THE INVISIBLE TEACHER: ALGORITHMS, EMOTIONS, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SELF IN DIGITAL CULTURES

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Double Blind Peer Review

Citation
Sammarro, M., & Zagari, E. (2026). The invisible teacher: Algorithms, emotions, and the construction of the self in digital cultures. *Italian Journal of Health Education, Sport and Inclusive Didactics, 10*(4).

Doi: https://doi.org/10.32043/gsd.v1i4.1902

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gsdjournal.it
ISSN: 3103-5744

ABSTRACT
The paper analyzes the relationship between social media, trap culture, and identity construction, focusing on contemporary masculinity. Digital platforms appear to offer freedom of self-expression, yet they are shaped by algorithmic logics that reinforce dominant aesthetic and cultural models (Bocci et al., 2023; Baeza-Yates, 2018). In this context, users become prosumers who actively participate in content production and consumption while remaining influenced by systems that reproduce stereotypes and exclusionary dynamics (Toffler, 1987). Trap culture amplifies these processes by promoting identity models based on power, material success, and control, contributing to a hegemonic masculinity that discourages vulnerability and emotional expression (Connell, 2005). From an ethnopedagogical perspective, the paper highlights the potential of counter-hegemonic practices such as graffiti and street art in fostering more inclusive forms of identity and participation (Gramsci, 2014).

KEYWORDS
social media; gender studies; cultural studies

Received 2026-07-10
Accepted 2026-10-27
Published 2026-10-30

1. Introduction

Not long ago, "being online" meant living in a state of liminality, suspended between an inside and an outside, between the real and the virtual, poised on the threshold, on the limen. Today, however, this real-virtual dichotomy has been overcome, giving way to a hybrid reality, the Onlife condition (Floridi, 2017), in which there is no longer any real distinction between "online" and "offline". With the boundaries down, the virtual becomes an extension of the real: media can no longer be understood merely as tools, nor simply as environments. They must instead be rethought as something internal to individuals' personal and social lives, since they have literally migrated inside objects (the Internet of Things) and have come to shape the very way we relate to one another (Rivoltella, 2020).

This shift brings with it a form of de-mediated communication, that is, communication stripped of any filter that regulates access to it: everyone can produce and publish content without mediation, and anyone can communicate directly, freely choosing what to share.

Publication - the act of making one's thoughts public - no longer depends on subjective conditions such as authorship or having something worth saying, but simply on the technical availability of access. In the Mediapolis, "being an author" is therefore no longer a mark of distinction or merit (Rivoltella, 2020).

This transformation reflects a broader shift from a "top-down", mainstream model of communication - structured around a one-to-many logic in which the circulation of content is tightly controlled - toward a "bottom-up" communication shaped by collective intelligence (Lévy, 1994). Such a shift brings about a democratization of the communicative system; at the same time, however, the multiplication of viewpoints produces a progressive fragmentation of pluralism within the network (Rivoltella, 2015).

Today, social networks appear to allow greater freedom both in self-representation and in the selection of content to follow, enabling new forms of self-expression and empowerment (Bocci et al., 2023). The social media user thus becomes a prosumer (Toffler, 1987): an active subject who selects content and decides what, when and how to consume. Consumption itself is increasingly shifting toward online platforms that offer personalized content while simultaneously generating aesthetic, ethical and cultural reference models. Recommendation systems play a central role in this process, shaping users' experience by influencing what they interact with - and often reinforcing biases that disproportionately harm marginalized individuals and communities (Baeza-Yates, 2018; Bocci et al., 2023). Digital visibility, then, does not merely distribute attention: it also orients tastes, behaviours and forms of social presence. In this sense, the platform ceases to be a neutral space of expression and becomes instead a normative environment, one that selects what appears desirable, imitable and socially legitimate. Whereas in the past the construction of cultural models was entrusted mainly to relatively stable institutions - school, family, traditional media, professional groups - today a growing share of this power passes through algorithms, engagement metrics and mechanisms of viral circulation, which reward certain forms of visibility while penalizing others.

2. Identity Construction on Social Media between Homologation and Male Conformism

To understand the role of social media in shaping contemporary cultural models, it is useful to start from Bourdieu's theory of Distinction (2001), according to which tastes, preferences and lifestyles are not simple individual choices but instruments through which individuals position themselves within

social space and gain recognition. Therefore, cultural practices contribute to the production of symbolic hierarchies, distinguishing what is considered legitimate and desirable from what is perceived as marginal or worthless.

In digital society, these processes do not disappear; rather, they are redefined by online platforms. Whereas in the past social recognition was mediated mainly by institutions such as schools, traditional media or cultural elites, today a significant part of that power is exercised by algorithms: digital platforms do not simply organize content but actively contribute to the production of cultural value, shaping what is perceived as relevant (Beer, 2009). Driven by the threat of algorithmic invisibility, users therefore tend to modify their behaviour in order to conform to platform logics (Bucher, 2012). In this context, visibility becomes a form of symbolic capital. Lundahl (2022) defines this phenomenon as algorithmic meta-capital: algorithms influence the distribution of public attention and determine which content is more likely to be viewed, shared and imitated. The pursuit of visibility and social approval is therefore not a mere side effect of platform use, but one of the main forces steering the production and circulation of online content; indeed, the trends that emerge on social networks do not simply reflect users' preferences but actively help define what appears desirable and socially acceptable. Through repeated exposure to specific aesthetic, linguistic and behavioural models, individuals are encouraged to conform to dominant norms in order to gain recognition and a sense of belonging. In this sense, digital culture tends to favour processes of homologation, in which popularity becomes synonymous with legitimacy.

The dynamics of viral circulation contribute further to this process: memes, trends and participatory content play a central role in constructing collective identities online. Although they appear as spontaneous and democratic practices, they tend to reinforce shared cultural codes and to mark the boundaries of belonging to digital groups (Gal et al., 2016). Participation in

online cultures requires mastery of specific symbolic and linguistic skills, turning viral content into a form of cultural capital that distinguishes those who belong to a community from those who remain excluded from it (Nissenbaum & Shifman, 2017). This phenomenon touches many aspects of social life: ways of dressing, cultural consumption, bodily practices, political opinions and forms of identity expression. Social media contribute to the construction of normative standards through the overexposure of certain bodies, lifestyles and relational models. A feed populated predominantly by white, cisgender, heterosexual and economically privileged people who conform to dominant aesthetic ideals risks presenting these traits as universally desirable, relegating other experiences to the margins of public representation.

The capacity of platforms to render some models more visible than others, however, does not concern masculinity alone, but affects the entire spectrum of social identities. As some African-American activists already denounced in the 1970s, including Assata Shakur (1988), the risk of an uncritical internalization of dominant cultural models remains a central issue today. Although social networks seem to broaden the possibilities of choice and self-expression, they simultaneously help define the boundaries of social recognition, rewarding some identities while marginalizing others. In this sense, algorithms do not merely show the world: they actively participate in constructing the cultural norms that shape how individuals perceive themselves and others.

Although digital platforms offer opportunities for self-representation and can foster paths of individual and collective empowerment, they also tend to reproduce inequalities already present in society; even advertising campaigns that claim to promote inclusivity and diversity continue to underrepresent certain social categories (Bocci et al., 2023). The logics of online visibility thus end up reflecting and reinforcing pre-existing power relations.

From this perspective, Noble (2018) shows that algorithms are not neutral tools but can reproduce and amplify racial, cultural and gender stereotypes already present in society. Digital platforms, therefore, do not merely represent social reality; they actively participate in defining what is considered normal, acceptable and worthy of attention.

The issue takes on particular relevance in relation to gender representations. Connell's reflections (1995) on hegemonic masculinity help us understand how certain models of masculinity acquire greater prestige and legitimacy than others. According to the author, hegemonic masculinity is the configuration of gender practices that legitimizes men's dominant position and the subordination of women and of non-conforming masculinities. In Western societies, this model tends to coincide with the ideal of the cisgender, white, heterosexual, economically successful and socially authoritative male (Connell, 1995; Di Grigoli, 2025). Some digital environments promote models of masculinity founded on domination, strength and superiority over women and non-conforming subjectivities, thereby contributing to the spread of toxic and polarizing forms of communication (Ciccone, 2019; Tanner & Gillardin, 2025).

3. Hegemonic Masculinity Online

Technology is not a neutral entity. On the contrary, the digital infrastructure we use every day is a political terrain, an ecosystem shaped by logics of power and control and, specifically, by a deeply rooted patriarchal matrix. From a pedagogical perspective, this requires moving beyond a purely instrumental and functionalist ideology of technology and instead embracing Critical Media Pedagogy (Feenberg, 1991; Kellner & Share, 2007): devices and networks are not merely objective "tools," but informal educational and cultural environments that shape identity, thought, and social relationships. To understand how internet culture has come to be permeated by a strong

masculinization, we can turn to Nathan Ensmenger's work (2015), which traces the history of computing technologies through the shift from a field with a marked female presence to a discipline populated exclusively by men. In the early phases of the history of computing, hardware work (building the machines) was associated with heavy engineering and therefore reserved for men, while software writing (coding) was seen as an executive task, similar to typing or weaving. Figures such as Ada Lovelace, the ENIAC programmers, or Margaret Hamilton (crucial to the Moon landing) show that technology has an origin deeply linked to female intellect. Technology, therefore, is not intrinsically male at birth; it becomes so through a precise political and economic process of exclusion. When women are excluded from the design of digital architectures, those same architectures begin to reflect the needs, desires and biases of patriarchy.

The erasure of women from the representation of reality leads to their exclusion not only as individuals, but also as bearers of individual skills, specific experiences and bodies that science does not study or take into account; as a result, AI systems end up discriminating, since they are built by, for, and according to the Weltanschauung of white men (Evans, 2020).

According to Farci (2022), the culture in which the masculine dominated was made up, at least initially, of individuals who felt uneasy about the complexity of human relationships while managing, at the same time, to master machines- a sort of refuge from social expectations, "a symbolic space in which to reaffirm a reassuring masculine identity, immune to the chaos and unpredictability of the real world" (Semenzin, 2026). Truly emblematic, in terms of misogyny and hegemonic masculinity, is the example of the origin of Facemash, the forerunner of Facebook, created by Mark Zuckerberg simply to get back at his girlfriend after being dumped, through a site on which the photos of all Harvard's female students were uploaded without consent. The question put to all students was "Who is hotter?" The rest is recent history! Haraway, in her

celebrated Cyborg Manifesto (1991), through the figure of a hybrid entity between human and machine, envisions the overcoming of the dichotomies that so often underlie logics of domination. At the heart of the essay lies the cyborg's capacity to dismantle the binary oppositions on which the entire history of Western thought has been built: conceptual pairs such as Nature/Culture, Man/Woman, Human/Machine, Mind/Body. According to Haraway, these dualisms are not neutral but have always been hierarchical: one term has always dominated the other (man over woman, culture over nature). Existing in a borderline space, the cyborg blurs these lines of demarcation. It is neither entirely natural nor entirely artificial; it is a hybrid identity that shows how the boundaries we consider "absolute" are in fact historical and cultural constructions. In the field of gender pedagogy and STEM/STEAM education (Biemmi, 2009; Cambi, 2010), the cyborg perspective offers a powerful educational model for dismantling gender stereotypes associated with scientific and technological aptitudes, while promoting a form of digital literacy that is both emancipatory and transformative. It is possible to encounter phenomena such as the so-called Manosphere, alongside incel groups, in which users perceive themselves as the true victims of a system dominated by female emancipation, using this belief to justify misogyny. Moreover, occurrences like that of trap music exalt models of hegemonic masculinity based on dominance, a lack of emotional vulnerability, and social vindication achieved through strength or economic success.

4. Trap Music, Social Media and Emotional Illiteracy

Trap music originated in the southern United States, particularly in Atlanta, between the 1990s and early 2000s, within contexts marked by urban marginality, informal economies and strong social inequality (Forman, 2002; Conti, 2020). Its name recalls the trap house, a place where drugs are sold, and

from its very origins the genre has retained a close link to the imagery of the street, of survival and of individual redemption; over time it has come to be defined by darker sounds, the use of autotune, a repetitive aesthetic and lyrics centred on power, money, risk, drugs and success, becoming at once a musical language and a form of social representation (Conti, 2020; Luccini, 2024). In the Italian context, trap has spread especially among adolescents and young people as a subculture capable of offering recognition, identity and belonging, but also of turning fragility, loneliness and the desire for validation into consumable goods. For this reason, it should not be read merely as a musical genre, but as a symbolic device that intertwines style, consumption and the construction of masculinity, often in ambivalent forms that combine authenticity, ostentation and the normalization of toxic models (Messerschmidt, 2022; Armengol, 2023). Within this framework, consumption is not merely an individual gesture but a practice bound up with the construction of a public image, with the need for recognition and with the constant necessity of appearing adequate. In youth subcultures, and in trap in particular, this performative dimension becomes central: ostentation, visual codes, willingness to take risks and substance use can become staging devices through which precariousness, vulnerability and a sense of marginality are masked, building an identity of strength within a context perceived as unstable. The resulting logic is one of continuous self-presentation, in which the subject's credibility depends on consistency with the group's codes and on the ability to hold the scene without visible cracks (Palmisano & Toto, 2026).

Rather than imagining a linear causality between music and behaviour, it is more useful to observe the interaction between the different levels of the phenomenon: music provides narratives, while social media amplify them and turn them into models to be imitated. Hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) is in fact constructed through practices that reward

strength, competition, self-control and dominance, discouraging vulnerability and turning fragility into something to be hidden; the result is often hyper-performative male identities, in need of constant validation and forced to measure themselves continually against hierarchical standards of recognition. Within this framework, trap does not act as a simple mirror of already-existing behaviours, but as a symbolic device that organizes postures, desires and expectations, reinforcing what appears legitimate within the group and devaluing what is perceived as weakness, passivity or loss of control. The very distinction between dominant masculinity and hegemonic masculinity helps to better understand the phenomenon: not everything that is popular or celebrated is automatically hegemonic; it becomes so when it contributes to legitimizing asymmetrical gender relations and to naturalizing the subordination of what is symbolically feminized (Messerschmidt, 2022). In the formation of emotional sensibility, the cultural context plays a decisive role, because it is through the relationship with the social environment that the individual learns the languages of feeling and the forms of their expression. A culture does not simply offer general values and norms, but issues genuine emotional prescriptions, standardizing the ways in which the self can manifest itself; within this framework, the feminine is often associated with the legitimacy of affective expression, while the masculine is trained toward restraint, control and the denial of fragility (Elias, 2009). Childhood and adolescence thus become crucial sites of emotional training: boys are often taught that crying is shameful, that fear must not be named, and that anger, by contrast, is a more acceptable emotion because it is culturally compatible with an ideal of strong, resilient and competitive virility. In this way, the sacrifice of the male emotional dimension is not a secondary effect but a genuine technique of gender socialization, one that shapes how male subjects learn to be in the world, to be in conflict, and to relate to their own bodies (Di Grigoli,

2025). This emotional discipline is intertwined with an implicit pedagogy of the body, insofar as masculinity is often constructed as distance from bodily vulnerability and as an exercise of self-mastery: control of pain, control of emotions, control of fear, control of performance. The male body is thus laden with expectations tied to strength, endurance, efficiency and readiness for action, while the sphere of uncertainty and need is removed or devalued. For this reason, many adolescents experience anxiety, shame and inadequacy when they feel they do not match the bodily and behavioural standards deemed appropriate, and seek compensation in practices of ostentation, hypersexualization or emotional rigidity (Dello Preite & Gheno, 2025).

In this perspective, trap can be read as a subculture equipped with codes, symbols and practices that construct belonging and distinction-that is, as a set of signs through which the group recognizes itself and differentiates itself from others (Hebdige, 2017). Aesthetic references, languages, consumer objects and public postures are not mere decorative details but elements that produce subcultural capital and reinforce group identity, especially when they are recognized and valued within the relevant scene (Thornton, 1995). In this sense, ostentation, the repetition of codes and the sharing of images and rituals online intensify the communal dimension of the phenomenon, turning trap into an environment in which style, recognition and consumption mutually sustain one another (Palmisano & Toto, 2026). Digital media, moreover, do not merely circulate content but select it, reiterate it and render it socially efficient through algorithmic logic: the circulation of reels, clips, challenges, memes and visual micro-narratives builds environments of informal learning in which practices, hierarchies and modes of self-representation are acquired. This process becomes particularly significant when it intertwines with models of toxic masculinity or with sigma and manosphere imaginaries, which simplify gender relations in terms of dominance, success, emotional coldness and male

superiority, making them easily consumable and imitable within the platform's languages (Tanner & Gillardin, 2025). In this way, trap and social media content do not operate on separate planes but reinforce one another: the former offers a symbolic lexicon, the latter accelerates its diffusion, simplification and replicability (Palmisano & Toto, 2026).

This dynamic gains further strength when one considers that hegemonic masculinity operates within relational systems that are heteronormative and often homosocial, in which recognition among peers matters at least as much as the relationship with the other gender. Within such systems, deviating from the expected script of virility exposes one to the risk of stigmatization, symbolic feminization or exclusion; conformity to the group's codes thus becomes both a resource for identity protection and a form of constant pressure. Bullying, derision and the devaluation of boys perceived as "other" can also function as local practices in the production of hegemony, since they make visible which qualities are rewarded and which are punished within the social space of peers (Messerschmidt, 2022; Dello Preite & Gheno, 2025). From this point of view, the vulnerability displayed by artists should not be read as a simple confession but as an element of an expressive strategy that can strengthen the appeal of the message precisely because it presents itself as authentic. The tension between authenticity and artifice is central here: what appears spontaneous is often the result of precise coding, while what is perceived as "real" is constructed within a scene that rewards excess, dramatization and repetition (Thornton, 1995). This produces a form of recognition based on the sharing of a lifestyle rather than on any actual common experience, which explains why the trap repertoire can also be adopted by individuals who do not come from the periphery but nonetheless find in it a language useful for naming anxieties, desires for redemption and identity fractures (Palmisano & Toto, 2026).

On the relational level, the normalization of violence constitutes a decisive

step, because violence does not always appear as an exceptional event but often as a possibility already lodged in the imaginary, made available through prolonged exposure to practices, narratives and codes that present it as a plausible response to humiliation, loss of control or the threat of discredit. In this sense, violence can be imagined as an expressive resource even before it is enacted, since it is socially tolerated in some of its minor forms, trivialized in the contexts in which young people grow up, or even valued as proof of character and self-affirmation. Its function is not merely instrumental but identity-related: it serves to re-establish a symbolic order, to repair a wounded self-image, and to relocate the subject within gender hierarchies perceived as faltering (Oddone, 2020). For this reason, the relationship between emotional repression and violence is not accidental. When the male emotional repertoire is restricted, and when anger, hardness and control remain the most legitimized forms of expression, violence risks imposing itself as an available language for managing frustration, shame, fear and loss. The difficulty of naming pain, dependency, failure or the need for recognition does not eliminate these experiences but can translate them into practices of abuse or into aggressive postures that defend the subject's virile image. For this reason too, educational work on masculinities cannot be limited to the moral condemnation of violence, but must intervene on the emotional grammar that makes it thinkable, tolerable or even gratifying (Armengol, 2023; Oddone, 2020). From this perspective, rewriting masculinity means making visible what the dominant model tends to naturalize: the constructed character of virility, its historicity, its devices of power and its forms of contemporary adaptation. It also means recognizing that male emotional expression, if it remains confined to mere individual self-representation, can be reabsorbed into a "new masculinity" that is only apparently transformed; but if it is connected to a critical reworking of privilege, hierarchy and forms of domination, it can open

up more credible spaces for change. In this sense, it is not enough for a man to appear more sensitive: what is required is a change in how he interprets his own place within relationships, within the peer group, in intimacy and in public space (Armengol, 2023; Facheris, 2025; Gasparrini, 2019). Without emotional education, individuals risk being overwhelmed by their own emotions, to the point of being unable to recognize them, name them and channel them constructively (Matarazzo & Zammuner, 2015). Emotional literacy, in fact, does not coincide with a generic affective sensitivity but refers to the ability to read one's own inner experiences, to attribute meaning to them and to translate them into non-destructive expressive and relational forms, transforming emotion from a blind force into a resource for knowledge and communication (Mortari, 2009). When only violent emotions are socially permitted, this dynamic can favour aggressive behaviour and relational patterns marked by domination. The problem concerns everyone, but affects men in a particular way, since gender socialization continues to convey models of masculinity centred on control, hardness and the denial of vulnerability (Connell, 2005). Within this framework, the difficulty of recognizing and legitimizing fragility is not an individual matter but the result of a cultural construction that ties masculine worth to performance, dominance and self-sufficiency, narrowing the space for emotional intimacy and for the need for support (Facheris, 2025). Even when the need for help is felt, norms of self-sufficiency discourage seeking support and reinforce the idea that asking for help amounts to failing on an identity level (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). The result is a vicious circle in which suffering finds no adequate symbolic channels, hardens into silence, and can re-emerge as aggressiveness, withdrawal or hostility toward others. So-called toxic masculinity, therefore, does not concern men as such, but the expectations imposed upon them: to be strong, dominant and never vulnerable (Facheris, 2025). Deconstructing these expectations means opening up the

possibility of a plural masculinity, capable of integrating strength and care, autonomy and mutual dependence, rationality and the acknowledgement of feeling (Nussbaum, 2009).

In this sense, narrative takes on decisive value, because it allows lived experience to be reworked, made speakable, and placed within a shareable framework (Demetrio, 1996).

5. Conclusion - Possible Interventions between Emotional Literacy and Street Art

Narrative is not merely an expressive medium but a form of symbolic literacy through which the subject learns to give order to experience, to recognize connections between events and inner states, and to construct a possible sense of their own story (Freire, 2022). It becomes especially significant when it confronts dominant cultural models that tend to exclude some subjectivities while normalizing others (Marzullo, 2018). For this reason, narrative work also has a political function: it allows the consolidated images of identity, deviance, power and virility to be questioned, opening up alternative and more inclusive spaces of interpretation (Arendt, 2017). From this perspective, narrative can be understood as an instrument of collective resignification, capable of transforming individual lived experience into communicable and communal experience (Maddalena, 2022).

This process is also evident in the visual languages of the city, particularly in graffiti and street art, which constitute forms of counter-narrative against the exhibited perfection of bourgeois society. Graffiti does not merely intervene in urban space as an aesthetic sign or an act of rupture; it also destabilizes the very idea of a perfectly ordered and legible city, revealing that behind the bourgeois façade there exist conflicts, allegiances and marginal identities demanding visibility and recognition (Lachmann, 1988). Its strength lies not

only in its visual content but in its capacity to make public what was previously peripheral, turning a fragment of experience into a shareable way of reading the world (Evans, 2025). It is here that pedagogical discourse becomes decisive, because every form of giving meaning to reality shapes how the subject situates themselves within social space and the kind of relationship they build with what they perceive as their own or as foreign (Bertolini, 2015). From this perspective, graffiti can be read as a practice of communal resignification, capable of opening up spaces of recognition and participation for subjectivities that would otherwise remain invisible (Marzullo, 2018).

In a capitalist context in which urban space is increasingly regulated, homogenized and normalized, graffiti allows marginalized groups to reclaim visibility and to introduce signs of discontinuity within the dominant symbolic order (Gramsci, 2014). Graffiti thus acts as a device of symbolic translation: from a marginal sign it becomes a recognizable language; from a contested practice it turns into a form of expression capable of shaping common sense, at times even being absorbed by the mainstream and reinterpreted by it (Lachmann, 1988). This dynamic shows that the conflict does not concern only the content of the images, but the right to symbolically occupy space, to assert a presence, and to make visible what dominant discourse would tend to remove (Evans, 2025).

As Lachmann (1988) observes, graffiti can challenge hegemony by drawing on the specific experiences and customs of different communities, ethnic groups and generations, demonstrating that social life can be constructed in ways different from dominant conceptions of reality. This observation clarifies well the pedagogical character of graffiti: it does not merely denounce, but produces a visible lexicon of difference, within which emotions, memories, allegiances and conflicts often erased from official discourse find space (Bertolini, 2015). For this reason, street art should not be read solely as an

aesthetic language, but as a formative experience that changes the perception of the possible, opens up encounters with others, and makes one's view of the world more fluid (Marzullo, 2018).

The parallel with social networks is particularly useful for clarifying this passage. If gender socialization continues to propose a model founded on hardness, control and invulnerability, social media can become an environment in which these images are called into question through alternative, more affective and relational narratives, which show the legitimacy of vulnerability and care (Connell, 2005). Just as graffiti wrests the urban message away from the monopoly of the official city, digital narrative can wrest the story of the masculine away from the univocity of the strong, closed and dominant model (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). Social media, in fact, are not only places for exhibiting the self, but spaces of symbolic circulation in which new practices of identification can be imitated, repeated, shared and made familiar until they become culturally normal (Bandura, 2024). The strength of this counter-narrative lies not only in the content of the messages but in their continuous circulation, which progressively familiarizes different forms of masculinity and opens up space for new symbolic identifications-identifications less tied to domination and more oriented toward reciprocity, emotional responsibility, and the possibility of asking for help without feeling disqualified.

The decisive point is that, in the case of both graffiti and social media, counter-narrative works when it transforms what originates at the margins into shared language. In the first case, the wall becomes a public page, and the urban sign breaks the illusion of a perfectly ordered city; in the second, the digital feed becomes a space for the circulation of plural masculine models, capable of cracking the monopoly of hegemonic masculinity and normalizing different forms of male identity (Connell, 2005). In both cases, educational strength lies not only in the content transmitted but in the capacity to make visible what

was marginal and to present it as thinkable, speakable and shareable (Dewey, 2018). Counter-narrative does not abolish the dominant model immediately, but erodes its symbolic monopoly, opening up spaces of possibility for new social imaginaries and for relational practices that are less violent and more inclusive (Maddalena, 2022).

From this point of view, the construction of a counter-hegemonic narrative can present itself as an educational and communal device. It is indeed possible to develop models of deconstruction, inclusion and participation capable of setting in motion processes of collective and communal education (Freire, 2022). Narrative, when it becomes a shared practice, does not serve only to recount the world but to rewrite it, because it offers new interpretive categories through which to read conflict, desire, difference and limit (Bertolini, 2015). In this sense, political freedom does not coincide with the absence of constraints, but with the possibility of acting and speaking together with others in a common space, recognizing everyone's right to take part in the construction of meaning (Arendt, 2017). It is precisely here that the parallel between graffiti and social media acquires pedagogical value: both show that visibility is never neutral, but depends on who has access to the public stage and on which narratives are authorized to circulate (Gramsci, 2014). Michael Addis (2015) accordingly stresses that emotional health is fundamental to educating for a nonviolent masculinity, and that this goal must be pursued during the subject's developmental stage. An education capable of integrating narrative, emotional literacy and media tools can thus help form subjects who are more self-aware and less dependent on stereotyped models of domination; in this sense, cultural transformation also passes through the capacity to give voice to new images of the masculine and to render them visible, shareable and credible (Matarazzo & Zammuner, 2015). The educational challenge, therefore, consists in creating contexts in which emotion can be recognized, narrated and

socially legitimized, and in which dissent from hegemonic models is not experienced as a threat but as an opportunity for collective growth (Mortari, 2009).

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