

Instructions for authors, subscriptions and further details:

<http://rimcis.hipatiapress.com>

The Social Nature of Attractiveness: How to Shift Attraction from the Dominant Traditional to Alternative Masculinities

Marcos Castro Sandúa¹, Liviu Catalin Mara²

1) University of Vic. Spain

2) University of Barcelona. Spain

Date of publication: July 30th, 2014

Edition period: July 2014 - November 2014

To cite this article: Castro Sandúa, M., & Mara, L.C. (2014). The Social Nature of Attractiveness: How to Shift Attraction from the Dominant Traditional to Alternative Masculinities. *International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(2), 182-206. doi: 10.4471/rimcis.2014.36

To link this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4471/rimcis.2014.36>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

The terms and conditions of use are related to the Open Journal System and to [Creative Commons Attribution License \(CC-BY\)](#).

The Social Nature of Attractiveness: How to Shift Attraction from the Dominant Traditional to Alternative Masculinities

Marcos Castro Sandúa
University of Vic

Liviu Catalin Mara
University of Barcelona

Abstract

This article explores the paradox that while much emphasis has been put into educating boys in the alternative masculinities, the boys who hold these values are not the ones who are considered attractive in the social imaginary of a large part of the population. Attractiveness to different masculinity models is the result of the process of socialization. The authors argue that there is a mainstream process of socialization – which is not the only one – that promotes the attraction to the dominant traditional model of masculinities, while the opposite process is found with alternatives ones. Drawing from previous studies in the area of preventive socialization of gender-based violence and men's studies, different aspects are highlighted showing how transformation is built in regards to provide new alternative models of masculinity.

Keywords: attractiveness, new alternative masculinities, hegemonic masculinity, dominant traditional masculinities, socialization, violence

La Naturaleza Social del Atractivo: Cómo Pasar de la Atracción hacia la Masculinidad Dominante Tradicional a la Alternativa

Marcos Castro Sandúa
University of Vic

Liviu Catalin Mara
University of Barcelona

Resumen

Este artículo explora la paradoja que mientras se ha hecho mucho énfasis en educar a los niños y chicos en masculinidades alternativas, los que albergan estos valores no son los que son considerados atractivos en el imaginario social de una gran parte de la población. El atractivo hacia distintos modelos de masculinidad resulta del proceso de socialización. Los autores argumentan que el principal proceso de socialización –aunque no el único– promueve la atracción hacia el modelo tradicional dominante de masculinidad, mientras que se da el proceso contrario hacia el modelo alternativo. Partiendo de estudios anteriores en el área de la socialización preventiva de la violencia de género y de los estudios de masculinidades, este artículo destaca diferentes aspectos que muestran como la transformación se construye a fin de proporcionar nuevos modelos alternativos de masculinidad.

Palabras clave: atractivo, nuevas masculinidades alternativas, masculinidad hegemónica, masculinidades tradicionales dominantes, socialización, violencia



Attraction, love and sex are key issues that have taken an important place in sociological studies. More than two decades ago Beck & Beck-Gernsheim (1995) initiated their study on love analysing how the social change towards democracy also lead to an increase in equality in love relationships. Moreover, Elster's contribution (1989, 1998, 1999) to the theory of the emotions analyses their social character instead of their instinctive one. From a sociological perspective, the social construction of love and sexuality and their mutual relationships with social change is challenging. Therefore this analysis can help to make progresses towards a more democratic society. But, there is still much work to be done until we can understand all the social elements that constitute love and attraction and the social problems related to both such as gender violence. Simultaneously, gender and feminist studies (Hooks, 2000) also introduce love and sexuality into their analyses. Nevertheless, although infravalued, the field of Men's studies, in which many authors have been researching for years (Kimmel, 1997; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Connell, 1987; Kimmel, Hearn & Connell, 2005), is being increasingly analysed. In this article we focus on the issue of masculinities and its link on how attraction is socially constructed and how it is commonly connected to violent models of masculinity. We start with an example that will guide the argument of our paper.

In a conference on masculinity, the leader of a group of men explained that he conducted workshops with boys in high schools focused on the issues of collaborating on domestic chores and on developing respectful relationships with girls. At the end of one of the workshops, a boy approached him and said: "All that you explained to us is well and good, and besides, I already do it, but I have a question: Why don't I succeed in attracting girls?" The leader could not give him an answer. This question reveals a problem in society: we try to educate boys in models of non-hegemonic masculinity, but often the boys and men who follow such models are not those who succeed in sexual and affective relationships. In this article we respond to this question from an in depth literature review that takes especially into account the research line of preventive socialization of gender violence and new alternative masculinities (Valls, Puigvert & Duque, 2008; Flecha, Puigvert & Rios, 2013).

Research on preventive socialization of gender violence and new alternative masculinities are strongly connected, and both have its origin in the analysis conducted by Jesus Gómez (2004) on love in the risk society, and then other scholars have developed extensively (Aubert, Melgar & Valls, 2011; Martin & Tellado, 2012; Padrós, 2012; Valls, Puigvert & Duque, 2008). In this article we present some findings that these works have developed exemplifying how is possible to transform sexual attraction and desire towards new alternative masculinities socialization.

To address this problem we first draw on academic research, which has found a wide diversity of masculinities (Connell, 2012; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Gutmann, 1996; Higate, 2003; Ishii-Kuntz, 2003; Valdés & Olavarría, 1998; Warren, 1997) including a range of hegemonic ones. Within this latter diversity, as Connell argues (2012), not all hegemonic models of masculinity are linked to violence. To avoid developing simplistic or misleading connections between hegemonic masculinity and violent attitudes we must be careful not to equate the two. These diverse models of masculinity are not static; they each have their own social nature and change over time (Dasgupta, 2000; Ferguson, 2001; Meuser, 2003; Morrell, 1998; Morris & Evans, 2001; Taga, 2003). For instance, Cavender (1999) shows how the hegemonic model of masculinity was constructed in different ways in 1940s films compared to actual social life in the 1980s.

The research on preventive socialization of gender violence has revealed that sometimes, but not always, there is an association between hegemonic and violent masculinity. There are some masculine models that do follow a hegemonic model but they do not always involve violence. Previous analyses have considered this distinction and they have defined three models of masculinities and only one of them is producing gender violence: dominant traditional masculinity (Flecha, Puigvert & Rios, 2013), lately will be explained in depth. For instance, a male character in a film set in the early 1900s can have sexist attitudes appropriate to that period and character. This does not mean that he mistreats the people with whom he establishes sexual and affective relationships. To clarify, in this article we use the concept of dominant traditional masculinity (here in after, DTM) to refer specifically to the model of masculinity that uses despise and violence –or could potentially

use it- in sexual and affective relationships. On the contrary we use the concept of new alternative masculinities (here in after, NAM), or the egalitarian masculinity model to refer to those masculinity models that being free of violence take stands in favour of equality.

Returning to the problem we stated and that boy's question about how is it possible to succeed with girls defending egalitarian positions, in this article we argue first that attraction is a social construction. That is, when people are attracted to particular models of masculinity, it is not purely the result of biological drives or of some kind of "magic". Attraction is created, reaffirmed, and transformed through socialization. Next, we analyse the scientific literature on attraction towards the masculine models to which we are largely socialised. Here we find that socialization tends to involve attraction towards traditional dominant models. This attraction gives place that DTM seem to be attractive while those in NAM's models are not. This phenomenon of socialization is not the only one, however, and not everyone internalises elements of it in the same way. That's the reason why there is the NAM model, in which various other forms of sexual and affective relationships can be developed, guided by attraction towards non-violent and even egalitarian models of masculinity. Based on these analyses, we present how attraction is being transferred from DTM towards NAM through participation in dialogue and reflection, what has been denominated the preventive socialization of gender violence.

Models of Attractiveness: From "Magical-Biological" to Social Explanations

Different explanations have been offered for how and why people feel attracted to diverse models of masculinity. Traditionally, efforts to explain attraction and love have involved magical, mystical, and even biological narratives. Many of these make the causes of attraction seem inexplicable because of their "magical" nature or unavoidability given their biological character. Thus empirical analyses in the domain of love and especially attraction become diffuse. Even those who defend scientific explanations of any social fact, agree that science cannot explain some behaviour related to love or sexuality. Along this line, some authors focussed on heterosexual

relationships link attraction to biological factors. Pillsworth and Haselton (2006) propose that women feel more sexual desire when they are ovulating, and manifest this desire particularly in extramarital relationships. Grammer and Thornhill (1994) describe the feminine tendency to prefer men with symmetrical faces. Johnston et al. (2001) also point to facial symmetry as key to men's attractiveness and say that women who are menstruating change their preferences regarding masculine attractiveness. Savulescu and Sandberg (2008) suggest using neuroscience and biological manipulation to improve the romantic relationships and the quality of love. Fischer (1998) distinguishes lust, attraction and attachment according to the neural correlates. Whereas lust is considered a motivation for sex, attraction refers to the human mechanism that helps us identify potential partners for a romantic and lasting relationship and attachment is related to comfort in a lasting relationship.

Other authors (Giddens, 1992; McDonald, 1998; Salecl, 1998) ultimately link love and attraction to irrationality, although they point out social elements that are worth considering. Sternberg (1998) analyses love relationships from a psychological perspective and therefore reviews their historical evolution. Yet, Sternberg does not question the idea of love as something unavoidable or impossible to intervene and therefore remains trapped in the irrationality of love. Elster (1989, 1998, 1999), for instance, raises the topic of emotions and rationality, sometimes claiming that emotions are always social constructions. However, he moves into the realm of the irrational when he focuses very explicitly on attraction and desire. He believes that sexual desire is a basic emotion, like the desire to feed oneself, a claim that enters the domain of the irrational. His arguments are inconsistent; at times, he separates love from irrationality. Thus, he declares that there is no universal law in human nature which states the existence of an inverse relationship between passions and reason. Furthermore, Elster (1999) argues that people increasingly dialogue, debate and reach consensus, which also interferes in their interpersonal relationships introducing personal preferences and dialogue in love relationships. Gómez (2004) takes this approach into account and applies it in his study of love and romantic relationships and therewith goes beyond by reaching the conclusion that

love, passion and desire are social and can, thus, be changed through interaction and resocialization.

Taking a slightly different approach, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) study the social character of love without divesting it of its irrational or magical character. They state that with the modernisation of society, the changes in the traditional gender roles and the emancipation of women, relationships are no longer pre-established but are the result of the personal choices of every individual. Nonetheless, the fact of recognising that relationships are transformed through dialogue is an essential element in order to advance the theory of the social nature of love. Moreover, and even though Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) state that in love issues everybody is responsible and accountable for his or her actions, they rely on the irrational when they suggest that love falls on people like a ray of light, or fades away according to physical laws that are not subject to human control. Luhmann (1986), on the other hand, analyses love and passion from a systemic perspective. He introduces the changes of society into the interpersonal relationships but he does not allow the individual for action in the personal love issues neglecting thus the capacity of human agency.

Although these explanations offer insights into the social nature of love and sexuality, attraction and desire still constitute a black hole that most researchers have not yet entered, they prefer to use the label of “inexplicable”. In fact, the pioneering research that demonstrates the social nature of attraction and its links to gender violence was conducted by Jesús Gómez (2004). Compiling the contributions of the scientific literature, he points out that, although they address the problem and are correct in many of their statements, research did not go deep enough into the real processes of socialization that determine who we like, and why, and how it all works. Lately, Flecha, Puigvert and Rios (2013) collected Gomez’s contribution and carried out a meta-analysis of previous research on the line of preventive socialisation. They developed the conceptualisation of three different typologies of masculinities: Dominant Traditional Masculinity (DTM), Oppressed Traditional Masculinity (OTM) and New Alternative Masculinities (NAM). In the next sections, we will describe the difference between them in terms of attractiveness.

However, in spite of the work developed in the line of preventive socialisation and NAM, the social nature of love and attractiveness in the research on masculinities has been scarcely analysed. In this regard, Jackson (1993) explores love from the perspective of the cultural construction of emotions and thus introduces the cultural nature of love. Various analyses have been conducted on the construction of romantic love in men (Gilmartin, 2007; Law, Campbell & Dolan, 1999; Redman, 1996; Redman, 2001; Worth, Paris & Allen, 2002) and how romantic men usually represent masculinity models that are the opposite of the hegemonic masculinity (Langford, 1996; Pearce & Stacey, 1995). Allen (2007), for instance, in discussing romantic men and hegemonic masculinity, points out that many men feel pressure to be “real macho and sensitive” (Allen, 2007, p. 149) at the same time. A generalised agreement seems to exist that men and women are being educated and socialised to think about sexual and affective relationships in two different ways.

Gómez (2004) was the first to explain that what comes spontaneously “from within” (love at first sight, sexual attraction), is neither unpredictable nor inexplicable. In particular, he shows that people are attracted – and sometimes “suddenly” – as a result of the socialization that each person has internalised throughout his or her life. Subsequent analysis along this line follows up this analysis (Duque, 2006; Padrós, 2007; Valls, Puigvert & Duque, 2008; Flecha, Puigvert & Rios, 2013). To develop this approach Gómez drew on authors such as Mead (1934), and Habermas (1984a, 1984b); although not directly dealing with attraction, both study how social interaction shapes our lives. Mead’s theory of the symbolic interactionism (1934) attempts to explain the construction of the individual personality based on the interaction with society. Even though he doesn’t consider love relationships, Mead defines the social nature of the individual character and allows for the changes of the personal attitudes through interaction, which Gómez (2004) applies to love relationships. The Theory of Communicative Action developed by Habermas (1984a, 1984b) introduces through the concept of communicative rationality the differentiation of power claims and validity claims that prevail and guide our interactions. Power claims are those that used to prevail in society and refer to the person with most power imposing the personal arguments and positioning. However, the use of

validity claims in the current societies and the interpersonal relationships is increasing. This implies that the participants in a dialogue provide arguments to convince the other individuals from their perspective but all participants are willing to changing their position if better arguments are provided by the rest of participants. Their thinking helps create the foundations for considering how attraction between people results from social interaction. As Gómez (2004) argues, love is historical, an institution, a social question that we live in a very personal way, thus, his work also shows that the consideration of attraction as instinct or “chemistry” is a mistake that derives in important consequences.

The fact that human desire crystallises on the basis of multiple previous interactions is what makes us experience desire as impulsive, unavoidable, and inexplicable. The “love at first sight” that seems to happen “suddenly” do not in fact occur by chance, moving us into a scenario that we cannot predict. It is both our personal socialization together with the historical beliefs about romance and love - both internalised through all our interactions- which shape the models of masculinity through which each of us will feel that "love at first sight".

Thus far we have explored academic explanations for the social nature of attraction. The key question appears when this attraction is linked to a model of DTM. How can we transform this kind of attraction and desire, to move towards the various models of new masculinity?

Attractiveness, Masculinities, and Violence

Femininity and masculinity have traditionally been linked to beauty and power respectively, represented by the mirror of Venus and the shield and spear of Ares. Regarding heterosexual relationships, masculinity is usually attractive because of its links to men’s economic position or to other social symbols of power. However, writers have described other characteristics that are relevant to understanding the attraction of certain masculine models. Ortega y Gasset (1999) puts it well that everybody knows men with whom women fall in love very quickly and intensely, thus, the philosopher wonders about which is the vital mystery that is hidden behind such privilege without finding an answer to it.

The scientific explanations provided for this phenomenon are very diverse and range from more biological ones to more social ones. Haiken (2000), for instance, analyses how the contemporary discourse about men's desire to succeed economically minimises the extent to which men, like women, are vulnerable to market-driven cultural imperatives regarding physical attractiveness. In fact, the mass media also have considerable influence over men's self-esteem and dissatisfaction with their bodies (Hobza et al., 2007; Hobza & Rochlen, 2009; McArdle & Hill, 2007; Nikkelen, 2011). Along this same line, several researchers (Frederick, 2007; Grogan & Richards, 2002; Hargreaves & Tiggemann, 2009; Morrison et al., 2004) have studied the body images of boys and men related to the idea that being muscular will make them physically more attractive. Whitchurch, Wilson and Gilbert (2011) in their study with female college students found that uncertainty about whether a man likes them or not increases attraction towards men.

Along these lines, Giddens (1992) also refers to attractive models of masculinity, such as the "womanizer", the Casanova without any attempt to explain it, just referring to it as a reality. However, some academic researchers do not only explain which masculinity is more attractive, but they also point at an attraction to violent models of masculinity. Bukowski, Sippola and Newcomb (2000) suggest that aggressive youths are increasingly considered attractive. Rebellon and Manasse (2004) studied a sample of 1,725 American adolescents aged 11 to 17 and concluded that there is a connection between delinquency and romantic involvement in adolescents. Being a delinquent seems to make young men more attractive to prospective mates, because their risk-taking attracts.

Looking at the media, some authors have analysed how the cinema promotes certain models of attractiveness which are based on violence (Cavender, 1999; Fouz-Hernández, 2005). Brown (2002), for example, focuses on the roles that Mel Gibson has played. He points out that by surviving great physical suffering; the characters appear more masculine, which enhances Gibson's standing as a sex symbol.

Along the same line, bell hooks (2000) explains that some people experience a "hooked feeling" towards people who treat others badly. Thus we claim that there exists a mainstream – but not unique – pattern of

socialization that draws people toward violence, within a particular violent hegemonic model of masculinity. In addition, Padrós (2012) states that the most successful models have systematically defined themselves through a type of masculinity in which the man who arouses desire in others is sometimes the one who has been considered aggressive and violent.

New (2001) discusses the negative effects that this mainstream socialization has on men themselves. She states that men are told to be “bad and dangerously irresponsible” in order to be admired and claims for focusing on the possibilities to diminish the influence of mainstream socialization with the effect of strengthening alternative masculinities. Thus, while research has already indicated the existence of attraction towards violent models, some other research has focused on the attraction (or lack of) towards non-violent masculinity models. In this line, Flecha, Puigvert and Rios (2013) argue that people are socialised in attraction models where DTM are the most successful one in terms of attractiveness, because there is a social constructed link between desire and dominance and violence.

Attractiveness and Equality: The Traditional Model and Alternative

The discussion of whether egalitarian masculine models are attractive appears in a few studies and theories. Giddens (1992) asks himself why a more egalitarian model of masculinity is not so attractive. He asks why can't a good man be sexy and why can't a sexy man be good. This is a key question to which he does not provide an answer. In the study conducted by McDaniel (2005), we can see how, when talking about attraction, adolescent girls admit that egalitarian attitudes are not the source of their attraction to boys. These attitudes, they say, can even reduce the power of sexual attraction. Frosh, Phoenix, and Pattman (2002) mention that girls positively value their male classmates that they consider “nice”, sensitive, and considerate; however, when they consider having a sexual and affective relationship, they do not see these boys as being as attractive as the “laddish” ones. Along the same lines, Talbot and Quayle (2010) believe that the hegemonic elements in masculinity are essential in romantic contexts: “nice guys” are valued in social contexts and work environments but not in romantic ones. Similarly, Speer (2005) describes the dichotomy between the valuing of a “nice” masculinity, one characterised by helping with

housework, taking care of the children, etc., and the valuing of dominant masculinities.

Jesus Gómez (2004) and Flecha, Puigvert and Rios (2013) move beyond stating this paradox, and provides an answer to the question why attractiveness towards new masculinities is not the same than the existing one towards dominant ones. They explain the two as part of the two faces of the same coin, naming them the Traditional Model. The Traditional Model, as it has been previously introduced, could be split in two different models: DTM and OTM socialization.. Thus, while some people feel “hooked” and find it impossible to end a relationship with a man who treats them badly (DTM), in other situations people choose men who do not mistreat and who are egalitarian (OTM), but towards whom they do not feel attraction, so the relationship lacks of passion. This double facet of the Traditional model is reflected in many of the studies conducted in the research field of preventive socialization of gender violence. As it has been studied by Flecha, Puigvert and Rios (2013) in the research with teenagers lead by professor Maria Padrós (2007), that boys and girls aged 14 to 17 said that the boys who have the greatest ability to turn on a girl are those with a strong and imposing character and, at the same time, are those who look down on others. When the same participants talked about boys who are guided by non-violent models of masculinity, they frequently spoke of them as “boring” and “not attractive”. They said, among other things, that they can “be overwhelming” and “tiresome”; one said “there are boys that are so nice that they seem stupid”. Contrastingly, the Alternative Model relies on a socialization process of attraction towards new masculinities. In this model the DTM is rejected and the NAM model is not only the convenient election but the desirable one.

To differentiate between the two models, the crucial characteristic is not stability or length of the relationship, or the genders or number of persons involved. The question is whether the persons involved in the relationship have been socialised in the attraction to violence. Both models, Traditional and Alternative, can be found in all types of relationships: heterosexual, homosexual, occasional, stable, marital, and any other. The key question is towards which type of model they have been socialised. In fact, it would be a mistake to try to categorise particular types of relationship, such as marriage,

within the Traditional Model and other types, like sporadic relationships, within the Alternative Model. The Alternative Model is found in sexual and affective relationships where people have been socialised in finding egalitarian men and boys as attractive; in fact they find them exciting and desirable, no matter the length or the form that the relationship takes.

Therefore, we claim, a mainstream tradition of socialization that transmits the idea that men who follow a model of sexuality linked to power and the exercise of violence and domination are more attractive and desirable than those men whose values are more related to solidarity and dialogue. This is not the only way that people can be socialised; in fact many people are not strongly socialised to be attracted to violence. However, the mass media and other socialising agents present many obvious examples of this mainstream socialization. We only need to think of the masculine characters that people can see in the films. How often is the attractive character of the film the most supportive? And how often is he the most conflictive? If we think about the most passionate scenes in a film, how often do they happen between people who have an egalitarian relationship based on dialogue? How many times are they between people who have a troublesome, love-hate relationship, based on conflict? Within this mainstream socialization in which the attractive model is the violent one, men who follow the most egalitarian model are usually positioned as “good” or “appropriate” but not as exciting and attractive. The dichotomy between the “good-convenient-non attractive” man and the “bad-inconvenient-attractive” one is transmitted through this mainstream socialization.

The research on preventive socialization of gender violence shows that this phenomenon leads to dilemmas like that of the boy in the opening example: his egalitarian behaviours do not attract girls. To move beyond this dichotomy, it is necessary to recognise the social nature of attractiveness and to promote the attraction towards NAM model and not towards the DTM model.

Preventive Socialization of Gender Violence: How Can We Make New Alternative Masculinities More Attractive?

When socialization results in individuals linking attractiveness to the model of DTM, they are more likely to experience gender violence in sexual and affective relationships. For those who choose a magical or biological explanation for entering a potentially violent relationship, the only ways to avoid violence are repressing one's instincts or simply being lucky. That is, according to this way of thinking, we cannot prevent gender violence; only good or bad luck can help people avoid it, because we do not know which model of masculinity we will be attracted to. The idea of romantic magic means anyone can fall in love with anyone else, violent or not, depending on the circumstances. But as it has already been argued, attractiveness has a social nature; it is created through social interactions. From this perspective, it is possible to overcome gender violence, by transforming society's conceptions of attractiveness to non-violent, egalitarian, models of masculinity.

The research conducted on preventing gender violence through socialization (Gómez, 2004; Duque, 2006; Flecha, Puigvert & Rios, 2013) makes it clear that the ideas of attractiveness, which lead to romantic and sexual desires, are formed during social interactions. If we aim to transform our conceptions of attractiveness to focus more on non-violent masculinity, we must begin with the fact that the desire for the violent hegemonic model of masculinity is the result of interactions, of thousands of dialogues with other persons and with oneself. Based on this evidence, if we are to take preventive action against gender violence, we must begin by analysing the values, including both violent and egalitarian ones, that are associated with the various models of masculinity that attract people to initiate long or short relationships. As discussed earlier, the social theories of Habermas (1984b) contribute to the basis for this argument that it is possible to transform our desires, if people want to be in charge of their own lives and responsible for them, they must know who they want to be and also consider the interactions they have had in the past.

According to researches carried out in the field of preventive socialisation and men studies, one of the first barriers to this kind of change

is our collection of internalised beliefs about the irrationality of all the questions we have raised above, especially those connected to attractiveness. Again, we must point out the social nature of attractiveness as these contradictions are difficult to solve if we focus on irrationality. Popular knowledge sometimes supports this irrationality: it tells us that “the heart has reasons that reason cannot understand”. As a result, people often experience a contradiction between their desires and their values. That is, society sees violent models of masculinity as negative, and people know about the potential problems in relationships that revolve around those models—but still some of them become involved in potentially violent relationships.

Thus, the idea of transformation based on interactions can seem to provide a simple solution. In practice, however, it is actually quite complex. First, people must acknowledge that they have been socialised in the attraction to violence. They must also understand that this attraction is the result of social interactions. We therefore suggest, that if people want to change their desires, they must first recognise who they are attracted to and why (Duque, 2006). Then, if a particular attraction could be detrimental, they must have to want to change such attraction. Second, it is also important to work towards transformation, to introduce and value the egalitarian model of masculinity. Connell (2012) tells us that this does not mean eliminating masculinity, but rather valuing the existing non-violent models of masculinity that she refers to as “peace-making” (p.5). Generally speaking, however, society has not promoted the egalitarian model in any consistent way. For instance, Hooks (2000) declares that there is no significant body of feminist literature addressed to boys, though Kimmel (1997) does talk about the need to integrate men into the curriculum. Michael Flood (1995) and his initiative of the XY movement focuses on men’s groups that are male-positive, pro-feminist and gay-affirmative to combat gender violence that occurs in romantic relationships and to empower egalitarian men. We add that in order to prevent gender violence, it is not enough to acknowledge and value these masculinities. The NAM’s model is an alternative model because contributes to socialise people away from gender violence and simultaneously create a mainstream form of socialization that promotes non dominant forms of masculinity as exciting, desirable, and attractive. In turn, this will mean fostering the kinds of

interactions that help people create masculinities as egalitarian and attractive.

Besides engaging in critical dialogues to change attraction, according to the research on preventive socialization of gender violence and NAM, it is necessary that men who are egalitarian are also considered attractive. Egalitarian men cannot wait passively for others, both men and women, to shift their attraction towards egalitarian models. If men consider the egalitarian masculinity as synonymous of being passive, insecure, and guilty of participating in all the kinds of discrimination that women have suffered throughout history, and not attractive, they help to perpetuate violent hegemonic masculinity and to undervalue the egalitarian type. To foster NAM it is crucial that men who are egalitarian assert themselves, reclaim the potential to live according to their own model, and refuse to accept sporadic or stable relationships with people who feel attracted to DTM. This would be a key step to end with the prevalence of hegemonic masculinity.

Thus, the research on preventive socialization of gender violence and NAM have also shown that when NAM empower themselves, and start to succeed in their sexual and affective relationships, they can sometimes move towards replicating the DTM model (Flecha, Puigvert & Rios, 2013). It is in this moment when their behaviour diminishes the potential of NAM. As the key message is again that to succeed you should reproduce DTM. It is essential to develop spaces where men can engage in dialogue with one another, to reflect on ways to create a range of non-violent models of masculinity that are defined by equality and attractiveness. Here, NAM can reaffirm their egalitarian attitudes, and learn how to become more attractive, becoming more self-confident with their own style. At these spaces, they can also reject the DTM masculinities, freeing themselves from a historical socialization of submission to the violent model. In doing so, the direct connection between violence and attraction should be substituted by equality and attraction.

In summary, research has stated that it is also crucial to create appropriate spaces for reflection where both men and women can generate these transformative interactions. Although few such opportunities exist for men, some progress is being made in this direction. Just as other social groups have found it difficult to create spaces where they can reflect on, and

describe, their gender and specific life situation, this is changing; meeting places for men are also increasingly becoming a reality (Puigvert & Muñoz, 2012; Serradell, Santa Cruz & Mondejar, 2014). Many men's associations exist and can serve as spaces for reflection. As some authors have described, educational centres are one place for developing more such opportunities (Martín & Tellado, 2012; Kimmel, 1997). Still, if people are to experience the many different kinds of interactions they need to develop masculinities that are both attractive and non-violent, the whole community will have to participate. The main issue to discuss in these spaces is the models of masculinity that society presents as attractive and exciting. Who is attractive: those who are violent, or those who are egalitarian? And why? It is also important to deepen this analysis: beyond considering simply whether a model of masculinity is or is not violent, we must ask whether or not it is attractive.

Conclusions: Towards the Alternative Model

This article starts from the premise that attractiveness is a social construction, and therefore, not based in magical or biological determinants. Therefore it can be created, but most importantly, it can be transformed. The attraction that people learn to feel to men is very often linked (not always) to a profound socialization toward particular ideas that connect desire and attractiveness with violence. The mainstream socialization promotes an attraction to DTM. Research shows that this is the main reason why the NAM is usually considered not to be attractive.

The scientific evidences discussed here allow shedding light onto the social roots of attractiveness towards the different masculine models. In this sense, the article represents a step forward in social studies. The analysis of the attraction to DTM model or to the egalitarian one allows for a better understanding of the persistent prevalence of the former in our society. Despite many social advances and deep transformations that have affected all the masculine models, DTM prevails due to the social attraction that is promoted towards it. While this violent model is presented and socially perceived as attractive, it is very difficult to eradicate it. The preventive socialization of gender violence and the analysis of masculinity models

(Gómez, 2004; Valls, Puigvert & Duque, 2008; Flecha, Puigvert & Rios, 2013) indicate that it is necessary to enhance a socialization that promotes attraction to an egalitarian model, at the same time, as it promotes indifference, rejection and no desire to violent hegemonic masculinity.

The reflections presented here have several important practical implications in the education for NAM and its social construction in the schools and other socialisation spaces. In this regard, steps should be taken in education in order to present egalitarian models as attractive and not as incompatible with them. Thus, dialogic spaces should be created in order to critically analyse those men and women who feel attracted to persons who are following the violent hegemonic model, not to take it for granted, but as something of social nature that can be transformed. Some key messages should be considered for men who following an egalitarian model of masculinity feel oftentimes admiration or even submission to the violent hegemonic model, as well as to all those persons who are actually subordinated to it.

References

- Allen, L. (2007). "Sensitive and real macho all at the same time": Young heterosexual men and romance. *Men and Masculinities*, 10, 137-152. doi: [10.1177/1097184X05284221](https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X05284221)
- Aubert A., Melgar, P., & Valls, R. (2011). Communicative daily life stories and focus groups: Proposals for overcoming gender violence among teenagers. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 17(3), 295-303. doi: [10.1177/1077800410397808](https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800410397808)
- Beck, U., & Beck-Gernsheim, E. (1995). *The normal chaos of love*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Brown, J.A. (2002). The tortures of Mel Gibson: Masochism and the sexy male body. *Men and Masculinities*, 5(2), 123-143. doi: [10.1177/1097184X02005002001](https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X02005002001)
- Bukowski, W.M., Sippola, L.K., & Newcomb, A.F. (2000). Variations in patterns of attraction o same and other sex peers during ealry

- adolescence. *Developmental Psychology*, 36(2), 147-154. doi: [10.1037//OOI2-1649.36.2.147](https://doi.org/10.1037//OOI2-1649.36.2.147)
- Cavender, G. (1999). Detecting masculinity. In J. Ferrell & N. Websdale (Eds.), *Making trouble: Cultural constuctions of crime, deviance and control* (pp. 157-177). New York: Aldine de Gruyter.
- Connell, R. (1987). *Gender and power: Society, the person and sexual politics*. Crows Nests: Allen & Unwin.
- Connell, R., & Messerschmidt, J.M. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & Society*, 19, 829-859. doi: [10.1177/0891243205278639](https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639)
- Connell, R. (2012). Masculinity research and global change. *Masculinities and Social Change*, 1(1), 4-18. doi: [10.4471/MCS.2012.01](https://doi.org/10.4471/MCS.2012.01)
- Dasgupta, R. (2000). Performing masculinties? The “salaryman” at work and play. *Japanese Studies*, 20(2), 189-200. doi: [10.1080/713683779](https://doi.org/10.1080/713683779)
- Duque, E. (2006). *Apreniendo para el amor o para la violència. Las relaciones en las discotecas*. Barcelona: Hipatia Editorial.
- Elster, J. (1989). *Nuts and bolts for the Social Sciences*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Elster, J. (1998). *Strong feelings: Emotion, addiction, and human behavior*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Elster, J. (1999). *Alchemies of the mind. Rationality and the emotions*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ferguson, H. (2001). Men and masculinities in late-modern Ireland. In B. Pease & K. Pringle (Eds.), *A man’s world? Changing men’s practices in a globalized world* (pp. 118-134). London: Zed Books.
- Fisher, H.E. (1998). Lust, attraction, and attachment in mammalian reproduction. *Human Nature*, 9(1), 23-52. doi: [10.1007/s12110-998-1010-5](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12110-998-1010-5)
- Flecha, R., Puigvert, L., & Ríos, O. (2013). The New Alternative Masculinities and the overcoming of gender violence. *International and Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(1), 88-113. doi: [10.4471/rimcis.2013.14](https://doi.org/10.4471/rimcis.2013.14)
- Flood, M. (1995). Three principles for men. *XY: Men, Sex, Politics*. Retrieved from <http://www.xyonline.net/content/three-principles-men>

- Fouz-Hernández, S. (2005). Phallic matters? Ewan McGregor and the representation of the male body in Peter Greenaway's *The Pillow Book* (1996). *Men and Masculinities*, 8(2), 133-147. doi: [10.1177/1097184X04265989](https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X04265989)
- Frederick, D.A., Buchanan, G.M., Sadehgi-Azar, L., Peplau, L.A., Haselton M.G., Berezovskaya, A., & Lipinski, R.E. (2007). Desiring the muscular ideal: Men's body satisfaction in the United States, Ukraine, and Ghana. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 8(2): 103-117. doi: [10.1037/1524-9220.8.2.103](https://doi.org/10.1037/1524-9220.8.2.103)
- Frosh, S., Phoenix, A., & Pattman, R. (2002). *Young masculinities*. New York: Palgrave.
- Giddens, A. (1992). *The transformation of intimacy. Sexuality, love, and eroticism in modern societies*. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
- Gilmartin, S.K. (2007). Crafting heterosexual masculine identities on campus: College men talk about romantic Love. *Men and Masculinities*, 9, 530-539. doi: [10.1177/1097184X05284994](https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X05284994)
- Gómez, J. (2004). *El amor en la Sociedad del riesgo. Una tentativa educativa*. Barcelona: Hipatia editorial.
- Grammer, K., & Thornhill, R. (1994). Human (homo-sapiens) facial attractiveness and sexual selection. The role of symmetry and averageness. *Journal of Comparative Psychology*, 108(3), 233-242. doi: [10.1037/0735-7036.108.3.233](https://doi.org/10.1037/0735-7036.108.3.233)
- Grogan, S., & Richards, H. (2002). Body image: Focus groups with boys and men. *Men and Masculinities*, 4(3), 219-232. doi: [10.1177/1097184X02004003001](https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X02004003001)
- Gutmann, M.C. (1996). *The meanings of macho: Being a man in Mexico City*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Habermas, J. (1984a). *The theory of communicative action. Volume 1. Reasons and the rationalization of society*. Boston: Beacon.
- Habermas, J. (1984b). *The theory of communicative action. Volume 2. Lifeworld and system: A critique of functionalist reason*. Boston: Beacon.
- Haiken, E. (2000). Virtual virility, or, does medicine make the man? *Men and Masculinities*, 2(4), 388-409. Doi: [10.1177/1097184X02004003001](https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X02004003001)

- Hargreaves, D.A., & Tiggemann, M. (2009). Muscular ideal media images and men's body image: Social comparison processing and individual vulnerability. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 10(2), 109-119. doi: [10.1037/a0014691](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014691)
- Higate, P. (2003). *Military masculinities: Identity and the state*. London: Praeger.
- Hobza, C.L., & Rochlen, A.B. (2009). Gender role conflict, drive for muscularity, and the impact of ideal media portrayals on men. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 10(2), 120-130. doi: [10.1037/a0015040](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015040)
- Hobza, C.L., Walker, K.E., Yakushko, O., & Peugh, J.L. (2007). What about men? Social comparison and the effects of media images on body and self-esteem. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 8(3), 161-172. doi: [10.1037/1524-9220.8.3.161](https://doi.org/10.1037/1524-9220.8.3.161)
- hooks, B. (2000). *Feminism is for everybody*. Cambridge, MA: South End.
- Ishii-Kuntz, M. (2003). Balancing fatherhood and work: Emergence of diverse masculinities in contemporary Japan. In J.E. Roberson & N. Suzuki (Eds.), *Men and masculinities in contemporary Japan* (pp. 198-216). London: Routledge Courzon.
- Jackson, S. (1993). Even sociologists fall in love: An exploration in the Sociology of Emotions. *Sociology*, 27(2), 201-220. doi: [10.1177/0038038593027002002](https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038593027002002)
- Johnston, V.S., Hagel, R., Franklin, M., Fink, B., & Grammer, K. (2001). Male facial attractiveness. Evidence for hormone-mediated adaptive design. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 22(4), 251-267. doi: [10.1016/S1090-5138\(01\)00066-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1090-5138(01)00066-6)
- Kimmel, M. (1997). Integrating men into the curriculum. *Duke Journal of Gender Law and Policy*, 4, 181-195.
- Kimmel, M., Hearn, J., & Connell, R. (2005). *Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE Publications.
- Langford, W. (1996). Romantic love and power. In T. Cosslett, A. Easton & P. Summerfield (Eds.), *Women, power and resistance: An introduction to women's studies* (pp. 23-34). Buckingham, UK: Open University Press.

- Law, R., Campbell, H., & Dolan, J. (1999). *Masculinities in Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Palmerston North: Dunmore Press.
- Luhmann, N. (1986). *Love as passion: The codification of intimacy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Martín, N., & Tellado, I. (2012). Violencia de género y resolución comunitaria de conflictos en los centros educativos. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Gender Studies*, 1(3), 300-319. doi: [10.4471/generos.2012.14](https://doi.org/10.4471/generos.2012.14)
- McArdle, K.A., & Hill, M.S. (2009). Understanding body dissatisfaction in gay and heterosexual men: The roles of self-esteem, media and peer influence. *Men and Masculinities*, 11(5), 511-532. doi: [10.1177/1097184X07303728](https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X07303728)
- McDaniel, A.K. (2005). Young women's dating behavior: Why/why not date a nice guy? *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 53(5-6), 347-359. doi: [10.1007/s11199-005-6758-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-005-6758-z)
- McDonald, K.A. (1998). Defining the nature of attraction. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 44(2), 14-15.
- Mead, G.H. (1934). *Mind, Self, and Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Meuser, M. (2003). Modernized masculinities? Continuities, challenges and changes in men's lives. In S. Ervo & T. Johansson (Eds.) *Among men: Moulding masculinities* (pp. 127-148). Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.
- Morrell, R. (1998). Of boys and men: Masculinity and gender in Southern African studies. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 24(4), 605-630. doi: [10.1080/03057079808708593](https://doi.org/10.1080/03057079808708593)
- Morris, C., & Evans, N. (2001). "Cheese makers are always women": Gendered representations of farm life in the agricultural press. *Gender, Place and Culture*, 8(4), 375-390. doi: [10.1080/09663690120111618](https://doi.org/10.1080/09663690120111618)
- Morrison, T.G., Morrison, M.A., Hopkins, C., & Rowan, E.T. (2004). Muscle mania: Development of a new scale examining the drive for muscularity in Canadian Males. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 5(1), 30-39. doi: [10.1037/1524-9220.5.1.30](https://doi.org/10.1037/1524-9220.5.1.30)
- New, C. (2001). Oppressed and oppressors? The systematic mistreatment of men. *Sociology*, 35,729-748. doi: [10.1177/S0038038501000372](https://doi.org/10.1177/S0038038501000372)

- Nikkelen, S.W.C., Anschutz, D.J., Thao, H., & Engels, R.C. (2011). Influence of visual attention on male body dissatisfaction after idealized media exposure. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 13(3), 308-323. doi: [10.1037/a0024942](https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024942)
- Ortega y Gasset, J. (1999). *Estudios sobre el amor*. Barcelona: Óptima.
- Padrós, M. (2007). *Models d'atracció dels i les adolescents. Contribucions des de la socialització preventiva de la violència de gènere*. Study funded by the Catalan Institute of Women.
- Padrós, M. (2012). Modelos de atractivo masculinos en la adolescencia. *Masculinities and Social Change*, 1(2), 165-183. doi: [10.4471/MCS.2014.39](https://doi.org/10.4471/MCS.2014.39)
- Pearce, L., & Stacey, J. (1995). *Romance revisited*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.
- Pillsworth, E.G., & Haselton, M.G. (2006). Male sexual attractiveness predicts differential ovulatory shifts in female extra-pair attraction and male mate retention. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 27(4), 247-258. doi: [10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2005.10.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2005.10.002)
- Puigvert, L., & Muñoz, B. (2012). Estudios de género. Barreras y aportaciones al debate teórico internacional desde las voces de las otras mujeres. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Gender Studies*, 1(1), 4-27. doi: [10.4471/generos.2012.01](https://doi.org/10.4471/generos.2012.01)
- Rebellon, C.J., & Manasse, M. (2004). Do “bad boys” really get the girls? Delinquency as a cause and consequence of dating behavior among adolescents. *Justice Quarterly*, 21, 355-389. doi: [10.1080/07418820400095841](https://doi.org/10.1080/07418820400095841)
- Redman, P. (1996). Curtis loves Ranjit: Heterosexual masculinities, schooling and challenge of pupils’ sexual culture. *Educational Review*, 48(2), 175-182. doi: [10.1177/1097184X01004002006](https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X01004002006)
- Redman, P. (2001). The discipline of love: Negotiation and regulation in boy’s performance of a romance-based heterosexual masculinity. *Men and Masculinities*, 2(4), 186-200. doi: [10.1177/1097184X01004002006](https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X01004002006)
- Salecl, R. (1998). *(Per)versions of love and hate*. London: Verso.

- Savulescu, J., & Sandberg, A. (2008). Neuroenhancement of love and marriage: The chemicals between us. *Neuroethics*, 1, 31-44. doi: [10.1007/s12152-007-9002-4](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12152-007-9002-4)
- Serradell, O., Santa Cruz, I., & Mondéjar, E. (2014). Can the men's movement attract young men? The Men in Dialogue Association. *Journal of Gender Studies*, Online first.
- Speer, S.A. (2005). *Gender talk: Feminism, discourse, and conversation analysis*. London: Routledge.
- Sternberg, R.J. (1998). *Love is a story*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Taga, F. (2003). Rethinking male socialization: Life histories of Japanese male youth. In K. Louie & M. Low (Eds.) *Asian masculinities* (pp. 137-154). London: Routledge Curzon.
- Talbot, K., & Quayle, M. (2010). The perils of being a nice guy: Contextual variation in five young women's constructions of acceptable hegemonic and alternative masculinities. *Men and Masculinities*, 13(2), 255-278. doi: [10.1177/1097184X09350408](https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X09350408)
- Valdés, T., & Olavarría, J. (1998). Ser hombre en Santiago de Chile: A pesar de todo, un mísero modelo. In T. Valdés & J. Olavarría (Eds.) *Masculinidades y equidad de género en América Latina* (pp. 12-35). Santiago de Chile: FALCSO/UNFPA.
- Valls, R., Puigvert, L., & Duque, E. (2008). Gender violence amongst teenagers: Socialization and prevention. *Violence against Women*, 14(7), 759-785. doi: [10.1177/1077801208320365](https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801208320365)
- Warren, S. (1997). Who do these boys think they are? An investigation into the construction of masculinities in a primary classroom. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1(2), 207-222. doi: [10.1080/1360311970010206](https://doi.org/10.1080/1360311970010206)
- Whitchurch, E.R., Wilson, T.D., & Gilbert, D.T. (2011). "He loves me, he loves me not...": Uncertainty can increase romantic attraction. *Psychological Science*, 22(2), 172-175. doi: [10.1177/0956797610393745](https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797610393745)
- Worth, H., Paris, A., & Allen, L. (2002). *The life of Brian: Kiwi masculinities, sexualities and health*. Dunedin, New Zealand: Otago University Press.

Marcos Castro Sandúa is PhD candidate in the Department of Pedagogy at the University of Vic

Liviu Catalin Mara is PhD candidate in the Department of Sociological Theory at the University of Barcelona

Contact Address: Department of Pedagogy, University of Vic, c/ Sagrada Familia, 7 -08500- Vic (Barcelona), Spain. Email: marcos.castro@uvic.cat