"—in "felt passage" and "felt transition"—signifies affect as both the change and the experience of that change. Thus, Massumi's conceptualisation involves a doubling, where "the affect and the feeling of the transition are not two different things" (2015, p. 4). "The experience of a change, an affecting-being affected, is redoubled by an experience of the experience", and this experience is what is registered and accumulated in bodies as memories, habits and tendencies (2015, p. 4). Hickey-Moody explains this doubling through *affectus* and *affection*[2]. Affectus represents the change in its materiality, the augmentation or reduction of the body's capacity to act (Hickey-Moody, 2013, 2019). Meanwhile, affection pertains to feeling the state of the changing body, what the encounter leaves in thought and the body (Hickey-Moody, 2013, 2019).

Affect is always embodied; it is a "bodily commotion, a movement in or of the body" (Massumi, 2015, p. 54), but affect is never entirely personal or intersubjective. In this theorisation of affect, emotion represents one partial way of statically registering the ongoing experience of affect, serving as a psychological form of socially coding affect.

In contrast to psychological approaches, Massumi (2015) emphasises the relationality of affect, meaning it is part of a contingent event in the in-between of the elements in relation. At the same time, it produces these related elements. Thus, these entities are

[2] For other approaches to *affectus* and *affectio*(*n*), see Grossberg et al., 2010; Seigworth & Pedwell, 2023.

neither discrete nor do they pre-exist the encounter. Massumi's contingent understanding of affect is also evident in his suggestion that "[a]ffect comes to determinate expression through actually occurring encounters" (p. 205). This means affect does not pre-exist the elements in relation but emerges from this relationality, thus being conditioned by the particularities of each situation, which shape the potentiality of what could happen in the encounter (p. 208).

Consequently, as affect emerges within events, affect cannot be transmitted: "The logic of affect is entirely bound up with the logic of serial repetition and difference that applies to events ... not a logic of transmission or communication" (Massumi, 2015, p. 63). For affect to be transmitted, it would require some form of continuity, which contradicts the event logic of affect, which means it does not pre-exist the relations. One way to consider the autonomy of affect that Massumi (1995) posits does not involve the independence of affect from bodies or events, but rather its operation within the autonomic nervous system, beyond consciousness, meaning that affect acts on bodies before it can be apprehended by language or thought (Dernikos et al., 2020). However, Massumi also refers to the autonomy of affect as the process by which affect's excess potential remains and awaits subsequent expression, possibly implying a continuous existence of affect through events.

In summary, for Massumi, "affect is the ongoing force of the social taking evolving form" (p. 205). On one hand, affect occurs in-between bodies, producing them and changing their capacities while being determined by the same encounter. On the other hand, affect as a felt passage resides within the bodies that have been produced/changed and in their feeling of this change. This is how affect is always embodied while simultaneously being trans-individual, existing in the in-between. However, it is important to note that defining affect as the force of the social, in addition to considering affect as felt, introduces some anthropocentric resonances into this definition.

Researchers in youth sexuality have employed various concepts to apply Massumi's definition of affect, such as flow, sound waves, archives, atmospheres and intensities. However, employing affect as flow (Alldred & Fox, 2015) has been criticised for implying continuity that contradicts Massumi's (2015) event-oriented understanding, potentially suggesting an existence separate from the relationalities from which affect emerges. Julian Henriques (2010) proposes an alternative perspective to flow, considering affect

as sound waves that propagate vibrations through corporeal, material and sociocultural mediums. Crucially, these vibrations, experienced as moods, rhythms, atmospheres or 'vibes,' remain in connection with the bodies and things they affect. This is because the existence of a wave depends on the medium it disturbs while propagating, and the meaning of affect depends on the properties of both the wave and the medium within the contextual constellation. Hence, the concept of affect as waves highlights the intra-connections among the material, human and social dimensions, presenting an alternative approach to understanding the movement of affect through bodies as patterns of energy and vibrations.

However, Massumi's approach to affect and affect being portrayed as flow or waves have faced some critique, especially regarding the relationship with discourse and a lack of concern for power dynamics. For example, Wetherell (2012, 2013) critiqued Massumi's notion of affect as separated from the discursive, as if meaning could come separately and after affect, arguing instead to understand them as intertwined, as in her concept of discursive-affective practices. In addition, Hemmings (2005) argues that Massumi's conceptualisation is ill-suited to address power issues and how affect can reproduce or transform the dominant norms.

Notwithstanding these critiques, feminist scholars working in education have drawn from Massumi, Deleuze and Guattari to conceptualise affect as intertwined with discourse, materiality and power imbalances in various ways. One example of utilising such an approach is Bessie Dernikos' (2020) concept of "sonic booms". This enabled her to pay attention to audible elements among boys of colour that affectively resist white and colonial impositions of being a 'good learner' in a primary classroom in New York City. For Dernikos (2020) and other colleagues, sound serves as a figure for affect, helping to explore what affect does rather than what it is, sometimes even without much input of representations—but never without them—thus directing our attention to the capacities of objects, like a chalk scratch on the blackboard or a childhood song, to affect ourselves in sometimes hard-to-verbalise ways.

The other example of intertwining Massumi's "affect" with discourse and power dynamics is Ringrose and Renold's (2014) research on sexual violence. They suggest the notion of "affective intensities" to work with Massumi's and Deleuzoguattarian affect, but viewing affect as "the effectuation of a power" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.265 in

Ringrose, 2011, p. 601). According to them, affect is relational; "it happens in and between and through bodies and things" (Ringrose & Renold, 2014, p. 773). Most relevantly, these affective intensities are not free-flowing but intersect with power relations. In their study, Ringrose and Renold (2014) examined a moment where the convergence of school and bullying policies banning the use of offensive words such as "slut", the presence of feminist teachers and their own urge as researchers compelled them to challenge the boundaries between what could and could not be spoken about. This led them to broach the discomfort and ask about Slutwalks, which invigorated the atmosphere and prompted lively debate about sexual violence. However, these discussions were stifled when the teachers denied the students the opportunity to attend one of these marches. Thus, "affect" would serve as a tool to emphasise the embodied, sensorial and material while analysing the effects of power in and in-between bodies (Ringrose & Renold, 2014).

In addition to these feminist studies, and akin to Massumi's (2015) idea that felt experience of affect is accumulated in bodies, Kyrölä and Paasonen (2016) work with the notion of "carnal resonances" (Paasonen, 2013) settled in the body to describe "how encounters with sexual acts and scenarios—be these lived, represented, or imagined—accumulate, actualise, and resonate as embodied memories and sensations" (2016, p. 3). They referred to these as "somatic archives", where layered carnal knowledge creates patterns that are simultaneously personal and culturally shared, guiding present and past encounters with bodies, technologies, scenarios and fantasies. This concept has proven useful in examining, for instance, the creation of sexual knowledge through the layering of different encounters with pornography within our bodies over time (Kyrölä & Paasonen, 2016). Huuki et al. (2021) also drew on "somatic archives" to consider, for example, how cumulative sediments of heteronormative discourses settle in the body, making it harder for some people to say 'no' when disturbed. Consequently, "somatic archives" are another useful concept to analyse how power, as discursive, embodied and affective former experiences, shapes encounters and bodies' possibilities to act.

The last figure for affect I wish to explore is "atmosphere". Ben Anderson's idea of "affective atmospheres" is helpful when focusing on collective affective experiences, defined by the "affective experience as occurring beyond, around, and alongside the formation of subjectivity" (2009, p. 77). According to Anderson (2009), affect is

transpersonal intensities that emerge as bodies affect one another and cannot be fully captured by emotions. Affective atmospheres, therefore, are produced by the convergence of heterogeneous elements that produce collective intensities. These elements may be considered assemblages of human and nonhuman bodies, discourses and materialities. Atmospheres, perceived as felt environments, can also serve as a useful tool to consider the embodied impact of aesthetic qualities of material arrangements in space, analysing how material and spatial arranging processes intertwine with the sensual and affective (Michels, 2015). In this regard, it is possible to think of "spatiotemporal arrangements" (Leff, 2021, p. 2), where affective atmospheres cannot be located within specific bodies, but cover a certain space in some way. This may manifest as the aura of an art piece curated in a museum with its lighting and distance arrangements, or the ambience during a ceremony, shaped by music, speeches, symbolic objects and so forth. The concept of "atmosphere" thus adds a spatial dimension to affect, creating a sense of envelopment between individuals and objects.

Serving as another element in relation, atmospheres can envelop and move bodies, leading to material effects. One such example can be found in Tan's (2013) study, which utilises "heterosexual affects" to illustrate how the décor at heterosexual clubs in Singapore, coupled with low lighting, seductive music and alcohol consumption, co-produce a relaxed and sexually permissive atmosphere that facilitates sexual contact among dancers.

So, "affective atmospheres" entail a shared or collective quality that seeks to unify the perceived affect, despite being described by Anderson (2009) as constantly emerging and changing when different bodies or objects interact. The concept of atmosphere, in a sense, may homogenise the affective experience of the encounter for those involved, perhaps suggesting that atmospheres are constructed by a 'participant observer' who defines the tone of the ambience. However, the existence of atmosphere is both embodied and situated in-between and, therefore, not reducible to individual bodies or any other element present (Anderson, 2009; Michels, 2015).

However, others suggest that since atmospheres exist within the interplay of material 'environments' and sensing bodies, it is this very interplay that challenges the notion that atmospheres can have a homogenising effect, as they emanate from the encounter of diverse bodies with different histories, skills and materialities (Leff, 2021; Michels,

2015). Emphasising the role of the material, Michels' study demonstrates the different aesthetic feelings that the filmmaker and Michels could engage with while videorecording a concert on a rainy winter night, where the latter was cold and frustrated while the former was enthralled by the effects of the lights in the rain, a sense of awe that Michels was only able to experience after setting aside the purpose of filming and the camera. This latter change is relevant as it shows that feeling atmospheres transcends individuals with personal histories and includes the material organisations within space; how filming with the camera oriented Michels' body differently, altering his capacity to be affected by what was happening around him.

Building on the concept of atmospheres emerging between bodies with histories and material space, Leff (2021) highlights the role of power imbalances in creating atmospheres, suggesting that they are felt unevenly. He thus proposes a feminist approach to Anderson's concept. Drawing from Ahmed's (2006) work on "orientations", Leff argues that individuals in the same space will not feel the same atmosphere, and this unevenness is because of differences in gender and race (among other factors). For example, during the SARS and Covid pandemics, the fear of contagion while wearing a mask in public spaces was felt differently by white people and those with Asian heritage who the media had framed as spreading the virus. This differential experience of atmospheres through power imbalances is also evident in Ringrose and Renold's (2016) study. They utilise Anderson's concept of "affective atmosphere" to examine the production of threatening and safe spaces at school, and how a teacher's Portacabin outside the school building could serve as a sanctuary for girls to explore feminism and their experiences of gendered violence. Therefore, a feminist lens is critical to interpret the affective atmosphere's potential 'colonisation' of bodies and places within flirting encounters with political nuance.

3.2.1 *Assembling Affective Intra-actions to Map How Flirting Feels*

In summary, for this project, affect can manifest as sensations, feelings or impulses for or against a specific action that may not be easily verbalised. These are co-produced by an entangled material-discursive and affective network of objects, environments, people and so forth. Building upon Massumi's conception of affect as a felt change, both as a force provoking the change and the feeling of this transition, while also considering the

feminist critique that emphasises the intertwinement of affect with discourses and a need to understand affect through gendered (and other) power imbalances, this study focuses mainly on the affordances of "affective atmospheres" and "somatic archives" to examine affect as intertwined with the material and spatial as well. Consequently, this approach transcends anthropocentrism in the sense that both concepts attribute significant roles to matter—our surrounding materiality and the materiality of the body—in our capacities to act and feel.

Particularly, "affective atmospheres" is a useful concept to address moods or environments that are felt as shared or that can have a role in a flirting encounter even when not necessarily acknowledged. This is illustrated by Tan's (2013) utilisation of "heterosexual affects" in his analysis of the material arrangements of heterosexual clubs that produced a relaxed atmosphere conducive to sexual contact among dancers. Furthermore, "affective atmospheres" (Anderson, 2009; Leff, 2021; Michels, 2015) are valuable for directing attention to the potential for mutuality or emotional relational attunement during flirting encounters, as feeling-with the other in the in-between.

Meanwhile, "somatic archives" are valuable for thinking about how our past experiences and fantasies settle in the body, guiding its capacity to move and be moved. Therefore, "somatic archives" serve as a suitable complement to this project's approach to the body as intra-actions that emerge from the literature review, considering it a sensuous and dynamic being continually produced, transformed and moved by its multiple relationalities with other bodies, objects and space.

Employing these concepts, this project introduces the term "cis-heterosexist affects" to refer to sensations, emotions and behaviour that emerge within material-discursive and affective intra-actions and that can settle in the body, prompting the re-production of cis-heterosexuality (and its underpinning mononormativity).

3.3 Fantasy: From Psychoanalysis to Intra-actions

Fantasy is often associated with imagination or fiction and, thus, as a realm diametrically opposed to reality. However, reducing fantasy to mere imagination overlooks its power to shape reality. In this section, I explore psychoanalytic notions of fantasy and their employment in empirical research, focusing on their discursive and

affective gripping while incorporating an emphasis on materiality to navigate the understanding of fantasy within material-discursive and affective intra-actions.

One way of thinking about how fantasy can shape reality derives from positivist psychology. As described by Karaian (2022), some understand fantasies as patterns of subjective, volitive and conscious thought. These patterns are viewed as a production of individual imagination with effects on the body; for instance, sexual arousal in the case of sexual fantasies. Consequently, fantasies involve imagination, bodily sensations and behaviour without identifiable causal relations.

Another perspective involves considering fantasy as the ability to imagine alternative worlds, thus serving as the first step towards changing the world (Rodríguez, 2011 in Karaian, 2022). Going further, Butler (1990, 2004) suggests that fantasies constitute the outside of what is called reality. According to Butler, fantasy delineates the contingent boundaries of reality while suggesting possibilities outside the norm. Consequently, fantasy has played a pivotal role for feminism to imagine alternative realities. Fantasies are "part of the articulation of the possible" (2004, p. 29). They are different versions of the 'real', transcending beyond the actual or present state and reaching towards the yet-to-be-realised or the unrealisable (Butler, 2004).

Butler conceptualises fantasy within her theory of performativity, wherein fantasy "postures as the real; it establishes the real through a repeated and persistent posturing" (1990, p. 188). Consequently, Butler emphasises the contingent nature of what is and is not reality, thus framing fantasy not as a passive but as a contesting constitutive exclusion. Moreover, she asserts that fantasy can exert its power more effectively when it acquires the status of the real (1990, p. 189). This may be evident at times when conspiratorial theories thrive, but it also operates within embodiment, where fantasy plays a role in the sense of inhabiting a body, its stylisation and the experience of gender in ways that are inseparable from the organisation of material life (Butler, 2004).

When considering fantasy as a part of the possible that articulates reality, psychoanalysis provides various perspectives on how fantasy operates. Within the psychoanalytic tradition, dating back to Freud, fantasies are regarded as part of psychic reality. This implies that fantasy exerts significant effects on individuals' bodies and

lives, despite being detached from the 'material world' in the sense that it does not require empirical proof. According to psychoanalysis, reality is constructed in the relationship between the psyche and the material and social world (Evans, 1996). However, within various psychoanalytic traditions, fantasies serve distinct functions and take on different forms, and are helpful for diverse purposes.

Freud defined fantasy as conscious or unconscious, but never deliberate, scripts or sequenced scenes that can be experienced as words or images (Laplanche & Pontalis, 2006), where the subject always assumes roles such as audience, agent, victim and so forth (Freud, 1919/2011). Consequently, it is possible to think of fantasies as potential scenarios that shape how the world is perceived.

Klein is useful to address the affective functions of fantasy, particularly as a defence mechanism against anxiety. In Kleinian theory, fantasy (or, as Kleinians prefer, phantasy) is viewed as the inner psychic reality of the individual, akin to a theatre of the mind. Fantasies are thus understood as encompassing all mental processes and psychic representations of somatic events, including the expression of libido, aggression and the defences against them. They interact reciprocally with (the perception of) reality and in the development of the subject (Segal, 2018; Spillius et al., 2011); creating "meaning from sensations" and serving as a link between affect and consciousness (Isaacs, 1948, p. 88). Kleinian fantasy can thus help us grasp how affect can be represented as scenes and therefore intra-vene in an encounter.

Lacan's insights aid in understanding fantasy's influence on social discourse. According to Lacan, fantasies are images operating within a signifying structure that masks the lack in the Other (Evans, 1996). In other words, fantasy gives the subject a sense of oneness, obscuring the fact that human existence (both linguistic and corporeal) is split and formed by a 'social outside' that is incomplete (Dean, 2000). Therefore, Lacan's fantasy describes one way in which the 'social' inhabits the subject while considering the multiple and particular ways that subjects and desire may relate with the social.

3.3.1 *Empirical Uses of Fantasy: From Affect to Discourse to Materiality*

As stated, Kleinian theory emphasises the affective attachment of fantasy and its role as an individual's way of relating to their inner and outer worlds. Empirical research that

views fantasy as a defensive mechanism often utilises Kleinian theory to conceptualise fantasy as a distortion of our perception of reality, employed defensively against challenging emotions (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Walkerdine et al., 2001). Therefore, fantasy used as a defence would be a fiction with a subjective purpose that can be interpreted (Spillius et al., 2011).

Examples of defensive fantasies can be found in Hollway and Jefferson's (2008) analysis of Ron's fantasies of being poisoned or contaminated, which served as a defence to keep 'bad' and dangerous stuff outside and away from him, rather than facing his fear of self-annihilation. Another example comes from Walkerdine's (1990) study of schoolgirls, where one young woman's fantasy of being the object of a sexual gaze can change how she behaves in a room. There is also a fear of others envying one's success, masking feelings of shame because of one's competitiveness (Lapping, 2011). As we can see, Kleinian approaches rely heavily on the subject's individuality and their relationship with the world. Thus, they reinforce rather than blur inner/outer and individual/social dualisms. However, in Lapping's discussion of the use of Kleinian theory for psychic and social defences, she reviews Jaques' (1951 as cited in Lapping, 2011) organisational work, where the institution is treated as a subject, demonstrating a way of de-subjectivising Kleinian theory for empirical research.

Given Lacan's critique of the Kleinian focus on imagination that dismisses the symbolic relations in which fantasy is embedded, for researchers working with Lacanian theory, the significant role of fantasy is mediating affectivity through the configurations of the relations of the signifier, the symbolic (Lapping, 2016). Thus, for these approaches, fantasy is intertwined with reality, organising complex and sometimes ambivalent circuits that are simultaneously personal and social, discursive and affective. For example, drawing on Lacan and Butler, Gurevich et al. (2015) propose fantasy as a sense-making apparatus, where the semiotic or symbolic world intertwines with the affective, providing some organisation of subjectivity and social bonds (desires, identifications, etc.). Hence, fantasy is a valuable tool to map what is valued symbolically and affectively in seemingly paradoxical ways. For instance, in a postfeminist context, women's self-adscription of the slut accusation works to cast themselves as objects of desire while rupturing the distinction between virtuous and vamp, accompanied by

triumphant defiance and compliance to what is suspected as the other's desire (Gurevich et al., 2015).

Fantasies thus represent affective investments in particular norms or identities and are not just narratives that may or may not be true (Glynos, 2011, 2021; Glynos et al., 2019). According to Glynos (2021), fantasies inhabit how people speak about things—in discourse, but exceeding it. By marking affective investments, fantasy entangles the discursive and the affective in inseparable ways. Thus, fantasies generate, sustain and transform social practices and relations at various levels, such as public policies, institutions and personal experience. Therefore, fantasy is a conceptual tool to interpret the emotional power of some aspects of discourse and practice, particularly regarding political life and how people resist or embrace change (Glynos et al., 2019).

Drawing on Glynos's former work on fantasy with Stavrakakis (2008), Ringrose and Renold (2012) explored the role of fantasy as a site for resistance for working-class girls who had been sexually harassed. They understand fantasy as political, representing affective investments in particular norms or identities; entangling the discursive and the affective in inseparable ways and generating, sustaining or transforming social practices and relations. However, Ringrose and Renold theorised fantasies as arising not only from the discursive and affective but also from material/economic conditions. They analysed these teenagers' ambivalent positions, where there was pleasure in being recognised as desirable, along with frustration at being unable to prevent the harassment from happening. The researchers suggest that, for these girls, one way of regaining the control of their sexuality that had been taken away was fantasising about: 1) fighting back with physical aggression the next time it happens or 2) abstaining from men in their future: never marrying, becoming a high-income professional, or living with friends as adults. However, Ringrose and Renold do not see these fantasies as a subjective defence against the hard experience of assault. They demonstrate the political role of fantasies in constructing the social and resisting oppressive heterosexual regulation. This contrasts with the work of Walkerdine (1991 as cited in Ringrose & Renold, 2012), where fantasies reinstate heteronormativity, such as being rescued by a prince. Together, these studies illustrate the possibilities of fantasies to reproduce the ('social') world or create it anew.

Ultimately, these approaches invite us to delve deeper into the concept of fantasy, extending beyond subjective imagination into the "intersections of one's sense of self, between bodies, and amidst social and cultural norms with myriad private and social affects and effects" (Barker, 2014 in Karaian, 2022, p. 6). From this definition, where fantasy "exists at the intersections", it is possible to conceive of fantasy as an assemblage of the above-listed human-related elements, as produced by—and within—the intersection of these elements, while also producing them. Moreover, it is possible to explore further into fantasies, embodiment and its relationship with objects, hypothesising its emergence from material arrangements. Hoogland (2002) draws on Butler, Freud and Deleuze and employs the idea of assemblage to conceptualise "bricolaged bodies", arguing that fantasy is crucial for the volatile production of the sense of embodiment. She suggests that fantasy "operat[es] as the necessary interface, in the material/cultural production of embodied subjectivity" (2002, p. 213). Thus, the experience of inhabiting a body would be "forged in the dynamic interaction between material and immaterial bodies, objects and subjects, at once imaginary and real" (Hoogland, 2002, p. 225). Hence, fantasy acts as a dynamic interface that connects bodies, subjects, matter and culture to produce a sense of embodiment. Hoogland employs this concept to explore what is commonly referred to as the 'gay radar', the identification of queer people by queer people and inquiries about how do they know? She argues that it is through a fantasy that connects the material and the cultural, the body and the mind and thus how (queer or any) embodiment is achieved and recognised.

Furthermore, considering fantasies with assemblages highlights the role of material space and objects for fantasies and the psyche. Buchanan (2013) illustrates this with a classic psychoanalytical example, demonstrating that Little Hans' fear of being harmed by a horse is not solely about the fear of castration by his father. It is also defined by an assemblage of what could be associated with a draught horse on the street in the early 20th century, "such as having one's eyes blocked, being restrained with bit and bridle, the sense of pride one is nevertheless able to maintain despite such restraints, and so on" (Buchanan, 2013, p. 16).

3.3.2 Fantasy Within Flirting Intra-Actions

The discussed psychoanalytical perspectives on fantasy enable the consideration of fantasy within material-discursive and affective intra-actions. The Freudian concept of fantasy as scripts or scenes, coupled with the empirical application of Klein's fantasy has proven beneficial to manifest affect as imagined scenarios that are an intertwined part-of the world and, as such, also produce it. Using fantasies as a form of defence reveals a strong relationship between fantasies and anxiety or 'bad' feelings, in contrast with Lacanian-influenced fantasies as affective gripping or investment in discourse. However, both affective emphases of fantasy address the entangled interplay of meaning-making and emotions in producing and maintaining relations between individuals, objects or ideas. Fantasy is arguably a helpful hinge concept that simultaneously entangles and blurs the psycho and the social, the limits of reality and the body, discourse and affect, helping us interpret what cannot be explained solely by relying on discourse.

Employing these psychoanalytic notions from a posthuman perspective involves glossing over some of their theoretical distinctions, primarily regarding the distinction between inner/outer worlds in Kleinian theory or the Lacanian 'human'-centred continuum between the psychic and the social. As Lapping (2011) demonstrated, extending the psychic beyond the subject is not new and it can aid us in unravelling affective circuits that cannot be attributed to a single individual. Furthermore, exploring material-discursive intra-actions facilitates a deeper understanding of the emergence of particular fantasies from material arrangements and their material effects on bodies.

Fantasy is helpful for considering the psychic intra-actions with the material-discursive and affective parts-of the phenomenon; while we also think of fantasies as emerging from those same intra-actions. Furthermore, as Butler suggests, imagining other possible happenings is constitutive of present encounters, enabling us to contemplate how what could be might shape what unfolds in a flirting encounter.

3.4 Conclusion: Discursive-Material and Affective Intra-actions to Study Flirting

For this project, what most drew me to Karen Barad's concepts, especially intra-actions, was her invitation to take a closer look at "how matter comes to matter" (2003, 2007, p. 205). In this regard, my study builds upon the PhEmaterialist work of scholars in

Gender, Sexuality and Education (Ringrose, Warfield, et al., 2019; Strom et al., 2019) who integrate Deleuzian Affect studies with Barad's materiality. They underscore how a feminist approach that simultaneously considers the discursive, material and affective can help reevaluate micro-macro scales while blurring the 'units' of analysis, which are never singular but always relational and intra-acting, dynamic and unfolding.

Reflecting on material-discursive and affective intra-actions enabled me to consider the agency of matter and space and its entanglements with discourse, while also paying closer attention to specific material arrangements and what was produced from them. Notably, affect as atmospheres (Anderson, 2009) or somatic archives (Kyrölä & Paasonen, 2016) are key to analysing constellations of relations that enact power relations beyond the logic of subjects that reproduce or resist social norms, which I conceptualise in one of the data analysis chapters as "cis-heterosexist affects". Furthermore, my proposition regarding fantasy as imagined scenes emerging from discursive-material and affective intra-actions allows us to contemplate how fantasies articulate reality, knowledge, and the material impacts of potential pasts, presents or futures. Utilising fantasies also influences this research methodology, as they can be considered a part-of the research(er)'s analytic process.

Moreover, choosing to adopt this Baradian-infused posthuman framework aligns with an ethical and political stance regarding epistemology and knowledge production, which Barad terms ethic-onto-epistemology (2007). The inseparability of these three fields prompts us to reflect on what we are doing and with what when we conduct research. It underlines that our approach to thinking about and conducting research is how we are doing the world in which we live.

Finally, given that this project predominantly uses co-produced accounts of flirting scenes, it seems intriguing and somewhat amusing to me that this highly abstract theory helps to ground the co-production and analysis of the data, not only on the specific details of the accounts but also on the particular materiality of the accounts themselves, such as facial and hand gestures, tones of voice, sighs, laughter and so on. This will be further elucidated in the subsequent chapter on methods.

4. Intra-active Methodology and Online Methods: Intraviewing the Material-Discursive and Affective Entanglements of Flirting

Introduction: Methodological Postfoundations

This research's methodology sits within what can be called postqualitative inquiry, a heterogeneous group of researchers who challenge humanist conceptions while refusing procedural methods and methodologies, suggesting instead a theoretically informed approach that foregrounds relational onto-epistemologies (Adams St. Pierre, 2020; Bodén & Gunnarsson, 2021; Carlson et al., 2021; Coleman & Ringrose, 2013; Mazzei & Jackson, 2024; Ringrose, Warfield, et al., 2019; Springgay & Truman, 2018). As seen in the previous chapter, the literature this project draws from is based on these contingent theoretical foundations, whether using "assemblage", "event", "intra-actions", or "affect".

More specifically, this project draws from Karen Barad's (2007) theorisation of world and knowledge-making. According to Barad, knowing is never at a distance; to know something is to be part of it. To re-create it through specific practices that simultaneously articulate and account for it. Thus, 'knower' and 'known' are unsevered parts of the world. A world that is created by intra-actions. In other words, in this paradigm, the study of something becomes a participatory act in its creation. Hence, epistemology is inseparable from ontology, and this has important ethical implications. Barad's term "ethic-onto-epistemologies" stresses this inseparability of what is, what it is possible to know, and the exclusions that are inevitably made by these intra-actions. Hence, doing research with intra-actions, as it also happens when approaching research as an assemblage (Baker & McGuirk, 2017; Fox & Alldred, 2015; Renold & Ringrose, 2017a), implies a constant re-working of us as researchers and of our methods to pay close attention to power dynamics involved in research and how these—among other intra-actions between the elements commonly differentiated as the researcher, participants, data, protocols, methods, etc.—co-produce the research and the world we 'study' (Strom et al., 2019). We must pay attention to the ways in which we are contributing to the creation of the world we live in.

Consequently, another implication of drawing from Barad for the methodology is rethinking this chapter's expected 'reflexivity section'. Instead of a confessional approach to sociological categories that somewhat pre-define the researcher and the research possibilities (Gemignani, 2017), Barad's theory invites us to look closer into which intra-actions mattered in an encounter, in which ways, and to produce what. For example, how, at times, my gender and age shaped the use of language, or how sharing a laugh changed the tone of the atmosphere and how my entangled self at that time introduced differences that changed what could be produced as knowledge in this research. Hence, reflecting on the role of the researcher is fluid, localized and continuous instead of focused on pre-given entities.

This project's methods encompass different approaches to interviewing. Interviewing was chosen as the main format since, as suggested in the literature review, they were more helpful in producing detailed accounts of the felt flirting experience. They were better suited than observation, for example, to capture others' experiences. Moreover, the specific interviewing approaches were chosen because of their synergic helpfulness in addressing two methodological challenges. The first challenge was raised in the literature review: working with interviews to elicit as much as possible the materiality and embodied felt sensations within flirting accounts. The second one arose due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, which were stringent in Chile during 2020-21. These circumstances demanded doing research entirely online. An online transmutation that, with some modifications and losses, interviews facilitated.

The methods employed in this project merged two existing interviewing methods in the literature with my previous curiosity about the psychoanalytical free association method for research. Central to this combination is the notion of "intraviews", a posthuman approach that reimagines traditional interviews as contingent and dynamic co-production of knowledge within complex entanglements of the human and non-human (Kuntz & Presnall, 2012; Warfield, 2017). This contingent theoretical framework aligns with this project's understanding of flirting as material-discursive and affective intra-actions, expanding the humanist foundations of the other two methods: free association and interviews about a flirting story (Mølbak, 2010). Free association is a psychoanalytical method involving unstructured exploratory interviews, which I

previously utilized as a youth therapist and piloted in 2019, during the initial year of my PhD. This method encourages participants to speak aloud whatever thoughts come to mind, avoiding selection based on relevance or embarrassment. Working with intraviews and free association, I developed a specific mode of third-party account based interviews drawing from Mølbak's (2010) PhD study on flirting as an "event". Mølbak's method follows a two-stage process. First, participants submit a written narrative to the researcher, who then fragments it and prepares questions on each fragment to discuss in an interview. In this way, I developed three different free-association-infused intraviews. The first two were conducted 'individually'. One focused on flirting, the other based on a flirting story. The third intraview encouraged them to invite their friends.

Hence, while thinking with material-discursive and affective intra-actions, this study's methods generate a novel approach to look into different ways of eliciting flirting accounts that highlight the significance of materiality and affectivity in flirting. Through these methods, I aimed to explore what flirting accounts can provide us to examine how young people flirt, the influence of the material on embodied sensations, and how normative discourses and power dynamics are felt while flirting.

Notably, this is not a mere combination of methods since it re-creates them. As Barad (2007) explains with her notion of diffraction, the convergence—or intra-actions—of elements necessarily modifies them. Thus, this project is concerned with how these methods particularly intra-act and create something else instead of finding ways to make them fit together or construct a theoretical framework that suits all of them.

This chapter begins by introducing the research questions and outlining the sample and recruitment process. Putting material-discursive and affective intra-actions to work as the theoretical framework, this section underscores the intra-connectedness of each element within the research process, treating them as part-of the process rather than independent entities. Next, the three interviewing methods are discussed separately, followed by their combination into three distinct encounters: 1) free association intraview with "flirting", 2) intraview about a flirting story and 3) intraview with friends. Followingly, the data produced and the transcription, translation, and analysis processes are examined. This section shows how the data was transformed into 'flirting scenes'

and how free association can become an affective method that is helpful to account for the researcher-researched intra-actions. Finally, this chapter concludes with an example that shows how the data co-production and analysis worked together.

4.1 Research Questions

Starting from my curiosity about the ways feminist activism could be shaping accounts of flirting among teenagers in Chile, the main questions that guide this research are:

How might the material-discursive and affective intra-actions that co-produce the diverse forms of feminist activism shape the accounts of flirting among teenagers in Chile?

And

How can focusing on flirting and feminist activism as material-discursive and affective intra-actions contribute to thinking about flirting and its ethical dilemmas?

Regarding methods, this project also inquires in which ways a posthuman approach to the psychoanalytic free association method help highlight the material and affective within accounts of flirting.

4.2 Presenting Recruitment, Sample and Other Part-icipants of this Research

This section presents the recruitment and "part-icipants" of this research. "Part-icipants" as a concept points to human and non-human elements that are an entangled and co-constitutive part-of the research that ongoingly made and transformed it (Renold & Ringrose, 2017b). Thinking about this research with "part-icipants" involves broadening the scope beyond the teenagers who volunteered to encompass various elements, such as objects, social media platforms, and colleagues, that facilitated the recruitment process and the entire research endeavour. Moreover, it means including my-researcher-self and my research journal.

4.2.1 Part-icipants: Recruiting Bodies and Objects

The planned sample for this research consisted of 6 to 8 teenagers in their final two years of high school, aged between 17 to 19 years old. The rationale was to have teenagers with any kind of 'flirting experience' who started high school close to the feminist upheaval against violence towards women that peaked in 2018. This is because, as scholars (Errázuriz Besa, 2019, 2021) and teenage-part-icipants of this study agreed, what in Chile is called 'the feminist movement' has had a crucial role in shaping socio-sexual landscapes. I also preferred that part-icipants were not in an exclusive relationship, so we could explore current instances of flirting. Yet this was not an absolute requirement.

The original plan of situating my research within one school collapsed with Covid-19, when public schools were shut down and teachers were stressed by the crazy demand to keep teaching as 'normal'. Plus, I could only start the fieldwork at the beginning of the summer break. These circumstances separated my sampling and recruiting possibilities from studies that approach students at institutions, progressively with group activities before recruiting for interviews (Austin, 2017; Bragg et al., 2018; Jaynes, 2020; Renold & Ringrose, 2008). So, given the limitations of this situation, my best remaining recruiting option was snowballing from my contacts and an open call on social media.

Having the approval of the UCL ethics committee (Z6364106/2020/03/23) I began fieldwork amid staged lockdowns in Chile. Recruitment began in December 2020 and ended in April 2021. This meant it covered Christmas, school's summer break, and for some, transitioning to higher education: taking the admission tests, receiving the results, applying, and starting university in March. So, recruitment and the scheduling of intraviews had to be paused several times. Yet also, recruiting was intentionally done slowly. Since each intraview demanded a lot of me, I wanted to give myself time to learn from them, in between them. In this way, I could, for instance, improve my capacity to encourage participants to continue speaking and to inquire about specific material details.

Materialities that played a role in the recruitment included two infographics, a video of myself, the information sheet and the informed consent form (the last two can be found

in Appendixes A and B). I used Canva to create the two infographics (Figure 2). I thought of them as a 'quick' information sheet. Recognising my scarce designing skills, I asked for feedback from a couple of 18-year-old acquaintances. I included the * note about embarrassment in the second image (see below-translated version) to show that offering a safe, non-judgmental space during our conversations was a priority for me. I ensured they felt that this was a safe space all the time, where they could speak as freely as possible, without second-guessing.

I used non-binary inclusive language and an image of the LGBTQ+ flag but restrained from mentioning feminism. I did not want to have an entire feminist-identified sample and/or to push away people not interested in feminism. Given the political situation in Chile, both scenarios were likely to happen if feminism appeared at this very first stage. However, my interest in feminism was in the information sheet, which also had a creative and short format to make it easier to read (see Appendix A).

Figure 2. *Instragram post-size infographics*

On the left: Looking for volunteers! "Entanglements, flirtings and teens in Chile" My name is Bárbara, and I am looking for volunteers for my PhD research. If you just graduated or are a senior high school student in a public or semi-private school and you are NOT in an exclusive relationship, I would like to discuss flirting and relationships in general with you. Your participation includes: 2 individual interviews and 1 interview with friends. Each interview will last about 1 hour and will be using Skype (because of Covid). If you are a minor, you will need your guardian's permission. Questions? Are you interested? Write to me.

*On the right: How are the interviews? In the first interview, I will ask you to say whatever comes to mind with the word 'flirting', whatever! In the second interview, we will deepen into a couple of experiences I will ask you to share beforehand, by audio, written, or as you like. In the third interview, you can invite friends so we can talk about how flirting works in your social group. Your participation is 100% confidential, I will change any data that may identify you. *It is normal that at times it can be embarrassing. I'll do my best to create a safe, relaxed and judgmental-free space so you can feel you can speak freely.*

Although informal contacts and snowballing are considered more successful when researching flirting (Cupples & Thompson, 2010), my snowballing attempts worked out differently. The only things that 'rolled' and passed on were the infographics advertising the research's call for volunteers. I began by asking my contacts to send the two images to whoever they thought could be interested. My contacts were colleagues working in schools (psychologists, teachers, researchers) and teenage acquaintances. The digital images took life on their own, and I could not track how they reached the people who volunteered. After three months, I used Facebook Ads to reach a broader audience and finish the recruitment quickly. I made a video for this advertisement, presenting myself and the research, to invite people to join[3]. This targeted advertising appeared on Facebook and Instagram's grid and stories. It was incredibly efficient; only three days were sufficient. Moreover, it can produce a notable affective nudge to volunteer, like in one participant's case: "… later it appeared (again) like in a post eh, and I saw the post and was like ok, the destiny is trying to tell me something haha things do not appear by, by chance, so I said Ok" (Piwke intraview 1, 00:03:41).

[3] I got the idea from my colleague Pavel Rubio who did something similar for his PhD.

When someone interested contacted me through WhatsApp or Facebook/Instagram direct message, I checked they complied with the sample criteria, sent them the two infographics, and asked them if they had any questions. However, I never rejected a volunteer and considered alternatives to accommodate them. I replied to their queries using audio messages to build rapport. Then, I sent them the information sheet and informed consent form. As it is possible to see in Appendix B, following the Chilean legislation, the consent form had a section for legal guardians to allow those under 18 to join the study (Ministerio de Educación, 2018). There were no issues in digitally signing or sending a picture of a signed printed copy.

Online recruiting had the evident advantage of reaching a diversity of teenagers I could never have if I had focused on one school. This is not only because of geographical affordances but also because of their experiences with their types of schools (military, private, public rural boarding, etc.). However, on my side as a researcher, this came with the limitation of only accessing their contexts through their accounts and being unable to make sense of a shared social context among participants (like if I had the chance to focus on and visit one school). On their side, online recruiting enabled more anonymous and voluntary participation than school-based studies. Teenagers could control who would know about them joining. Thus, online recruiting may ease peer pressure, like joining because one's friends are, or not joining because of what peers may say. Anonymity also worked in the partial concealment of their identities (Kara, 2015, p. 33). I could only know what they showed me. Moreover, protecting their privacy and intimacy was very important for me. Besides pseudonymising any information that could identify them, I did not ask for personal details like the name of their school. Plus, I decided not to look at their profiles online even when they contacted me by Instagram or Facebook. It was not originally included in the research, and they did not consent to me accessing those spaces.

4.2.2 Part-icipants: Teenagers

Ten teenagers aged between 17 and 19 joined the research as the main participants. Six out of ten completed the three intraviews. Two did not continue after the first encounter because of health-related issues. With the other two, we could never schedule the third encounter after they started University in March. So, this project produced 25

intraviews in total. I consider this an excellent adherence, especially considering that I insisted on the chance of withdrawing at the beginning of each meeting and every time we struggled with scheduling or when rescheduling. Perhaps I was too persistent with the reminders about withdrawing. Yet I did this because, arguably, consent can only happen if the opportunity to refuse is not merely stated but readily accessible (Angel, 2022). So, this was a way I found to facilitate withdrawal and reduce the feeling of continuing out of politeness or to keep a commitment with me.

Including the main participants and their friends, 16 teenagers were part-of this research. A quick glimpse of each participant's information is in Table 1, in 'order of appearance'. As it is possible to see, considering the small sample size, I got a wide variety of gender and sexuality 'identities' from different parts of the country, courtesy of online research. As I understand 'identities' as contingent iterative performativities with no clear or fixed boundaries (Barad, 2003), I do not consider that this data says something about them. It is just a failed quick way to introduce the group of teenagers I engaged with during fieldwork. A great example of this is Nicole, whose 'identity' as a heterosexual woman hides her struggles with performing femininity and her explorations with a kind of trans identity for almost a year.

Table 1. *Sample description.*

						25 Intraviews distribution:		
	Alias	**G&S 'identity'**	**Age**	**Location**	**Type of school**	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**
1	Andrea	Pansexual woman	17	Santiago outskirts	Low-cost private	X	X-X[4]	X w/o friends
2	Javier	Heterosexual man	17	West Santiago	Low-cost private	X		
3	Juan	Queer trans man	18	East Santiago	Private	X		
4	Nicole	Heterosexual woman	18	South Santiago	Military, public	X	X	
5	Alicia	Heterosexual	18	South-	Private	X	X	

[4] During Andrea's second intraview we had several connectivity and recording issues and she offered to meet again.

		woman		Chile city				
6	Marisa	Heterosexual woman	17	South Santiago	Low-cost private	X	X	X + Selena
7	Daniel	Heterosexual man	18	East Santiago	Private	X	X	X + Flo & Pola
8	Franco	Heterosexual man	17	East Santiago	Private	X	X	X + Diego & Jose
9	Piwke	Mapuche epu püllü[5] gay man	19	Rural Araucanía	Public (boarding)	X	X	X + Carolina
10	Newen	Mapuche heterosexual trans man	18	Urban Araucanía	Public	X	X	X w/o friends

The table includes the type of school as a marker of class, given Chile's highly segregated school system. As a broad stroked illustration, in Chile, lower working classes attend public schools—36% of students. Working and lower middle classes go to low-cost private/public schools—54% of students. Upper middle classes go to private schools with a wide range of fees—10% of students (Statistics taken from Ministry of Education, 2021). At the beginning of the recruitment process, as it is clear in the infographics, I tried to avoid students from private schools. I wanted to focus on students that did not belong to the wealthiest 10% of the country. However, I did not reject volunteers because of their school attendance. So, part of the sample attended private schools. Noteworthy is that all the private schools in the sample are in Santiago's East area, where the more accommodated people live (high-income professionals). However, these schools do not meet the criteria of elite schools within the Chilean context, as defined by Madrid (2016). Primarily, this is because these schools are not Catholic, are situated in different geographical areas, and do not have fees comparable to elite schools.

Since snowballing failed, none of the main part-icipants knew each other, except Daniel and Franco, who were classmates and joined together. One of the possible causes for the failure of the snowballing method could be attributed to the third intraview. The friends invited to join might have been potential contacts for snowballing. For instance, one of

[5] *Epu Püllü* is a Mapuzungun word that means having both a feminine and masculine soul (Millaleo, 2022)

Franco's invited friends, Jose, explicitly stated he would have participated in the research if he had not had the opportunity to speak in Franco's third intraview.

4.2.3 Part-icipants: Journal-Researcher Intra-actions

The researcher's becoming is inseparably entangled with the processes of fieldwork. I choose to have a section on myself as a researcher here, among the traditionally called participants and the materials that had an agentic role in recruitment, to stress that the researcher is not apart, but a part-of the research. As such, reflections about 'my' doings are interwoven throughout this chapter. Yet, in this section, I want to focus on the journal I kept from the beginning of the recruitment process until the end of transcription and its role in some challenges encountered during fieldwork.

As several scholars from different fields have noted, there are many ways in which research journals are helpful. First, to record a bigger picture that supplements the data produced, like the socio-political atmosphere (Browne, 2013), the material context of the interviews or observations (Burgess, 1981), and the context of the researcher, recording former ideas, decisions made, and events that might have guided decisions or actions later (Borg, 2001). Second, having to write a journal facilitates a pause for reflexive thinking and accounting (Nadin & Cassell, 2006). Third, research journals can act as emotional support for the researcher in a self-care or cathartic way (Cooper 1991 in Browne, 2013) or by helping to make decisions since writing would help to rationalise emotions and take further strategic action (Browne, 2013). Furthermore, the emotional documentation may also enable a retrospective analysis of the emotional impact of the research encounters on the researcher and thus later inform the analysis (Berger Correa & Ringrose, 2024).

For this project, the journal and I recollected more entangled contingent elements that may have mattered by then or later. As such, it was one way to hold myself accountable within this process. There I wrote thoughts, emotions and sensations about fieldwork activities: contacting and recruiting, doing intraviews and preparing tasks, transcribing, etc. I also jot down any relevant contingency in Chile. The pausing for writing was not spontaneous for me. So, having to write an input forced me into these reflexive spaces, to stay with every interview after it had finished. This journal thus materialised a linear

record of an entangled and multilayered process that included each time more people, more objects and more affects, plus a developing and changing me as a researcher. Doing fieldwork, becoming a researcher and creating knowledge are inseparable, and the journal can be seen as a partial record of the "interplay of elements" during these processes (Newbury, 2001, p. 3).

There was a lot of re-turning (Barad, 2014) during fieldwork, enacted in taking notes after each intraview, when transcribing just a few days after and when reading my notes before the next encounter. This re-visiting was not to reify what was registered as what happened but to put these parts closer together and 'read' them through one another. As Barad's conceptualisation of "re-turning" stresses, it is not about returning to a static former past but "going forward to the past", a turning and turning that creates something else (2014, p. 184). In other words, re-reading the diary during fieldwork acted as a way of keeping the past in the present, the past intra-acting in the present. For example, the journal evidenced ways former intraviews might shape the ones that came after, and myself. An example is my initial surprise when Marisa told me she tends to discuss not engaging in a relationship before kissing someone. With time and intraviews, I came to realise this was not unusual, and I got used to it, even though it still is a practice that puzzles me and ultimately became the topic of one chapter in this thesis.

On specific occasions, the journal was critical emotional support. The withdrawal of two participants weeks after the first encounter in the first month of fieldwork triggered the fantasy that I had done something wrong. Anxiously, I returned to the video recordings and transcriptions of both part-icipants and carefully checked my word choice, facial gestures and tone of voice, looking for something that could have prompted their drop-out. I found nothing. Particularly haunting was the possibility of having misgendered Juan. This hit me when I realised I could not see Juan's WhatsApp profile picture, which is what happens when someone blocks you. The journal was vital in grounding my anxiety around Juan's potential block. This is because, in contrast with my catastrophic experience and memories of this issue lasting weeks, the journal recorded five days between realising the profile picture was missing, writing Juan a message, and seeing the double check that confirmed he received it and that everything was fine. Thus,

journaling and registering dates kept me grounded and provided another layer that helped me identify and reflect on some affective facets of the research process.

4.3 Methods Intra-actions to Explore Flirting's Material-Discursive and Affective Entanglements: Intraviews, Free Association, and Flirting Stories Interviews

As mentioned in the introduction, designing this project's methods comes from the intra-action of posthuman intraviews, the psychoanalytical free association method and Mølbak's interview based on a written flirting story. This combination aims to elicit as much as possible the discourses, materiality and embodied felt sensations that might be involved when accounting for flirting experiences.

As the word intra-action emphasises, the methods are re-created by their relationalities and, thus, transformed away from their original frameworks and forms. Hence, "intraviews" strip the other two methods of their humanist foundations while emphasising the role of materiality. At the same time, "free association" facilitates the letting go of the narrator's protagonism and control of the flirting account, helping to decentre the subject and the emergence of material agencies. The latter is also enabled by Mølbak's intense, detailed focus on one flirting story that emphasises materiality and sensations. Merging these methods creates a synergy that facilitates the exploration of flirting as material-discursive and affective intra-actions.

The first half of this section provides precedent information on each method as found in the literature. The second half shows this project's resulting combination/intra-actions into three encounters: 1) free association intraview, 2) Intraview about a flirting story, and 3) intraview with friends.

4.3.1 Intraviews

The concept of intraviews emerges from research inspired by new materialism and posthuman theories (Bodén, 2020; Kuntz & Presnall, 2012; Warfield, 2017). Intraviews do not have a specific format or style. It is an approach to encounters with participants where the use of intra- (within) instead of inter- (between) turns away from conceiving meaning as being produced by bounded, discrete, agentic humanistic subjects; towards an understanding of meaning and matter as an entangled cocreation among—not

between—multiple bodies and forces. This approach attempts to decentre and trouble human subjectivity and agency, and the traditional notion of the interview as a verbal exchange between two or more human subjects. Thus turning it into "an event in which spoken, material and affective expressions by human and non-human agents gather in a process of doing something together" (Brinkmann, 2011, p. 63 cited in Kuntz & Presnall, 2012, p. 742). Intraviews align with this project's theoretical approach to flirting, which calls to the centre the materiality of the body, objects and space, as well as the affective forces and potential capacities of these elements. Furthermore, intraviews help to pay attention to how the materiality of the research encounter plays a crucial role in what is produced as data.

4.3.2 Free Association

Free association is referred to by Freud (1923/1975, p. 238) as the fundamental rule of psychoanalysis. In his words, free association asks the analysand:

> (…) to read off all the time the surface of his consciousness, and on the one hand to make a duty of the most complete honesty while on the other not to hold back any idea of communication, even if (1) he feels that it is too disagreeable or if (2) he judges that it is nonsensical or (3) too unimportant or (4) irrelevant to what is being looked for.

Freud's free association has therapeutic aims based on psychoanalytic understandings of subjectivity, where this method helps unveil the analysand's repressed content and thus alleviate symptoms. Without its therapeutic aims, free association can be considered an instruction to communicate what is on our minds without holding any thought (Holmes, 2013). It requires a conscious effort to avoid self-censorship due to relevance, pertinence or discomfort. The 'freeness' within free association does not refer to an unbounded wandering but to a self-conscious, active and somewhat failed effort to relax control over one's mind, speech and behaviour (Bollas, 2005; Lagos Serrano, 2021; Lapping, 2016). This requested effort also aims to lighten the researcher's steering, allowing the interviewee to lead the conversation (Coelho & Cunha, 2021).

Free association as a psychoanalytical research method has been used in different ways. This is not only because scholars follow different traditions—mainly Kleinian (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000) or Lacanian (Lagos Serrano, 2021; Lapping & Glynos, 2019)—but also because they innovate on how to work with free association. Particularly relevant for this project are studies that used free association as part of an elicitation interview: by asking teenagers to free associate with their account of a dream (Abarca-Brown et al., 2017) or by asking groups of sex educators or students to comment on whatever comes to their minds related to short clips of a movie (Casemore, 2010). In comparison with studies that ask to associate around words (Lapping & Glynos, 2019), this research shows how free association can be used as a way of introducing multisensorial elements that guide the associations, while also acting as a tool to address difficult-to-speak topics like sexuality or dreams.

Crucial to this project is the psychoanalytic work that acknowledges the agency of materiality in free association. In particular, Montrelay (1984) emphasises not only the power of the spoken word's sounds in her clinical practice but also the role that events beyond human agency can have for the psychoanalytic cure, like a coffee stain resulting from a tipped cup (p.212-218). Additionally, Coehlo and Cunha (2021) illustrate how the material setting in which research interviews occur can strongly influence the associations and possibilities of speech. For instance, facing silence when inviting adolescents from shelter institutions to freely associate in the office where their records are stored—a silence that may suggest a feeling of privacy infringement. Thus, although primarily relying on spoken words, the free association method can encompass the influence of the materiality of the interview setting.

Finally, ethical concerns have been raised regarding free association interviews due to the inherent difficulty of informing participants in advance about the experience (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, p. 95). There is potential discomfort or the facilitation of disclosing highly sensitive experiences such as sexual violence or suicide. However, free association also allows participants to discuss matters most relevant to them. When conducted by trained researchers with sensitivity and care, it has been argued that even without therapeutic aims, free association interviews can offer emotional benefits (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008; Lagos-Serrano, 2021).

4.3.3 Mølbak's Interview About a Written Flirting Story

As discussed in the literature review, Mølbak (2010) conceptualises flirting as a contingent event with no pre-existing subjects. One of the methods he used to study flirting among undergraduate and postgraduate students was requesting a written description of a flirting moment to facilitate an interview where more details could be explored. The instructions for writing the story were:

> Please think back on a specific time when you flirted with someone. Help me experience this time exactly as you did by describing in as great detail as you can what you were thinking and feeling from the moment leading up to the experience to when it ended.
>
> (2010, p.166)

Afterwards, each participant joined an interview to reflect on their experience and to elicit contextual information to situate their account within a broader understanding of their life. During this interview, participants are requested to read aloud their description and pause whenever they encounter a marking, indicating the researcher's intention to ask them a question. This dynamic is repeated until the end of the story.

Mølbak's method enabled detailed, fine-grained accounts of people's flirting experience, including sensations and social pressure. Yet the resulting 55 themes analysed in their study, even though relatable, were quite abstract, with a vague situation within a social context. Moreover, he overlooks power dynamics or the influence of the material context, neither within the story, nor when writing it, or during the interview. Thus, for this PhD research, the intraview-adaptation of Mølbak's method had to work to decentre the narrator's subjectivity and to facilitate the exploration of the role of power imbalances and the material in shaping flirting.

4.3.4 Intra-actions Within the Three Methods: Free Association Intraviews and About a Flirting Story

The three methods of this project were designed by merging the posthuman approach of intraviews with free association's requirement to 'say whatever comes to mind' and

Mølbak's way of working with flirting written accounts to explore flirting narratives as intra-actions of material-discursive and affective elements. Intra-actions among these methods changed their 'original' forms. This section will address this transformation in detail.

A key precedent for this project's methods was a pilot study of online free association interviews I did during August and September of 2019 with three 18 to 19 years old Chileans. I asked them to say whatever came into their minds about flirting and romantic experiences. Free association worked to ease the control of egoic attention and facilitate the emergence of difficult or unforeseen topics. Also, the pilot proved that free association with teenagers could produce rich data without much awkwardness. However, the data lacked the details needed to disrupt humanist assumptions and explore flirting as entanglement. Nevertheless, free association in this pilot could be considered a way to ask "what else?". As such, it was helpful to call up front more elements that might be at play yet typically considered irrelevant in producing the accounted flirting encounter.

The intra-action of the pilot's free association interviews with intraviews meant thinking of the encounters with participants as contingent co-produced events, including the potential role of diverse materialities, such as each other's environment and the (mis)functioning of technological apparatuses and connectivity. In this context, associations are not produced and do not belong to the one speaking. Associations emerge as co-produced by the material-discursive and affective intra-actions that are part-of the encounter. This had significant implications for my interventions during intraviews. Contrary to the traditional psychoanalytical free association method's abstinence to intervene, supposed to avoid contaminating the analysand's associations with the analyst material (Rubinsztejn, 2006), in free association intraviews there are no different entities that can misshape or contaminate one another. It is a dynamic ongoing co-creating. Still, I was careful about my interventions because I did not want a word choice or a gesture to preclude further associations or make the participant feel that some things could not be said.

After piloting these interviews and to manage my anxiety, I made a brief list of the techniques I used to help the associations roll again, besides the traditional silent

waiting for them to speak and asking them if they have another thought (Bollas, 2005). One technique was to recap what they told me, trying to use their words. Most of the time, this prompted more details, clarifications or the resuming of the narration. Other techniques were repeating words or sentences, asking for more details or explaining something. Moreover, and considering the agency of the material, other interventions emerged when I, for example, drank water, which later I realised served to fill the silence. Another one occurred when, motivated by a connectivity glitch, I asked the intraviewee to repeat the last thing they said because the audio was interrupted. Later I realised this request could help them continue speaking where they had left off, without me remarking anything of what they had said, which is quite helpful for free association. I repeated that strategy a few times, although it felt a bit cheeky because I had indeed heard them. I was essentially pretending, but I never did it to catch them.

Yet free association intraviews could not be enough to disrupt narratives of flirting that centre humans as protagonists while including the agency of the material space and objects. In this regard, Mølbak's (2010) interviews about flirting stories helped produce fine-grained detailed accounts that enabled the exploration of usually taken-for-granted elements. Intraviewing as a framework for Mølbak's method stretches its perspective to de-centre humans as individual and discrete flirters, generating space to think about the role of objects, space and affects. At the same time, free association with a focus on the material environment enables a different probing the story, focusing more on the phenomenon as a whole instead of the 'human experience' reported by the original method.

Developing Mølbak's approach through the lens of intraviews also facilitated including an affective element in the process of cutting the story's segments. Thus, when to cut emerges from multiple readings attentive to what was happening to the researcher. The latter relates to what, drawing from MacLure (2013), Ringrose and Renold (2014) call 'data glow', an affective intrusion of a piece of fieldwork. This meant that sometimes a cut was done because a question popped into my head, free-association style. Others were because the sentence puzzled me or caught my attention in some way, and I wanted to explore it further, even when sometimes I did not know how. So, in a way, it would be possible to say that the cuttings were not a calculated or a thoughtful decision

but emerged in the intra-action between my reading and the text, or the audio-stories, in the intra-action of my hearing-transcribing-reading and the story's sounds and words.

4.3.5 Presenting the Methods for this Project: Three Intraviews and a Flirting Story Task

This project's three intraviews followed a progressive order according to their level of structure, starting from an unstructured individual free association intraview, followed by an intraview structured around a flirting story sent beforehand, to end with a semi-structured intraview, potentially with friends. The following table presents the aims and briefly describes each intraview and the flirting story task.

Table 2. *Method's aims and description*

	Aims	Description
First Encounter **Free Association Intraview**	An exploratory mapping of each participant's flirting experiences. To build rapport To discuss together the details of the flirting story for the second meeting.	I asked them to tell me whatever came into their minds with the word 'flirting', even if they thought it was silly or unrelated.
Preparation Task **Flirting Story**	To produce an artefact that would help us elicit associations about specific flirting encounters.	I asked them to send me a flirting story in their preferred format, trying to include as many details as they could recall. After receiving the story and transcribing, when necessary, I cut it into small fragments and prepared questions about them.
Second Encounter **Intraview About a Flirting Story**	To co-produce detailed flirting accounts, gathering as many material-discursive and affective elements as possible that might be at	Participants were asked to read aloud each fragment of the story, and we discussed each segment, bringing more details and making connections to other stories or topics.

	play in making the flirting encounter and its account.	
Third Encounter **Intraview With Friends**	To explore broader flirting entanglements with social forces and institutions like school, feminism and the role of friends in flirting.	Participants could invite friends to a semi-structured interview with four questions about flirting, feminism and friends.

Each intraview lasted between 45 and 90 minutes and was video recorded. I initially used Skype but switched to Zoom due to technical issues. Each encounter began with me thanking them for joining and checking any practical issue that may put the intraview at risk—for example, connectivity, microphone, battery, or not having privacy. I also explained how the recording system worked and that they could tell me to stop recording anytime. I also repeated that they could withdraw from the research at any time without questions. Lastly, I told them I would like our conversations to be safe and non-judgmental, with no right or wrong answers.

Before presenting each method in detail, a word on translating 'flirting' is relevant here. There is no everyday life word in Chilean Spanish to say 'flirting', only several generational slang words. Hence, any word from a Spanish dictionary sounds awkward, like coming from a book or another country. Moreover, during the pilot study, I realised that one slang word could have different meanings in different geo-localities. For example, some definitions could include or not having sex—whatever that meant. Facing this dilemma, I chose to use "*coqueteo*". This word means flirting but sounds outdated, and some might associate it with femininity[6], though the latter never happened during these conversations. "Coqueteo" sounded awkward during the whole research but proved helpful in mapping the manifold landscapes of flirting while leaving many

[6] Thanks, Toscana Garfunkel, for pointing that, in Latin America, *coquetterie* has been traditionally considered a women's affair.

directions open and limiting the potential exclusions of what could or could not be (associated with) flirting.

For the first intraview, I asked them to say whatever came into their minds with the word coqueteo/flirting. The undefinable quality of flirtation, added to the choice of using "coqueteo", aimed at giving as few references as possible. Most of the time, the method successfully loosened the direction of speech, sometimes in the form of "what else (can I say)?", facilitating a participant-led exploration of their concerns revolving around flirting (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). An example is Franco's first 15 minutes of his first intraview, where he started talking about:

the wordplay involved in flirting,

the importance of both feeling comfortable,

how much he likes and plays music,

a couple of times he gifted songs to girls he liked,

how boring is flirting online

others' sexual aggressiveness while flirting online,

alcohol-infused confidence and sexual harassment at parties,

ambivalent critique of funas and feminism,

challenges to move flirting from online to face-to-face;

relationships and peer pressure to have sex and/or a relationship,

consent to kiss,

party and alcohol...

This seemingly unfocused exploration helped me grasp the significant role funas played for some boys within a school. While I foresaw funas as a subject of interest, I had not fully anticipated its potential strength and profound impact, which may have influenced Franco's initial emphasis on fostering a sense of comfort for both parties. I think this might have happened because free association helped create a space where Franco

could speak more freely, even against feminism, with a potentially feminist adult woman at the very beginning of the first encounter.

The second intraview and its preparation task were mainly drawn from Mølbak's (2010) method, which focuses on eliciting more details about fragments of a narrated experience. For the preparation task for the second intraview, I asked part-icipants to send a flirting story in their preferred format, trying to include as many details as possible, even though they might seem irrelevant: what was happening and where, what they were thinking, feeling, wearing, eating and any other object that might have been related. The formats chosen were pages-long documents, WhatsApp messages or audios. Some added pictures or screenshots from Instagram Direct Messages. I transcribed the audios verbatim and segmented the written stories. For each segment, I wrote questions to bring more details and elements into the story, to call for more associations during the next encounter. Examples of the questions are: Can you give me a bit more context? What were you/they wearing? Do you remember how you felt at this moment? What do you mean by..? Why is this part hard/easy/boring/funny/etc.?, How did you figure out..? What made you decide/choose to…? What do you associate with..?

For the second intraview, I asked the participant to read aloud each story fragment I had sent them through WhatsApp minutes before our meeting. I offered to read these myself if there were any concerns about privacy, safety or excessive discomfort. Newen was the only one who accepted this offer since his parents were at home. The reading could stop if

a) something came into their minds,

b) they remembered another detail or

c) when the fragment ended, so I could ask them a question I had prepared or come up with by then.

This probing for more details was not an attempt to explain or get to the 'truth' of what was happening. The purpose was to explore what else is entangled within those flirting stories and, thus, may have a role in their production. To do this, the questions about details added to the say whatever that comes to mind of free association aimed at

opening up the first version of the story by gathering other discursive-material and affective elements that might have mattered, yet most of the time are excluded as irrelevant.

The third encounter included the possibility of inviting friends since both empirical literature and my pilot data evidenced that young people's flirting is tightly entangled with friends (Christopher et al., 2016; Cupples & Thompson, 2010; Korobov & Thorne, 2006; Osella & Osella, 1998; Pinsky, 2019; Sims, 2007). In contrast with feminist studies on teenagers' sexuality and friendship, which, for different reasons, start with group methods to later schedule individual ones (examples: Austin, 2017; Naezer & Ringrose, 2018; Renold & Ringrose, 2012), the design of this project's methods closes with the group instance because it was a more structured method where I was introducing topics. Also because I wanted to prevent feminism from shaping what they felt they could say or do and the stories they wanted to tell in the other interviews. This might sound a bit too much, but the presence and affective force of feminism were evident in the exclamations and gasps each time I asked about it.

This third intraview was a semi-structured conversation centred around the following questions:

> How does flirting work among teens?
>
> What is the role of friends in flirting?
>
> What does feminism mean to you?
>
> Do you think feminism has influenced the ways you or others flirt?
>
> Do you think feminism has influenced how you relate to your bodies while flirting?

My readings of studies on flirting and Deleuzoguattarian research on youth sexuality shaped the formulation of these questions. For example, asking how flirting 'works' comes from a Deleuzian framing for research that inquires how things work instead of what they are (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013). Moreover, I asked about the role of friends

because their relevance was suggested or emphasised by several studies on youth's flirting and sexual cultures (Christopher et al., 2016; Cupples & Thompson, 2010; Meenagh, 2015; Pinsky, 2019).

Free association's instruction of saying whatever comes into one's mind and avoiding self-censorship framed this encounter. I think this was crucial in enabling teenagers to express unpopular opinions, such as Franco and friends' disagreements with feminism. It also facilitated bringing up topics I had not anticipated, like when Piwke and Carolina talked about emotionally vulnerable young teenagers who are groomed by adults.

> Bárbara: And what other examples, besides pregnancy, are included in "I did things without thinking, then I must face the consequences"?
>
> Carolina: Uhm.. running away from home with people that are older than us, because (…) many times adults, men and women, look for kids that are in the adolescence of 15, 16 years old or more and, because we fall quickly, let's say and we accept the proposals, believing that they give us like, affection, when in reality they are looking for something else
>
> (Piwke Intraview 3, 00:16:36)

Interviewing with friends can provide deeper insights and a better chance to keep group confidentiality (Allen, 2015a, 2015b; Cupples & Thompson, 2010; Meehan, 2021). It also gave me glimpses of things that were only told to me in the previous encounters. For instance, Franco spoke about men joking about being called out the first time we met, and then, in the third intraview, his friend Diego made one of those jokes. It also gave me a chance to experience gendered and age-related dynamics that were less acknowledged by the teenagers' accounts, like when in the same intraview, Franco's friend Diego asked if he could swear after I had dropped some light swearing myself. Or later, when Franco hesitated and apologised before saying a vulgar expression: "I want to put it in you" (Franco intraview 3, 00:56:03). It could be argued that my gender expression and presumed age were limiting what was possible to say or do in the intraviews. However, the formal setting of the conversation, a foreign university research project, also imposed certain limitations. Lastly, meeting with friends gave me glimpses of things I

had not realised. One limitation of individual accounts is that you can only access what is presented to you, and having a conversation with the best friends can open other facets of the main participant. For instance, when Franco's friends repeatedly joked about him being the most knowledgeable about flirting, my impression of him being quiet and with little experience changed.

Moreover, leaving the group encounter to the end meant being careful about rapport and confidentiality. I expected the rapport built in the individual encounters would somehow transfer to their friends. I can't say this was what happened, but the conversations were open and fluid. This might be had been facilitated by all participants inviting their closest friends and by the emphasis posed by free association that nothing is irrelevant. Regarding confidentiality, I restrained myself from referring to material from former encounters. I was also mindful of the possibility of friends breaking each other's privacy by telling me anecdotes about each other, which never happened. Group confidentiality was reminded, but, as the literature states, is somewhat covered by their former trusting relationship (Meehan, 2021).

However, this may have also been facilitated by the rapport established with the main participant during the two previous encounters. This rapport could have framed the space of the third intraview or may have been somewhat transferred to their friends.

I wrapped up this final intraview with a short conversation with the main participant about their experience of joining this research to give closure to this process and get feedback. These last conversations emphasised the trustworthiness of the space and the enjoyment during the intraviews—"I liked it, ah, I like you haha you are trustable" (Marisa intraview 3, 01:19:45). Others spoke about the liberating effects of telling things they usually do not share with others.

> (…) like it gave me relief like telling some stuff, that maybe one, doesn't say because have no one to communicate it to, or or or some prejudice, but like telling it like at the air, I mean at the air between quotation marks, it was indeed like relaxing.
>
> (Daniel intraview 3, 01:23:07)

By “telling it like at the air”, Daniel might refer to my online presence instead of being both in the same room. The online format was especially significant for Daniel and Newen, allowing them to share things they might not have disclosed in different circumstances.

4.4 Producing and Analysing Scenes: Re-turning and Working With Multiple Data to Produce Accounts of Flirting Scenes

4.4.1 Presenting the Data

The data of this project primarily consisted of video recordings of the online intraviews, transcripts and my journal notes. I also had several versions of the requested flirting story, besides the recorded in the second intraview: audios, text, photos, and chat screenshots. Table 3 presents the types and amounts of data. In the following, I focus on the affordances of video recording of the intraviews and the challenges of working with screenshots.

Table 3. *Types and amount of data produced*

Type of data	Video Recordings	Intraview Transcripts	Written Stories	Audio Stories	Pictures	Screenshots
Amount	24[7]	25	6	2	9	16

Videos, as partial records of those encounters, were a valuable input to focus on the embodied and affective elements of both the ongoing intraview and the narrated situations. Videos recorded more than I could note and record at the time or later transcribe from the video, enabling re-visiting and changing focus (Renold & Mellor, 2013). More particularly, re-watching videos facilitated making space for analysing humour or intense discussions during intraviews, as can be seen in Chapter 5 or when Daniel refers to how my jokes helped him get through the embarrassing moments of our conversations. To emphasise the significance of videos in the analysis, when quoting excerpts from the intraviews, I include the corresponding timing in the video.

[7] I lost one videorecording, so I had to use the back-up audio recording I improvised with the consent of that participant since I suspected a malfunctioning in the Skype platform during our encounter.

Additionally, I provide annotations in square brackets, [ ], describing gestures or other elements observed or heard alongside the participant's speech.

Screenshots were not asked for by the researcher but offered by part-icipants as an illustration or evidence that supported their accounts (Jaynes, 2020). Working with chat screenshots posed challenges in protecting the privacy of the nonconsenting others involved (Ali et al., 2022; Marston, 2019). This concern is especially significant since obtaining informed consent from every individual involved is impractical and potentially detrimental to the participants' social lives (Mortensen, 2015). Therefore, I reassured the part-icipants that all persons mentioned in their accounts would be given pseudonyms, and their identities would be protected. However, it is noteworthy that in most instances, participants themselves were mindful of preserving the privacy of others and took precautions such as erasing names in the shared screenshots and not sharing many details about them with me.

4.4.2 Trans-Turning: Transcription and Translating as "Re-turning" and Creating Anew

Transcribing and translating were processes that were not only a returning to the conversations but a turning and "re-turning" (Barad, 2014) into something different. "Re-turning" as a concept helps us to think of data not as a representation of some 'personal truth' or 'objective reality' but as a contingent and iterative co-production made within the intraviews and later on. At the same time, it does not mean the researcher is allowed to do whatever with the records of the intraviews. On the contrary, the notion of "re-turning" helps acknowledge the shaping role of the researcher, even when trying to be as close to the data as possible.

For this project, transcription was done verbatim from the video recordings no more than a couple of days after each intraview. I signalled silences, onomatopoeias, different laughs, sighs, gasps or any other sound. I also marked moments that demanded a closer look at the video and wrote my thoughts and sensations on my journal while transcribing. Thus, transcription was not something to do just once but an open, iterative process and never a substitution of the video recording.

Even though the entire fieldwork, transcription and most of the analytic process were done in Spanish, translating the extracts to English was not a post-analytic work but a "re-turning" that reshaped my relationship with data. I did my best to translate the transcripts as precisely as possible, making careful decisions regarding when it was necessary to sacrifice readability or keep a word in Spanish, considering their geo-political meaning. Tools that were vital for translating were the webpages Linguee.com and the Chilean-English dictionaries "How to survive in the Chilean Jungle" (Brennan & Taboada, 1996, 2002) and a compendium of Chilean words based on our indigenous languages (Meyer Rusca, 1952). Translation's necessary millimetric reading and challenges sometimes produced further insights, signalling discursive and affective forces. At times, translation efforts opened up different words' connotations and roots, triggering associations that enriched the analysis, like when linking "canchero" with "player" masculinities (see Chapter 5). Other times, translation challenges pointed out affective intensities. For instance, when while struggling to translate Alicia's fake swearing (e.g. fudge), I realised she used it when talking about herself while openly swearing (e.g. fuck) when talking about the guy she was going out with. Thus potentially signalling a not openly acknowledged frustration or anger towards this—not particularly kind—guy.

4.4.3 Free Association as an Affective Method for Analysis

For the analysis, I read the transcripts closely while taking notes about anything that came into my mind, free-associatively. This included: other intraviews or part-icipants, theory, my emotional responses, Chilean contingency, etc. The latter might sound a bit unorthodox, yet, for example, I do believe that speaking with Franco and Daniel in the week of International Women's Day with Chile's massive protests despite the pandemic, in some ways, prompted the discussion on funas. Thus, the work with 'data' entailed combining pieces from these teenagers' flirting accounts; but also mine, and our experience together. This included, for example, what I read, watched, discussed, and so on.

I used free association as an active effort not to try to control, organise or make sense of the data (Lagos Serrano, 2021) but to open up and think about what else could be happening within the narrated scene and myself. In this way, noticing whatever comes

into one's mind (and body!) can be considered an affective research method (Mehrabi, 2020), where affective processes are considered a crucial part of knowledge production and a way to acknowledge the researcher's happenings during both data production/analysis. A tool for holding ourselves accountable for how we are shaping and being shaped by the research. Examples of these happenings can be, for instance, the emergence of embodied memories of teenage experiences of flirting in the form of sensations and stories, like the cheek spasm mentioned in the Introduction Chapter. Hence, free association would be a privileged way to bring upfront entangled potential matterings, not only during and about the intraviews but also during the analytical work with data.

After this close free associative reading, I could organise extracts into topics I wanted to analyse while highlighting quotes that intrigued me, motivating me to keep exploring—that "glowed" (MacLure, 2013; Ringrose & Renold, 2014). To analyse the selected quotes, I first focused on the transcripts: the words said, the sentences produced, and the location of certain words within the conversation. I also considered the multiple meanings conveyed by the word choices and the affectivity they signalled.

I then incorporated the audiovisual record of those extracts and other moments of the intraview into the analysis. Videos were crucial to give texture to the written words with voice intonation and volume, facial and bodily gestures, and other noises whose particularities are hard to transcribe, like different laughter, chuckles, sighs or gasps. Videos thus constituted an essential tool to explore nuanced affective tones during our conversations. This thesis does not include the analysis of screenshots or photos. Yet, they facilitated attuning myself to what was narrated, as illustrations, or by conveying a certain affectivity in the story.

Thus, my work with data resided between two entangled scenarios that are multiple and dynamically co-produced: the recorded intraview—video, memories and notes—and the flirting account—the transcript content, gestures accompanying the narrative, screenshots, photos. Focusing on both scenes enabled me to develop a specific approach to map the affectivity of both the encounter and what was being told. I paid attention to word choice, tone of voice, rhythm of speech, and details in facial gestures; while holding

myself accountable for some of the specific intra-actions at play while co-creating and thinking with these stories.

4.4.4 Analysing "Flirting Scenes" With the Researcher's Imagination and Free Association

During the close reading of the transcripts, I also selected 13 "flirting scenes". A "flirting scene" was a moment identified by the storyteller as flirting that was constituted as continuous in their particular space-time and was narrated in detail. For instance, the moment surrounding a kiss at a party or inside a car, or the increasing tension while caressing or sexting humorously. However, this cutting out of flirting scenes does not imply that there is a way to define when flirting begins and ends. Instead, I think of these scenes as having entangled contingent boundaries being made and remade while telling and re-telling these embodied and material memories.

The key to turning the story narrated into a "flirting scene" is not much about the plot but the richness of the details that enabled a sort of staging of the moment. The assembling of a flirting scene aimed at highlighting flirting not as a human-activity-in-a-context but as a happening that emerges from the moment's discursive, material and affective particularities. This setting up was done by gathering different extracts from the transcripts, video recordings, pictures or audios related to the scene.

Combining different pieces of data to stage scenes required a fair amount of imagination. Even if not theorised as such, working out data by the staging of scenes can be found in works that draw on affect theory and consider the agency of the material, like in Stewart's (2007) affective ethnographic research, in Baradian-inspired intra-active analysis of ethnographic data (Taylor, 2019) and interviews (Mazzei & Jackson, 2017). Also, in Taguchi's analysis of narrative data using both Barad and Deleuze and Guattari's theories, where she emphasises the researcher's awareness of their "imaginary and bodymind sensibilities" (2012, p. 275) as a pivotal tool to deepen the exploration of the entangled process of the scene. Moreover, working with the researcher's imagination can also be considered free-associating with images that come to mind. Montrelay (1984) suggests that if we are open and attentive to how the

encounters move us, we can use our imagined associations to unpack something else about them.

Yet, I needed an anchor for my imaginary wanderings. This anchoring was achieved by keeping a reflexive work during fieldwork, asking for more details instead of making assumptions and a later fine-grained attachment to the transcribed data, pictures and videos, recognizing its limitations and trying my best not to include features that could not be argued to be present in the data. Also, focusing on what was produced by the intra-actions between elements instead of the reified properties of those elements. Moreover, these intra-actions and affective elements were possible to unpack further, given the chance that the videos gave me to "re-turn" to gestures, intonations and other sounds while narrating the scene. An example of this is when Piwke spoke about when he and his date sat together to watch the lake on a full moon night. For this scene, the analysis focuses on the romantic atmosphere produced by the full moon entangled with the lake, discourses on romantic love, and Piwke's sexual attraction to his date, among others, without considering what this moon looked like. Moreover, Piwke narrated an uncomfortable moment involving their hands in this 'romantic' context. The video enabled me to delve further into the affectivity of this moment by returning to Piwke's simultaneous hand and facial gestures, which provided a texture of his excitement, confusion, sexual desire and the power imbalances between them (fully addressed in Chapter 6).

> … and he took my hand, [crosses one arm in front of his body, grabbing his wrist] he did **not even ask me for permission** like eerr gimme your hand, it was like **he grabbed my hand** [cross the same arm in front of him] and **pulled it** and sure, we joined our hands [hold his palms together] and... and effectively my hand was super more sma- was super **tiny in comparison with his hand** po, and like… while had the hand there like he started like to caress my hand [he caresses one of his hands], and.. and like I was already practically dying inside because I was getting exasperated by why is he doing this?!
>
> (Piwke intraview 1, 00:50:22)

I would also say that noting and following our associations as researchers is a tool to handle with care. Not all our associations will matter to our work; some will be better not acting on. Deciding what to do with our associations can thus be challenging. An example of this happened with Newen's pages-long story about a relationship with a classmate who was planning to run away. When I was reading it for the first time, I instantly felt that running away was an euphemism for suicide. I got stressed about how the story would end. But the girl in question did run away. What triggered this fantasy? Maybe it was a mix of my old therapist's alarm and the profound sadness I felt both the first time I met Newen and in his story. I chose not to share this fantasy with Newen, even though sometimes I did share my fantasising with part-icipants. Instead, I kept it in mind and noted the elements I associate with suicide, maybe contacting myself with a fragility that was not openly acknowledged. I looked in the data for different material, discursive, embodied and affective types of non-recognition, suppression, exclusion or death. Some elements I found resonated with Newen's former experiences of violence, mental health struggles and trans identity recognition addressed in Chapter 7.

4.5 Example: Co-producing a Flirting Scene During the Second Intraview

This example shows how the second intraview worked and its contributions to opening up accounts of flirting, bringing forward the agency of the material and the embodied affectivity of these encounters' accounts. Moreover, it shows how data production is entangled with the analysis, sometimes as simultaneous processes.

For this second intraview, Daniel, who is 17 years old, sent me a written story on WhatsApp. I segmented his story and prepared questions, mostly asking for more details. Below is the first half of the story, segmented, and an extract of the second intraview based on this moment.

Translated extract from the segmented story:

> I had invited my friend to meet because it had been a while that we did not see each other and we wanted to talk about life and blah blah, so we met in a small square and we talked, the talking was very varied, we talked about our plans for holidays, about stuff we did in lockdown and etc.

The thing started to change when I started talking about a childhood movie that I recently watched and that I love, here I think that what I did like to "flirt" was talking about something I like

so I said this with passion, so while I was telling the plot of the movie, we got more affectionate (xd), and in each moment that went by we were closer to the point of being hugging each other since we were that close, we were caressing each other,

and I am not going to lie to you I was with the mindset of spending a great day with one of my best friends,

well the thing is that during a long while we were in this sensation of trying to kiss and no, I did not dare because I did not know if she wanted and I did not want to mess things up.

Intraviews's Translated Extract After Daniel Read the Underlined Extract Above

Daniel: "(...) we were caressing each other,"

Bárbara: ok... do you wanna say anything else? I started talking over you

Daniel: No, nothing more; I remember that apart that why we were getting closer was because there was too much sun and the bench, the sun started to eat the bench, so we put ourselves more and more into a corner, in a corner, in a corner… and that, so it was like, the, was like that too, (was) an important factor.

Bárbara: ok, so you were in this square but you were uhm like seated in a…

Daniel: yeah, yes, we sat on a bench because of the heat and we bought an ice cream, yes.

(Daniel intraview 2, 00:16:09)

This extract shows the details I aimed for the flirting story in the second intraview. I was going to ask a question this time, but realised I might have interrupted him and asked, following the free-association method, if he wanted to say anything else. This opened up several details of the materiality of the encounter. These details are important because they shape the encounter in very particular ways. For example, the bench provides a linear path while the sun beams advancing through the bench worked as a practical reason to get closer, maybe dismissing the possibility of her sexual attraction to him. The repetition of "in a corner" suggests progressive movement but also the affectivity of feeling cornered. The sun, bench and girl-friend that materially cornered him also materialise discursive pressures on boys to make the first move to kiss or to be always interested in sex, which is something we explored later with the next written segment where he needed to clarify this was not in his plans for the evening.

Daniel's spontaneous details reshaped my imagination of that moment because I had pictured them sitting casually on the grass, and that was what I was planning to ask. Yet we cannot know if he would have given the same details if I had asked this directly instead of just letting him speak whatever came into his mind, where the bench is not the object to be sitting on but the thing the sun was "eating"—with its sexual connotations—and thus pushing them closer together.

Thus, this example shows the productivity of this focus on details that might be done by intense questioning or by insisting on pausing to think what else was, or could be, happening at that time. In this sense, free association can help ease the censorship of what could or could not be relevant and the humanist assumption that human-flirters are the only agents in these encounters. This focus on material objects and sensations can also contribute to conveying affective sensations that are difficult to identify and be explicit about, which, for Daniel, was the possibility that he might be thought of as a guy who only cares about sex.

Finally, this example also shows how the process of analysing, looking for underpinnings and other connections happens as a part of the co-production of the data and the benefits of not relegating it as an 'after fieldwork' task.

4.6 What comes next?

This chapter presented the methodological postqualitative foundations of this research and the methods employed to produce detailed accounts that enabled an exploration of the role of the material, the sensorial and how discourses are felt while flirting, thus helping with the challenge of eliciting the materiality and embodied felt sensations in flirting accounts, exceeding humanist understandings of flirting. I showed different ways in which the psychoanalytic free association method and Mølbak's interviews about flirting stories can be put to work not only online but within the posthumanist framework of intraviews to co-produce detailed accounts that stage flirting as entangled phenomena of discourses, material objects and sensing bodies.

Thus, this research approaches flirting from a posthuman theoretical lens and pays particular attention to the "ethic-onto-epistemologies" of doing research. That is, to analyse power dynamics involved in research and how these, among other material-discursive and affective intra-actions, co-produce the research itself and its possibilities to create knowledge and the world. To achieve this, working with the two scenarios (intraview and accounted flirting scene) is crucial to map how data was co-created to consider what data can do and what it is possible to say about it.

Hence, thinking of the methods with material-discursive and affective intra-actions helped generate a novel approach to look into different ways of eliciting flirting accounts that highlight the significance of materiality and affectivity in flirting, to explore what these accounts can tell us about how young people flirt, what else is at play within flirting and how certain things or sensations come to matter, like, for example, how normative discourses and power dynamics are felt.

In the following three data analysis chapters, I work with data produced across these three methods to explore flirting entanglements with digital feminist activism against sexual violence or funas in Chapter 5. I then analyse different materializations of "affective responsibility" in Chapter 6 and construct a posthuman perspective on bodily boundaries and consent within flirting among teenagers in Chile in Chapter 7.

5. "To Me It's Normal, But if It Bothers Them, It's Not Said Anymore': Intra-actions of Feminist Funas With Teenage Flirting and Heterosexual Masculinities

"We are not the ones who should be afraid and embarrassed, IT'S THEM."

"Today I speak; today I am strong, and you will fall."

"All the *machitos* will fall."

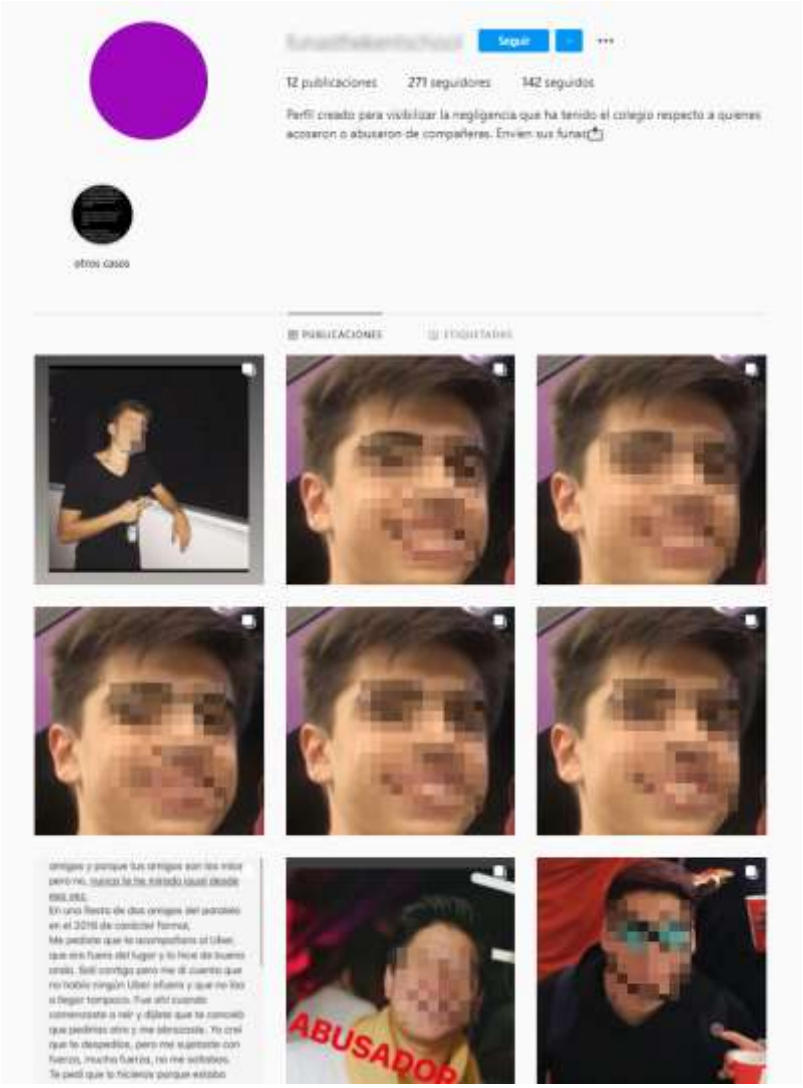

Figure 3. *Funas Instagram account grid. The researcher blurred the faces for anonymity purposes.*

Introduction

The description of the Instagram account, which I renamed @funasbostonschool, translates to: "Profile created to make visible the school's negligence with whom had abused and harassed women-schoolmates. Send your funas". Funa is a Mapudungun word that means rotten (Villena Araya, 2017) and was born as a political practice in the 90s after Pinochet's dictatorship to protest against the lack of justice and to publicly shame people who had gone unpunished for committing crimes against humanity during that period. Thus, the description of the Instagram account illustrates funa's feature as a protest when institutions fail to provide justice and protect victims.

The quotes that opened this chapter are from this Instagram account. They portray funas as individual empowering public performances ("Today I speak, today I am strong") and a sort of turning tables of fear and embarrassment, from women to men, from 'victims' to harassers. Twice is stated that *machitos*—sexist and violent men—will fall, presenting the public calling out of their abuses as a means to hold them accountable, while also winking at a famous feminist consign against patriarchy *"se va a caer!"*—it will fall!. I want to stay with the emotionally charged statements since feminists' anger and ability to fight back against sexual violence with funas flood hetero men's concerns and practices when flirting.

In the introduction of this thesis, I suggested that flirting tends to slip out of the picture, and I illustrated how the tendency is to focus on violence: sexual, school-based, etc. Starting the data analysis of a thesis on flirting with the digital calling out of sexual violence is part of my working with and out of this same symptom. Here, I stay in the intertwined 'margins' to explore feminist activism's shapings of flirting. As one of the participants said in the first intraview when associating with "flirting":

> Franco: (…)the issue of the funas! Why? Because well nowadays with the issue of feminism and all of that like, we have been taught (…) like the margin about, about, flirting and something like harassment. (…)
>
> (Franco intraview 1, 00:07:57)

In this chapter, I suggest possibilities to think about how feminist digital activism in the form of funas co-produce the flirting possibilities of a group of heterosexual young men friends and whether it may promote changes towards gender equality. Thinking funas and flirting with material-discursive and affective intra-actions, especially with the concepts of affect and fantasy, allows a nuanced and complex exploration of this topic. Affect, as the capacity to affect and be affected that is humanly felt and captured by feelings (Massumi, 2015). Fantasies, as conscious or unconscious imagined scenarios that materialise affects and show the embodied affective grip of discourses. In this way, fantasies can be considered a co-constitutive part of the sense-making of the world. Fantasy is thus a way to think of how alternative—past, present or future—scenarios can influence what occurs in an encounter or in an account of it.

Particularly, this analysis explores affective responses to funas, like fear, passivity, resignation and cluelessness, along with fantasies related to sexual violence, such as misogynistic portrayals of women as whimsical, the overspread myth that miscommunication is at the basis of sexual violence (Beres, 2020; Fanghanel, 2020); and the fantasy of potentially being called out in the future, what I refer to as "funa fear fantasy". By tracing these feelings and fantasies, this chapter sketches some ways funas might be 'encouraging' men to change how they approach women when flirting while also policing 'player masculinities' and re-figuring 'proper' masculine traits.

This particular Instagram account had 271 followers when the screenshot was taken (27-11-2021). This is quite a number in a school with no more than 360 students counting from the 7th to 12th grade. Its first post was on December 8th 2019, after the beginning of the *Estallido Social* in October and the viralization of LASTESIS feminist anthem and performance against sexual violence "A Rapist in Your Path", in November that sparked a 'heatwave' of funas in the country (Vera Gajardo, 2022). The last post is from April 2020, coinciding with the closing of schools and the lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This tight window of activity of only five months might respond to an initiative provoked by the social environment that then lost its strength when there was no chance of running into these men, given the strict and lengthy lockdowns in Chile that lasted the whole school year, from March to December 2020.

The grid of this account shows funas against at least six schoolmates or alumni[8] from more than one young woman, detailing diverse forms of sexual violence. These funas called-out unwanted or forced touching of genitals or breasts, forced kisses, corralling, and insistent unwanted touching after repeatedly asking to stop. All this happened while women were visibly drunk—vomiting or completely unconscious—or knowably emotionally vulnerable—crying or sleeping. Other behaviours reported were non-consensual sex within relationships, taking pictures or videos without consent, friends stealing nudes from the smartphone, and non-consented sharing of ex-partner's nudes after they asked to delete them. Some also included psychological abuse, manipulation, mistreatment and harassment after ending a relationship.

Several other schools and universities had similar funas accounts before December 2019 (Errázuriz Besa, 2019; Román & Retamal, 2019). Noteworthy is the launch of www.estafunao.com (meaning www.heiscalled-out.com) that same month, an unsuccessful attempt to create a database and search engine of *funaos,* men that had been called out for sexual violence. What I want to convey with this information is how pervasive funas were—and still are—among young people's lives and relationships in Chile. I also want to keep this particular Instagram account as part-of the material-discursive and affective intra-actions of the six year 12 classmates at Boston School who are the focus of this chapter.

As a disclaimer, I acknowledge the limitations of the scope of this chapter due to the exclusive focus of feminist funas on men's violence against women and recognise the importance of exploring the influence of feminist digital activism among non-heterosexual relationalities. This scope further complicated my efforts to work beyond/in addition to binary frameworks. Nonetheless, I managed to make some headway in this regard, particularly concerning the online/offline and human/non-human divide.

[8] The exact age of these youg men and women is not crucial for the Chilean Law since, from the grades they mention in the stories, everyone was above 14 years old, the legal age to consent to sex and to be criminally responsible, so they are not considered minors (Establece un sistema de responsabilidad de los adolescentes por infracciones a la ley penal, 2005).

5.1 Funas Historical-Political Material Entanglements in Chile

Some political and historical contextualisation is necessary before deepening into the analysis. I consider this context, not a mere background or frame, but an active constitutive part-of flirting and funas intra-actions, as will be evidenced throughout the chapter.

As said, funas, as a political practice, were born in Chile after 1999 to denounce the impunity surrounding crimes against humanity committed during Pinochet's dictatorship, inspired by mid-90s *escraches* in Argentina against dictatorship criminals by "HIJOS"—Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice against Forgetting and Silence (Bravo, 2010). In that time, both funas and escraches worked against the impossibility of getting "Truth, Justice and Reparation" through formal penal justice because of politics of impunity and forgetting, along with institutional efforts to 'move on' and reconcile the population in Chile's return to democracy (Gahona, 2003, p. 2).

At that time, funas were organised by collective groups of relatives of dictatorship victims in different regions in Chile—called "Commission FUNA". They gathered evidence of the crimes and (failed) trials of a particular criminal and called people to gather in a peaceful yet colourful and noisy protest on the streets nearby the criminal's home or workplace. To call the attention of passersby, protesters would bring signs and pamphlets with the criminal's personal information and details about their crimes and judicial process(es). They would also bring guitars and percussions to sing or dance, shouting, "If there is no justice, there is funa" (Gahona, 2003, p. 2). Thus, according to Commission Funa, these protests aimed at exposing the dictatorship's violation of human rights and protecting the citizen's right to know with whom they are living together while calling for social responsibility of not forgetting and morally and socially condemning these crimes by social exclusion and repudiation—which they called the "FUNA effect" (Gahona, 2003).

With time, the focus of funas broadened to other spheres, and they migrated from the streets into social media. The initiative to make a funa also changed, and currently, they are initiated by the aggrieved individual or their close ones. Among the different types of funas, the most infamous is the one that calls out sexual violence against women: the so-

called feminist funa (Larraín Matte, 2023; Vera Gajardo, 2022). Similarly to post-dictatorship FUNAS, "feminist funas" seek to underscore sexist practices as violent and condemnable while simultaneously exposing the perpetrator for social punishment and warning other women, to protect them from future attacks (Bonavitta et al., 2020; Errázuriz Besa, 2019).

By calling out everyday sexual violence, like, for instance, taking or sharing nude pictures without consent, feminist funas also keep an eye on flirting-related practices. A "feminist funa" starts with a post on social media containing at least one image portraying the abuser, his personal information and detailed testimony of what happened. Yet what turns a post into a funa is its spreadability[9] (Jenkins, 2010), that is, the grassroots circulation of the post in unpredictable directions because of the likes, shares and comments across social media platforms, fuelled by the emotional engagement with its content. So, once posted online, funas depart from any kind of (human) intentions and control over it and spread through networks, shaking bodies with its violent content and impacting social groups offline. The power of the funa is evident in that it affectively reorganises social groups with its mandate for social punishment and exclusion that is hard to contest. This is because funa can splatter or "stick" (Ahmed, 2014) to people or institutions that do not exclude the funao, turning them into accomplices. Moreover, given the difficulty of erasing things from the internet and online content's visibility, searchability and persistence (boyd, 2014), funas are hard to overcome or forget and can come to life and recirculate after years of staying dormant.

Understanding funas as emerging from material-discursive and affective intra-actions allows us to pay attention to the intra-connected work between the materiality of the images and social media networks, the discourses that cut through the testimonies and responses to funas, and their intense affectivity. Moreover, this approach enables surpassing the funa as a digital artefact and understanding it as part of the social fabric and human bodies, contesting the on/offline division with its powerful online and offline repercussions.

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[9] Special thanks to Xumeng Xie, for your comments on a draft of this chapter, your knowledge on feminist digital activism, and introducing me to this concept.

In this context, the potential for social change of feminist funas or escraches is intensely discussed in feminist circles in Latin America. These debates primarily revolve around funas' punitive approach, which emphasises the public shaming of 'rotten apples,' thereby attributing the problem to the actions of individual men (Larraín Matte, 2023). Hence, even if sometimes these men are portrayed as "healthy sons of patriarchy" (López Awad, 2022, p. 1), funas reproduce a restrictive view of gendered violence that risks turning sexual violence into a personal/private issue since it does not address the social gendered structure that sustains violence against women (Bonavitta et al., 2020; Giudice, 2020; Larraín Matte, 2023; Vera Gajardo, 2022). Hence, funas would leave no space for inclusion, learning, and tackling the underlying societal issues.

This chapter is interested in the intermingling of funas in how young people relate, especially within heterosexual encounters, to examine its potential to address 'structural' issues, like patriarchal masculinity[10], and, thus, push for feminist social change. Particularly, this chapter adds to the ongoing discussion by illustrating how funas may shape heterosexual men's flirting without the acknowledgement of gendered power dynamics.

5.2 Changing Through Fear: Funa Fear Fantasy and Funas' Potential for Feminist Social Change Within Flirting

The analysis of this chapter dwells on the intra-actions between funas and flirting within the heterosexual young men in my sample, focusing on three aspects. First, on the role of "funa fear fantasy", the fear linked to the fantasy of potentially being called out in the future. I show how this fear might be pushing for changes in how men flirt and relate to women while simultaneously feeding misogynistic fantasies about whimsical women. Second, on how these men engage with masculinity traits to flirt, mainly by distancing themselves from what is considered "disrespectful" or "gross" (Franco intraview 3, 00:54:42). Third, through mapping the co-production of the figure of the 'funao', I explore deeper the dynamics of funa fear fantasy and its entanglements with misogynistic fantasies and the miscommunication myth, to understand better the

[10] One way, among many others, to refer to the gendered social structure where men hold power over women (Domínguez & Lozano, 2021).

pervasiveness of this fantasy, particularly among young men who do not consider themselves capable of assaulting women.

5.2.1 Contextualising the sample

The key participants were pseudonymised as Franco and Daniel. I intraviewed them three times each. For the third intraview, each invited two friends. Franco invited two heterosexual men, pseudonymised as Diego and Jose. Daniel invited two feminist-identified women, Flo and Pola. They were between 17 and 18 years old and classmates in Boston School, an expensive but not elite (Madrid, 2016) co-educational private school in Santiago. Thus, these teenagers were in their first year of high school, 14-15 years old, when the Feminist May hit in 2018—the month-long national paralysation of universities protesting for protocols for sexual violence. When we met in March 2021, right after International Women's Day, they were starting their senior year, resuming their 'normal' activities after a strict Covid lockdown in 2020. This overlapped with an ongoing political crisis since 2019 intertwined with feminist activism initiates, such as LASTESIS feminist anthem "A rapist in your Path" (Sepúlveda Eriz, 2021).

According to these teenagers, their school is quite conservative regarding sexuality, and it has failed to address issues of sexual violence among students, such as a trafficking network involving students and alums of young women's nudes and disclosures of sexual abuse between students. The latter led to the Instagram account that opened this Chapter. Moreover, according to Franco, the atmosphere at school is "complicated" by "intolerance", where ideas against feminist claims may be retaliated online. Franco illustrates this by narrating how a right-wing conservative classmate was attacked on Instagram after defending against abortion at a school debate, "act with fear, think with fear (…) there are times that... that one simply no, can't like, express oneself because of this—yeah, is complicated" (Franco intraview 1, 00:38:42). To this, I would add Chile's political crisis in 2019-2022, with, according to the Observatory of Social Cohesion (2020), the highest levels of social and political polarisation since the return of democracy in 1989. This polarisation and 'easily' triggered aggressions were part of the Chilean landscape during 2021, where it was common to see in the news people physically attacking others for political differences. For example, there were instances

where presidential candidates were targeted with stones and glass bottles (El Mercurio, 2021; Felipe Delgado, 2021).

This subsample was chosen mainly for three reasons. First, since they were the only heterosexual men in the sample who completed more than one intraview and who discussed funas; maybe facilitated by the feminist protests because of International Women's Day. Second, because Daniel and Franco were classmates, so the intraviews together provided more data and insights about a shared context. Third, because the gender proportions in the third intraview propitiated different discussions around funas, enriching the possibilities for the analysis. In Franco's, the researcher was the only woman and she had her camera off because of a technical glitch that could not be solved. So, perhaps these young men felt a bit more at ease to openly critique funas and feminism. However, I was repeatedly annoyed by my restrained ability to communicate due to the lack of video and by not taking more time to fix it. That was because Franco had to leave in an hour, and I thought I should embrace these differences and analyse what they could produce. But nothing helped me ease the guilt I felt for not re-scheduling. Maybe this guilt contributed to my distancing using 'the researcher' above. Maybe this word choice extended the erasure I felt during that time. On the other hand, in Daniel's intraview, he was the only man among feminist friends and a potential feminist researcher, which heightened his defensiveness despite my efforts to generate a non-judgemental space.

5.2.2 Afraid of a Funa? Unpacking the Intra-active Co-production of "Funa Fear Fantasy"

Among the accounts of these young men, funa circulates as a mechanism that promotes changes through the fear of being called out in the future for sexual violence, what I call "funa fear fantasy". In this subsection, I focus mainly on Franco's accounts to shed light on the entanglements of feelings of passiveness and resignation with misogynist fantasies that dynamically constitute and reconfigure men's interactions with women, pushing into changing once normalised practices to protect themselves. This is illustrated in the quote in the title of this chapter "To me it's normal but if it bothers them, it's not said anymore", where Franco expressed a pragmatic approach of stopping saying or doing things that 'bother' women, even if he finds them normal. As Franco's

quote suggests, among these teenagers, feminist funas had imposed that there are things that can't be done anymore because they are just wrong, even though sometimes these men can't articulate why. This categorization of banned practices is what I refer to as the "feminist no", a sticky labelling of practices, discourses, objects or anything identified by funas as sexist violence, which is reinforced by the fear of being called out. "Funa fear fantasy" is enhanced by the potentially harsh consequences that may follow a funa, and both, fear and punishment, likewise, feed feelings of passivity and misogynistic fantasies about women being irrational, whimsical or cruel to men.

I mainly turn to Franco's account since he spontaneously and directly referred to funas as an agent in changing men's behaviours when flirting. At the beginning of the first intraview, when I asked Franco to tell me whatever came into his mind regarding flirting, it took him only a few minutes to talk about flirting at parties and alcohol, before jumping into the topic of funas,

> Franco: Ehhh.. I don't know what else ehh flirting.. ehm.. ah! Well also something that comes to my mind like, is, the issue of the funas! Why? Because well nowadays with the issue of feminism and all of that like, we have been taught basically that, that (we) have to be much more, careful with what, with what you have to say or how do you have to act or at the end what, what is what the woman finds uncomfortable be said to her, done to her and at the end what turns to be a lack of respect, or what, what is like the margin between, between, flirting and something like harassment.
>
> (Franco intraview 1, 00:08:28)

In this quote, Franco marks feminism as a turning point in how men relate with women, "nowadays with the issue of feminism and all of that". Noteworthy is the passiveness that Franco's utterances portray. "We have been taught" conveys men are passively changed by external inputs instead of their reflections and accountability. In Franco's excerpt, the associative movement from "funas" to "feminism and all that" implies feminist funas are the medium through which men had "been taught" about respect and harassment, an idea he later acknowledges explicitly.

To explore the kind of pedagogical functioning of funas, Franco's "we have been taught" by feminism to be "much more, careful" is worth unpacking closely. In Spanish and English, the word careful means "close attention" and can refer to at least two situations that work in this sentence's context. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary (n.d.c), first, there is "close attentiveness with protectiveness and responsibility". Second, there is "close attentiveness to avoid danger". Thus, in one way, Franco refers to engaging with women kindly or "subtly", as he mentions several times. On the other, he may refer to engaging with women considering the risks of himself ending up harmed. According to Franco, this carefulness that might be perceived as excessive, as "much more", aims at preventing "what the woman finds uncomfortable to be said to her, done to her". Hence, he is expressing a need, "have to", to pay attention to not discomfort women, maybe to prevent causing them harm or being harmed himself.

Similarly to one of the quotes at the beginning of this chapter that claimed a shift where men instead of women should be "embarrassed and afraid", Franco's quote conveys a turn of the (gendered) tables where men must be "much more careful" around women to avoid 'bothering' or upsetting them—and to avoid a funa. Yet this idea is then nuanced by Franco's moral references to "lack of respect". So, in his account, women do not hold enough power over men to change them. Men change because it is the right thing to do, giving them some agency. However, I interpret that under "much more careful" and "the woman" in this quote, there are old femininity tropes, maybe working as unconscious fantasies. Evident is the emergence of a fragile woman who must be taken cared of and not discomforted. Yet, underlying it peeps a figure of a fussy or capricious woman who demands changes—not because of gender equity and social justice but—because she doesn't like how things are. Thus, funas would be the whip to punish those who don't conform to her demands. In this quote, the whimsical woman fantasy is not so clear but it re-emerged several times during the conversations with these young men. This fantasy of whimsical women can be considered as a misogynistic and defensive fantasy. Yet, we can also understand it as a humanistic and individualising way to understand the feminist re-configurations around them.

As said, Franco is open about the transformative impact of funas in flirting and sexual relationalities. In the following quote, right after Franco nuanced his criticism against

funas with “is my opinion, clearly”, he turned into resignation with a meekly “well, I don’t know, it just is what it is” and talked about men joking about this.

> Franco: (…) but well, don’t know, it just is what it is, aannd because also I feel that, always like us in between men, like, we tease like between joke like ‘Oh you are afraid of being funao!” and while it is a joke, also is like a hidden truth over that joke that, yes! I mean anything, (they) can funar you and, and is like… Oh! (…)
>
> (…) But still, that not, that don’t knooooow if that is wrong but at least like is noticeable that it has had an impact over us like so we behave in another way. But, what, what like I don’t like is that it is through fear and not from respect. Because, I am one of the, to teach you have to teach with respect and not with fear. So if you have like fear of being called-out, yes, (you) learn, but you learn with- for the bad ways.
>
> (Franco intraview 1, 00:10:40)

The passiveness highlighted in the first quotes gives way to resignation and indirect ways to deal with the funa fear fantasy, where joking among men could be a way to cope with and dismiss this fear. When thinking about the entanglements of joking and fear, in the quote, it feels like fear was pushing—as Freud dynamically understood these tendencies (Breuer & Freud, 1893/2011)—to fully appear in Franco’s speech, which was gradually achieved until finally getting full recognition. Progressively, fear first is mentioned inside a joke, “‘Oh, you are afraid of being funao!’“. Then, fear peeps in the lapsus linguae about fear’s role in joking, where Franco errs the preposition (“hidden truth over that joke”) since hiding should be under and not over. This lapsus might indicate the difficulty of covering the fear entangled with those jokes. Or, as Freud (1905b/2011) understands wits, it is the inhibited fear that makes these jokes funny. Finally, at the end of the quote, fear gets explicit recognition as what has made men change their behaviour—“if you have like fear of being called out, yes, (you) learn”. And interestingly, once this fear is acknowledged, men “learn” instead of “being taught”.

Franco is explicit about funas having a "noticeable (…) impact over us like so we behave in another way", repeating the passivity regarding these changes. He acknowledges that the fear of being called out and its consequences cause these changes, opposing it to respect, thus critiquing funas' mechanisms. Fear would be the "bad way" of teaching and learning, and Franco positioned himself on the side of respect, implying feminist funas are on the "bad" side of fear. His suggestions fall again in the logic of men being potential victims of bad/dangerous women, which also appeared in "I mean anything, (they) can call you out and, and, is like… oh!", where Franco pictured a paranoid threat and an underlying critique that portrays women as holding power and being able to use it whimsically, turning "anything" into a funa. Hence, he recognises women's power while discrediting its source and rationale.

Moreover, the "Oh!" of this sentence could signal a moment where Franco cannot find words to express men's situation, showing a sort of helplessness that adds to the abovementioned resignation. Hence, the fear/respect opposition added to the passiveness in the first quote and the helplessness here maintains the portrayal of men as victims and thus might be encouraging the fantasy of the (powerful) whimsical woman, since because of "anything" she could attack you to the extent of "twist things"; so "always, what one says at the end can be used against you" (see quote below).

Consequently, the funa fear fantasy permeated Franco's flirting behaviours. For example, even though he used to ask before attempting to kiss a young woman to avoid a more embarrassing rejection, now he is more concerned than before about asking before a kiss—"there had been times when I did not ask (before kissing someone) and and and but, now you must ask, I guess." (Franco intraview 1, 00:57:14). The quote portrays both the mandate—"must"—coming from outside and the hesitation—"I guess"— that I am suggesting. However, the aim "to avoid problems" associated with funa fear fantasy extended beyond flirting spheres towards interactions with women-friends:

> Franco: (…) for example, I before eh like to my (women)friends, not even like strangers, like to my close (women)friends, my classmates thus I said to them like "Hi gorg!", like that. And at the end that, like, lately just, I just don't say it like that because, because... don't know, is like something.. that don't know, I find it normal, but if, if it bothers them, is not said

anymore, but, is like saying someone "Oh, hi, you look nice", is like, that things like that I now try to not say.

Bárbara: but why it bothers them?

Franco: I mean no, not to them [his friends] no, but like in social media like always say like "oh, no, *piropos*, no and that stuff no, so like at the end to to avoid problems and things like that, because anyway always, what one says at the end later can be used against you and like.. and like if later like for any reason I got to be called-out, oy, they would say 'Oh no and he said gorg' and they can always twist things and like say 'oh no he said yummy hottie' and like always it can be twisted, so at the end, better no.

(Franco intraview 1, 00:51:27)

Franco tried to explain another change he had made when interacting with women, which is avoiding commenting on their appearance ("Hi gorg!" or "Oh, hello, you look nice"). The sole reason Franco mentioned making this change was to "avoid problems" associated with funas. Thus, even with his close (women)friends, with whom he said there was trust and the possibility to joke about feminism, he stopped using words that refer to their appearance. He explicitly says he finds these comments "normal" and states his disposition to change whatever bothers women, even if he does not quite understand. In the sentence "to me it's normal, but if bothers them, it's not said anymore" there is both his willingness to change and avoid problems and his cluelessness about the rationale of the feminists' demands. So, changes are made while what is considered normal remains discursively unchallenged (does it?).

Franco said he made these changes even if his (women)friends were not bothered by these comments—"not to them". Yet social media is exerting here the "feminist no" when "says like Oh no, *piropos*, no, and that stuff no". *Piropos* is a Latin-American word to refer to flattering comments. Yet, it is also used to hide catcalling as 'mere flattery'. As such, piropos has gotten bad connotations. Hence, Franco moves the social media "no piropos" directly into his relationships. This rigid codification of behaviours without

nuances flattens the complexities and multiplicities of flirting and social interactions. It could also signal excessive and rigid precautions to deal with funa fear fantasy.

The rigid codification of Franco's practices is explained by the threat of a funa, where "what one says at the end later can be used against you". Possibly, rigid, unreflecting and patch-like solutions like the one expressed by Franco are motivated by the power of funas both on and offline, where the high stakes of social exclusion added to the persistence (boyd, 2014) and spreadability (Jenkins, 2010) of funas leave little margin to risk making mistakes. Also at play could be the fantasy of irrational women capable and willing to punish men for behaviours like saying, "you look nice". A third reading could be that this rigid codification is a way of getting some sense of certainty or control over the pervasive sense of passiveness and cluelessness shown above. Another possibility is that Franco's rigid understanding is mirroring the rigidity of what I call the "feminist no", that bans practices without many nuances. Anyway, it seems like the constellation of elements that co-constitute the funa fear fantasy facilitates the blurring of the lines between political slogans and particular situations, creating an unclear group of women that can be 'bothered' and retaliate.

What I have pulled out from Franco's quotes is also present in his friends' accounts. For example, the force of feminism and the felt passivity, when Jose stated, "is like impossible to ignore the feminist movement (…) independent that one is informed or not, anyway it will provoke to oneself a certain change on how one relates with (…) women" (Franco intraview 3, 01:06:36). The fantasy of whimsical women was also in Jose and Diego's word choices, when, instead of Franco's "fear", they used "dangers" to imply the possibility of being called out. Using danger instead of fear is a way of covering the vulnerability of being afraid or perceived as wrong. But it is also a way of decentring men's responsibility in those situations by implying women can be dangerous because of their power over funas—and, unsurprisingly, putting the responsibility on them.

To conclude, in this section I identified the intra-actions that co-produce the "funa fear fantasy", which includes the easily shareable, spreadable and hard-to-erase funa's pictures and testimonies that threaten with social exclusion. These are intertwined with misogynistic fantasies of weak or whimsical women and a mix of feelings of confusion, passiveness, cluelessness, resignation and, of course, fear. Moreover, I showed how

funas, particularly through funa fear fantasy, can shape heterosexual young men's flirting possibilities beyond discourses of social gender equity. This is because "funa fear fantasy" would push men into protecting themselves by behaving differently, sometimes through overcautious and rigid restrictions. Notably, even when they don't think themselves capable of sexual violence or invest in sexist masculinities, as we will see in the next section.

5.2.3 Can Feminist Funas Re-Shape Flirting Masculinities?

Within the new normality funas are delineating by calling out once normalised behaviours, there is also an attempt to re-draft a 'proper' masculinity, how a 'good guy' behaves. This section shows how these young men engage with heterosexual masculine practices within flirting. I first focus on Franco and his friends Diego and Jose, particularly on their cautious engagement with "canchero", a term commonly used in Chile to describe men with high self-esteem, excessive confidence, and adeptness in social interactions, especially in flirting (Diccionario Chileno, n.d.b). "Canchero" comes from the word '*cancha'*, a court or field to play sports, and thus also refers to playfulness and prowess in sports. Hence, "canchero", even though it is not limited to the sexual field, floats closely to what is known in Anglo culture as a "player". I then proceed to analyse Daniel's struggles with being identified as a man in the context of funas' rejection of sexist men or "machitos" where it is possible to "be thrown to the same sack" (Daniel intraview 3, 00:45:55) as a bad, meaning sexist, guy. Thus, this section shows some of the entangled tensions in these young men's accounts around funas, flirting and masculinities.

To explore masculinities within this subsection, I draw from Anna Hickey-Moody's assemblage work with young boys that encourages us to move away from static notions of masculinities and the focus on 'crisis', thinking masculinities as creatively and dynamically arising from material, affective and discursive relations. Also, from Jonathan Allan's (2018) affective insights on masculinities, mainly through Sedgwick's works on shame and Kimmel's and Freud's works on paranoia. In this chapter, understandings of masculinities shed light on the funa fear fantasy mechanisms as much as on masculine identities/discourses.

5.2.3.1 Franco and friends distancing from canchero's flirting practices

In our conversation during Franco's third intraview, he and his friends Jose and Diego distanced themselves and the ways they thought it was appropriate and pleasurable to flirt from the usual flirting practices of "cancheros" or "champions", which include objectification and harassment of women and other practices that they consider "mega sexist" and "rancid". One example of this distancing is Jose's talking about the "obvious" impact feminism has had on men. After saying that "anyway it will provoke to oneself a certain change on how one relates with (…) other women really, specifically in these cases of flirting"; he continues:

> Jose: (…) it also depends on the men's attitude, I mean, for example my attitude I am pretty like low-key, (…) I am very shy [Diego nods] (…) (…) so but sure there are people that have an attitude super like that mark authority among men, I mean, men who mark authority and, sure, I mean them, who had a whole reality of like 'oh I am superior", you know, "I am mega *canchero* and all of that" and feminism comes, right, and basically comes to say to you no, really you are wrong, and is true, I mean really what you do affect a lot women, you know, like, how they feel with themselves, and the *vergüenza* (embarrassment/shame) they start to feel, etc, so I think that obvious[ly] it have changed to to to all to to to to all men and clearly, there are men that simply don't change since they are mega sexists right, but.. yeah I mean is a change super like notorious and obvious.
>
> (Franco intraview 3, 01:05:42)

Here, Jose presented himself as "shy" and "low-key", which is reaffirmed by Diego's nodding. Jose then stated that there is a group of men who "mark authority among men" and think of themselves as "superior" and "mega canchero", which is the problematic group feminism is against—"feminism comes, right, and basically comes to say to you no, really you are wrong". Hence, he implies that shy men—like him—are not as affected by feminism as men who highly invest in canchero masculinities. The stutter in "to to to all to to to to all men" might imply a sort of hesitation to overgeneralise his claim, since, even though he more than once stated that feminism is an unavoidable force that has

changed all men, here he said "there are men that simply don't change". Thus, this quote illustrates Jose's ambivalent inclusion of himself—"changed… all men"—while simultaneously defensive distancing from practices of sexist men, to be seen as a 'good' guy, and out of reach of funas.

Additionally, Jose contrasted himself as someone empathetic with women's self-esteem and feelings of (sexual) *vergüenza*. Vergüenza is a Spanish word that can be translated as embarrassment and shame (Collins Dictionary, n.d.). As such, vergüenza condenses but also collapses the complex and particular experiences of each assaulted woman. Both self-esteem and embarrassment/shame are recurrent elements in the testimonies on their school's funas' Instagram account, where some women blame the abuser for causing them mental health problems: "several therapies trying to heal". Others report feeling embarrassed after sexualising comments: "never again wearing those jeans for the embarrassment of being looked at". Also, feeling shame and guilt when thinking they might have done something to provoke the assault: "I even questioned myself if I had done something to provoke him or make him believe I was interested (..) I am not the one to blame" (extracts from what I rename as @funasbostonschool, translated by me).

Jose's quote implies a sort of hierarchy where, on top, there are men who think they are "superior" to other men and women, and mistreat women. Then, there are men who reject those at the top and are emotionally connected enough to empathise with women's positions. Women, who are at the lowest level of this pyramid, are pictured as fragile and subjected to how men treat them. Hence, it implies men have power over them—"what you do affect a lot women, you know, like, how they feel with themselves, and the vergüenza they start to feel, etc.". By contrasting the harmful men with the empathetic men, Jose shows two ways men could hold power over women: by harming or caring for them. By locating himself with the latter, Jose echoes Franco's being "careful" with women.

Turning women into weak and vulnerable can be an easier yet contradictory way to try to empathise with gender violence and inequity. But this could also work as a defensive way of compensating the power imbalance men may feel, where young feminist women perform as empowered active agents with a higher moral position, "you are wrong",

which is imposed by the force of funas. Hence, by defensively depicting women as fragile, "caring" men can hold them in a lower position and thus feel less threatened.

However, Jose's references to women's self-esteem and embarrassment/shame align with the testimonies on @funasbostonschool account, showing he also problematises sexist practices because of the emotional impact on individual women evidenced by funas' testimonies. By referring to the emotional effects, Jose hints at how he "had been taught" from the real and personal experiences of women who come forward with their testimonies. This might point out one way funas are reshaping men's practices towards women, focusing on emotional responses of individual cases and bypassing an understanding of sexual violence as coming from societal structures. It is noteworthy that Franco, in section one, articulated "being changed" in two ways: to avoid women's bother and moral grounds like "lack of respect"; while Jose depicts an emotional approach to the profound consequences that sexual violence can have on women. Thus, there are different positionalities and fantasies about women available. In Franco's account, women can heavily retaliate to discomfort, while in Jose's, women are subjects with feelings he can relate to but also in need of men's care.

Regarding how to flirt, these three young men criticise what they perceive around them as belonging to sexist and player masculinities. These friends differentiate themselves from "mega canchero" since they do not commit the sexist 'flirting' practices these men do, which they find "disturbing". On the contrary, Franco and his friends emphasised playing with the double meaning of words as a playful and reliable strategy to flirt, implying sexual interest while minimising the impact of rejection if they claim they meant the 'healthy' meaning. During our conversation, they refer to this type of approach as being "not too direct" or "being a bit canchero", showing how these flirting practices discursively emerge from the simultaneous rejection and value of men's sexist, objectifying practices ("not too"; "a bit"). Hence, they rejected sexually explicit approaches such as "let's kiss", "you are hot", or "send nudes", which they found "disrespectful", but also called them "disturbing", "gross", and off-putting to everyone (Franco intraview 3, 00:54:42).

> Franco: but no, no, I mean I no... no sincerely like I don't dare and neither I find it something like

Diego: [interrupts] respectable, I also find it like… I wouldn't recommend it (Diego and Franco shake their heads]

Bárbara laughs

Franco: I don't find it, besides (I) feel that is passion-killer too. Being like so…

Diego: explicit

[All speak simultaneously, and there was interference in audio and video, but I distinguish Jose saying 'yeah too much' while distancing his body from the screen, like going away. I also heard 'such a pig[11]']

Franco: is like for example, ok, apologies for what I am going to say, but to tell her like 'Oh I want to put it in you', for example

Diego: yess it's a thing like to run away // [Jose says sth inaudible at the same time]

Franco: *nada que ver, nada que ver*, [shaking his head] is disturbing, is uncomfortable, is

Diego: it is rancid.

(Franco intraview 3, 00:55:51)

Here, the rejection takes spatial forms. It is "to run away", and Jose's body is separated from the screen while saying, "is too much". Franco's stating that these phrases would kill the mood shows the level of embodied and affective rejection these practices provoke in him and flirting intra-actions, where performing disrespectful sexuality would kill the flirting atmosphere. Jose later echoed this embodied rejection, saying if he ever said something sexually explicit, "my body would turn ice" (Franco intraview 3, 00:55:52), which also might point to discomfort with unveiled sexuality.

[11] Chilean expression for something very disgusting and repulsive.

The type of choral response in the quote was rare in this group, showing the intense and quick vocal rejection accompanied by head shakings. The affective charge of moving away and words such as "rancid", "disturbing", and "pig" can relate to a raw rejection. Franco's "*nada que ver*" is a Chilean expression of inappropriateness, of being out of place (Brennan & Taboada, 2002). Hence, in these rejections, there is more than the "feminist no" I have been suggesting. These are positive, affirmative embodied rejections that are not explicitly built as non-canchero, even though Jose later linked these practices to disrespectful men.

Moreover, it is possible to connect Franco's reference to "passion-killer" and being out of place as signals of the production of flirting as a space for mutual pleasure and enjoyment—"both feeling comfortable and both enjoying it" (Franco intraview 3, 01:11:12). Thus, there is more than funas and cancheros in shaping "careful" ways to flirt. However, these are not less gendered. As shown by Franco's apologetic hesitation, "apologies for what I am going to say", there is also at play a gendered behavioural etiquette that marks that a certain kind of language cannot be used in front of a 'lady'—while flirting, or when talking with an adult in a formal research context.

The discussion continued, showing this time the influence of the feminist funa in the sanctioning of sexually explicit practices and how they relate these practices to "mega canchero*"* and "disrespectful" men:

> Jose: (..) clearly if one has an attitude like, like really, like gross I mean super disrespectful to people, you know, to women imagine, and is like part of their everyday life clearly one is not going to feel gross, is going to think that "Oh I am a mega champion, like mega *canchero"*
>
> (…)
>
> Jose: (..) and especially nowadays where in fact these issues are su- like are super delicate and really they must not be done, they are totally incorrect and besides like.. like I said before now like socially, saying those, those things really, no, no, no, no you can't [while shaking his head]
>
> Diego: Mister Funao

Jose: you mustn't *po*[12], this is a very bad thing, how are you going to say such thing… like no.

(Franco intraview 3, 00:58:13)

In this quote, Jose linked the gross practices they were discussing to "super disrespectful" men whose investment in being "mega canchero" does not allow them to realise that their actions are gross and disrespectful. Simultaneously, he presents a juxtaposition between them, respectful men, and this other "mega canchero" group. Until now, canchero as a signifier of masculinity has appeared alone, in an acceptable small portion, "a bit canchero", and amplified in "mega canchero". As canchero relates to (masculine) confidence, social competence and playfulness, it produces an ambivalent masculinity figure which is both valued and rejected by these young men. This is because confidence and playfulness are essential for flirting to achieve these double-meaning quick wits. However, in excess, "mega canchero" can lead to the sexualization and objectification of women.

The "super delicate"-ness Jose refers to may point to different affectively intense processes. "Super delicate" might talk about the emotional, psychic and social consequences experienced by women who suffered sexual violence. It might also refer to the social and affective consequences of the punishment of the "funa effect". But, there also is a feeling of walking on eggshells, the sort of cluelessness I had signalled in section one with Franco, that facilitates the fear of potentially being the target of a funa with or without having committed sexual violence. Moreover, at play in "super delicate" there might also be some sort of fragility or discomfort around sexually explicit language or sexuality more broadly.

Finally, noteworthy is that this group did not mention the word "funa" spontaneously, yet the silenced funa managed to be present in the form of a joke—"Mister Funao"—confirming Franco's statement that these men joked about funas. In the video, Diego's "Mister Funao" overlaps with Jose's repeated and embodied emphasis on the incorrectness of direct sexual comments, ending with "no, no, no, you can't" while

[12] In Chile, "*po*" is a short and colloquial word used in everyday conversations as stuffing or to emphasise or clarify what is being said.

shaking his head, as another example of what I have been referring to the "feminist no". The overlapping of the sounds no, no, no and the joke "Mister Funao" did what Franco referred to as "the truth hidden over the joke". The truth that these young men are unwilling to address verbally, and that Franco openly acknowledged: identifying funa as key in how these restrictions, these "no, no", materialise and are imposed onto men within their social group, provoking the changes. Thus, it might be possible to think of funaos' jokes as more than anti-feminist, but as a way of creating homosocial connective bonds that both reiterate and subvert men's insecurities (Whitehead & Ringrose, 2021) without necessarily putting them onto women, as frequently suggested by research on homosocial banter (Haslop & O'Rourke, 2021; Kehily & Nayak, 1997; Pascoe, 2017; Reinicke, 2022).

5.2.3.2 Daniel's struggles with being identified as a (bad)man

Even when he did not use the word "canchero" in our conversations, Daniel repeatedly distanced himself from sexist, objectifying masculinities. His distancing moves struck me as a bit excessive in our first encounter when he seemed to interpret my questions in the worst light. For example, he rejected using flames emojis to reply to his (girl) friends' Instagram stories because men who do that are catalogued as "horny", and "I no, I am not and neither I would like to be seen like that" (Daniel intraview 1, 00:23:21). Or when I asked him if between men-friends share flirting advice and he replied that would be mistreating women: "saying like those things about a person like 'Oh this person in this way, is easy', like easy to get, in some way, (I) find that is like very derogatory and like that, like one lowers a lot that person" (Daniel intraview 1, 00:27:49).

I also sensed some discomfort in Daniel to identify himself as a man in a tendency to avoid using gendered words—which requires a considerable effort in Spanish. He mainly recurred to non-gendered words such as "person" or "people". This tendency heightened during the third intraview with his feminist girl-friends Flo and Pola, where he was the only man.

One example during the third intraview is when he talked about "people" being afraid while flirting about doing something and then being called out. I asked if everyone feared being called out or if it was men. I introduced this clarification because I wanted

to stress that our conversation was a safe space to speak freely, so there was no need to be as defensive and vague as he had been for a while.

> Bárbara: but everyone, men and women, would be afraid to be funaos or just men only?
>
> Daniel: eeehh don't know, is that, is like
>
> Flo: I believe that more men
>
> Daniel: yes, that, I didn't want to say it, but yes
>
> (…)
>
> Daniel: I don't want to end up in... I don't want to be put in, a like (someone) bad.
>
> (Daniel intraview 3, 00:48:24)

This moment is key to show that the bare word "men" attached to himself is uncomfortable for him, carrying already meanings that leave him as someone "bad", pushing him to remark and reject performances of sexist or objectifying masculinities constantly. Moreover, this is the second time in these quotes Daniel referred to the production of his subjectivity as coming from others' perceptions, when he did not want to be seen as "horny", and now, he does not want to be considered as someone "bad"—"be put in, a like (someone) bad".

Hence, unlike his friends who found ways to compartmentalise and distance themselves from unwanted canchero's features, Daniel was somehow haunted by the social judgement that may portray him as a "horny" or "bad" man. His discomfort with being identified as a man and thus as "bad" can be interpreted in a context where funas position men as "bad" or harmful by intensely denouncing and condemning men's once-normalised behaviours. To this, one can add these participants' felt passiveness regarding these changes, which they perceived as being provoked to them with little understanding of the rationale of some feminist social sanctioning—"Independent of whether one informs oneself or not, it still provokes a certain change in how one relates to others, to other women, specifically in these cases of flirting" (Jose in Franco

intraview 3, 01:06:20). This, in turn, offers another way to think about how funas in Chile might shape masculinities, not by the threat of social exclusion but through the self-image and value received from others.

5.2.4 Spreading Fear: If Funaos are Clueless and Passive Victims, Can Funas Happen to Anyone?

Among these friends, especially Franco and Daniel, a called-out man, or funao, is depicted as a clueless, passive victim. Interestingly, this portrayal sharply contrasts with the confident, sexist cancheros identified by Franco, Diego, and Jose as capable of perpetrating sexual violence. This section focuses on discussions about the circumstances that could lead to a funa to explore the construction of the funao and further elements entangled with the "funa fear fantasy". Particularly, the analysis focuses on how the visibility of funas' punishment, the miscommunication myth, male victimhood discourses and related misogynistic fantasies, co-produce the funao as a clueless victim while trying not to blame women, thus, feeding the fear of being called out in the future without deserving it.

I begin with Franco to illustrate how witnessing the consequences of a funa in his school contributes to the portrayal of the funao as a ruined victim.

> Franco: (…) But, anyway about that, of the funa, I find that, even though is a way of doing social justice, like… (I) feel that, also it sorts of shocks me a bit the issue that, there is like a lack of communication eh, in those funas because is like, I am seeing only one point of view and maybe not even (this) was discussed with with the other person involved. And it's hard also, because because of what.. what a funa carries out also, is, is potent. For example, at my school *funaron* one, one fellow student, I mean, from a lower grade. Aaaand and well he had to leave school bb like he just like lost contact with, almost everyone and I also put myself in his place and even though no, it is not ok like what he did, but… don't know, anyway it must be super tough, anyway we are all human beings.
>
> (Franco intraview 1, 00:09:49)

In this extract, Franco conveys funas as agents, somewhat erasing or only implying the (presumable) woman that is 'behind'. This softens his criticism that doubts about women's judgement, in addition to emotional references like "I feel" and "shocks me a bit". He doubts women had made everything possible before making a funa since he mentioned a "lack of communication" and suggested a probable absence of discussion with the person involved. This also implies that the situation being called out may be based on a misunderstanding or conflict that can be resolved through a conversation instead of considering it blatant sexual violence. Yet also, Franco might be referring to some accusations on his school's funas Instagram account that accuse men of lewd or objectifying comments that indeed could have been talked through. However, this also implies an expectation to be taught by women about their wrongdoings. In this way, men remain unaccountable, passive, and blaming women. However, "lack of communication" can also point to the dynamics of the "feminist no" where there is no dialogue possible that can consider alternative interpretations of situations that might include men's vulnerabilities.

Even if Franco said he considers funas an act of "social justice", he posits funa as a social punishment, an exercise of power (of women) over men with "potent" outcomes. As the case he narrates, funas are known to have a significant impact on young men since the social punishment they trigger involves more than your face attached to insulting emojis and harsh comments against you all over social media. Because of social media's context and time collapse (Brandtzaeg & Lüders, 2018; Marwick & boyd, 2014), funas can invade several aspects of funaos' lives. They can even return at different moments in life, provoking offline social exclusion, having to change schools or jobs, direct attacks on social media or threats against physical integrity, to name the ones mentioned during this research.

I want to highlight in this quote the contrast between the "potent" funa and the funao's associated signifiers "had to leave", "loss", and "super tough". This word choice is not only sexually suggestive, pointing to feelings of loss, castration and impotence. It creates a contrast that twists the situation, turning the aggressor into the victim, under funa's punishment. The victimhood in this portrayal of the funao and the sort of sympathy that Franco felt towards him is condensed in "Anyway we are all human beings".

While trying to be comprehensive and empathetic to both sides, Franco mobilises what Manne (2017) defines as 'himpathy', an affective stance that pictures called-out men as someone whose life has been ruined by the woman he had violated in the first place. In this way, himpathy equates the sexual assault with the woman's search for justice. It might be that the public, sometimes viral, and evident effects of funa's social punishment enhance "himpathy", in contrast to the covert sexual abuse and its impact on women who are fighting to be acknowledged through funas' testimonies.

However, starting from funas as online public shaming (Larraín Matte, 2023), Allan's (2018) considerations of masculinity and shame are helpful to give us another perspective on this sort of feeling together that "himpathy" signals and sanctions as defending male privilege. Drawing from Sedgwick (2003), Allan suggests that shame can provoke a "radically alienating experience", and, simultaneously, an "uncontrollable relationality". Thus, shame as an affect blurs the distinction between funa's target and 'audience', making it hard to distinguish who is being shamed and the ones that feel shame (2018, p. 178). In this sense, it would be possible to think of "himpathy" as a response that is particular to shaming and not necessarily a way of retrenching male privilege.

Moreover, given that Franco's quotes posed funa as the agent and the woman is only implied, it leaves open a posthuman understanding of the situation where a woman's online testimony then turns into a funa through online spreading, thus becoming a third independent protagonist in the dilemma. This interpretation can be supported by cases where funas arise from a private testimony that spreads against the wishes of its author (for an example, see Cáceres & Caro, 2021).

In addition, Franco's statement, "there is like a lack of communication", implies that sexual violence happens because of miscommunication, which in turn serves to facilitate "himpathy" (Manne, 2017) towards a man subjected to a powerful woman who did not consider alternatives. On his side, Daniel deepens into the miscommunication myth when stating that now, when flirting, everyone is afraid that "the other person takes it worse than it is" and thus is misunderstood as having bad intentions (Daniel intraview 3, 00:44:52).

While speaking in the third intraview with his feminist friends, Flo and Pola, Daniel seemed to pick out words to be as ambiguous as possible. He seemed to avoid talking directly about situations when the other may take "it worse than it is". So, I asked him for an example. His reply hesitantly drew a situation where a man approaches a woman with flirting intentions,

> Daniel: but that person, the person that is receiving the flirting, which in this case would be the woman, perceives it in a way maybe like... negative in that way, so don't know, that would be an extreme case, but so to speak she 'funa' him [air quotes gesture]
>
> Pola and Flo laugh
>
> Bárbara: mm
>
> Daniel: like "oh he harassed me"
>
> Pola and Flo continue laughing
>
> Daniel: yeah, directly
>
> Pola and Flo keep laughing
>
> Daniel: yeah I believe that this, is a fear that everyone has nowadays like now with the with the issue of social media one can say anything, it can be, can be true or false, no I am not making that judgement but one can say anything and and who read it, without, without knowing the context or anything, can, they are going to believe you because at the end you did it, you, you posted it and that can can, can be like a double-edged sword, in the sense that can... say the truth like communicate it and reveal like something that was negative or like also it can use, it can be used to, either I believe that few people do it, but it can be used to, to do, harm and there like, hurting the person that maybe did not go with that intention, but anyway suffered the consequences, don't know if I explained myself better.

(Daniel Intraview 3, 00:48:15)

In this discussion, Daniel starts implying that sexual harassment could be a problem of miscommunication—"the woman, perceives it in a way maybe like.. negative" (..) "Oh he harassed me". Moreover, he leaves space to think harassment is a woman's mistaken interpretation of the interaction, thus portraying the man as disadvantaged and subjected to the woman's perception.

Even though Daniel did not mention funas, he implies them by narrating their circuit, and when he refrains from speaking about the legitimacy of the posts. He only acknowledges that social media posts gain automatic social believability just for being posted—"they are going to believe you because at the end you did it, you, you posted it". This signals part of Chile's broader social landscape where funas are supported and received with less misogynist suspicion. Daniel deepens into an ambivalence when suggesting "few" funas could be false, moving his references from women who make wrong interpretations to women who make false accusations, where it is possible to interpret the functioning of misogynistic fantasies of reckless or cruel women.

Hence, in Daniel's utterances, genuine concern and fear are interwoven with male victimhood discourses that question women's believability, leaving men as victims of women who interpret them wrongly or want to harm them with false accusations. Male victimhood discourses work through exaggeration (Banet-Weiser, 2021), and Daniel recognised this was "an extreme case". His friends also acknowledged this, laughing at length as a friendly rejection of the absurdity of his example. Interestingly, these victimhood ideas, far from their purpose of defending Daniel from responsibility, are feeding his fear and fantasy of being funao.

Like Franco, Daniel implied that some called-out situations could have been resolved through discussion with the man involved, portraying funaos as passive defenceless victims. In the quote below, Daniel adds cluelessness when suggesting that men can't tell if they are misbehaving unless they are told. Interestingly, the passivity and alleged ignorance of the funaos might intertwine with the passivity and cluelessness identified among these friends in section one. This affective overlapping may contribute to the "himpathy" (Manne, 2017) towards called-out men.

Daniel: is that, for example if one does something and and does it in a wrong way, imagine, jump into a pool, even though there is no water, takes a dive in of (one's) head.

Flo and Pola laughs

Daniel: and, and try it anyway and the thing is that nobody says (him) anything and he is going to say "ah like ah I did it well, I didn't have like, nobody criticised me for what I did" so will continue doing it, continue doing it, so it is going to be like accumulating to the point that is going to do [phut] and and everything will explode, and the pool

Flo: you can have 30 mentions on Instagram out of the blue [smirks]

Daniel: yes yes

(Daniel intraview 3, 00:52:02)

Daniel here depicts an exaggerated figure of men's passivity and lack of accountability, which is again accompanied by his friends' laughter. He first spoke about clueless men who apparently can't read a social interaction and can eagerly approach women sexually without realising they are not interested. "Jump into a pool" is an expression that commonly refers to taking an action that has some risks, and "of (one's) head" is a youth slang term that refers to doing something eagerly. Second, Daniel refers to men who can not reflect on the impact of their behaviour or think ahead about how, and if, their doings can upset—or assault!—others. Moreover, Daniel portrays men as not having enough self-reflectiveness to decide by themselves how to act properly and needing others to tell them, which places responsibility on the others who did not correct him, meaning women. In this hypothetical story, the man is punished instead of being educated. Thus, Daniel is adding to victimhood discourses notions of socially clueless men who can't tell beforehand when they are doing something that may upset the other to the point of harassment. This exaggeration depicts a clueless position where funas are a surprise for the funao.

Flo's "30 mentions in Instagram out the blue" refers to Daniel's story's allegedly unforeseeable explosion in social media after the unaware funao unwillingly and unknowingly repeatedly harassed women. Yet, it also refers to the impact and quick volume that funas may achieve while spreading online. The explosion may also refer to the implications funas have in the social circles, which are demanded to take a position. This is the only intervention, besides laughing, that Daniel's friends did while he talked, agreeing with him that a funa would eventually follow after repeated sexual harassment, with a smirk.

In this quote, it seems like Daniel's fear and concern of possibly being called out emerges from the intertwinement of the lack of agency in discourses of male victimhood to avoid accountability for sexual violence and the perplexity that Daniel might feel since he doesn't seem to understand feminist demands against gendered and sexual violence fully. This might feed the fantasy of making an innocent mistake that may risk him a funa. Yet also, Daniel refers mainly to the social consequences, highlighting what is at stake in case you are called out. Hence, there are also material, social implications enhancing funa fear, from the opportunity for women to call out men's behaviour on social media with more credibility than before, making funas able to have "potent" impacts on funaos' lives.

The co-production of the funao as a clueless passive victim involves several material-discursive and affective intra-actions. One is the "feminist no" that struck, sanctioned once normalised practices, and punished them with funas. Second is funas' visible, spreadable, searchable and persistent (boyd, 2014) online materiality and following public/viral punishment that also materialises in social exclusion offline, among friends and at school. Third are discourses of male victimhood that reverse the blame by removing the abuser's agency, drawing from misogynistic fantasies of whimsical or cruel women. Altogether, these co-create a figure of the funao as someone passive and clueless about his wrongdoings, a victim of a furious woman.

However, the cluelessness does not come entirely from this passivity but also from some men's surprise or perplexity when facing the feminist re-configuring of once normalised sexual violent practices, evidenced in this and other research (Essig, 2018; Reinicke, 2022). In some way, not understanding the feminist demands beyond knowing that

some things cannot be done or said anymore, connects with fantasies that simplistically picture men as being socially unaware and unable to distinguish when they might be violent to women. This perplexity could be because they were not aware that some normalised practices were violent until they were "taught" by the "feminist no". There would be then a movement as if the former lack of awareness—and maybe the guilt related to it?—is projected into the future, where they fear they might be unaware—again?— while doing something violent.

5.3 Conclusion

Similarly to research on young adults (Essig, 2018; Flood, 2019; Reinicke, 2022), these young men faced a disorientating situation where they lost part of their once privileged sense of control and confidence in who they are, who they could become, and in behaviours that once were considered normal. Particularly, and like other young men in Northern, Western contexts (Brady et al., 2018; Holmström et al., 2020; Setty, 2021, 2022), they are afraid of being accused of committing sexual violence, because they knew no better or because of a misunderstanding, or, in less extent, as a result of a woman's harmful intentions.

When these friends depicted situations that could lead to a funa, the analysis showed misogynistic fantasies of women as fragile, whimsical, unreliable, or cruel, intertwined with discourses of male victimhood. Yet, these enactments of male victimhood were mild and tentative, since even when underpinned by misogynistic fantasies that indirectly blame women, they were intertwined with efforts to be empathetic with women's position. This is in contrast with the direct blame reversing of male victimhood found in public discourses (Banet-Weiser, 2021) and offers another function of mild male victimhood, one that is not only oriented to self-presentation as a professional, as in Laurie et al. (2021) research. Moreover, this mild or ambivalent victimhood might also be considered as a part-of the same circuit of protecting themselves from funas, especially since funas can easily splatter to those who question their legitimacy.

The main contribution of this Chapter is providing empirical foundations for the feminist discussion about the potential for social change of funas and similar digital campaigns against violence towards women. By drawing mainly on "affect" and

“fantasy”, merged in the concept of “funa fear fantasy”, I mapped how these heterosexual young men navigated their relationships with women under the threat of being called out in the future for committing sexual violence. Understanding this fear as a fantasy helped address the intra-actions between meaning-making and emotions in co-producing relations between people, objects or ideas. Moreover, it allowed us to decentre the subject and explore the circulation of affects without attributing the emotions and misogynist fantasies to a particular individual (Lapping, 2011).

Through an analysis of multiple intra-secting layers, I demonstrated the contributions of “funa fear fantasy” for mapping the complex impact of feminist funas in the flirting practices of these heterosexual young men in Santiago. To address fully the contributions of “funa fear fantasy”, we need to pay attention to two particularities of this group. First, the intra-actions between these friends with canchero’s masculine player flirting practices and with funaos, the called-out men. Second, the persistence of the fear of being called out among these men, who rejected and did not see themselves as capable of such mistreatment of women.

The analysis of these teenagers’ engagement with canchero—sexist and excessively confident—masculinities presented it as a simultaneously rejected and valued figure for flirting. This duality emerges from, on the one hand, defensive manoeuvres that can be conceptualised as “discursive distancing” (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014) or “disassociation” (Burrell, 2020), where Franco and his friends rejected and differentiated themselves from “mega canchero”, sexist and objectifying women masculinity. On the other hand, these friends also stated that they need to be “a bit canchero” to flirt with confidence and wit. Thus, my analysis tries to develop a nuanced approach to “discursive distancing” or “dissociation” while suggesting a differential in intensity in heterosexual masculine flirting practices.

In addition, this distancing from canchero is more than discursive and it is produced by more than a consequence of funas’ policing. A discursive-material and affective approach allows us to consider, for example, the embodied rejection of Franco and his friends towards men’s sexually explicit ‘flirtatious’ approaches to women as also involving embodied responses and affects such as sexual decency, embarrassment, rejection management, or, privileging a shared playful/pleasurable sexuality in a will-

we-won't-we style. This thus opens several lines of investigation about hetero-masculine performances in flirting encounters.

Notably, in contrast with mega cancheros who objectify and mistreat women, funaos are portrayed as passive and clueless victims, showing a "himpathy" produced by intra-actions of male victimhood discourses, misogynist fantasies and feelings of passivity, resignation and clueless. Yet this apparent binary juxtaposition is troubled by these friends' position of being shy and empathetic with women, yet who may also commit sexual violence and/or be called out. Here, the "funa fear fantasy" thus impedes a complete disassociation from violent men and affectively spreads the potential for sexual violence to all men, maybe through the overlap of feelings of passivity, resignation and cluelessness between these teenagers and the depiction of funaos. Thus somewhat provoking changes bypassing an intellectual understanding of gendered violence as structural/societal.

It is also possible to address this situation within theoretical approaches to masculinities. Given that men's identities tend to be structured by an ideal masculinity which is known to be unreachable (Connell, 2005; Hickey-Moody, 2019; Kimmel, 1994), Allan (2018) suggests thinking masculinity as a cruel optimism, an ideal that hinders men's happiness. This means masculinity becomes an unattainable ideal for men, , one they are not only unable to reach but also must actively reject, though they will ultimately fail in both endeavours. Some of this can be seen in the complex tensions with canchero, where there is a simultaneous distancing and valuing of those practices. This gives us another tool to think of the embodied affective-discursive complex intra-actions between 'men-bodies' and masculinities discourses and affects. Maybe also another lens to approach "himpathy".

Second to explore is that these men stated they changed some behaviours because of funas, even when they were distancing themselves from those practices and not believing themselves capable of mistreating women. How come? The first and easiest explanation is because of the felt danger produced by misogynistic fantasies of cruel and whimsical women that could "turn anything" into a funa. Another reason could be that the defensive purpose of "discursive distancing" (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014) or "dissociation" (Burrell, 2020) from violent masculinities did not operate well enough to

shield them from "funa fear fantasy". Moreover, if we consider that the situations they narrated as potentially leading to a funa were far less severe and blurrier than the scenes described in their school Instagram funas account (@funasbostonschool), this fear could also signal an underlying sense of sexual violence as a more general men's issue and not a problem of some rotten apples that you can separate from. So, just because they are men, they have the possibility to exert violence over women and thus the possibility of being called out. Hence the need to be "careful".

Another element behind the pervasive impact of this fantasy is the miscommunication myth—the portrayal of sexual violence as a communication problem (Fanghanel, 2020). This myth was underpinning both Franco and Daniel's explanations of situations that could lead to a funa even when the testimonies in @funasbostonschool detailed repeated and explicit requests to stop. The use of this myth can be seen as defensive since it appears repeatedly in accused men's public speeches that portray them as victims (Banet-Weiser, 2021). However, in their case, the miscommunication myth was not defending them. Instead, it was fuelling their funa fear fantasies with the possibility of being punished because of a misunderstanding. This may be because this largely discredited myth is also re-produced among feminist circles, underpinning some sexual violence prevention programs and approaches to consent (Beres, 2020).

Among all the mentioned elements, there is an interesting mix of cluelessness and fear. In Kimmel's (1994) masculinity as paranoia, men fear being outed by other men as not being men enough. In the case of these friends, and maybe especially Daniel, one could say that these men fear being outed by funas as not being a good person. Allan (2018) draws from both Kimmel and Freud to explain how paranoia works. According to Freud, the paranoid subjects asks "What do people know about us that we know nothing about, that we cannot admit?" (Freud, 1895/1964). Paranoia would be an outward movement where one anticipates being shamed and thus encourages actions to prevent this from happening. Both the question and the anticipation match the situation of these friends, where there is a sort of lack of knowledge about the changes that feminist funas demand, accompanied by measures to prevent or attenuate the chances of a funa.

Thinking paranoia and fantasy together enables us to think of how, through funa fear fantasy, past and future merge in ways that shape the present since the possibility of

having—unknowingly—mistreated women before "being taught" by feminism expands to a future where they unknowingly could mistreat or violate women. Moreover, thinking about the impact of funas through fantasy and shame enables us to decentre the subject and blur the differentiation between subjects, thus locating sexual violence as a possibility between men. This because, as suggested by Sedgwick, shame would expand and blur the distinction between who is being shamed and who feels shame, creating simultaneous "painful individuation" and "uncontrollable relationality" (2003, p. 37). Thus, the former and current actions of others can 'haunt' the future of these men, urging them to take measures in their present to avoid the potential punishment. This materialised in Franco's rigidly codifying his behaviours and being "more careful" to avoid misunderstandings, rumours and funas. Meanwhile, Daniel needed to frequently reaffirm his good intentions against the potential misinterpretation of his words during the intraviews, which could cast him in a negative (sexist) light.

Thus, to address feminist funas' potential to promote social change it is helpful to understand funas as complex and multiple intra-actions among the materiality of a posted image and testimony of sexual violence spreading and invading social media; intra-acting with feminist, misogynist and other discourses like the miscommunication myth and with intense affects such as shock, anger, fear, resignation, cluelessness and shame; with its consequent potential social exclusion. Within these intra-actions, I particularly showed how useful was to think with affect and fantasies, like cluelessness and shame, the misogynist whimsical woman and the potential of being called out. In this way, even if funas' testimonies focus on specific individuals, funas' grassroots pervasiveness and affective impact on social groups create a sense that any man could be violent—the funa fear fantasy. This shameful paranoid fantasy impedes men can shake the problem off by disassociating and thus can provoke changes in some men's practices towards women, without necessarily much understanding of gendered power relations. However, it is important to say that funa fear fantasy is possible in specific contexts, like this particular feminist momentum.

6. *"Responsabilidad Afectiva"*: Flirting's Tensions With Postfeminist Arrangements for Clear Communication From the Beginning

No te enamorí, en guerra
No muere gente si se avisa

don't fall in love, at war
people don't die if warned

(No te enamores, Paloma Mami, 2018)

Introduction

This chapter explores "*responsabilidad afectiva*" a psychology-infused feminist buzz term among Spanish speaking countries' media that I translate as affective responsibility (AR). AR proposes an ethics of caring for the other based on ideals of clarity and anticipation that support that harm can be prevented by clear and timely warnings, challenging the traditional "all's fair in love and war", which points to a loosening of the usual rules of behaviour (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, n.d.a). As Chilean urban singer Paloma Mami's 2018 song illustrates, "at war people don't die if warned".

Among mainstream media in Chile and other Spanish-speaking countries, AR is explained by stressing one's responsibility for how one's actions or omissions make the other one feel (Alvear Blau, 2020; López, 2019; Mahecha, 2022; Martín, 2021; Rubio, 2022). These media link AR with care, honesty and communication (Vespucci et al., 2022), as well as with polyamorous relationships, setting boundaries and against ghosting (Mahecha, 2022). Additionally, AR is framed as a means that, through shared agreements, can disrupt traditional monogamous cis-heterogendered norms and promote gender equity and freedom (López, 2019; Mauri, 2021).

Particularly in the sample of this study, even though the term "*Responsabilidad Afectiva*" is barely mentioned, its logic permeated several accounts of flirting. In broad terms, I summarise it as "clearly communicating what you want and expect from the beginning",

which shows AR's ideals of clarity and anticipation since knowing in advance would prevent the suffering of unreciprocated involvement in later stages.

As suggested in the literature review, the concept of AR condenses, among others, a feminist desire to change the hegemonic normativity and power imbalances in sexual relationships. This desire is shared with other feminist ethics, such as consent. However, these ethical proposals rely heavily on neoliberal humanist notions of the subject as individual agents who can know and verbally negotiate what they want with all the information they need. Particularly, AR presupposes that emphasising and communicating personal wants can help partners stand against social paradigms while also avoiding suffering. Thus, AR may also rest on an idealised faith in verbal communication and honesty that might obscure the messy contradictions of sexual encounters. Or worse, it might burden each subject with the task of keeping them tidy, with the suggested potential temptation of blaming the other for not being affectively responsible. According to AR critiques (Kohan, 2019; Vespucci et al., 2022), the latter would be facilitated by AR's individualisation of responsibility, which in turn enables diverting self-accountability.

Another issue with communicating your desires and expectations from the outset is that it presupposes a static view of relationships, in which informed individuals negotiate their discrete experiences and expectations. This overlooks the porosity of our affective experience and that relationships are built on the transformative repetition of encounters. According to Kohan (2020), this tendency stems from AR's criticised desire for guarantees that everything will run smoothly. This chapter builds from the mentioned critiques to explore how AR emerges within and shapes flirting encounters.

To address these critiques, I conceptualise AR within postfeminist sensibilities as material-discursive and affective intra-actions. "Postfeminist Sensibility" was coined by Gill (2017) to refer to a sociocultural, psychic and affective logic within mainstream feminisms that favours individual empowerment, freedom, choice and constant self-improvement, prioritising happy and positive attitudes and feelings while marginalising 'bad' emotions, for example, happiness and positivity and excluding anger, sadness or insecurity. In this way, Gill (2017) argues "postfeminist sensibility" enhances individualization, self-responsibilisation and surveillance of women's bodies while

keeping unacknowledged social inequities. I thus situate AR as one instantiation of postfeminist sensibility's intra-actions within flirting encounters. This stems from AR's emphasis on individual responsibility for influencing how the other may feel, which can be seen as a means to improve relationships—and oneself in the process. Understanding both AR and postfeminist sensibilities as material-discursive and affective intra-actions enables me to think of multiple tensions within and outside the binary framing of oppositions and logics of reproducing/resisting. Also, to surpass the common discourse-centred uses of "postfeminist sensibility" (Burkett & Hamilton, 2012; Giraldo, 2016) and include the affective element Gill (2017) argued with the idea of sensibility, while at the same time extending it to consider the role of material spaces and objects.

In this chapter, I analyse flirting accounts of two queer young people, Andrea and Piwke. I chose them because they were engaged with queer feminist or LGBTQ+ activism and since they both acknowledge, in different ways, AR as part-of the impact feminism has made on how they flirt. These two different accounts allow me to map the challenges and tensions that gravitate around their flirting stories, such as the tension between "just flow", the letting go of control, and clearly naming the relationship; or, the power imbalances and the material constellations that pushed, for or against, romantic involvement or sending a nude. Hence, this analysis challenges AR's assumptions about the power of the spoken word, identifying beginnings, and the possibility of controlling own and the others' feelings through alleged agreements. Additionally, by putting AR's logic alongside material arrangements and fears of disappointing the other, I wonder if AR could be, contradictorily, contributing to the heteronormative sexual pleasing of men (Burns et al., 2011; Holland et al., 1998; Rasmussen et al., 2016).

6.1 How Affective Responsibility Emerged in Young People's Flirting Accounts?

Both Piwke and Andrea associated feminism and consent with the notion of AR, yet it materialised differently in each account. In Piwke's case, AR meant clearly ruling out the possibility of a relationship from the very beginning. According to Andrea, it meant agreeing on the expectations and limitations of the encounters/relationships. However, in both ways, AR aims to prevent suffering by attempting to manage both people's emotions and the developing of the situation.

Piwke is a young gay man who, in our encounters, repeatedly emphasised the relevance of making things "quite clear" from the beginning to prevent harm—"make it quite clear that, I come to do, to carry out only that thing and that thing, (I) don't want anything serious to happen or any of that" (Piwke intraview 3, 00:11:37). And, in his stories, what needed to be clear was the impossibility of a "serious" relationship.

In the third intraview, when replying to the question about how feminism has influenced his ways of flirting, Piwke first talked about consent. Then, he went into an account that aligns closely with definitions of AR:

> Piwke: (…) that is what I wanted to m, highlight more than anything and like say, because, it is super important and fundamental to know consent and, the affective relation. The, the importance of our affective relation, that within flirting I feel it is super important.
>
> (2 secs) Bárbara: but, what would it be the last you said?
>
> Piwke: eh the affective relation, I mean, like really don't know if it is called affective relation, but, uhm, it was the making yourself accountable like of, the thoughts or the feeling that one is feeling for other person. Making yourself accountable in the sense that, eehh no, I won't play with the feelings of that person but I will make it like very clear that this and that thing, can't happen, like something more, mostly that.
>
> (Piwke intraview 3, 01:12:48)

While associating with consent, Piwke suggests that it is "super important" to "make yourself accountable" for your feelings and thoughts, "not playing with the other person's feelings", and "make it like very clear" that some possibilities "can't happen". This quote condenses key elements of how AR worked in the accounts of this sample: a) individual responsibility for one's feelings and how one makes the other one feel — "making yourself accountable"; "won't play with the feelings of that person", b) an emphasis on the clarity of the communication to avoid hurting the other—"I will make it very clear"; and, c) a sort of control of future becomings through the spoken word—"that this and that thing, can't happen".

In Piwke's examples of these conversations, the future that is disallowed is a romantic, monogamous relationship, which is not explicitly said here but it is referred to in the "like something more" that cannot happen. In this chapter, I understand monogamy as a constellation of discursive-material and affective elements that push for reproducing a pattern for sexual relations based on romantic love and coupledom. Monogamy also appears in "serious" when referring to emotional (romantic) relationships in "I don't want anything serious to happen" (Piwke intraview 3, 00:11:45). Hence, the tension between AR and monogamy is evident in its entanglements with polyamory, as well as in Piwke's clear communication to exclude any future emotional monogamous relationship.

Ruling out a future romantic relationship is of the utmost importance for Piwke, even when he is unsure about the success of this precaution to prevent potential suffering for the parties involved.

> Bárbara (…) to make things clear beforehand (…) is it really useful?
>
> Carolina: lots of times it is
>
> Piwke: no hahaha
>
> Carolina: and sometimes it isn't
>
> Piwke: well it is like 50/50
>
> (Piwke intraview 3, 00:11:32)

He explained this "50/50" by recurring to "at our age it is like obvious that, we don't like following rules, we like to break them". This is echoed by Carolina with "we don't like following rules like at this age and, we feel like we are, they need to let us be free" (Piwke intraview 3, 00:12:35). Interestingly, this conversation between friends creates the sense that this clear ruling out is felt as an actual rule, an imposition from the one who enunciates it; while at the same time takes away its bounding force—"we like to break them", "let us be free".

On her side, Andrea identifies as a pansexual polyamorous cis-woman and a feminist. She posts and discusses feminism and body positivity with people on social media and engages in feminist dissident groups. She links AR with these feminist groups where several members study psychology. In those spaces, they discuss and challenge topics related to relationships and sexuality like the "normalization of jealousy" or the "romanticization of toxicity" (Andrea intraview 4[13], 00:03:46). Her take on AR considers:

> Andrea: (…) must consent like boundaries within the two parts so that it can carry out like.. ehm.. well, the, the relationship, independently it is, I don't know, I mean a monogamous relationship, closed or whatever, but it is necessary eh from the beginning to put this, these bases. (5 secs) like affective responsibility.
>
> (Andrea intraview 4, 00:05:05)

Andrea offered AR as a co-produced, mutually agreed-upon arrangement that defines and delineates the relationship and each other's possibilities and limits. She refers to these agreed boundaries as the bases of the relationship, emphasising their relevance. Thus, monogamy is mentioned here as something to be agreed on, not assumed, but not necessarily ruled out. Noteworthy are the tight links between consent and AR, where the latter is framed as a consensual conversation about "boundaries", a common signifier among consent culture.

So, AR materialises in different ways, evident in these two accounts. For Andrea, it seems to be more about creating present and future possibilities. In contrast, for Piwke, AR would be more of a unilateral erasure of some future developments based on personal feelings, aiming most of the time at ruling out emotional, romantic involvement to avoid playing with the other's feelings. However, both agree in their emphasis on communication, clarity, and that it must happen from the outset. So, it is possible to state that the most basic outlining of AR would be 'say what you want clearly from the beginning'. Yet for that to be done, one first needs to clearly know one's own feelings and wants, which in itself poses an impossible conundrum.

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[13] Because of technical difficulties, with Andrea we divided the second intraview into two sessions, so the fourth intraview corresponds to the third semi-structured intraview, but she did not invite friends.

In the following, I address tensions between AR and flirting that revolve around clarity, control and care.

6.2 Tensions Between AR's Naming Against Flirting's Flow and Uncertainty

In both Piwke and Andrea's accounts of flirting, there are references to 'flowing', a certain necessary and desirable fluid ongoingness for flirting to happen, that has also been evidenced by studies on young people's relationships in Chile (Besoain et al., 2017). For Piwke, flowing occurs when the conversation is not interrupted by awkward silences "the conversation, we were always afloat, never like.. there was that awkward silence" (Piwke intraview 1, 00:21:49). For Andrea, for things to flow when flirting it is necessary "that we are in the same stance" (Andrea intraview 2, 00:29:26); a certain attunement that allows enjoying spending time together. So, while Piwke emphasises the rhythm of conversation, Andrea emphasises a less tangible attunement of mood and wants. Yet, these accounts share a notion of flirting flowing that can be thought of as a spontaneous fluid ongoingness in-between flirters. By spontaneous, I mean that it is not directed or intended by the human parties; it is something that just happens, in-between them. I say fluid, since water or liquid figures are not rare when talking about flow, like "afloat" in Piwke's quote above, which might be more than a metaphor. It might accurately convey the sensation of the evolving flow of flirting becomings.

Flowing thus refers to a sensation of continuity between flirters. A posthuman lens enables us to view flowing as a gradual progression of events that facilitate the emergence, increase, and sustainability of sexual attraction. Maybe also creating a feeling of synchronicity, of connection. One example of how flowing works and shapes flirting is when Andrea spoke about sending *packs*—Chilean youth slang for nude pictures. Sharing packs for Andrea was something that may occur after some time chatting online with another person, "and later at night like we keep chatting (..) then for example that can transform like in a pack, ok?" (Andrea intraview 1, 00:59:02). This "that", that can turn into sending nudes it is not produced by someone or according to someone's intentions, it emerges from a certain way of relating. In contrast, if she is asked directly for a nude, the interest fades—"I hate that. Is like it has to flow, if they ask me, I don't feel like it" (Andrea intraview 2, 00:31:41). Flirting and flowing thus can't be

forced, they just happen, and likewise, this fluid continuity felt in between them facilitates more flirting.

In this context of expectations to flow, if doing AR means stating clearly from the beginning what you want from the present and future encounters, there are at least two challenges. The most evident one is knowing precisely what you want—maybe even before experiencing it—and having the skills to communicate these wishes and expectations clearly. The second challenge is to achieve this dialogue without modifying flirting's desired flowing. It is necessary thus to find a balance between the AR's ideals of clear communication from the outset and flowing, letting things/encounters unfold on their own. In the following, I unpack the productive tensions between flowing and different functions of naming: for clarity, to avoid harm, and to steer the relationship.

In Andrea's account, 'being clear from the beginning' meant a sort of co-created "label" that clearly identifies the agreed expectations of the status of the relationship.

> Andrea: (…) the label, but like, like that part of like make it clear what kind of relationship we have. Not socially, but like between me and that person.
>
> (Andrea intraview 1, 00:05:20)

Andrea is explicit about the tension between this label and flowing, especially when addressing her challenges when flirting and hanging out with people who are not as informed as her about gender and sexuality. This meant these people were not as clear as her regarding their wants and expectations about their flirting interactions and thus, were keener to be ambiguous and ask to just flow. In contrast, Andrea prefers to identify interests and attractions using a fine-grained division between sexual, friendly, affective and romantic, which allows her to identify and communicate what each other wants and expects.

> Andrea: (….) I am of communicating things right away like 'hey, I like you, I'm into you' or whatever or I'm interested in getting to know you in this way and there are people that like don't, don't have anything clear. Like 'we are getting to know each other", like 'let's flow'. But that person whom I asked them, 'ok, you said we get to know each other, but in which way are you

interested in knowing me?' And they say 'no, I am interested in knowing you in a sexual way but I am liking you, so friendly also, but affectively I see zero (chance)', so, I am like 'oh ok, cool' so we have the… all clear. Instead, there is other people, 'no, let's flow' and I am like, I personally NEED (it) ok, yes I can flow but tell me something like, ok but let's go on this side or a bit

Bárbara: yeah like a bit of [inaudible - interference]

Andrea: yeah, a bit, like I need that start, put a name on the door and then, then we go flowing as you like, but put it a tiny name hahahaha

(Andrea intraview 4, 00:47:18)

Andrea attempts to balance her "NEED" of "a bit" of a "tiny name" with flowing as a way of relating when flirting. I capitalised NEED since she emphasised that word with her voice, intensifying both the tone and volume. Naming would provide a sense of knowing or clarity, potentially easing the discomfort arising from the uncertainty of the potential futures of these flirting encounters by defining and excluding particular current and future possibilities. In this way, flowing is desirable within known and named paths. Thus, Andrea shows that naming and flowing are not necessarily in contradiction but in a productive tension—"put a name on the door and then, then we go flowing".

Furthermore, and continuing with the second function of naming, the "label" could work as a way to avoid hurting the other and/or oneself:

Andrea: It is very ambiguous [voice emphasis] saying that you are getting to know someone because you don't know eh in which way, like, where is it flowing [slightly rocks from side to side], if being faithful to that person you are getting to know without like maybe I don't know having a label… and you, don't know po, talk with another person and the other person finds out and is mad at you and like it screws everything about getting to know each other.

(Andrea intraview 4, 00:04:26)

Andrea uses “talking” as teenage slang for flirting, so faithfulness means exclusive flirting with one person. In this quote, “where is it flowing” implies that it has a direction that can be known in advance. Knowing that direction or “having a label” is useful for Andrea to shape her behaviour outside those encounters, like talking/flirting with other people, to avoid making the other mad or hurting them. But also to avoid ‘bad’ feelings of guilt or feeling unfairly judged because she unknowingly cheated on them. The latter is enhanced by the pressure of sexual double standards that are harsher on women’s sexual practices. Thus, naming can work to act accordingly to the expectations of others and avoid harm. In this sense, her detailed dissections of types of attraction resonate with attempts of close control of her experience, which might also be fuelled by a sense of responsibility towards the other, of avoiding hurting the other. Naming could be a way of caring for the other, and herself, amid uncertain flirting flows.

However, naming and having more words and meanings to attach to relationships, bodily sensations and feelings does not necessarily help clarify or limit flirting encounters’ becoming. Even Andrea’s detailed system does not make identifying her wishes and emotions easier. She recognised that sometimes there is a “short circuit” that obscures what she wants, resulting in her suffering.

> Andrea: it is not really that I like someone else, but, [I] have make short circuit and mess up
>
> Bárbara: how short circuit?
>
> Andrea: no *po*[14], remember what happened to me with Pablo?, that I, actually I always fancied him, but I, at some point like said ‘today I don’t like you’. I told him. He tried something with someone else and well I re- I realise that I did like him but it was too late po so
>
> Bárbara: mhm, ok, lik- a short circuit with your emotions, something like that
>
> Andrea: right

[14] In Chile, "*po*" is a short and colloquial word used in everyday conversations as stuffing or to emphasise or clarify what is being said.

(Andrea intraview 3, 00:39:54)

Even though it does not always work for Andrea, both flowing and naming are needed to be comfortable while flirting. This is because naming helps deal with uncertainty about current or future becomings. But also, naming or "labelling" would be a way to resist monogamous heteronormativity by not assuming a predetermined path towards a romantic relationship.

Lastly, the third tension between flowing and naming appeared when Piwke and his friend Carolina discussed how clearly stating your intentions when flirting sometimes does not work. Moreover, such efforts are occasionally doomed to fail since these are things hard to predict or control— "so it is like super common for us to say ah like no, this is not gonna happen, it won't happen and it ends up happening he he" (Piwke intraview 3, 00:11:47). So, naming could serve as a—doomed or "50/50" successful—strategy to attempt to control the future unfolding of the relationship.

Moreover, following these friends' references to the age-related impulse to break the rules, naming, for them, could also work as an attempt to disrupt the current perceived flow of the relationship and impose another direction.

> Carolina: sure, like we look to put a name on things
>
> Piwke: yeah… and instead of and instead of letting them flow, many times (we) want to stop that aaannndd change like the course no? like when for example we feel that… I fancy a person who doesn't want anything, I am going to insist for that person to try. Like, that I mean like trying to change the course, right? instead of letting it just flow, and that happens what has to happen.

(Piwke intraview 3, 00:14:06)

In contrast to the productive tension between naming and flowing in Andrea's accounts, these friends portray an opposition: naming "instead of letting them flow". Naming would be a way to "stop" and "change" what is or what can happen. So, for them, naming serves not only to provide clarity or certainty but also as a deliberate means to modify

the direction of the flirting encounters. This is not only opposed to renouncing control and letting whatever to happen. It relies on the "name" as being able to "change like the course". The latter reflects an assumption regarding the power of words to shape or control events. Thus, naming would be one way of easing flirting's uncertain flows by getting some sense of human agentic control. Moreover, the resisting and controlling attempts of the other's wants, evident in "I fancy a person who doesn't want anything, I am going to insist for that person to try", responds to the difference I signalled between Andrea's understanding of AR as co-produced agreements in contrast with Piwke's AR as a unilateral ruling out.

In this section, I explored different materializations of the tensions between naming and flowing in flirting. By defining the current and future possibilities of flirting encounters and excluding others, naming is expected to limit the discomfort stemming from flirting flow and uncertainty. Moreover, these delimitations are deemed important to avoid hurting the other or oneself. This, to an extent, allows flowing while limiting it under certain conditions. Hence, there might be a productive tension between naming and flowing under Andrea's accounts of discussed agreements. However, when naming is enacted unilaterally, it would act as an attempt to control the relationship and the other, maybe even provoking resistance in the same word-ly order, by looking for another name to "change the course" of the relationship. Additionally, I propose that naming is a part-of postfeminist AR. This is evident in its facilitation of conversations that might or might not assume a monogamous destination, in its reliance on the power of communication to shape relationships and avoid 'bad' feelings, and in its emphasis on individual responsibility in identifying and expressing one's wants while avoiding harm.

6.3 Stated From the Beginning: Control and Power Imbalances Regarding Not Wanting a Serious Relationship

Piwke, aged 19, identifies as a *Mapuche* homosexual young cisgender man. His accounts suggest that being gay and living in a small touristic town means he mostly has had ephemeral relationships. This is often because the other young men are in the process of coming out, are polyamorous, or they met during the summer, so things end with the holiday season. Hence, given his socio-geographical location and former experiences with non-monogamous relationalities, for Piwke it is crucial to communicate upfront if

one is not seeking a serious relationship; which is his understanding of being affectively responsible.

In this section, I explore further the tension between AR's clarity and flirting flow. I focus on attempts to control the developing of continuous flirting encounters by stating one's expectations from the outset. Specifically, 'warning' from the beginning that one does not want a serious relationship, meaning monogamous, romantic, or emotionally engaged. I analyse Piwke's story with Tomás, where this warning fails to prevent Piwke from engaging emotionally and wanting a relationship. I mainly focus on two moments: one conversation during the first time they went out and the conversation that ended everything between them. Through Piwke's story, I map the power imbalances at work as "immanent relations of force" (Barad, 2007, p. 450) that facilitate or restrict certain possibilities over others along material constellations that push for romantic involvement or against it. With this, I trouble AR's assumptions on flirting beginnings, reliance on the power of the spoken word, and the possibility to control one's own and the other's feelings through alleged agreements. In other words, I try to unpack the material-discursive and affective intra-actions condensed in "this should not have happened because from the beginning he had made clear that he did not want absolutely anything serious" (Piwke intraview 1, 00:58:36).

In the first intraview, Piwke told the story with Tomás with barely any interruptions for about 13 minutes. He began by telling me when, during a truth or dare game, his friend challenged him to post an Instagram story tagging his "AP", so he would know. "AP" is for A*mor Platónico*, platonic love in English. But, contrary to desexualized understandings of platonic love, the Chilean youth slang expression "AP" refers to an idealized and unrequited sexual and/or romantic attraction to someone who is perceived as somehow unreachable, due to its idealization (Diccionario Chileno, n.d.a).

> Piwke: Eh for example in 2019 eehh I had… well it really was an AP, a platonic love, and the thing is that one day playing truth or dare with a friend through Instagram, ok, I chose dare and she told me I had to post a story, like tagging my AP, obviously, without the need for his name to be visible, but the thing is, for him to know he was my AP.

(Piwke intraview 1, 00:46:51)

So, Piwke accepted the challenge and tagged Tomás. Surprisingly—because APs are assumed unreachable—Tomás replied. They started chatting on Instagram and agreed to hang out one night. In this first face-to-face encounter, Piwke was disappointed by Tomás excluding any chance of them having a relationship. Piwke thus decided to stop initiating online conversations with him. However, Tomás continued to pursue Piwke and they hung out. This lasted about a year, until Piwke decided to be honest with Tomás about his wish to be in a relationship, which led to the end of their relationship.

To dwell deeper into the moment when Tomás ruled out a relationship, first, it is crucial to examine the idealization of Tomás as an AP. The idealised attraction did not only stem from Piwke's consideration of Tomás as too attractive but also from Tomás being a bit older and a soon-to-be university student. This idealisation facilitated an uneven positioning intensified by Tomás's knowledge of Piwke's attraction for him from the AP tagging. Hence, the differences regarding desiring, attractiveness, age and occupation co-produced a power imbalance that materialized in copious self-doubt thoughts in Piwke about his own desirability. While coming to meet Tomás:

> Piwke: (…) like they come these insecurities of (I) don't think I'll catch his eye because for starters he is one year older and he soon is going to the university and I still don't know what I am going to do with my life and like don't know what, like those thoughts came to me lots of loads (…)

(Piwke intraview 1, 00:48:42)

This insecure position did not fade during the encounter, and it was evident when Tomás clearly stated his expectations for their relationship. It happened at a moment of their date night when they were seated on a bench sightseeing at the sky and lake after strolling through the bustling streets of this nightlife town in summer.

> Piwke: and well, there as a moment in which we were like… seated on a bench like, while the the the… we were watching, the moon because I don't remember if there was a full moon that day or just a moon, but we were watching the sky. The thing is I remember that at a moment like he

> started talking to me about hands, hehe about his dad's hand, that he would like to have his dad's hands [puzzled expression] because his hands were super big and I don't remember what and I remember that I told him.. eh.. hey but you have a super big hands *po* and.. he said 'really?' Yes, and he **took** my hand, [crosses one arm in front of his body, grabbing his wrist] he did not even ask me for permission like eerr gimme your hand, it was like he **grabbed** my hand [cross the same arm in front of him] and **pulled it** and sure, we **joined** our hands [hold his palms together] and... and effectively my hand was super more sma- **was super tiny** in comparison with his hand *po*, and like… **while had the hand** there like he started like to caress my hand [he caresses one of his hands], and.. and like I was already practically dying inside because I was getting exasperated by why is he doing this?! And.. and then I remember he told me... something that he was not looking for anything serious, no serious relationship, he did not want anything serious with nobody [while slightly shaking his head].
>
> (Piwke intraview 1, 00:50:22)

Considering Piwke is not sure if Tomás is flirting, "why is he doing this?!", isn't it odd that the possibility of a serious relationship is brought up on the first date? Yet, upon closer examination of the material constellation at work in this accounted scene, one might suggest this possibility was already there. The constellation of the two going out at night, sitting together on a bench to stare at a starry sky, the potential presence of a full, and thus especially beautiful, moon, the hand caressing; kind of sets a mood, an affective atmosphere (Anderson, 2009) that resonates with western normative monogamous romantic-ness. A posthuman understanding of monogamy as intra-actions of discursive-material and affective elements that push for reproducing a pattern for sexual relations based on romantic love and coupledom allows us to see the arrangement of circumstantial material elements above, added to Piwke's sexual attraction for Tomás and Tomás tag as AP, co-producing a romantic affective atmosphere. This mood or environmental force is hard to particularly locate, yet it provokes a romantic direction to

the encounter that must be acknowledged. And it was, but by barring it out— “no serious relationship”.

Another element that pops out of this quote is the grabbing of the hand that is framed as non-consensual—"he did not even ask me for permission”; where “not even” marks an expected minimum. Yet discussing consent is not what interests me here, but the sensation of powerlessness, of a sort of being done to or passivity in his remarks. The ambiguity referring to whom had his hand there, “while had the hand there”, may point to this same passivity. However, putting words aside a bit, given that this scene was both narrated and performed during the intraview, I found it interesting to follow Piwke’s gestures and explore the sequence of bodily movements that are in brackets in the quote above: one hand pulled by the wrist, a hand grabbed, pulled and crossed in front of him, a super tiny hand and a big hand’s palms joint together, one hand caressing the other.

Approaching the data through intraviews facilitates paying attention both to the data produced as transcripts and how it was produced within the research encounter. I would like to play with these hand movements not as representing the relationship between them, but as showing “how matter comes to matter” (Barad, 2007, p. 205): the material co-producing of their particular way of relating within the constellation of elements I have already considered within this scene. Pulling by the wrist has some one-directionality. Tomás’s hand picked up a part of Piwke that cannot reciprocate his doing. This movement made an impact on Piwke. He remarked this three times, intensifying the action done to him (“he took my hand”, “grabbed”, “pulled”). Then, joining palms can enact a sort of connectedness, touching and feeling each other, but the size asymmetry took centre stage. I won’t consider it here as a marker of masculinity, but as materializing the idealization and the consequent power imbalance. Tomás is idealized; Piwke’s hand is not only “super sma(ll)”, he is “super tiny”. In this context, hand caressing could work as another way of togetherness or feeling (with) the other, but this produced in Piwke “exasperation”, feeling like “dying inside”. He can’t tell what is going on, what Tomás wanted. And maybe, this intensity also shows the clash between his desires for things moving into a sexual/physical/romantic direction with his self-doubt thoughts: a mixture of desires, uncertainty, anxiety, pleasure, etc. But he seems to be in no position to decide or make a move. He stands there, he listens.

The sequence of movements continued and the hand caressing was followed by the sound of the impossibility of a future together—"he told me... he did not want anything serious with nobody"—and a head shake. Piwke's head shaking embodies Tomás no, but also Piwke's disappointment. Piwke's desires for a different situation.

> Piwke: (…) Anyway I got disappointed a bit because I already had had illusions of ah dating with that person and what do I know and, all of that.
>
> (Piwke intraview 1, 00:51:15)

With this story, it seems we are supposed to accept that things were clear at the beginning, and nobody was confused or misunderstood. Yet, in this quote, Piwke's disappointment might show that the warning came too late. The hopes of dating Tomás were already there. Thus, when Tomás ruled out emotional involvement, Piwke already was, literally and figuratively, in his hands. Moreover, it might be possible that Tomás's flirtatious yet aggressive hand petting combined with the elimination of a relationship was, intended or not, a sort of power play. Yet Piwke's account does not have much material to affirm he felt it as such. Moreover, a posthuman approach helps us analyse the materialisation of a power differential besides Tomás or Piwke's intentions, within the constellation of material objects that produced a romantic atmosphere, sequential bodily movements, Piwke's sensations, and the words said and gestures done during the intraview.

From the story Piwke narrated, Tomás's statement came late. Thus, it worked less as a warning and more as a banning of a relationship. Consequently, Piwke decided not to look for Tomás anymore. But Tomás did, and they went out a second time, kissed, and kept hanging out and cuddling in each other's homes for several months. During that time, Piwke struggled with his emotions and with keeping things as not serious—"Practically was, it seemed like a real relationship" (Piwke intraview 1, 00:57:51).

> Piwke: (…) but it wasn't. anyway I had a very bad time because sometimes we spent weeks without talkiiiing or anything, and I did not want to look like.. that I was into him, becaussse like he had told me from the beginning that he did not want anything serious or anything of that, so,

> that things stay as they were [inhales] and almost finishing the year, I told him that effectively I liked him, and then was when he told me like nooo.. this should not have happened because from the beginning he had made clear that he did not want absolutely anything serious, (…)
>
> (Piwke intraview 1, 00:58:36)

In the story, Piwke was struggling with several tensions between: what he experienced, a relationship that seemed "real"/"serious"; what he felt, desires for a "serious" relationship; what he was expected to feel and what he was performing—"I did not want to look like… that I was not into him". "Becaaussee" heard pressing and uncomfortable when Piwke said it, and the air needed after saying "things stay as they were" produced an effect of struggling, of tiredness. Both suggest a sense of lack of control over the unfolding of the relationship.

It is possible to think that this bodily effort also materialises a narrative disorientation of the beginning of the relationship. Here the beginning is located in Tomás's clear statement banning "absolutely anything serious", instead of the "AP" Instagram tag Piwke first mentioned when telling the story in the intraview. However, when exactly the relationship began is not the most relevant, one might even challenge the possibility of identifying a beginning. Piwke could have fantasised about Tomás long before he knew about Piwke's existence. What matters is how this dislocation in the narrative happened and what it can produce.

It is possible to see this disorientation being co-produced within the intertwinement of AR's logic of clearly communicating your expectations at the beginning, which privileges direct verbal conversations and thus links these conversations to the starting point. All this intertwined with the abovementioned power imbalances between them. Hence, the ways AR materialised between them exerted some control over Piwke's capacity to act within this encounter, ultimately prioritising Tomás's desires. Yet this dynamic was not solely shaped by AR. Tomás brought up the topic without opening it for discussion, further limiting disappointed-Piwke's chances to express disagreement; especially since it would have left him in an even more vulnerable position.

Turning to Tomás reaction, his phrase shows an assumption of the overruling power of the human-intentionally-spoken-word over the potentiality of flirting becomings—"this should not have happened because from the beginning he had made clear that (…)". From a psychoanalytic perspective, this might be interpreted as an omnipotent fantasy of controlling the future unfolding of emotions and the other. Or, to put it whatanother way, an omnipotent way to dissociate words from actions by summoning the power of the clearly spoken word. This, as an attempt to avoid engaging in the constant embodied negotiation that several encounters with someone would entail. In this story, Piwke complains about the inconsistency of Tomás not wanting something serious while enacting 'real relationship' activities like cuddling on the sofa in each's home. Hence, from this case, it appears that clearly stating expectations from the beginning might serve as a somewhat normalised yet ultimately ineffective controlling mechanism. These 'clear statements' aim to mitigate the uncertainty that the unfolding of several flirting encounters involves while also seeking to control the other person's feelings, wishes, fantasies and movements through previously stated requests.

A posthuman lens helps us suspect AR's reliance on the power of the spoken word over other ways of communication and relationship building. This story shows that meaning-making involves more than words and conversations; it is also materially produced through concrete practices, surrounding objects, power dynamics and affective atmospheres.

6.4 Affective Responsibility's Entanglements With Sending Nudes "due to Inertia" and Avoiding Deception

AR is often associated with relationship building. However, AR can stretch from relationships to flirting practices such as sending nudes. I explore Andrea's accounts of sending nudes "due to inertia" through a material-discursive and affective lens to unpack what else is at play besides the commonly understood normative/discursive/social pressures on young women to sexually please men, emphasised thoroughly by feminist research. Through this analysis, I illustrate how attempting honest communication to materialise an apparent clarity can help to counter this inertia. At the same time, transparent communication pushes for caring for the

other through the avoidance of deception and hurt, which, in turn, might reinforce women's self-responsibilisation and pressure to please men.

Andrea, aged 18, identifies as a polyamorous pansexual woman and a feminist. She used to regularly post packs on her Best Friends Instagram stories and usually shared nudes with people she was flirting with—"I am very much of, don't know, posting nudes and things like that" (Andrea intraview 4, 00:21:47). However, after publicly exposing her sexual harasser by a funa more than a year ago, Andrea stopped feeling sexual desire:

> Andrea: (…) last year there was a period where I was asexual hh so and like due to inertia, like because eh, gen- generally people are alosexual not asexual eehh… like I *me pelaba*[15] with people or we sent each other pack and I did that like because of inertia, like just because, that was what was normal *po*
>
> (Andrea intraview 4, 00:44:06)

Despite her lack of sexual desire during that time, she kept interacting in sexual ways, flirting with other people online and sending nude pictures "due to inertia". In the quote, the closeness of "inertia", "generally", "inertia", and "normal" help us examine the affective force of the discursive, how the push of 'what is normal' is felt. Considering that "inertia" is defined as the tendency to remain at the same velocity or rest (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.), this reproduction of the same could be experienced as if it was a continuation propelled by what you just did. As such, inertia, instead of pressure, might speak about the sources of this force that not only stems from "what was normal" but also from one's former behaviour.

The latter can be justified considering the material arrangements that also co-produce this tendency to the same that pushed Andrea into sending nudes. For instance, the Instagram's platform and her profile. She spoke about the ways she used to be and how her past display on Instagram could make understandable that guys expect her to be hypersexual—"it was like people saw me very horny, very everything, and I like dang, I am not that way haha now" (Andrea intraview 1, 00:43:37). The Instagram profile's grid,

[15] *Pelar(se)* is a chilean youth slang word for relating sexually that can cover from flirting to sex.

where pictures are displayed side by side even if they are months or years apart, and her former regular display of nudes on Instagram stories can turn the platform—where she chats and is asked to send nudes—into a rigid and limiting space, orienting Andrea into very few possibilities of doings. The repetition of her videos and images can also work as a push towards consistency, a push for keeping the same. It might be this trapped her in a persona she is not anymore, pushing her to comply and maintain some sort of consistency. Thus, the material arrangements of this social media interface would co-produce a push towards the same ways of relating and flirting.

But besides this inertia, focusing on some of AR's elements can give other clues about Andrea's situation. This because Andrea did not just send nudes when asked. She took the time to explain to the guy why she was not in the mood for a sexual exchange and then offered to send instead a stored old nude picture. Key here is that these situations always happened when flirting with cisgender men who were, most of the time, one, two or three years older than her.

In the video, Andrea sounded choppy when narrating these situations. Her sentences were interrupted like she struggled to find the right words. Her face looked like she felt she is in a complicated situation, and her discomfort seemed to be embodied in headshakes, nods and smiles.

> Andrea: (…) and that.. anyway with some people I had told them 'Hey you know I'm no.. I don't feel sexual attraction like for nobody, so.. if you are looking for something [slightly shooks her head]… m…[pouting] I can´t help you much hehe [smiles], truly, because before, don't know, like I also told them, I've got stored packs, if you want I send you those because I really now, don't know, I don't feel well like to interact, like in a horny way, no like, I don't think so [slightly shaking her head]
>
> (…..)
>
> Bárbara: Ok… like it does not… it does not provoke the same sparks as it used to

Andrea: Mhm [nodding]—anyway I had told them, neither it is that like, I deceive them or something like that, anyway I had told them 'hey, this is happening to me' haha [smiles]

(Andrea intraview 1, 01:01:27)

To some extent, the denial of taking a nude pic in its wording, pouting, head shaking, and uncomfortable choppiness feels a bit apologetic—"m… I can´t help you much, truly". In addition to the apologetic tone and the potential caring underpinnings of "help", there is "truly" a marker of honesty. Honesty that links with the spontaneous free-associated remark that she does not deceive these men since she explains herself. She is not explicit about the deception, but it could revolve around the impression that her Instagram profile might convey to these men. Another option is that denying a nude picture after flirting could be read by the other as if you were playing with their sexual arousal, making false hopes and deceiving them. So, she first communicates clearly and "truly" her situation.

The focus on telling in advance as a way of not deceiving has an ethical tone that resonates with the "responsibility" within AR. On the one hand, there is the responsibility for taking care of others and avoiding hurting them with clear communication that can eliminate false hopes or play with their feelings, which have sanctionable ethical connotations. However, on the other hand, there is self-responsibilisation. While communicating clearly her situation, Andrea framed herself as failing, as not being able to help, not feeling well, not feeling sexual attraction to anyone. Thus, by being clear on what she is, or not, feeling, she ends up offering an account that individually locates the cause of 'the problem' on her lack of sexual arousal. Moreover, these two options can work together: by blaming herself, she might be caring about not making the other feel bad, not hurting them with her rejection.

In addition, her apologetic tone may also stem from a fear of being unable to meet the other person's expectations, which could help explain why she offered the stored nude.

Andrea: from that physical relationship with… my abusers, like it limited mi relationship with other people

Bárbara: Mhm

Andrea: Like that's why I closed myself... and that's also why like I get afraid like, to return to interact with someone in that way [sexually], like, that, like… it is not like fear of rejection or to disappointment, but it is like, to not being able like to give what it is supposed to what we are going for, (…)

(Andrea intraview 1, 01:03:23)

It might be possible that the potential emergence of fear of rejection or of disappointment for not meeting expectations could be promoting the offering and sending of stored nudes. Maybe as part-of the felt inertia. Linking these feelings with the responsibility for not hurting the other, it might be that offering a stored nude was a way to prevent those feelings from happening on Andrea's body. But also to avoid their emergence on the other; for instance, so they don't feel rejected or disappointed.

However, as the quote reminds us, we must not forget Andrea's former experiences of sexual abuse, that bounded her possibilities in ways that cannot be fully explored because of a lack of data. Yet the concept of "somatic archives" (Kyrölä & Paasonen, 2016) can be helpful. "Somatic archives" are defined as the cumulative sedimentation of sexual experiences that create simultaneously personal and culturally shared orienting patterns that shape bodies' possibilities to act. So, we can consider that the "physical"—embodied and affective—archiving of those experiences might, to hypothesise options, hinder moving away from an exploitative position or make it more difficult for her to enjoy herself as an object of sexual satisfaction— not being able to give".

In line with AR's resistance to heterogendered norms (López, 2019; Mauri, 2021), it is possible to think that "clear communication from the beginning" might work to nuance or counter some of the felt inertia. Since she did not just comply and send a stored nude, but took time to explain her current situation instead, she created a separation between her current 'self' and her former sexual experiences and performances online. This type of clear communication encourages vulnerable conversations that oppose the objectification and disposable detachment often associated with the commodification of love and sexuality (Illouz, 2013). Moreover, maybe telling them beforehand gives Andrea

a bit of sense of control of the situation, of standing for herself, materializing her situation—"hey, this is happening to me" (Andrea intraview 1, 01:01:27)—and thus not getting lost into the other's request, even when attempting to comply to it through a substitute. Request, instead of invitation, to emphasise the gendered and age imbalance and the potential pressure to sexually please men. Yet this resistance is not straightforward nor clear, especially if we think that offering to send an old nude simultaneously pleases men while avoids hurting them with rejection. This could make it possible to think that, even in contradictory directions, heteronormative sexual pleasing of men and AR's responsibility for preventing harm could be working towards this "inertia".

Offering a stored nude after explaining herself puzzled me then and now. It glows. I close this section with speculations on the roles the stored nude might play. For example, the stored nude could be re-enacting a former self, an Andrea who enjoyed sexuality and sharing nudes. Maybe even a wish to return to that possibility. Thus, the picture is not part of Andrea's past, but a part-of the intra-actions that Andrea was at that time. In this sense, the stored nude could act as a material-affective object of Andrea's entangled self that can engage sexually while other parts of her cannot/do not want to.

A posthuman approach that thinks within the entanglements of discourses, materialities and affects as feelings and sensations offers a complex mapping of this situation. Sending a stored nude can enact a tense compromise that maintains an unveiled illusion of sexual engagement. Simultaneously, one could say that Andrea is engaging sexually by sending a nude, while she does not feel sexually involved, but also not faking it. In its particular 'transparent' ways, sending an old nude is a yes that is not a full yes, but a yes that does not play with the other. The stored picture and the asynchronicity and bodily distance that online encounters provide would materialize a complex network that maintains unresolved the tension between accepting or rejecting, doing what she or the other wants. Within this web, she can still offer what the other wants (a nude image of herself) while doing what she wants: not taking pictures, not engaging sexually. The stored nude could jump out of the binary understanding of yes/no by materializing both. In the same way, it maintains unresolved the tension between postfeminist sexual empowerment and the heteronormative pressure to please (masculine) others.

6.5 Conclusion: Critiques and Intra-active Dynamics Between Affective Responsibility, Postfeminist Sensibility and Flirting

This chapter fleshed out the material-discursive and affective co-production between flirting and AR, understanding the latter within "postfeminist sensibilities" (Gill, 2017). The analysis showed that enactments of AR included conversations that might or not assume a monogamous destination of the relationship. It also showed that AR might encourage conversations that can be hard since they involve vulnerability or that are avoided with proposals of 'just flow'. Thus, one could say that these enactments of AR materialise attempts to disrupt monogamous heteronormativity and the disposable detachment of the commodification of love/sexuality (Illouz, 2013).

However, humanist and neoliberal foundations of AR have consequences that complicate further feminist resistance. These insights are relevant not only for AR, but for other feminist ethics proposals, which include affirmative consent. This is because, as the Literature Review suggested, both share similar humanist neoliberal foundations. One implication of AR's neoliberal underpinning is the attempts to manage part of the unknowingness of relationships by a reliance on the power of verbal communication to shape relationships and as a guarantee to avoid 'bad' feelings (Kohan, 2019). This not only minimizes or completely erases the role of actions and objects in meaning- and world-making, and its relational functioning. It also provides a simplistic approach to the complex messiness of the unfolding of relationships. At the same time, it gives an illusion of human omnipotent control over ourselves, others and the uncertain future. Sometimes, through the individual responsibilisation for identifying and communicating one's wants and caring about not hurting the other. A posthuman lens helped us suspect AR's reliance on the power of the spoken word over different ways of communication, showing that meaning-making and relationship building are more than words and conversations. They are also materially produced through concrete practices, surrounding objects, power dynamics and affective atmospheres, for instance, during hand movements on a starry night date.

Understanding AR within postfeminist sensibilities enables us to identify how, through a feminist desire to change, AR may enhance individualization and self-responsibilisation while keeping the veil over power dynamics within flirting encounters. However, the

individualisation of responsibility in Andrea and Piwke's stories did not work as a projection of responsibility onto the other, as AR's critiques suggested. In Andrea's apologetic approach, neoliberal self-responsibilisation is clear, where she frames herself as the problem (McLeod, 2017). This self-responsibilisation might have worked to protect the other from rejection. But Tomás's "no serious relationship with anybody" also locates the 'problem' on himself, avoiding Piwke's particularities. Thus, though unsuccessfully, avoiding Piwke's potential feelings of rejection without going further into self-blame. On Piwke's side, there is no clear responsibilisation for the result of the relationship, just complaints about Tomás's lack of coherency between his manifested desires of not wanting a relationship and the activities he wanted to do that enacted a normative monogamous relationship. However, there is no accountability from Piwke about his role in engaging and staying in a relationship that hurt him, which is part of Kohan's (2019) critique, that AR hinders asking oneself those questions.

The individualisation of AR also comes with a gender blindness since its mandate is the same for everyone. Thus, it overlooks gendered power dynamics and the heightened surveillance and pressure on women, as in Andrea's nude-sending situation. That the emotional work AR requires is gendered and thus burdening women is highlighted by Kohan's (2019) critique and is evidenced by empirical research on young heterosexual couples (Holford, 2019). Yet Piwke's case helps us transcend this heterosexual and binary frame and point out masculine dominance instead, since both stories happened when engaging with a slightly older cisgender man. And, in both cases, though to different extents, Piwke and Andrea's needs were deferred to the masculine other, maybe linked to wants of being an object of (masculine) desire (Alvear Blau, 2023). Masculine dominance can also be seen in the contrast between how AR was enacted in Andrea's and Tomás's situations. While Andrea's explanations burdened her with self-blame; Tomas's "no serious relationships" created a sort of control over Piwke. The latter was possible because it matched with Piwke's unilateral application of AR, which worked more as a warning: "make it quite clear that, I come to do, to carry out only that thing … (I) don't want anything serious to happen" (Piwke intraview 3, 00:11:37).

A posthuman focus on how discourses are materialised and felt in the body provided further insights into the role of power beyond gender within flirting, where age gaps

and differences in attraction can also be key factors. At the same time, this approach highlighted that AR covers far more than human communication, including material and social 'contexts' that are not separate or separable from people's experiences. More importantly, this lens enabled thinking about some of the situations in these stories beyond/in addition to binaries, as when thinking about the productive tension instead of contraposition between flowing and naming or how Andrea's stored nude could enact several contradictory options simultaneously.

Finally, the analysis also challenged AR's timeline, which stresses that clear conversations must be had at the beginning of a relationship. This is because relationships can start even before one of the parties is aware. This is even more true in social media times, where our profiles are parts-of ourselves that are displayed and intra-act with others, in ways we cannot predict, control or even notice, as shown by Andrea's struggling with the expectation her Instagram profile could give others. Thus, in this context, it might be that the beginning of a relationship is closer to visiting and fantasizing about social media profiles before the possibility of a synchronic encounter. In this way, we saw how marking the 'beginning' is more of a narrative construction supported by power imbalances and AR's promotion of verbal, face-to-face communication from the outset.

Through this chapter, I have outlined several pitfalls of AR and how it has been re-created among teens in the sample. While doing this, I showed that for a conceptualisation of AR to work towards more equality in relationships, it needs to reject postfeminist individualisation and trust in direct verbal communication and responsibility, and take seriously the materiality of atmospheres, of affect and of power. My analysis agrees with McLeod (2017) in that the word responsibility inevitably enhances individualization. Even when not working as their critics envisioned, by ignoring relations, AR politics are inevitably blind to differences in gender, age, and felt attraction, to name a few, that create power asymmetries. As such, even a new, relational conceptualisation and/or politics of AR, that emphasise the emotional impact on others of one's actions and omissions (Alvear Blau, 2020; Martín, 2021) will struggle to also pay attention to the power dynamics within intra-actions of objects, sensations,

gestures, practices and affective atmospheres. We need to strip away the postfeminist pull and start thinking about intra-active ethics instead of individual responsibility.

7. Challenging the 'Non-Consensual' Through a Posthuman Mapping of Cis-Heterosexist Affects and Contingent Intra-acting Bodily Boundaries

"You did not even give the consent of 'hey, filth my name, talk bad about me.' "
(Nicole intraview 1, 00:26:30)

"It was like very uncomfortable when stuff like that arrived…
because they were something that I did not ask for [shakes his head]"
(Piwke intraview 1, 00:36:09)

Introduction

The last chapter explored, among others, a fantasy of controlling oneself, the other and the becoming of a relationship by rational and conscious verbal agreements to avoid emotional involvement. This chapter starts from similar fantasies underpinning consent, evidenced in the quotes above that refer to, respectively, men shaming women after engaging sexually with them, and, receiving unsolicited dick pics. The logic of both quotes points to a fantasy of individual control over the other's actions and what is done to oneself, in the sense that one must give permission or ask for it. As Saketopoulou (2023) states, the logic of consent is excessively concerned with keeping the ego safe and the same, in control of the situation. However, this restraining of facing unsettling experiences limits the possibilities of encounters that can transform and benefit the self. This chapter offers a posthuman perspective on 'non-consensual' situations to challenge the individualist foundations of consent that support these fantasies of control and of aware subjects, suggesting these uncomfortable touches can, in some specific and perhaps unpredictable cases, have life-affirming, transformative outcomes.

For the purposes of this chapter, I understand 'non-consensual' as against one's will or without permission. The quotation marks are used to bracket the subject's rationality and consciousness, allowing for an exploration of concepts such as power imbalances and bodily boundaries. I conceptualise these using a material-discursive and affective

intra-actions lens. This firstly entails understanding power imbalances as "immanent relations of force" (Barad, 2007, p. 450) that facilitate or restrict certain possibilities over others. Second, understanding the body as decentred and non-individual, a sensuous and dynamic being constantly produced, transformed and moved by its multiple relationalities with other bodies, objects and space. Hence, the scope of the body and its boundaries are fluid and dynamic. A boundary can be thus understood, drawing from the Merriam-Webster (n.d.b) definition, as a dynamic tension that marks a "point beyond which a person or thing cannot go". Since boundaries limit, resist or shape the capacities of human and non-human bodies—"person or thing"—through space, it delineates a kind of relational spatiality—a point beyond which.. cannot go"—, thereby showing itself as a material and affective limiting phenomenon. Hence, and simultaneously drawing from Barad, a boundary can be thought of as contingently produced "difference-within-relations" (2007, p.197). This conceptualisation of bodily boundaries allows us to trace their unstable dynamicity and how they are co-created within material-discursive and affective intra-actions, highlighting the role of the spatial context.

The scenes of non-consensual kissing and hand-holding I analyse in this Chapter belong to the accounts of two part-icipants, Nicole and Newen, who respectively identified as a heterosexual cisgender woman and a trans man. Their stories were chosen after analysing all the scenes in the data that could be considered blurry—that is, lacking clarity of what was happening or how one or the other was feeling. The accounts of Nicole and Newen were selected for three reasons. First, both were discussed in the second intraview, so we delved into fine details about these moments, allowing to re-construct a nuanced material-discursive and affective flirting scene. Second, although these 'non-consensual' moments were very different from each other, both were key in how the relationship evolved. Third, both teenagers had former experiences of violence, which made them particularly sensitive to physical closeness.

Exploring power relations and bodily boundaries from a material-discursive and affective approach means mapping the particular ways bodies and their capacities to do and feel came to matter. This involves focusing on the narrative and how it is recounted, looking for material objects and space, discourses, body parts and sensations that are

part-of a co-created flirting scene. But also, it means paying attention to how the data was co-produced, to the material-discursive and affective elements within the intraview. To achieve this, I intertwine both scenarios, the recounted story and the intraview, to explore first the affective force of discourses, what I call "cis-heterosexist affects", to then dwell in the conjured materiality of the narrated scenes and map how bodies and their boundaries where intra-actively co-created.

A couple of theoretical precisions are necessary before the analysis. "Cis-heterosexist affects" serves to conceptualise the affective capacities of what is commonly addressed as cis-heteronormative discourses or social norms, that modify bodies' capacities to feel or act—and thus their flirting possibilities—to maintain the re-production of cis-heterosexism. This concept draws from Tan's (2013) "affective heterosexualities", which refers to "an attunement to the ways in which 'becoming (hetero)sexual' is felt as affective intensities that are transmitted" among bodies, things and space (Tan, 2013, p. 719). Using affect highlights "a sense of push in the world" within "constantly emerging sexual encounters" (p.720). By thinking of becoming heterosexual as affective, Tan emphasises movement and changes in intensity that help consider power as an increase or decrease in a body's capacity to "assert agency, act/perform and affect" (p.719). Hence, "cis-heterosexist affects" is useful to shed light on how power dynamics regarding gender and compulsory heterosexuality are enacted and felt in the body, maybe as pushes, and how they can shape the flirting encounter.

Conceptualising bodily boundaries within a posthuman material-discursive and affective lens means the body involves more than the flesh. Thus, we renounce the skin as a frontier. For this, Mølbak's conceptualisation of Deleuzoguattarian "hapticity" is helpful in thinking about the extension of the body and the co-production of boundaries. Mølbak (2010) understands "hapticity" as the potential capacity of sensuous organs to touch the other person and be touched simultaneously. This capacity only emerges in relation and in-between bodies, and, I would add, it can be extended to material objects. Hapticity emerges from intra-actions and can extend the commonly known limits of bodies to touch each other while being apart.

Lastly, when thinking about bodies in this contingent way, the concept of "somatic archives" (Kyrölä and Paasonen, 2016) is helpful to grasp how different lived, witnessed

or imagined experiences with sexuality settle, pile up and resonate as embodied sensations and gestures, orienting encounters with other bodies. It offers a tool to think about how former experiences influence the potential for new ones. The accumulation of former experiences might sound contradictory in a contingent approach, but we must remind ourselves that linear time is also contingently created, and this archiving is constantly enacted and re-written with every encounter.

Mapping "cis-heterosexist affects" and emergent posthuman bodily boundaries allows this Chapter to engage with two main critiques on consent raised in the Literature Review. The first critique focuses on the underlying assumption of a transparent, knowing and coherent subject, arguing it leaves us with few tools to understand ambiguity, ambivalence and uncertainty when flirting. The second critique stresses the importance of acknowledging power dynamics that stem from differences regarding class, gender and sexuality, to name but a few. In addition, this Chapter addresses the need for further theorisation of the body and the embodied experience of sexual bodily boundaries, thereby offering a reconceptualisation of bodies and their boundaries as contingently co-produced by material-discursive and affective intra-actions.

As a result, this Chapter supports with empirical evidence the feminist request to include power dynamics within discussions on consent, while showing how flirting is more than embodied. Flirting creates bodies and boundaries through material-discursive and affective intra-actions. Thus, it provides a posthuman perspective on sexual relationalities that contributes to rethink consent and the sexual ethics involved beyond/in addition to individualistic paradigms of understanding and control.

7.1 Nicole: Haptic Touches and Building Cis-Heterosexist Affective Walls

Following the presentation of Nicole's flirting account with Mateo, I analyse the underlying "cis-heterosexist affects" at work. Specifically, how her former experiences with sexual double standards, slut-shaming, and dating violence shaped what happened between them. I then focus on fragments of her recounted flirting encounters to map the different discursive-material and affective co-productions of bodies and boundaries while flirting. First at school, then at a public park. I thus point out the differences

between these contexts and how they produced different bodies, boundaries and ways of being seen and touched.

When I met her, Nicole was 18 years old, and she identified as a heterosexual cisgender woman. She came from an economically deprived family and had recently graduated from a public military school in a vulnerable area in Greater Santiago. The past year, Nicole had an exemplary academic performance and spent her Saturdays studying at a pre-university to improve her chances of getting a university scholarship. On Sundays, she worked as a private tutor.

The story under analysis centres on the three to four weeks Nicole and Mateo spent time together before becoming an official couple. Nicole met Mateo when he arrived in her class during the middle of the school year in 2019. Nicole found him attractive and easy-going, so she invited him to watch 'The Lion King" at the cinema. During the movie, they kissed, but before leaving the cinema, she made it very clear she did not want a relationship or that people saw them together. Hence, they did not talk to each other at school, not even online on weekdays. They only met on Saturday afternoons after her pre-university classes and went to the cinema or to a public park.

> Nicole: (…) I am focused on my studies, I am, so, to me, there were more important things than a relationship so, (…) barriers that I myself had put up because of my bad experience.
>
> (Nicole intraview 2, 00:51:40)

At first, she explained that she did not want to be seen or be together with Mateo because she was worried about jeopardizing her studies and about what people would say about her. However, in our second encounter, she told me about a suffocating and controlling relationship with a classmate who was 20 years old when she was 14 or 15[16]. For more than a year, he psychologically and physically abused her, thereby, she feared experiencing a similar situation again. Hence, when spending time with Mateo, Nicole

[16] Having older classmates is not unusual in the most vulnerable public schools that receive students that have repeatedly failed grades, as another evidence of her impoverish context.

had to navigate the pressure of sexual double standards, the dream of getting into higher education and the threat of a potentially violent boyfriend.

7.1.1 Cis-Heterosexist Affects: Piling up Bricks to Build a Wall

It is useful to explore the "cis-heterosexist affects" entangled in Nicole's accounts before focusing on the specific flirting scenes with Mateo because it enables us to grasp the material and affective consequences of discourses on bodies. As a young working-class woman, the central social pressures that appeared in her account revolved around the hope of higher education to improve her life, the sexual double standard, and slut-shaming among peers. However, an approach that conceptualises these pressures through material-discursive and affective intra-actions, as capacities to act and feel, sheds light on the specific ways these discourses are embodied and materialise in flirting encounters.

From the moment I met her, Nicole showed a concern about gender inequality, especially regarding the sexual double standard and slut-shaming. In our first conversation, after I asked her to free associate about flirting, she spent twenty minutes talking about boys slut-shaming girls for posting sexy selfies on Instagram and other social judgements women frequently suffered regarding their bodies and sexual choices. She quickly approached flirting through its potentially harmful consequences, referring to it as a "double-edged sword" (Nicole intraview 1, 00:27:03). She mainly referred to the risks of social judgement if the guy later speaks negatively about the girl, or peers gossiping, regardless of the truth—"[women are] dispossessed from our right to choose to whom we want to tell our private life, and to whom not" (00:29:53). For her, this entailed she always tried to avoid drawing attention to her, occasionally restraining her actions out of fear of what people would say. When I asked her for an example of these occasions, she told me about when she met Mateo and that time at the cinema, where they kissed during the movie.

Before leaving the cinema, Nicole told me she clearly stated her boundaries:

> Nicole: I just immediately when I was with him, when eh we kissed and all, (I) drew the line of telling him 'you know, I don't want anything', eh one part

> was because of my studies and another part was also because of what would people say (…) (I) preferred to leave it there, so no hanging out at school and being seen, at school I neither spoke to him and he didn't speak to me, it was only the weekends.
>
> (Nicole Intraview 1, 00:38:45)

"Just immediately" after the movie finished, at the stairs of the room of the cinema, she had to "(draw) the line" and rule out a relationship—"I don't want anything". In this way, she protected herself from two different threats. First, "my studies", the fear that pursuing a relationship could jeopardise her chances of obtaining a scholarship to university. Second, "what would people say", which links to the abovementioned concerns about social judgement, sexual double standards and slut-shaming. She protected herself by being specific about her requirements—"no hanging out at school" —and no speaking to each other. There is a certain intensity arising from the copious details of the requests, the length of time she dedicated to talking about them, and the fact that she mentioned this 15 times during our two intraviews.

This intensity persisted in the second intraview when she talked about her limitations for being in a relationship while we discussed in depth these first weeks with Mateo.

> Nicole: I closed myself I mean one thing was, sure, you may have that insecurity and another thing is like not wanting and not wanting and no nothing.
>
> (Nicole Intraview 2, p.17 00:50:03)

While saying this in the intraview, she waved a stretched hand up and down after "closed myself", and after each "not wanting" and "no nothing". The repeated hand gesture provoked me a 'visual illusion', an intangible materialisation, of a wall in front of her. This could be interpreted as a metaphorical representation but it could also convey a certain materiality, or a force she was experiencing, that was more than "insecurity" and that kept her "closed". This closing added to the repeated "not wanting", and the hand moving up and down co-produce a feeling of wanting to be left alone. She "drew the line", she "closed herself", and kept him at bay, at a safe distance, far from being seen, far from the potential gossip. Her specific emotional situation is not clear in this quote.

She expressed it against insecurity, picturing it as more than the typically expected worries that "sure, you may have" when starting a relationship with someone. Insecurity is not an odd word choice but a telling one, considering the former experience of dating violence that she disclosed closer to the end of the second intraview.

The experiences of this violent relationship, understood as "somatic archives" (Kyrölä & Paasonen, 2016), that is, sedimentations that are part-of the co-production of her body, might have pressed or constrained her possibilities to engage in a new relationship. Maybe this embodied present history could also propel the gestural materialisation of her 'wall' and the fear she could not easily speak about.

Hence, in Nicole's account, co-existent class-related cis-heterosexist affects were pulling her away and shaping her possibilities, which were not only felt but also they were materialised around her. For example, on their Saturday dates after pre-university, the fear of jeopardising her studies was carried with the heavy backpack and pile of folders she always brought with her, along with her messy hair and stained clothes for running all day; which contrasted with Mateo's always impeccable looks—"I saw him all dressed up, and I looked at myself and said "what the hell am I wearing?! I came with normal sneakers, my, I carried my folder, generally I had like, don't know, sometimes I even had my hands stained with pen ink" (Nicole intraview 2, 01:11:05). Moreover, the pressures from sexual double standards materialised around her in the comments on the sexy selfies on Instagram and each time a classmate gossiped or commented on a woman's sexuality—"other people's experiences are useful for me to say, damn I don't want to go through that" (Nicole Intraview 1, 00:29:53). Lastly, allow me to play with the idea that the fear of being hurt again piled everything up as bricks, building the affective wall around her that kept Mateo at a distance.

7.1.2 Entangled Co-Production of Bodily Boundaries at School and the Park

Nicole's wall, built from social pressures and experiences archived on her body, materialised as a space separating and protecting her from harm; thereby, it is possible to consider it as a boundary. Here, I explore different situations where bodily boundaries between Nicole and Mateo are dynamically re-created within specific intra-actions with objects and space, enabling different ways of being (pleasurably) touched.

The scenes at school are useful for developing a conceptualisation of the dynamic co-production of boundaries and ways of relating with and beyond the fleshy body, which is helpful for re-imagining the 'non-consensual' kissing at the park.

7.1.2.1 At school: Haptic touches at a distance

Since Nicole emphatically requested not to be seen together, they barely explicitly interacted at school and did not even chat online during weekdays. However, they did fool around by making inside jokes, like Mateo asking a teacher who is nearby Nicole, "Hey Mister, do you know that The Lion King movie is at the cinema?" making her blush—"turned red from embarrassment" (Nicole Intraview 2, 00:23:37). They also teased with their bodies to touch each other, like when she pushed him 'accidentally' or when gazing and raising eyebrows at each other. Thus, at school, it is possible to say the boundaries stated by Nicole's request were respected and lightly played with. Better said, the bodily boundaries and the limits of what is allowed or not to do were created and re-created time and time again, with each different joke, playful gaze, or push.

> Nicole: nothing, not even a word, but he usually looked at me and always tried to stroll where I was. I sat on the first row, always, because I have sight problems, so, sure, I had to be close to, to the whiteboard and he suddenly strolled only in front of my table just, just because, because he wasn't doing anything. And I stared at him and we both gazed at each other, but he did not say anything and me neither but it wasn't necessary. I mean, we smiled or something and we already knew that we were like looking at each other, I don't know, he wanted to tease me many times.
>
> (Nicole intraview 2, 00:23:20)

Within the teasing, the constellation of objects and bodies in space plays a role in what they can do and how they flirt in simultaneous intra-actions with the cis-heterosexist affects mapped in the previous section. The prohibition of being seen together materialised a distance between them at school, thus enabling them to gaze and smirk at each other. The classroom space and the location of her seat and the whiteboard mapped another context into which Mateo could appear in her view and touch her at a

distance by making an excuse to pass by the whiteboard or teasing her. Even the teacher played a role in this teasing, with the amusement and embarrassment produced by the chance of him realising they were up to something.

I say "touch" because of the haptic capacity mentioned before, but also because these gazes, jokes, and teasing felt differently. There was no need for words; both knew what they were doing and what was happening. I would add that an affective attunement between them supports this narration, and maybe the reader can also feel it. A sort of playfulness, a bit of excitement and nervousness, a flirtatious affective atmosphere (Anderson, 2009). At school, flirting and bodily contact were entangled with this necessary distance, both accepting and playing with it for their contingent or imagined audience (teachers, peers).

> Nicole: Sometimes he sent me cat stickers, like that level, not even a "hello".
>
> (Nicole Intraview 2, 00:25:31)

Cat stickers on WhatsApp, with their playful cuteness, performs a touch that conveys "say like, I don't know, here I am, or I like you or that kind of stuff" (Nicole Intraview 2, 00:24:33). It is possible to add to the sticker the potential notification on the screen and the sound or vibration that announces that a message was received. The hapticity of eye contact as the possibility of touching and feeling touched by someone at a distance, or even through a screen, is unlike any other touch. It does not touch a particular part of the body but creates a sensation of connectedness or togetherness. This teasing thus produced different 'allowed' ways of touching and being touched, considering the haptic touch of this type of gazing and when sharing stickers on WhatsApp.

Thus, thinking with hapticity within the material arrangements at school, it is possible to consider a dynamic re-creation of the boundaries between them that is material even though not located in any body parts. This contingent boundary co-creation was constantly reintroduced by Nicole's request of not to be seen together, and the cis-heterosexist affects that co-produced that request, along with the teasing and risking getting caught that amusingly tensioned and re-enacted the 'wall'—"so, it was more fun I feel, it made it much more interesting" (Nicole Intraview 2, 00:29:30). Thus, ways of

being touched and feeling together were produced: momentary complicity, momentary sensations of togetherness that might be felt as shared atmospheres that separate them from the school crowd. However, at the park, the distance between their bodies shrank and hapticity, though still present in gazes, smirks and the like, is less helpful to think about the dynamic co-creation of bodily boundaries while spending time there.

7.1.2.2 At the park: Posthuman co-production of boundaries

The space of the park on Saturday dates allowed more closeness than the school, yet also heightened the fear of being seen. In a way, the heavily transited public park created a sense of being hidden in the open public. Hidden enough for her to "let herself" be cuddled, yet public enough that it reintroduces her fears and the abovementioned 'wall'—illustrated in the quote below. While at the park, Nicole expressed that Mateo acknowledged her limitations while trying to push them playfully, kissing her in the park knowing it would make her uncomfortable. However, although disagreeing with Nicole's limitation of being affectionate in public, Mateo's actions always showed genuine, caring concern for her—"he wanted to help me maybe or I don't know or that he understood me, supported me"(Nicole 2, p.25). An example of this is when she told him that when her dad left when she was little, the financial precarity of her family increased, so she no longer received toys as gifts. As a response, Mateo bought her kid's plastic toys from the street vendors at the park, and they goofed around with them—"His gesture (…) trying to give me a little piece of my, of a childhood I never had (...) changed everything" (Nicole's extract of written story read in intraview 2, 01:13:45)

One example of the 'non-consensual' situations is the following:

> Nicole: (…) I am focused on my studies, I am, so, to me, there were more important things than a relationship so, to me see couples, so I said to my boyfriend, 'I hate seeing people kissing in the park'. I hated it. And my boyfriend at that time, when we were nothing, kissed me in the park and I was but heey [she moves to a side, like miming she was distancing from him] like, I stopped him and he played with that, like to break those barriers that I myself had put up because of my bad experience. So, yes, that is why he seduced me again to this, to these experiences that I, or to

> this side that I did not want to live again but that finally ended up being good.
>
> (Nicole intraview 2, 00:52:06)

She said that she hates "seeing people kissing in the park", but it is unclear what she might mean by this. By saying this, it might be possible that she is drawing Mateo's attention to, perhaps even inviting, the supposedly unwanted, or, better said, ambivalently desired, gesture. She needed to move away from it, as she did with her gestures. The beginning of the quote explains this rejection by studying responsibilities, yet at the end, peeps the chance of dating violence she "did not want to live again". In this scene, playing frames the interaction as banter, where Mateo may kiss her precisely to tease her because she'd said she did not like it. In this sense, this 'non-consensual' kiss conveys a sort of recognition of her, her stated wishes and boundaries, while simultaneously disagreeing with and pushing them—"I stopped him and he played with that, like to break those barriers that I myself had put up".

The wall appears here as an external barrier that constrains access, not only to Mateo but to her too. Thinking with Nicole's gestures during the intraviews, it is possible to think of this barrier as a material space surrounding her fleshy body. This barrier/distance might have been easier to play with and bend through the haptic force of the gaze or fooling around at a distance at school. At the park, the distance from the school—classmates, teachers, studies—allowed physical proximity where this barrier could be 'heavily negotiated'. We may speculate that the geographical distance from the school-building, eased the threats the institution and peers entailed, but the open space of the park and its heavy traffic kept a certain chance of being seen by any of them. The park thus materialises the potential peer gaze, which is charged by heteronormative pressures on girls as "cis-heterosexist affects", threatening and constraining Nicole's possibilities for relating sexually.

Thus, a sensed space between them acts as a boundary, a wall that prevents kissing or touching. At the same time, this wall is acknowledged and re-transformed with each playful and pleasurable 'transgression'.

Nicole: yes, I mean, there was a part in me that suddenly says to him hey, stop [she crossed her hand over her body, like 'stop/enough'] like they are going to see us or when we, he held my hand for example. But I liked it he he, that is like, it is like this no but that that that behind has a yes [she laughed while saying this whole sentence], it is like when you say no, I am not sure or I don't know, but, you really are saying 'Ohh I like that, I want you to keep doing it because is great, is nice". So, yes, he flirted with me in that sense and I let myself be caressed, I let myself be spoiled and I liked it in fact, I liked that he looked for me, that, and I also played with him because also sometimes I was the one holding his hand, or I was who gazed at him and gave him pecks on his cheek and we gazed each other and things like that"

(Nicole Intraview 2, 00: 57:00)

The sentence speaks again about her solicited limit to not being seen together in public. "Stop" is a clear boundary stating a point beyond you cannot go. "Stop" happens simultaneously with a hand crossing over her body, which could be another way to embody the limitation, this minimum distance their bodies must keep. Through this quote, it is possible to see moments when, in between them, the wall emerged (stop and gesture) and other moments when it is blurred by pleasure—"it is like when you say no, I am not sure or I don't know, but, you really are saying 'Ohh I like that, I want you to keep doing it because is great, is nice". Or even played with, like at the end of the quote when she held his hand or gave him pecks.

If we interpret Nicole's situation with intra-actions, it is possible to grasp both the dynamic instability of the boundaries and the intensity of the social pressure. This especially if we consider that the quote points out that Nicole was not feeling like a unitary, coherent, transparent self, but as multiple, dynamic and opposing bits. "There was a part of me" shows she felt these co-existent forces as being part of herself, but also as contradictory fragments: the coexistence of wanting to keep going and wanting to stop, the bodily pleasure—"Oohh I like that"—and the fear of social judgement—"they are going to see us". So, it is possible to see the coexistence of fear, concern and pleasure when flirting in Nicole, materialising a barrier at the park.

Thus, this quote enables us to unlink pleasure, desire and asking to stop. A "no (..) that behind has a yes" is more than "token resistance", a "no" to save face or respectability (Shafer et al., 2018). It is a "no" that emerges from the multiple abovementioned elements at play. In this affective context, wanting, pleasure, or desire are not enough to eliminate the constraining power of "cis-heterosexist affects". So, this demonstrates it is not only that she felt as contradicting bits but also that the decision to engage sexually involves much more than just knowing what you want.

It might be possible to think that this playful togetherness enabled Mateo to breach her boundaries while at the same time making Nicole not feel threatened but amused; working also as an invitation to play and bend the boundaries together ("I let myself to…"). "Let myself", talks about a duplicity. The Spanish version of the expression she used is '*dejarse querer*', a raw translation would be to let oneself be cared for. This expression points to a doubling of the speaker, that gives permission to the people involved, for the enactment of caring, cuddling, etc. Perhaps the playful atmosphere and having fun facilitated the production of new bodily boundaries. New ways of being together in public propitiated that Nicole could play as well, which re- and co-built the wall differently each time.

Moreover, returning to the first quote, Nicole said, "he seduced me again to this, to these experiences". This is a sexually affectively charged word that caught my attention amid her usual cognitive and rational terms. "Seduced" might point to an embodied affective allure, which made me think of Mateo's desire to be affectionate in public working as a kind of affirmative invitation, instead of her feeling pushed or convinced. She might also be talking about how the "affective atmosphere" (Anderson, 2009) between them changed in ways she got open to play with him in public when she felt safe after trusting him. In other words, and drawing from Clark (2019), one can say that she borrowed and played with Mateo's desire of being, and being seen, together until she felt confident and safe enough to openly desire this as well, or to embrace this desire as hers.

Through Nicole's flirting accounts, I presented a novel perspective on the negotiation of boundaries while flirting as an alternative to affirmative consent's humanist logic of knowing and communicating one's sexual wants and boundaries. I proposed that flirting can be seen as a playful intra-acting co-production of bodily boundaries, where

relationalities are continually and dynamically shaped by the interplay of various material-discursive and affective elements, in different contexts. In this case, these boundaries had an affective materialisation in the distance/wall maintained between them. A wall far from solid that was playfully re-built in every encounter. Thus, the transgression of Nicole's stated boundaries, in this case, would not necessarily be that, but the emergence of new instances of relating. However, this 'trespassing' cannot be done in any way. In this particular case, a sense of being cared for and recognised was added to the playfulness and tenderness present in Mateo's 'trespasses', which led to amusement, closeness and trust between them.

7.2 Newen: Affirmative Re-Producing Bodies Through 'Non-Consensual' Hand-Holding Against Trans and Homophobia

After presenting Newen's story with his classmate Ana, I trace the "cis-heterosexist affects" in this case: trans and homophobia, school-based violence and compulsory sexuality. I then proceed to unpack Ana's repeated 'non-consensual' holding hands, suggesting their, though uncomfortable, potential to re-produce an affirmative embodied existence for Newen.

Newen is an 18-year-old *Mapuche* trans man and a senior year student in an LGBTQ+ affirmative, academic excellence public school in a city in southern Chile. This school is enormous. It has at least 400 students per grade divided into ten classrooms—2500 in high schools' 6 grades—, so students don't know each other very well. He arrived at that school three years ago in 2018, escaping from a smaller school where he was severely violated for different 'reasons', one being that, at that time, as a girl, he did not know her sexual orientation. The harassment he endured for three years at that school was physical, psychological and through his phone, making him change his number constantly. Thus, the threat of harassment easily followed him into this new school. This violence added to his dad's homophobia and transphobia at home—"my dad is super homophobic and transphobic (…) I could not see beyond that" (Newen Intraview 1, 00:17:36). Thus, since childhood, Newen struggled with recognition and living an embodied life, expressed in mental health issues like panic attacks, insomnia, and emotional flatness.

The story I analyse is from the first year in this new school, where Newen met Ana, a woman-classmate who immediately showed interest in him by praising his dyed hair and asking him to sit together and hang out in class. Newen had no social or sexual interest in Ana since he was solely focused on getting good grades for his parent's approval. Moreover, he never had a comforting friendship before, and he tended to suspect people's intentions of hurting him because of the repeated violence at his former school.

Despite Newen's disinterest, Ana kept trying to reach him. He could tell Ana treated him differently from the other girls, yet he was puzzled and could not say if there was sexual interest between them. At that time, Newen did not consider himself a trans man; he identified as a young woman, and he didn't know Ana's sexual orientation. He found it too uncomfortable to ask her since she seemed to avoid the subject when the other girls chitchatted about the boys they fancied—he also did. Their relationship ends when Ana suddenly drops out of school and disappears. One year later, Newen came out as trans, and much later, he realised Ana had a girlfriend.

7.2.1 "Cis-Heterosexist Affects": Between Pressures to be Sexual and Trans-Homophobia

This section maps the "cis-heterosexist affects" in Newen's accounts that mainly relate to compulsory sexuality (Mollet & Lackman, 2021) among peers at school, trans and homophobia, and school-based violence. By tracing these as more than discursive, but also material and affective, I outline how Newen's possibilities to acknowledge what he wanted, who he was, and living through an affirmative body and relationships were crushed by the self-deprecation and loneliness resulting from the above.

Compulsory sexuality (Mollet & Lackman, 2021) refers to a pressure to exercise sexuality regardless of gender or sexual orientation, which dominated in this new LGBTQ+ supportive high school. Thus, students saw people who were not interested in hooking up "as a freak I mean, but the difference is that it does not matter the sexuality of the person" (Newen Intraview 1, 00:33:43). Yet at his arrival, Newen was unsure who he was—"I did not feel interested in any of the two genders, I mean like I was, I, in my opinion, was nothing" (Newen Intraview 1, 00:14:37). So, this apparently liberatory,

affirmative and sex-positive environment felt otherwise for Newen, making him feel uncomfortable and pressured; given his lack of sexual interest and his confusion about his identity. Thus, it is possible to see how an affirmative environment can turn pressuring by substituting one mandate with another.

Newen related his uncertainty regarding his gender and sexual identity with the emotional flatness he experienced at that time and the problems he had carried since his childhood because of the violence at home and school. "I, in my opinion, was nothing" potently addresses the crushing power of this violence, which failed to recognise his existence as valuable or directly aimed at belittling him. This sentence also evidences how Newen arrived at this new school, diminished by his former schoolmates' physical and psychological violence, which limited his possibilities to act/feel sexual or even relate with others.

Moreover, the years-long exposure to school-based violence developed in Newen a suspicion that people may want to hurt him.

> Newen: (I) distrust people too much. But also that lack of confidence in myself like, that "Ah maybe they are hh it is like a joke, at me, it is like if they were utilising me and at the same time is like I feel that I am not like capable, of, giving that happiness to a person.
>
> (Newen Intraview 1, 00:16:45)

The violence at the former school affected how he saw himself and his possibilities to relate affectively and physically with others. It isolated him and made it difficult for him to have friends—"still did not accept that.. I could have friends? Hh like I said ah acquaintances" (Newen intraview 2, 00:33:05).

This school-based violence was significantly fuelled by homophobia, which was also at his home by his trans and homophobic father. So, even though at first Newen explained his disinterest in Ana because of studying responsibilities, this disinterest also emanates from his lack of experiencing friendship and the homophobia around him.

Newen: (…) I, moved away, I mean, I did not want it, because by then I still no, I did not come out of the closet like a trans person so, at that time, it was like (a) woman and the person, was also a woman hh so I was like no, how is this possible! Hh.

(Newen intraview 1, 00:05:17)

Newen's quote signals homophobic forces coming from his family and the former school that constrained him. The affirmative environment of the new school was insufficient to mitigate them. His moving away and the feeling of puzzlement—"how is this possible?"—can be seen as "cis-heterosexist affects" since these sensations and movements push for the maintenance of the cis-heterosexist status quo. Newen's "moved away" stretched to include avoiding the chitchat among girls at the back of the classroom about the boys they fancy, nor asking Ana about her sexual orientation. Interestingly, in the quote, homophobia is both rejecting their potential relationship while reinforcing his trans identity since it implies that if, at that time, he had identified as a trans man, he would have been less troubled by this attraction.

It is possible to see how compulsory sexuality, but most importantly trans and homophobia and gender-based school violence were crushing Newen's capacities to know himself and act/feel sexual.

7.2.2 The Affirmative Potential of 'Non-Consensual' Hand-Holding

In Newen's accounts, I explore the complex intra-actions of repeated 'non-consensual' hand-holding. However, the posthuman attention to bodies emerging within intra-actions with objects in space and how those bodies are brought to life and felt enables us to surpass understandings of 'non-consensual' touching. Thus, I suggest an alternative perspective on how 'non-consensual' experiences may foster life-affirming outcomes.

One of the things Ana did that made Newen think she treated him differently was that she frequently held his hand, which made him feel "too uncomfortable at the beginning". I address this uncomfortable hand-holding by centring on a fragment of the story he wrote for the second intraview and our conversations around this fragment.

> She hugged me and she took me by the hand even though to me it was too uncomfortable at the beginning, because the person that assaulted me at the former school hugged me against my will after or before hitting me, but Ana had no bad intentions, so I got used to physical contact only with her, I did not understand why but I felt strange, I could not distinguish my emotions fully.
>
> (Excerpt of Newen's written flirting story)

The quote shows a tight entanglement between Ana's hugging and holding hands with former assault experiences that combined triggered the feeling of discomfort. The affective triggering of this touching shows one way in which "somatic archives"(Kyrölä & Paasonen, 2016) can work. Through one touch, the past materialises and acts upon the present. The triggered sensation and memory coexist in such an imbricated way, making it not easy to say that Ana *caused* the discomfort. Thus, this triggering can be better understood as the convergence of, at least, Newen's embodied past, the places where these happened—in plain sight of other classmates at school—and Ana's actions as a woman's body. The places are significant since they activated in Newen a fearful fantasy that the students from the other school could use his relationship with Ana to hurt him again. This fantasy was fed by his feeling of living in a small and tightly connected city and by the fact that some students from that school also transferred to the new one—"these people started to look at whom I considered like, people with whom I hung out now to uhm keep ehm in some way hurting me" (Newen intraview 2, 00:36:16).

Adapting the method of the second intraview, I read[17] each segment of the written paragraph cited above, and together we explored further how he felt at those moments.

> Bárbara: M sure. And mmm and do you remember for example, I don't know, like, the first or firsts times that (she) took you from the hand or something like that
>
> Newen: Mmm
>
> Bárbara: Or any time that had been particularly special, weird, awkward, like…

[17] Newen was the only participant who preferred me to read the segments, as his parents were at home.

Newen: [cheek rests on his hand] I mean the first times obviously for me were like, uncomfortable because I said "what is she doing?!!" hh hh [nervous chuckle, lowers the hand]

Bárbara: Mhm [smiles]

Newen: Eehh but later like… simply like I got used to it. But, ho-however like if another person tried to be like closer like eh like a physical contact, I don't know *po* like 'Ah gimme a hug!' I was going to tell them like 'no, no thank you, out!' hh hh I want my personal space hh hh [chuckles]

Bárbara: Mhm

Newen: Eeh so like I became accustomed only, to her.

(Newen intraview 2, 00:37:46)

There are two scenes in this quote. First, there is Ana who abruptly held his hand without asking, which surprised him and made him feel uncomfortable. However, he did not reject her directly. Second, other classmates may ask for a hug but are eagerly rejected and pushed away—"no, no thank you, out!". With Ana, at the beginning, there was surprise and uneasiness—"what is she doing?!" —, even attempts to avoid her hand-holding and a gesture to put the hand away. It might be that the repetition of these uncomfortable 'being done to' re-wrote the archives of physical touch, making it more comfortable with time. Thus, later enabling Newen to respond to Ana's gesture of holding his hand, "much later, before, at the beginning like [inhales] like I tried to move away hehe" (Newen intraview 2, 00:41:03).

In addition, frequent mentions of "move way" and "I want my personal space" explicitly state his desire to maintain a proxemic distance. However, it may also talk about another space he is avoiding, shared intimacy. Getting used to Ana touching him may also produce the possibility of a future comfortable shared space that feels intimate.

Former and current sensations of others having access to his body against his will, but differently—maybe with care or a sense of recognition—are intermeshed in these

scenes. Yet this does not mean he did not feel some aggressiveness in Ana's doing at first. Interestingly, in the written story, he used "holding his hand", but when we spoke, he used "grabbed":

> Newen: (…) always like, she said "seat with me" and all and suddenly like she grabbed me from the hand [chuckles] in class or simply we were like holding hands in class and it was like that kind of closeness that it wasn't with the others girls.
>
> (Newen intraview 2, 00:30:24)

The words in Spanish were "*tomar*" (take/hold) and "*agarrar*" (grab). The emergence of grabbing substituting taking or holding struck me in the intraview due to its sexual[18] and aggressive connotations since, in Chile, grabbing is also slang that can refer to either fighting or kissing.

So, I will try to explore the intensities of these experiences further.

> Bárbara: Mhm. But if she grabbed your hand it was like "Ah, Pah!" And she grabbed you the hand like that, and you stayed like grabbed by the hand?
>
> Newen: I mean, no *po*, [looks to the ceiling and rests his chin on his fist] for example if we were walking out of nothing suddenly she gets close to me suddenly for example if I had the hand-- (I) always was with the hands in the pockets of the jacket [does the gesture of putting hands in jacket's pocket] and she put her hand too and grabbed the hand in the pocket for example [same gesture but with a wrapping effect].
>
> (Newen intraview 2, 00:38:10)

At that time, I did not have words to express the intensity I felt when he used "grabbing", like something abrupt and sort of aggressive: "Ah! Pah!" and a hand gesture of crossing an arm in front of me to grab something in the air was what emerged. Yet Newen's reply narrated this scene softly, giving the sensation that "grabbing" was more related to the

[18] Unfortunately, the blurriness of the sexuality of Newen and Ana's encounters cannot be addressed here.

impact of the suddenness, whose intensity is evident in "out of nothing, suddenly she gets close to me suddenly". Also, "grabbing" could speak about the discomfort of the first times, which then melted into each time more pleasant, holding hands together. Moreover, it might be possible to hypothesize that Newen's gesture of a wrapping effect of Ana's hand in his pocket tells something of the caring tenderness in her gesture.

At this point, it is possible to think of the specific scene described in the quote above as materialising several intertwined affective spacetimes. One is the intense "somatic archive" of being harassed that makes physical contact uncomfortable and something to avoid, pushing Newen to "move away". Then there are the school's classrooms, corridors and yards that made him over-conscious about what people may think if they were seen holding hands, activating homophobic affects while also threatening him with more abuse from his harassers. The others' gaze may also hold and push the question of "who are you?" with the peer pressure of that school culture of knowing one's sexual desire and eagerly acting accordingly. Even though all the abovementioned can be thought of as discursive or psychic, they do push the body away, creating a distance, as if those (centi)metres could also make a distance from him and these crushing forces that are activated or enhanced by the physical touch at school.

More closely, there is his jacket covering his body, protecting him from the cold, and offering pockets. Pockets to cover or hide his hands, and maybe himself, or offering a way to be present but without much physically engaging with the environment. An attempt of an isolated embodied circuit, a closed subjectivity towards others—"always was with the hands in the pockets of the jacket". This closed circuit of hands-in-pockets is disrupted by Ana's hand suddenly sneaking into the pocket and holding his hand. The pocket thus worked as an unstable space where public and private overlapped, producing a space that could be both personal and shared. It may also enable the chance to resist the uncomfortableness of the touch—and the peer gaze—and stay with it a bit. Each time. Until it was not uncomfortable anymore, but nice. Something special that was theirs and different from the other girls.

Initially, I framed this handholding as 'non-consensual', following Newen's understanding, of doing something to someone against their will, making them feel uneasy because of it.

Newen: (…) is like a bit harassment, ha! because they take a picture of a person without their consent (while they are at class) (…) people that suffered that harassment felt uncomfortable, could not feel at ease (..) not even in class.

(Newen Intraview 1, 00:38:57)

But I don't think this frame is helpful to approach the complexities of his accounts. Moreover, Newen never even implied that what Ana did was without consent. It seems like there is uncomfortableness that is not felt as abusive. Perhaps Ana's caring attitude, combined with her unawareness of his past experiences and Newen's sensation that she had no bad intentions, let him feel this unwanted touching differently. To try to work through the discomfort, exploring the touch of caressing. Moreover, it may be that staying with the discomfort was what enabled him "getting used to only her", and later open up to the possibility of physical touch and proximity with other people—"(later) I did not feel that refusal of being close to someone" (Newen Intraview 2, 00:41:16).

At that time, Newen's feelings were difficult for him to grasp—"did not understand why but I felt strange, I could not distinguish my feelings fully". When we discussed this sentence of the written story in the second intraview, I asked him to try to distinguish them:

Bárbara: mhm (4 secs) uhm.. [smack lips] so then you say "I did not understand why but I felt strange, I could not distinguish my feelings fully". Aaannd now that you have a bit more distance, could you try to pull to pieces which were… some of the emotions that you felt, or the sensations maybe?

Newen: mm [rests chin in his fist] like to that feeling of nervousness but not the nervousness like negative, but like a tingling

Bárbara: mhm

Newen: eh and that was more than anything, like that feeling like, that when I was with her I could feel like, free [the fist in the chin opens into the air], so that was what made me feel like happier [caress his eyebrow].

Bárbara: mhm

Newen: But neither I can like remember much the feelings I had because at that time I still was like shut down emotionally.

(Newen intraview 2, 00:39:49)

With time, tingling nervousness and feelings of freedom and happiness made their way through the nothingness of Newen's emotional flatness. It is possible that the intra-actions of Ana's 'transgressions' and Newen's resistance to act on his embodied pulls of moving away co-produced some type of embodied 'healing'. It might be that staying with the discomfort enabled the re-production of experiences of touching and being touched with the emergence of affirmative sensations and feelings. Hence, a co- re-writing of his somatic archives.

It may be possible to think that these repeated holding hands re-produced time and time again a body for Newen that is seen and recognised in his queerness, a part-of him he had not embraced. So even though these repeated interactions at the beginning re-enacted former violent affects and memories, they, bit by bit, re-created parts of his body. They slowly diluted former violence constraints that kept bodily contact as an impossibility for him, fostering new capacities for relating socially and sexually.

In a more hypothetical stance, it may also be possible to say that there was some kind of power asymmetry between Ana and Newen that paralysed him while inviting him to explore. Perhaps Ana's history and her environment were more affirmative of her sexual desire, giving her more confidence to act in comparison to the crushing cis-heteronormative violence Newen suffered. In this way, there is something of Ana's affirmative desire in these holding hands that is lent to, shared with or spread to Newen (Clark, 2019). It was a transformative experience that first made him feel uncomfortable, then got used to it, and later enabled him to relate physically with other bodies.

As a result, through Newen's account, it is possible to re-think non-consensual touching as benefitting him. By co-creating an affirmative embodied existence for him, it augmented his body's possibilities for physical contact with others, thus cracking his isolated state.

7.3 Conclusion: What Can a Material-Discursive and Affective Intra-acting Approach Contribute to Debates on Consent?

Newen and Nicole's stories point out that sexuality can be uncomfortable since it involves the uncertainty and nervousness of the unpredictable and the new. Thus, feeling vulnerable and a bit uneasy would be a part-of these interactions, and closing oneself down can stop you from having the experience. Moreover, these stories show it is possible and even desirable to stay with the discomfort, to explore and try something new, when it feels safe yet it still does not feel nice. As argued by Saketoupoulou (2019, 2023), consent is excessively concerned with identifying boundaries so as not to cross them, keeping the ego comfortable and the same. Thus, resisting novelty and exploring what could feel edgy, but, as such, can also be transformational and rewarding. For both Nicole and Newen, the 'transgression' of boundaries, or better said, the together re-production of their bodies and bodily boundaries, helped them overcome walls and inhibitions built by former experiences of violence and thus re-writing "somatic archives" of touch, which helped them open up to more vulnerable relationships with others.

The analysis of these stories supports the feminist critiques on consent's humanist and individualist foundations, showing that a subject cannot be self-transparent, self-aware and in control of the situation all the time while flirting. Entangled with the described cis-heterosexist affects in Nicole's story, there was a complex mixture of, at least, what she thought she should do—study and stay out of peers' attention—, what she feared—another experience of dating violence—and her desire for Mateo; evidencing that making sexual decisions is much more complicated for young women than choosing what you want (Angel, 2022). In Newen's accounts, there were previous experiences of homophobic violence and an emotional void or flatness that impeded him from knowing himself and what he wanted, leaving him to navigate the encounters as they came and as he could most of the time.

In contrast with humanist individualist approaches to consent that consider sexual boundaries as personal likes and dislikes that can be known beforehand (Reinicke, 2022), a posthuman analysis of these stories showed a new way of thinking of bodily boundaries as co-produced within each encounter. Moreover, this perspective helps to think about desire and the possibility to consent as an intersubjective phenomenon instead of an individual identifiable property (Clark, 2019). In different ways, both stories portrayed these relationalities not as one person's desires that push against another person's boundaries, but desires that circulate or are offered to the other to borrow until they feel comfortable to feel it or embrace it for themselves (Clark, 2019). For example, one can say that Mateo's desire to be together in public was lent to, or slowly seduced, Nicole until she could feel it as her own. Similarly, Ana's wanting for physical closeness could later be recognised in Newen's getting used to and corresponding to the gesture. In both instances, this might also be understood as a re-writing of a somatic archive.

Furthermore, exploring how cis-heteronormative discourses are felt and constrain the body's capacities to do/feel as "cis-heterosexist affects" contributes with empirical evidence to insist on the crucial relevance of including power dynamics within flirting and consent negotiations. Thinking with "cis-heterosexist affects" creates an intertwined approach to the simultaneous material-discursive and affective emergence of these felt pushes while also showing how these can emerge in the space of the intraview as word choices and facial or bodily gestures. In addition, it is crucial to have an intersectional approach to "cis-heterosexist affects" since, for both Nicole and Newen, there was an intense pressure to perform academically due to their working-class backgrounds. This pressure limited their possibilities for even considering sexual engagement while also working as a veil for their vulnerability stemming from their experiences with violence.

Moreover, Nicole's and Newen's 'non-consensual' encounters illustrate and support the argument that consent is not enough to address the complexity of sexual encounters. Considering the caring attention and recognition present in both Mateo and Ana's 'transgressions', the analysis supports and expands feminist research in education that emphasises mutuality and recognition as crucial complements to consent, transcending

rational, verbal negotiations (Bartlett et al., 2019; Lamb et al., 2021). Both terms refer to a caring approach that attempts to embrace a thick view of the other in a situated way, considering disparities of power and privilege. This might be less evident in Ana's approaches, but it is clear in Nicole's account of how Mateo behaved with her. This recognition has been theorised as "loving attention" to the other's alterity by Lamb et al. (2021, p. 274) who define mutuality as a complement to consent. Creating these spaces of awareness of the other person is also stressed by Bartlet and colleagues (2019) as an ethics of care while flirting that exceeds consent. Clarke (2019) and Saketoupolou (2023) also emphasise this kind of bond as a baseline to have a secure connection and be attuned to the other, which allows letting go of control and letting oneself be moved and transformed by sexual encounters.

Hence, this study also contributes to advancing proposals for ethical sexual relationalities that surpass rational verbal negotiations by highlighting affective relational attunement as a relational orientation characterised by the capacity to feel, notice and tune into the non-representational aspects of somatic interplay within an encounter (Willink & Shukri, 2018). In Baradian terms, Dos Santos defines affective attunement as a "mutually affective response-ability", where 'individuals' open up to "affecting and being affected by another (human or non-human, material and conceptual, animate or inanimate) body" (2022, p. 263). Furthermore, Dos Santos (2022) adds that response-ability entails being attentive to the emergent qualities of experiences and allowing ourselves to see and hear more, and differently. Thus, it also requires relinquishing expected outcomes, even those—maybe especially those—that dictate how things should be.

8. Conclusion

Introduction

Through the study of flirting, this research sheds light on the current political struggles and tensions between feminist activism and traditional norms regarding gender, sexuality and relationships. To address how feminist activism might shape flirting encounters among teenagers in Chile, I selected topics from the data that, in one way or another, pertained to feminist ethics for relating sexually without violence and emotional exploitation. These topics encompassed accounts and discussions of funas, comments on consent, instances of 'non-consensual' moments, and discussions and accounts related to AR. Based on the material-discursive and affective entanglements of flirting and these feminist topics, this research makes four distinctive contributions to knowledge:

1. A conceptualisation of 'funa fear' as a fantasy that offers a new way of understanding the mechanism through which funas shape the flirting practices of heterosexual young men.
2. An intra-active conceptualisation of consent that emphasises affective attunement.
3. A reconceptualisation of AR that rejects postfeminist individualisation and trust in direct verbal communication and responsibility, in favour of an ethics of relationalities that emphasise differences in power and recognises the importance of the materiality and the digital encounters.

Together, these first three contributions offer a reconceptualisation of flirting that acknowledges the diverse material, discursive and affective elements that constitute any instance of flirting. The reader might notice the order is different than the chapters' order. This is because it allows me to work better with the overlapping contributions of AR and consent. The fourth contribution pertains to the methods:

4. A distinctive methodological approach that combines intraviews, fragments of written texts and free association to highlight the material and affective aspects in flirting accounts.

The first half of this conclusion elaborates on each of these contributions, noting how they enhance or expand upon the existing literature. The second half examined both 'personal' and other aspects of the limitations of this research, concluding with reflections on the further possibilities of this study.

8.1 Theoretical and Methodological Contributions

8.1.1 A Conceptualisation of 'Funa Fear' as a Fantasy That Offers a New Way of Understanding the Mechanism Through Which Funas Shape the Flirting Practices of Heterosexual Young Men

In Chapter 5, I theorised funas as contingent, multiple and dynamic material-discursive and affective intra-actions. This approach facilitated the identification of various co-constitutive elements of funas while focusing on the fear among heterosexual men of being denounced in the future for sexual violence, as also found by other researchers in education (Brady et al., 2018; Holmström et al., 2020; Setty, 2021, 2022). I conceptualised this fear as a fantasy, shedding light on how this fear emerges and its potential to shape the flirting practices of young heterosexual men.

The entanglements that co-constitute a funa were the starting point to unpack how the funa fear fantasy emerged among these teenagers. I described the intra-actions between three key elements that heightened each other and fed the fear of being denounced in the future among the men in my sample. Firstly, there was the overwhelming materiality of the posted image and testimony of sexual violence, and its consequent affective impact that spread (Jenkins, 2010) through both online and offline networks, demanding social exclusion. Secondly, there is the social response to these accusations, where women are more believed and supported within their social groups. If someone doubts the testimony, they can be implicated along with the accused. Thirdly, there are men's affective responses as targets and spectators to this social phenomenon, which, in the case of these friends, included fear, resignation and cluelessness.

Mixed with their efforts to be empathetic with women's vulnerability to sexual harassment, I identified misogynistic fantasies portraying women as capricious, vindictive or unreliable. The way these young men attempted to make sense of the

sexual violence cases around them tapped into male victimhood discourses that diminish the abuser's responsibility with misogynistic depictions of women, thus constructing a clueless persona of the sexual harasser. This is significant because, contrary to the defensive purpose associated with male victimhood discourses (Banet-Weiser, 2021), the portrayal of the funao, or the subject of the funa, as a clueless passive victim amplifies young men's uncertainty and anxiety. This is because, on the one hand, as these misogynistic discourses suggest, it might be possible that any man could be punished for something they did not do.

But, on the other hand, these men—who did not consider themselves capable of mistreating women and vehemently rejected canchero approaches—discussed the possibility of being punished for something one did not realise one was doing. This possibility arises from the myth that sexual violence occurs due to miscommunication and from their cluelessness, revealed by their surprise when "being taught" by feminism, which re-emerges as a threat. They feel perplexed about what could 'bother' a woman. In addition, this perplexity is exacerbated by the downplaying of men's sense of agency through the discursive portrayal of men as passive and by the "potent" impact of funas that leave men without a chance to defend themselves.

I demonstrated at least two ways that these men rejected canchero approaches to women. One was by presenting themselves as different from those disrespectful men. Another was through embodied rejection, manifested through affects such as disgust, a mood-killing sensation, or Jose's body turning to ice. However, the complex and sometimes contradictory entanglements mentioned above create a scenario where any man could be violent, and anyone could be subjected to a funa. The concept of fantasy aided in understanding why these men feared they could engage in something they viscerally rejected. Fantasies are conscious or unconscious imagined scenarios that materialise affects and demonstrate the embodied affective grip of discourse. This helps us think about how potential scenarios may shape actual occurrences and how we make sense of the world.

So, even though the testimonies of sexual violence focus on specific individuals, the affectively intense grassroots pervasiveness of funas and their impact on social groups create a potential scenario where violence becomes a possibility that lies in between

men simply because they are men. This blurs individual differences among men and impedes their chances of shaking off the issue through "disassociating" (Burrell, 2020) or "discursive distancing" from violent men (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). In this regard, Allan's (2018) and Sedgewick's (2003) approach to shame can be useful to address the blurring of individual differences and the creation of this sticky relationality that somehow lumps all men together.

I thus proposed another way of thinking about paranoia within masculinity (Allan, 2018; Kimmel, 1994). In this instance, paranoia spreads since funas potentially happen to anyone. Individuals who possess more knowledge than you—whether feminists, women or your social group—may shame you in the future for not adhering to the standards of being a 'good man'. Paranoia prompts actions aimed at preventing or mitigating the likelihood of a funa. In this way, the fear of a funa as a paranoid fantasy can change some men's practices towards women, bypassing a feminist, discourse-oriented understanding of gendered violence as structural/societal. The consequences of this fantasy on young men are unpredictable, potentially influencing how they interact with young women in everyday situations, such as when Franco said he now avoids commenting on his women-friends' appearance, like when he greeted them with "Hi gorg!", out of concern that it might "bother" them or it could backfire later on.

This new conceptualisation of funas and the fear of being called out reframes the feminist debate on the potential of the digital public shaming of abusers to combat sexual violence and promote greater equality within sexual relationalities. This debate has swung between the punitive individualisation of the harasser and addressing the structural societal causes of violence against women—referred to as patriarchy, rape culture, toxic masculinity and so on (Bonavitta et al., 2020; Giudice, 2020; Vera Gajardo, 2022). However, considering this fear through the lens of fantasy offers an alternative perspective to this dichotomous debate. I demonstrated how, through the complex and varied entanglements that produce both funas and the funa fear fantasy, the distinctions between individuals are blurred, and the potential for violence lies among men, making it challenging for them to disassociate themselves discursively and perhaps motivating some changes in their behaviour. Therefore, by emphasising the crucial role of affects and online materialities, I provided a perspective less rooted in cognitive processes and

the individual/social divide, which encompasses an affectivity that can sometimes be deemed irrational.

8.1.2 An Intra-active Conceptualisation of Consent That Emphasises Affective Attunement.

Through my analysis of the co-production of bodies and bodily boundaries in accounts of 'non-consensual' situations, in Chapter 7, I suggested considering consent as a dynamic entanglement of affective attunement. I explored the flirting accounts of two teenagers, identified respectively as a cis-heterosexual woman and a trans man. Both had histories heavily influenced by gendered discourses on sexual behaviour, some of which were imposed through physical violence, restricting what they were able to feel, want or do.

I unpacked these flirting scenes, placing emphasis on the role of affects and materiality, in addition to discourses. Initially, I examined the influence of gendered violence by identifying it across their accounts, which then shed light on the specific scenes I was interested in. I termed these "cis-heterosexist affects" to point out how cis-heterosexist discourses alter a body's capacity to act or feel. Mapping how these discourses came to matter in each situation allowed me to discern how "somatic archives" (Kyrölä & Paasonen, 2016) of violence shaped their flirting possibilities. I also mapped how specific intra-actions with bodies, objects and locations activated these archives; for instance, the fear of being seen—and subsequently judged or violated—that the school building elicited in both teenagers.

I mapped the emergence of bodies and bodily boundaries at various moments in each 'blurry' scene. I operated with a definition of the body as decentred and non-individual, a sensuous and dynamic entity continuously produced, transformed and moved by its multiple relationalities with other bodies, objects and space. Therefore, the scope of the body is fluid and dynamic, as are its boundaries. Consequently, an intra-active body transcends its flesh, and its boundaries do not necessarily align with the skin.

To unpack how these bodies and their boundaries were co-constructed, I first analysed how the identified cis-heterosexist affects emerged from the specific material arrangements. I viewed the location not as mere context but as constitutive of bodies and what actions were possible and how. Consequently, I could delineate different

bodies and boundaries across various locations and with different objects. I also observed gestures during the intraviews that were particularly insightful for mapping, for instance, how Nicole's necessary distance took the form of a wall. Exploring this distance and how it was breached and transformed was helpful to think about bodily boundaries and their dynamic contingency. In this context, "hapticity" (Mølbak, 2010) proved useful in broadening the body's capacity for action and feeling, allowing consideration of how gazes at school or online interactions constitute bodily boundaries and ways of being touched.

This perspective on bodily boundaries helps us consider flirting as an intra-acting co-production of bodily boundaries, where relationalities are continually and dynamically shaped by the interplay of various material-discursive and affective elements in different contexts. By adopting this approach, I could re-turn (Barad, 2014) to these recounted scenes and focus more on how these situations, which could be framed as non-consensual since they went against the narrator's will, were not recognised as such by these teenagers. On the contrary, considering their recurrence, my analysis suggested they had affirmative outcomes for their lives, enhancing their opportunities to connect physically and emotionally with others. While exploring these complex situations, I introduced a novel perspective on sexual encounters that highlights a relational affective attunement. This is because both these stories contained a sense of feeling seen and recognised in their vulnerabilities, even when the 'trespassers' made them uncomfortable or disagreed with their explicit wishes.

The emphasis is less on communication and agreements and more on feeling and sensing the other, taking into account the power imbalances at play. By highlighting affective attunement, I extend research that has explored consent as *con-sentir*, the Latin term that means to feel with (Clark, 2019; Whittington, 2021). Affective attunement, drawing from my data and Dos Santos' (2022) Baradian work, involves an interplay between human and non-human elements, matter and concepts, creating an entanglement that language cannot fully capture. Bodies attune to each other and the emergent qualities of experiences, which encompass response-ability to difference and power imbalances. This somatic orientation, which embraces the affective and non-representational intra-actions of the encounter, provides a distinct framework for considering how to relate and interact sexually while caring for the other.

The posthuman perspective of this study supports and expands feminist research in education that emphasises mutuality and recognition as crucial complements to consent, transcending rational, verbal negotiations (Bartlett et al., 2019; Carmody, 2015; Lamb et al., 2021). However, my approach to ethical sexual encounters is also valuable in discussions of affirmative consent. Firstly, because it aligns with feminist critiques of the foundations of consent, particularly the pressing need to address power dynamics (Beres, 2020; Brady et al., 2018; Bragg et al., 2020; Cense, 2019; Coy et al., 2013; Setty, 2021; Whittington, 2021). Secondly, because it broadens and proposes an alternative to address feminist critiques against the neoliberal individual who must be aware in advance of what they want or feel (Brady et al., 2018; Gilbert, 2018; Saketopoulou, 2019; Munro, 2008 in Setty et al., 2022). I demonstrated how "cis-heterosexist affects" illustrate how discourses are felt and alter the body's capacities to feel/act. This concept also implies that the subject-as-a-body is co-produced within, not separate from, power imbalances. Consequently, it complicates and challenges notions of consent often found in research on consent with young people (Brady et al., 2018; Bragg et al., 2020; Gilbert, 2018) which assume a neoliberal, discrete, coherent and transparent subject with precise and knowable desires, compelled to resist/conform to social pressures.

By focusing on the role of material objects and space, and embodied affects in flirting encounters, I offered a dynamic that is less prone to neoliberal individualisation and self-responsibilisation as an alternative to address the complexities of consent. My approach can thus complement consent models focused on transactions and verbal/non-verbal communication (Holmström et al., 2020; Righi et al., 2021), aiding in the process of overcoming the miscommunication myth that shapes both consent-based prevention programmes and defensive, anti-feminist or misogynist positions (Beres, 2020; O'Byrne et al., 2006).

Another contribution to discussions about consent involves the theorisation of the body and its boundaries. As argued in the literature review, the body is an undiscussed given in these debates. The implications of this are more pressing when addressing online sexual encounters because it has been argued that the physical distance from the other's flesh during online interactions creates a false sense of control or security (Mortensen, 2017; Pinsky, 2019). This false sense of security contributes to the dismissal of technology-facilitated, sometimes image-based, gender-based sexual harassment and

abuse (Horeck et al., 2023b; Ringrose et al., 2022; Ringrose, Regehr, & Milne, 2021; Ringrose, Whitehead, et al., 2019). Hence, this contingent and dynamic understanding of bodily boundaries can help emphasise the need to take these acts of violence seriously.

Finally, in dialogue with psychoanalysis, I offered another perspective to contemplate the opaque alterity of the other (Clark, 2019; Saketopoulou, 2023). Perhaps not necessarily because there is an unconscious, but because every part of us and our experiences are dynamically, relationally and contingently co-produced, which always entails an amount of uncertainty and unknowability. Furthermore, this approach materially expands thinking about desire and the possibility of consent as constituted within social discourses instead of as an individual identifiable property (Srinivasan, 2021) or as an intersubjective phenomenon (Clark, 2019), further complicating neoliberal affirmative consent.

Taken together, the implications of these conceptualisations mean there are fewer possibilities to anticipate our bodily boundaries, what could/will happen or how one could/will feel. Thus, there is a certain margin where there are no guarantees which transactional consent models cannot fully cover, even when emphasising ongoingness. Instead, I encourage a closer look into the material and sensual parts of sexual encounters. This is an opportunity to engage with the complexity of sexual encounters without trying to structure them through ethical norms about how they should be and focusing more on how we sense our way through encounters with others, which is something that affective attunement stresses.

8.1.3 A reconceptualisation of AR that rejects postfeminist individualisation and trust in direct verbal communication and responsibility, in favour of an ethics of relationalities that emphasise differences in power and recognises the importance of the materiality and the digital encounters

In Chapter 6, I demonstrated the particular and different ways in which AR can materialise within flirting as an entangled part-of "postfeminist sensibilities" (Gill, 2017). AR, a feminist buzz term in Spanish-speaking media, stresses one's responsibility for how one's actions or omissions make the other feel, while also emphasising communication and honesty (Alvear Blau, 2020; López, 2019; Mahecha, 2022; Martín, 2021; Rubio, 2022). Among the teenagers in my sample, AR meant clearly expressing

one's desires from the beginning to avoid causing harm to yourself or others. I examined how two teenagers who identified with feminism in my sample implicitly or explicitly referred to AR and how that logic shaped what they could do in the flirting encounters they shared. Consequently, I identified several tensions that shed light on the entanglements that produce AR.

I first explored the tensions between the requirement of a clear naming of the relationship or what you want and the ideal of flow, which is perceived as a spontaneous and effortless connection. However, these tensions need not be understood as binary or linear. They did not function as contradictions that negate each other. Instead, they were productive of something else. In Andrea's case, they were both necessary to enjoy flirting, to "put a name on the door and then, then we go flowing", limiting the anxiety provoked by uncertainty and the chances of hurting the other when not acting according to their unspoken expectations. Thus, even when it is not successful in identifying our wants, naming could be a way of caring for the other and oneself amid uncertain flirting flows. On the other hand, for Piwke and his friend Carolina, naming would be one way of balancing the uncertain flow of flirting by gaining some sense of human agentic control. Yet this unilateral vision of AR that attempts to control the relationship and the other through words can provoke resistance within the same frame by seeking another name to "change the course" of the relationship.

I suggested that naming operated as a "postfeminist sensibility" part-of AR. I employed this term in accordance with Gill's (2017) definition of "postfeminist sensibility" as a sociocultural, psychic and affective logic within mainstream feminisms that favours individual empowerment, freedom, choice and constant self-improvement, prioritising happy and positive attitudes and feelings while marginalising 'bad' emotions. Postfeminist sensibility is evident in AR's trust in the power of communication to shape relationships and avoid 'bad' feelings and its emphasis on individual responsibility to identify and communicate one's wants and care to avoid harming the other.

A posthuman approach to AR emphasises that materiality transcends an assembled context. The arrangement of material objects played a significant role in the establishment of romantic/monogamous or heteronormative ways of relating, which, in turn, shaped how AR can be done. Most of the time, in these cases, each material element contributed to creating an affective atmosphere that pushed the encounter

towards normative mono-hetero-romantic patterns. I identified how these normative forces came to matter in sometimes paradoxical ways through a complex entanglement of material arrangements and affects that may or may not be aligned with explicit or implicit discourses. For instance, the verbal assertion of "not wanting a serious relationship" clashes with a romantic (material-discursive and) affective atmosphere and a caressing hand in Piwke's story. This misalignment exacerbates the power imbalances stemming from, among other factors, Piwke's desire and emotional involvement with Tomás, thereby undermining Piwke's purported freedom and agency during that conversation to speak about his excitement about the chance of dating Tomás.

Another example is found in Andrea's accounts of sending nudes due to inertia, where the postfeminist sexual empowerment discourse aligns with the sexy pictures and videos on Andrea's Instagram grid. However, at the same time, these images compel her to conform to her former persona and to the sexual desires of men requesting nudes, thereby reinforcing men's power over women's bodies. Nevertheless, discussing (mis)alignments is misleading because I do not see them as distinct enough to (mis)align. Still, the figure helps illustrate the importance of paying closer attention to the material arrangements and embodied sensations during the accounts, in addition to discourses, to develop a more nuanced and comprehensive perspective of these situations.

I thus emphasised the importance of conceptualising AR not solely as a postfeminist discourse on sexual ethics, but rather as an intra-active material-discursive and affective entanglement that shapes the possibilities of sexual relations. These entanglements include, but are not limited to, these feminist discourses intertwined with mono-heteronormative discourses. They also encompass the material arrangements that activate these discourses, thereby creating affective atmospheres (Anderson, 2009) that modify what bodies can feel or do in specific encounters. Focusing on the material and affective dimensions provides a way to address power imbalances and illustrate what happens when these elements align (or do not) in creating an encounter, producing contradictory potential becomings.

This perspective enhances our understanding of the complexity inherent in operationalising these feminist ideals, thereby contributing to the academic and media

discussion of AR. My research on AR supports and expands upon feminist critiques of its neoliberal individualistic foundations, which posit that the individual subject must know themselves and what they want beforehand (Gilbert, 2018). These critiques also apply to the excessive focus on honesty and verbal communication seen in foundational books on polyamory (Anapol, 2012; Easton & Hardy, 2009). Since these concerns are also relevant to consent, I addressed them in the preceding subsection. Here, I want to delve deeper into the psychoanalytical critique, which identifies an excessive trust in the power of verbal communication to manage part of the uncertainties of relationships and to shape them as a guarantee to avoid 'bad' feelings (Kohan, 2019). I demonstrated how this excessive trust operates and its impact on the development of encounters. I also challenged its power by shedding light on the influence of the material and affective to shape these encounters as well.

Within this excessive focus on verbal communication, present both in AR and polyamory literature, I identified another risk. Within these two logics, the emphasis on the beginning and the prioritisation of verbal, face-to-face communication over non-verbal and online communication is strong enough to reshape a relationship's narrative and its material and affective sense-making. This influence may extend to the point of relocating the beginning to the moment when and where the conversation framed as "stating things clearly" occurred. For example, in Piwke's story with Tomás, the Instagram tagging truth-or-dare episode was initially identified as the beginning. However, as the story unfolded, the beginning was relocated to the date night when Tomás stated he did not want anything serious.

Furthermore, my analysis contributes to the debate regarding the potential tendency of AR's individualisation to encourage blaming the other (McLeod, 2017). My analysis complicates this critique by demonstrating that individualisation alone is inadequate to promote the projection of responsibility to the other. On the contrary, given that both Piwke and Andrea were flirting with cisgender men in their narratives, I illustrated how gendered power imbalances, particularly male privilege, led Andrea to identify herself as being the one at fault or as the problem, while Piwke diffused responsibilities.

Overall, this conceptualisation provides an alternative to the dichotomous autonomist/relational approach to AR that I identified in the literature, broadening its relationality beyond individual humans. It also aligns with other feminist scholarship by

emphasising the critical importance of including a sensitivity to the power imbalances at work when having this kind of conversation (Bragg et al., 2020; Setty, 2021)—a sensitivity that could operate in a similar manner to the affective attunement I suggested for consent.

8.1.4 A Distinctive Methodological Approach That Combines Intraviews, Fragments of Written Texts and Free Association to Highlight the Material and Affective in Flirting Accounts

There are several aspects to my methodological contribution. Firstly, I presented ways of using the psychoanalytic free association method when conducting research within posthuman frameworks. In alignment with this, I proposed a posthuman extension of Mølbak's interviewing method, which is grounded in written stories about experiences of flirting. Below, I explain these contributions and then provide details of the effectiveness of combining these methods to map the specific ways in which material arrangements enact discourses, shape embodied sensations and recreate bodies in flirting encounters.

For this study, the psychoanalytical free association method entailed an instruction to communicate whatever came to mind without holding any thought (Holmes, 2013). It requires a conscious effort to avoid self-censorship due to relevance, pertinence or discomfort. However, the precise way in which I deployed this instruction differed in the three intraviews. In the first, where I asked teenagers to tell me whatever came to mind regarding '*coqueteo'* (flirting), free association took precedence. This intraview was the closest to resembling a typical unstructured free association interview, where the interviewee directs the conversation and the interviewer is supposed to intervene as little as possible. However, adopting a posthuman intraview lens on this entails considering associations not solely as generated by the subject-intraviewee, but as co-produced by the material-discursive and affective intra-actions that are part-of the encounter. This means the intraviewer's interventions do not 'contaminate' the flow of associations. At the same time, it acknowledges the role of diverse materialities in the production of what is said and how it is expressed, such as each other's bodily gestures, background objects and the (mis)functioning of technological devices and connectivity. In this intraview, as also occurs with the more typical method, asking the participants

about what comes to mind disrupts the linear narrative and the narrator, who is open to being interrupted by 'themselves': how what they are saying in the encounter affects them. For instance, this is illustrated in the Methods chapter when I asked Daniel if he wanted to add anything else and he responded "No, nothing more", only to then continue adding details he had just recalled—"I remember that apart, that why we were getting closer … the sun started to eat the bench" (Daniel intraview 2, 00:16:09).

In the third intraview, the teenagers could invite friends for a semi-structured conversation centred around five questions. Here, asking them to say whatever came to mind was aimed at framing the conversation as a safe, non-judgmental space. This played a crucial role in enabling them to express unpopular opinions, such as their disagreements with feminism, or to bring up topics I had not anticipated, such as grooming by adults. However, this may have also been facilitated by the rapport established with the main participant during the two previous encounters. This rapport could have framed the space of the third intraview or may have been somewhat transferred to their friends. This possibility suggests the potential benefits of reversing the order of interventions when designing research projects with young people, considering conducting group sessions at the end of fieldwork rather than at the beginning.

The second intraview was particularly significant as I developed a posthuman adaptation of Mølbak's method by combining it with intraviews and free association. It became posthuman by decentring the narrator and protagonist in the story, which was further facilitated by probing the fragments of the story through the intra-actions of the researcher and intraviewee with the written piece. As the researcher, my initial 'solitary' reading before the encounter produced affective excerpts of segments and promoted the formulation of questions through "data glow" (MacLure, 2013; Ringrose & Renold, 2014) and free association. These intra-ventions into the story prompted exploration for additional elements that could be at play in how the story unfolded, broadening the range of agents involved. On the side of the intraviewee, their reading aloud of the story's segments in the encounter created a space where both parties were open to being affected by the words through new associations in the form of ideas, gestures or sensations. Additionally, the possibility of interrupting our conversation with whatever

came to mind enhanced the decentring by momentary relinquishing control over the thread of the conversation.

These methodological practices enabled the consideration of objects, space and affects, focusing on the phenomenon as an entangled whole rather than solely the 'human experience' as reported by Mølbak's original method. An illustrative example of the efficacy of this combined method is the co-production of Daniel's story presented in the Methods chapter, detailing the almost-kiss with his friend while sitting on a bench that was being "eaten" by the sun rays, thus drawing their bodies closer. Therefore, in the second intraview, free association, as an affective method, was brought into dialogue with a posthuman methodological orientation to explore human and non-human agents and intra-actions in the encounters co-created by the researcher and research participants.

Combining the three methods—intraviews, free association and Mølbak's interviews about a written flirting story—proved to be helpful in approaching accounts from a posthuman perspective. Together, they highlighted the role of objects, space, emotions and sensations. These methods facilitated the decentring of subjects as the main agents of the account while enabling an open exploration of typically overlooked, unforeseen or allegedly irrelevant elements within flirting moments. However, analysing how the materiality shaped the encounter and what/how was communicated was largely made possible because the encounters were online and videorecorded, and complemented by my annotations on my journal reflecting on my feelings/thoughts after each intraview. Examples of this can be found in my analysis of power imbalances evident in the hand movements during Piwke's narrative performance of his date with Tomás, and Nicole's 'wall' that separated her from Mateo in the story and the intraview.

Another perspective on the contribution of these methods to posthuman research with accounts is by using free association as an affective research tool, both to co-produce and analyse data. Allowing myself to freely associate helped me to pay detailed attention to how the encounters—within intraviews and with data—affected me. Thus, it was useful for holding myself accountable for how they might have mattered in terms of how the research developed and the knowledge produced. Therefore, my proposal to employ free association as an affective research tool contributes to scholarly work on affective

research (Hickey-Moody, 2013; MacLure, 2013; Mehrabi, 2020; Ringrose & Renold, 2014) and studies that draw from Barad's (2007) ethic-onto-epistemology, addressing how researchers and research create the world while 'studying' it (Meissner, 2017; Murris & Bozalek, 2019; Renold et al., 2021; Springgay & Truman, 2018; Strom et al., 2019).

Combining these three data production methods under an intra-active lens proved to be productive in generating rich and detailed data that helped in understanding the intertwining of discourses, materiality and affectivity in specific ways. By encouraging closer attention to intra-actions, I was able to map how specific material arrangements of objects and places materialise discourses and shape flirting encounters. For example, in Chapter 6, it facilitated an exploration of the co-produced romantic and monogamous atmosphere during Piwke's date with Tomás while sightseeing at a lake on a starry night, with hand caressing. This is particularly relevant as it illustrates Barad's (2007) conceptualisation of discourses as material arrangements, thus offering a concrete approach to understanding discourses beyond the psychosocial realm.

In this vein, the methods employed in this study facilitated a distinctive exploration of normative discourses and power dynamics and how these are felt during flirting. Moreover, they shed light on how discourses and power imbalances can materialise in the space of the intraview. An illustrative case in Chapter 7 was the illusion of a wall manifested by Nicole's gestures while narrating various instances where she physically kept Mateo at a distance. This wall was co-produced by various factors, including affective somatic archives of past violence, discursive pressures of sexual double standards and the economic pressures to excel in her studies to secure a scholarship. Therefore, it is possible to see different material-discursive and affective elements converging in what was said and done during the intraview. Furthermore, recognising this distance as a wall when revisiting the intraview video recording enriched the analysis of her accounts of Mateo's 'trespasses', prompting me to think differently about the notions of distance and touch.

Additionally, the distinctive efficacy of these methods offers us a means to explore how materiality is entangled with embodied sensations and sense-making. This was possible as most of these entanglements can be accessed through accounts. While some might

argue that these accounts could have been enhanced by the direct observation of the events, as achieved in self-ethnographies (Lambevski, 2005; Pedersen et al., 2017), there is some agreement that observation inevitably influences the flirting encounter and the opportunities to form a subsequent account of it (Bianciotti, 2015; Rincón Aponte, 2014; Trysnes, 2019). This holds true even when individuals are unaware of being observed, which raises other ethical issues. Through this project, I believe I have presented a compelling argument for eschewing direct observation when studying complex intimacies that traverse the online-offline continuum and are thus harder to observe, which is even more crucial when conducting research with minors. Moreover, exploring the material setting via the intraview account provides primary access to the participant's fantasy of the space, rather than beginning from the researcher's perception, which is a critical aspect, as demonstrated in cases such as Daniel's bench-eating sun.

This project's methodological contributions extend beyond studies on sexual matters. They may appeal to any social science scholar seeking novel ways of conducting research with accounts of experiences, particularly within a postqualitative framework that highlights the intertwinement between discourses, materialities, affects and fantasies. This research provides conceptual and methodological tools to enrich the growing body of academic work that combines psychoanalytic and posthuman/new materialist theories (Grosz & Mercier, 2021; Hickey-Moody, 2019; Ringrose & Renold, 2012). It also broadens work that draws from Barad's agential realism and affect theory (Ringrose & Renold, 2014; Zarabadi, 2021), offering avenues to incorporate psychoanalytic insights, particularly concerning fantasy. Therefore, it represents a modest contribution to both psychosocial and posthuman approaches interested in working with different figures of affect theory (and together).

8.2 Reflections on My (and This Study's) Limitations

Working with a posthuman approach challenged me both as a researcher and as an individual. As an individual, I experienced the vertigo of contemplating myself and the world as non-unitary, unbounded and dynamic. When I mention vertigo, I mean it quite literally. There were times when I had to put down Barad's book *Meeting the Universe Halfway* because I had sensations of vertigo or became dizzy. It seemed that even the

suggestion of thinking about the world in this way triggered an embodied sensation of anxiety for me. Perhaps this was exacerbated by the fact that I was studying it during the first lockdown in 2020, which disrupted many aspects of our lives that we had previously taken for granted. Nonetheless, I still experience some of that sensation when explaining my theoretical standpoint to others. Initially, I found myself defending my position, asserting that it only applied to moments such as flirting, when one might be more open to being carried away by the back and forth of the encounter. However, over time, I grew more sensitive to considering my moods, for example, as shaped—'co-produced' still feels excessive—by 'my' surroundings.

As a researcher, I struggled to embrace an entirely consistent posthuman perspective of the world and encounters. It seemed to be in constant tension with how one perceives oneself as, to a certain extent, a coherent subject with a history and a particular understanding of the world. This tension was evident in the thesis when I was unable to abandon humanist language for posthuman language, if such a thing exists. Similarly, I encountered difficulty in decentring the teenagers within their stories. I chose to narrate the flirting stories from their perspective and wrote chapters around particular participants, resembling case studies, instead of mixing and analysing the data across all of the teenagers. Perhaps the issue relates to the expectations of what "decentring" would mean in practice. In this project, decentring meant paying attention to the effects of the materiality of the encounters while alleviating some of the pressure on the subjects. This form of decentring would be more akin to squinting until the image becomes blurry rather than dissolving or marginalising subjectivity.

On the theoretical side, throughout the whole project, I encountered tensions regarding what a posthuman study would look like and how to effectively convey its distinctiveness through written language. I must admit that these struggles sometimes led me to question my masochistic tendencies in choosing this theoretical perspective which seemed to make everything more difficult—which is a fantasy since every theoretical approach has its own challenges. However, maintaining an intra-active lens felt worthwhile every time I discovered something that surprised me when I attempted to challenge my initial ideas of what was occurring in a flirting story. I would sit down with the same extract and jot down all the ideas that came to mind about what else could be going on.

Another unsuccessful theoretical effort I made throughout the whole PhD was attempting to avoid using binaries as the main categories for analysing flirting. Three binaries emerged as the main framework I found when reviewing the literature on youth sexuality, which I did not wish to repeat. These binaries, and how they were articulated, resembled the following: there are *individuals* that possess agency to either *reproduce or resist* the *social*–structures, norms, discourses, and so on, and those possibilities depended on whether they were *women or men*—sometimes nuanced by an intersectional approach. I believe that I managed to decentre these categories as the central axis of my analysis but could not entirely avoid using them.

Moreover, I owe a debt to an intersectional approach as I did not emphasise class, gender, race or any other social category in my analysis. However, this was deliberate. I aimed to highlight power imbalances less rooted in social categories instead, such as differences in age and social status, or confidence in one's gender and sexual identity. However, this meant that I did miss some opportunities, such as omitting Piwke and Newen's Mapuche identity in the analysis.

I did not view my inability to speak fluent 'posthumanism' as a problem, nor did I find the combination of different theories with diverse onto-epistemologies to be an issue. To me, theoretical approaches are tools that we employ, and they transform us, but we do not owe them fidelity or exclusivity. In this project, I focused on applying theory to empirical analysis, emphasizing the analytical affordances of each concept to reconceptualize flirting and its constitutive elements. This approach required abandoning the desire for a consistent epistemological framework for the thesis, aiming instead for a thorough analysis and a novel understanding of flirting events.

With regard to the methods, I encountered other, yet entangled, limitations. Performing a fine-grained analysis similar to those I conducted for the flirting scenes was less feasible for the intraview moments and impossible for the encounters with data during the analysis. Besides the theoretical suggestion mentioned above, this was because I did not have the methods applied to myself. I did not undergo the experience narrated in text, where details are fragmented and probed for through free association by another person. Having someone else intraview me about a flirting story might have further opened up my position and entanglements with data.

I do not have an answer for why I did not do this, especially since Mølbak (2010) did something similar for his PhD, and several scholars are very open about their sexual experiences, especially those who use self-ethnography (Brown, 2008; Lambevski, 2005). I think there was/is a strong resistance to opening up my sexual experiences for the sake of the thesis. To me, including my flirting experiences felt exhibitionist, especially when these anecdotes are used to comply with theoretical demands without making a specific contribution to the analysis. However, my resistance did not mean I did not write or include my experiences in the analysis. I tried my best to delve deep into my history, thoughts and embodied sensations, which were plentiful during research and recorded in my journal. I resisted the resistance. But somehow, these aspects of myself were intertwined with extracts that, in the end, did not make it into the thesis. Perhaps the resistance unconsciously worked its way through the lengthy iterative selection process. Nevertheless, I think my resistance impacted my extra care with my participants' stories, vulnerability and privacy.

However, traces of this work can still be found, for example, in my reflection on my suicidal fantasies with Newen's story, which shaped how I relate with him, the data and the analysis. But nothing related to my former flirting experiences remained. One reaction that particularly surprised me was when Franco said he could tell if someone was flirting because they smile a lot, which instantly triggered a muscle contraction in both my cheeks—a felt, embodied memory from years ago brought me back to moments before going to bed after particularly flirtatious nights out clubbing, where I realised I might have smiled a lot, to the extent of causing muscle pain. Nonetheless, Franco's flirting stories did not make it into the thesis.

Furthermore, to address this limitation it could be possible to adapt the second intraview. Rather than focusing on flirting stories, it could delve into accounts of engaging in and analysing flirting stories. This approach would make it possible to unpack what I was feeling, sensing or thinking, and how these factors shaped the way I treated the intraviewees, conducted the intraviews, the data and the results of the analysis. While my journal was somewhat helpful for this exercise, it did not provide sufficient insights into how affectivity or materiality shaped what I could do/think/feel regarding the research. For example, the fieldwork in Chile was quite nomadic, as I juggled it with teaching responsibilities in the UK and waking up very early while

travelling around the country. During my visit to Chile, I stayed at various locations—my mother's, father's or mother-in-law's homes, or a cousin's vacation house—which were all in different regions and with varying climates. This meant that my surroundings changed and I had very different spaces for the intraviews. It was always private, but sometimes I had a desk, while at other times I sat on a couch. I even once sat on the floor, searching for a stable internet connection. I still remember the leg pain, which prompted me to conclude that particular intraview, which had already lasted 90 minutes. However, even more intriguing than analysing the locations where I conducted the intraviews, I believe it would be beneficial to have a tool for analysing my various emotional connections and how they evolved through the intraviews, transcriptions and analysis, including how these connections influenced the selection of the data published.

8.3 Further Reflections: What Else Can This Thesis Do?

The exploration of flirting as a politically relevant research topic has revealed the intricate dynamics shaping sexual encounters. This project challenged the individual/social axis conventionally considered when addressing normative power, while also shedding light on often-overlooked aspects of online/offline encounters. I emphasised the political significance of flirting, questioned the tendency to dismiss it as mere play and advocated for its recognition as a fundamental aspect of sexuality deserving serious scholarly attention. In doing so, this study contributes to scholarly work across various disciplines aimed at broadening the narrow focus on genitals and conventional notions of 'sex' when researching sexuality with young people (Austin, 2017; Bartlett et al., 2019; Hromadžić, 2015; Ingram, 2019; Osella & Osella, 1998). Furthermore, by focusing on flirting, this study offers insights to further comprehend the current political struggles and tensions between digital feminist activism, postfeminism and traditional normativity regarding gender, sexuality and relationships.

Expanding the scope beyond genital interactions and traditional notions of 'sex' carried significant political relevance. As highlighted in the thesis introduction, approaching sexuality with a narrow focus on genital sexual access frequently results in a hierarchical categorisation of sexual violence within both the law and public opinion. For example, despite the reforms enacted in Chile in 2023, instances of penetration carry greater legal consequences compared with other forms of sexual violation not

centred on the genitals. This disproportionate emphasis on specific acts neglects the seriousness of everyday sexual aggressions, ultimately undermining our ability to address and combat them effectively.

This study identifies and questions several binaries that underlie this hierarchy of sexual violence. One of these binaries is the notion that offline encounters hold greater significance than online interactions, thereby downplaying the emotional and embodied impact of online interactions. This belief is rooted in misconceptions that the body is absent in online spaces, prioritising physical touch over online or haptic interactions, thus overlooking the latter's impact on bodies. The thesis presents examples illustrating the embodied impact of online or haptic encounters, such as the felt connection through a gaze in a classroom or a cat sticker on WhatsApp. Existing research has documented instances of emotional distress caused by receiving unsolicited dick pics (Pinsky, 2019; Ringrose, Whitehead, et al., 2019) or experiencing lewd gazes from afar (Bartlett et al., 2019). This thesis contributes further instances and theorisation regarding the significance of these modes of touch.

There is also a prevailing belief that sexual violence is perpetrated by one or several individual human harassers. Although not the focus of this thesis, my analysis of the "potent" impact of funas, alongside my work with colleagues on trolling (Berger Correa et al., 2024; Xie et al., 2022), highlights the strength of the networked accumulation of likes, comments, emojis or posts and how these networked assemblages often diverge from the initial posters' intentions and take on a 'life on their own'. My analysis revealed how entangled materialities can drive both feminist activism and normative pressures without there necessarily being a human intention 'behind' them. This complexity makes attributing specific actions to humans or even discrete non-human agents challenging. My research exemplified this with the "spreadable" (Jenkins, 2010) quality of funas and how Andrea's Instagram profile grid pushed her to continue sending nudes to men. Understanding social media-facilitated violence as networked online/offline accumulative assemblages deepens our understanding of cases such as that of Katy Winter mentioned in the introduction, downplayed by concepts such as 'cyberbullying', and in which the complexities cannot be fully addressed by solely pursuing the peers that harassed her, ultimately leading her to suicide.

Thus, this study aligns with feminist activist research on postdigital cultures, asserting that online interactions exert intense psychic and physical impacts (Horeck et al., 2021, 2023b; Ringrose, Whitehead, et al., 2019). Specifically, this project contributed to advancing the understanding of normative pressures or violence beyond the group of peers to include, for example, the materiality of platform interfaces as agents (Renold & Ringrose, 2017b). Consequently, this study aids in the process of posthumanising normative pressures that constrain women and marginalised bodies. By de-individualising technology-based violence, we can deepen our knowledge of how it works, our ability to explain it and its impact on its targets/victims, thereby enhancing our capacity to design digital violence prevention programmes in schools (Ringrose et al., 2023).

8.3.1 What About Sexuality Education and Schools?

My primary motivation for pursuing this PhD was to contribute to the understanding of what sexuality is, thereby potentially shaping broader fields of sexuality education. The distinctive theoretical and methodological approach of this research, along with its consequential conceptual innovations, offers valuable insights for developing nuanced and critical perspectives for sexuality educators in schools or universities, or at the level of public policy. Among the key contributions, the concept of "funa fear fantasy" helps consider other ways in which feminist digital activism can shape how heterosexual men relate to women. At the same time, this concept is useful for grappling with men's responses to feminist activism that go beyond feminist interpretations of defensiveness. Both are useful to work and affectively attune with boys and men in schools (students, teachers, parents, etc.). Another contribution lies in how "cis-heterosexist affects" can help teach and understand what feminist activist groups in Chile referred to as Bordieuan "symbolic violence" (e.g., see @larebeliondelcuerpo), by demonstrating that power imbalances are not mere discourses that one can either believe or disregard, but they restrain certain individuals' abilities to act or feel, thus demonstrating the complex interplay between matter, affectivity and bodily possibilities to act. Furthermore, teaching consent as affective attunement may resonate more deeply with students, surpassing the simplistic emphasis on verbal contracts and offering a more nuanced alternative that does not draw from binary and heteronormative narratives of men

against women. Finally, the close connections between this study and social media content and practices, in the form of funas or sending nudes, shed light on how these mechanisms may operate within young people's social groups, thereby enriching our potential to think and engage in 'informal' feminist digital pedagogies (Ringrose, Mendes, et al., 2021).

Exploring sexuality beyond genital-centric perspectives and delving into everyday practices, such as flirting, has enabled me to focus on the specific ways in which materiality and affects intertwine with discourses, which has changed how I approach everything related to sexuality and the body. My expertise and approach to the affective body and materiality within sexual encounters and the classroom (Berger Correa & Ringrose, 2024) have also been beneficial for related areas in education and activism; for example, in advising a confessional Catholic all-girls school on the inclusion of their trans* students and the management of sexual expressions within the school, since their efforts were met with lesbophobic accusations from students. This illustrates the challenges that some schools in Chile[19] face with the social and legal recognition of gender and sexual diversities[20]. It also underlines the need for perspectives about our subjectivities and relationalities that challenge our sense of individuality and the human/non-human divide, and which build bridges between discourse, matter and affects. This posthuman lens helps us think about how school culture, buildings, uniforms and so on, shape students' experiences of gender and sexuality and their possibilities to feel/act, in line with other feminist and new materialist research (Bragg & Ringrose, 2023; Renold, 2019; Shanks et al., 2023).

In addition, when I presented part of the chapter on affective responsibility at an International Conference on ethical non-monogamies in Valparaíso (2023), I realised the political relevance of AR and the practical challenges surrounding this concept among scholars, activists and practitioners. The desire to do things differently is strong

[19] This was confirmed by my informal conversations with the Comprehensive Education Professional and Gender Specialist at the Undersecretariat of Early Childhood Education at the Ministry of Education in Chile, Wanda Stuardo.

[20] Chilean Law has strict guidance under the non-discrimination law, which means that single-gender schools must embrace their trans or non-binary students and change any necessary institutional practices to achieve this objective (Circular 707 Aplicación de Los Principios de No Discriminación e Igualdad de Trato En El Ámbito Educativo [Application of the Principles of No Discrimination and Equity in Educational Contexts], 2022; Circular 812 Garantiza El Derecho a La Identidad de Género de Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes En El Ámbito Educacional [Guarantees the Right to a Gender Identity of Children and Adolescents in Educational Contexts], 2021).

within non-monogamous spheres, yet the means to achieve this are still being developed. There is a pressing need for further research within these communities, whose struggles can yield valuable insights and practical tools for reshaping societal perceptions and norms, ultimately fostering more equitable ways of relating sexually for all.

To conclude, even though this thesis primarily addressed pressing topics in Chile, a rich context for this analysis given its contentious feminist politics (Errázuriz Besa, 2019), the insights that emerged from this work hold relevance for other Latin American and Western contexts. As we navigate the dynamic landscapes of gender and sexuality, this research aims to inspire scholars, activists and practitioners to persist in urgent research and collaborative intra-ventions, to engage in discussions about feminist sexual ethics, to develop effective prevention programs against sexual and technology-based violence, and to collectively work towards building tools that promote inclusivity and understanding.

9. Appendixes

Appendix A. Information sheet. Versions in Spanish and translated into English

Enredos, coqueteos y adolescentes en Chile

Hola!

Mi nombre es Bárbara Berger y estoy estudiando un doctorado en University College London (UCL).

Me gustaría invitarte a que me ayudes con mi estudio sobre cómo funciona el coqueteo entre los adolescentes chilenos.

Por favor lee esta guía de información y si tienes cualquier pregunta, no dudes en contactarme!

* Si tienes menos de 18 años, recuerda que debes pedir permiso a tu apoderade/tutor.

Muchas gracias por tu interés y ayuda!

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UCL Institute of Education

¿Qué tendría que hacer en este estudio?

Tu participación consiste en 3 entrevistas individuales conmigo, por Skype. Las entrevistas no sobrepasarán los 90 minutos y las agendaremos cuando tú quieras. Para la tercera entrevista, puedes invitar amigues a participar (opcional). En este estudio no hay respuestas buenas ni malas, lo que importa es tu opinión y experiencia.

¿De qué vamos a hablar?

En las entrevistas, te pediré que me cuentes cualquier cosa que pase por tu mente mientras hablamos, lo que sea! Esto significa pedirte que hables con la mayor honestidad posible y me cuentes cosas aunque pienses que no son importantes o te den vergüenza. Me interesa lo que sea que tengas para decir. Yo haré lo mejor que pueda para que te sientas cómode y en un espacio seguro para que hables con libertad sobre tu experiencia y opiniones.

En la primera entrevista, hablaremos sobre ti y tu experiencia con el 'coqueteo'. Para la segunda entrevista, te pediré que me compartas 1 o 2 historias de 'coqueteo' para que profundicemos en ellas. En la tercera y final entrevista, si quieres puedes invitar amigues para que hablemos sobre cómo funciona el 'coqueteo' en tu grupo social.

¿Las entrevistas serán grabadas?

Si. Skype graba en audio y video nuestra conversación. Te avisaré cada vez que la grabación comience y termine. También puedes pedirme que detenga la grabación en cualquier momento o que borre partes de la entrevista. No necesitas dar explicaciones.

La grabación es para poder transcribir la entrevista y luego traducir algunos fragmentos al inglés.

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¿Tendré algún beneficio por participar?

Hablar con alguien sobre un aspecto de tu vida puede ser beneficioso, como una forma de reflexionar sobre tu experiencia y tus relaciones. Aparte de eso, y quizás sentirte bien por ayudarme, no hay más beneficios. 😊

¿Hay alguna desventaja o riesgo si participo?

Compartir lo que sea que te venga a la mente puede ser un poco raro. También puede ser que me cuentes alguna situación que te de pena, rabia, etc. y eso pueda hacerte sentir mal.

Si en cualquier momento te arrepientes de contarme algo o prefieres que no lo use en la investigación, basta con que me lo digas y borraré esa parte.

¿Qué pasará con los resultados de este estudio?

Los resultados pueden aparecer en revistas y conferencias académicas y en mi tesis doctoral. Al publicar los resultados SIEMPRE cambiaré cualquier dato personal que pueda identificarte. Las publicaciones serán mayormente en inglés y las conferencias pueden ser en cualquier parte del mundo, incluido Chile.

Si me compartes fotos/videos donde aparecen caras de personas o alguna información que pueda identificarte (como el uniforme escolar) no serán publicadas en ningún lado.

¿Qué pasa si algo sale mal?

En caso de que tú (o tus padres/tutores) no estén conformes con cómo he llevado el estudio, pueden enviarle un mail a mi supervisora en UCL Dr. Claudia Lapping, XXXXXXXX@ucl.ac.uk.

¿Quién organiza y financia esta investigación?

Este estudio está organizado por mí y mis supervisoras en University College London: Dr. Claudia Lapping y Prof. Jessica Ringrose. Está financiado por Becas Chile, Conicyt/ANID, como parte de mi doctorado.

¿Mi participación será confidencial?

Toda tu participación será 100% confidencial. Nadie va a saber que participaste de este estudio a menos que tú les cuentes.

Yo usaré **apodos** para referirme a ti y a las personas que menciones (puedes elegirlos si quieres) y borraré o cambiaré cualquier dato que pueda relacionarse con tu identidad.

Si tienes menos de 18 años, no le contaré a tus padres/tutores nada de lo que nosotros hablemos, **EXCEPTO si me cuentas que estás en riesgo de hacerte daño a ti o a otres. En ese caso, vamos a tener que buscar a quien contarle y pedirle ayuda.**

Muchas gracias por tomarte el tiempo de leer!
Si quieres participar, por favor firma la siguiente hoja

Flirting entanglements among teens in Chile

I am Bárbara Berger, a PhD student in University College London (UCL). I want to invite you to help me with my PhD research about how flirting works among teens in Chile.

Please read all this information sheet carefully, and if you any have questions, do not hesitate to contact me.

If you are under 18 years old, remember to talk to your parents/tutors and show them this information sheet, to ask them for permission to participate.

Thank you very much for your interest and help!

Bárbara Berger Correa
UCL Institute of Education
20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL
XXXXXXXXXXXXX@ucl.ac.uk
+44 XXXXXXXXXXX

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What I am expected to do in this research?

Your participation required is 3 individual online interviews with me. We can meet on Skype at a time that suits you best. Interviews should be on a weekly basis and will last no longer than 90 minutes. For the third encounter, you are encouraged to bring friend(s). During that time, we will be talking about your experience and ideas on flirting among people of your age. There are no right or wrong answers in this matter; what is important is your perspective on this.

What will we talk about?

In these interviews, I will be asking you to share with me whatever comes into your mind while we are having our conversation. This mean a lot, because I am asking you to be as honest as you can, and to tell me anything that you are thinking even if you don't think it is relevant. Maybe you think that is silly or you can feel a little bit embarrassed, but don't worry, that is normal. I am interested in whatever you have to say. I will be doing my best to make you feel comfortable and in a safe environment, so you can speak freely about your thoughts and experiences.

In the first interview we will talk about yourself and your experience with flirting. For the second interview I will ask you to share 1-2 detailed stories of flirting and we will go deeper into them in the second interview. In the third interview, you can bring friend(s) to discuss how flirting works for people of your age, the fun and the challenges you face and how you deal with them.

Interviews will be recorded?

Yes. I will let you know when the recording starts and when it finishes. Also, you can ask me to stop recording at any moment of the interview. I will use it to transcript all our conversation, and then I will translate to English some moments of it.

If at any moment you regret telling me something, you can ask me to erase that part of the conversation, and I will do it. No explanations needed.

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Will this benefit me in some way?

Talking to someone about an aspect of your life can be beneficial to you, as a way to reflect about your life and your relationships. Besides that, and feeling good because you are helping me, there are no benefits.

Any possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Sharing whatever comes into your mind sometimes can be a little bit uncomfortable and it is possible that at times we have some awkward silences. You may feel also a little bit of distress if you share with me a story that makes you sad, for example.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The results of the interviews may appear in publications in academic journals, academic conferences and in my PhD thesis but it always be using pseudonyms and erasing personal data to protect your identity and privacy. Publications will be mostly in English but conferences can be in any part of the world, including Chile.

What if something goes wrong?

If you or your parents are not happy with how I handle my research, you can complain to my supervisor at UCL, Dr. Claudia Lapping by email c.lapping@ucl.ac.uk.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is organised by me and my supervisors Dr Claudia Lapping and Prof. Jessica Ringrose. As it is my PhD research it is funded by Becas Chile, ANID.

Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?

All your participation will be kept completely confidential, so nobody can know that you participate in the study, unless you tell them.

I will use a **pseudonym** to refer to you and the people you mention during your interview (you can choose them, if you like) and I will erase or change any information that can be related to your identity.

I can't tell your parents or other participants about what we talked about **UNLESS you tell me something that it makes me believe that you are in danger or harming yourself or others. In that case I will have to tell your parents/tutors.**

Data Protection Privacy Notice: The data controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Office provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk. Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found here: www.ucl.ac.uk/legal-services/privacy/participants-health-and-care-research-privacy-notice

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Local Data Protection Privacy Notice

The controller for this project will be University College London (UCL). The UCL Data Protection Officer provides oversight of UCL activities involving the processing of personal data, and can be contacted at data-protection@ucl.ac.uk

This 'local' privacy notice sets out the information that applies to this particular study. Further information on how UCL uses participant information can be found in our 'general' privacy notice:

For participants in research studies, click here or visit https://bit.ly/2FygiLg

The information that is required to be provided to participants under data protection legislation (GDPR and DPA 2018) is provided across both the 'local' and 'general' privacy notices.

The categories of personal data used will be as follows: gender, diversity beliefs.

The lawful basis that will be used to process your *personal data* are: 'Public task' for personal data and' Research purposes' for special category data.
Your personal data will be processed so long as it is required for the research project. If we are able to anonymise or pseudonymise the personal data you provide we will undertake this, and will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information sheet

If you would like to participate, you and your parent/tutor need to sign the consent form below

Appendix B. Informed Consent form. Versions in Spanish and translated into English

Consentimiento Informado

Si has leído toda la información y quieres participar del estudio "**Enredos, coqueteos y adolescentes en Chile**", por favor completa el siguiente formulario y envíaselo a Bárbara Berger a XXXXXXXXXXXX@ucl.ac.uk.

	SI	NO
He leído y comprendido el documento que informa sobre esta investigación.	☐	☐
Entiendo que puedo retirarme de este estudio en cualquier momento y que se me preguntará qué deseo que se haga con la información recolectada hasta ese momento.	☐	☐
Entiendo que puedo pedir que parte de la información que compartí no sea incluida en el estudio, sin tener que dar explicaciones.	☐	☐
Entiendo que puedo contactar a Bárbara Berger hasta el 30 de junio de 2022 para pedirle que retire mi información de esta investigación.	☐	☐
Autorizo que las entrevistas sean grabadas en audio/video y entiendo que las grabaciones serán destruidas después de su transcripción.	☐	☐
Entiendo que los resultados de esta investigación pueden ser publicados en la tesis doctoral, en reportes de investigación y en artículos de revistas académicas y conferencias.	☐	☐
Entiendo que, en caso de usar citas textuales en reportes, presentaciones, artículos académicos o en la tesis doctoral, estas no serán atribuidas a mí y mi identidad será protegida.	☐	☐

Nombre del participante _____

Firma _____ Fecha _____

Consentimiento del apoderade: [sólo para menores de 18 años]

He leído y comprendido la información contenida en los documentos sobre el estudio "Enredos, coqueteos y adolescentes en Chile" y mediante esta firma autorizo que mi hije/pupile participe.

Nombre apoderade _____

Por favor marque su relación con le participante: madre / padre / otro

Firma _____ Fecha _____

GRACIAS!

Informed Consent Form

If you are happy to participate in the study *Teenagers' flirting and dating experiences in Chile,* please complete this consent form and return to Bárbara Berger Correa at XXXXXXXXXX@ucl.ac.uk.

	Yes	No
I have read and understood the information sheet about the research.	☐	☐
I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time and that I will be asked what I wish to happen to the data I have provided up to that point.	☐	☐
I understand that I can ask that some of the things I shared will not be used in the research.	☐	☐
I understand that I can contact Bárbara Berger Correa up to 30 November 2022 and request for my data to be withdrawn from the project.	☐	☐
I consent to being audio recorded and I understand that the recordings will be destroyed following transcription.	☐	☐
I understand that if any of my words are used in reports, presentations, thesis or publication they will not be attributed to me.	☐	☐
I understand that the results will be shared in a PhD thesis, in a report and in research publications and/or presentations.	☐	☐

Participant's Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Legal Guardian's Consent: [for under 18 year-olds only]

I have read and understood the information sheet about the study *Teenagers' flirting and dating experiences in Chile* and I consent the participation of the abovementioned minor.

Name _____

Please circle your relationship to the participant: mother / father / other

Signature _____ Date _____

Thank you!

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