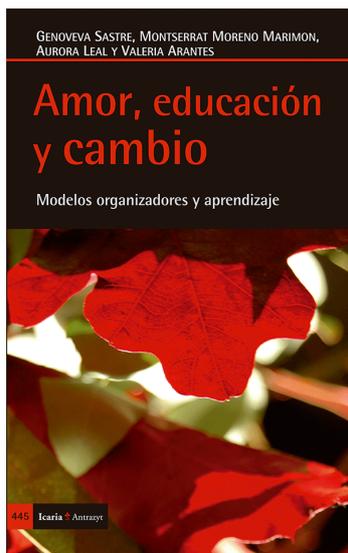


“AMOR, EDUCACIÓN Y CAMBIO. MODELOS ORGANIZADORES Y APRENDIZAJE”. Genoveva Sastre, Montserrat Moreno Marimón, Aurora Leal and Valeria Arantes. Icaria Editorial. Barcelona, 2016. 248 pages.



Amor, educación y cambio. Modelos organizadores y aprendizaje (Love, education and change: Organizational models and learning) is published as part of the *Mujeres, voces y propuestas* series by the *Antrazyt* collection of Icaria Editorial, a collection of essays on areas of the past and present and notes for developing other potential models. The authors of this book, along with Nuria Becerra, Alba González and Marc Ros i Companys, who also collaborated in the publication, are from the field of psychology. They are university teachers and researchers and professionals in social intervention and, in all cases, their work perspectives are in the areas of gender and education.

This book is “an invitation to think about loving feelings” (p.7). Love, more specifically love in a couple, is another area of social hierarchization and taking the reins on this field which is so important to our existence is vital if we are to be co-authors of our own lives. From this approach, this collective work on intervention with young people and adolescents, will approach love in the hope of change and will do so through the theory of organisational models. This publication provides a methodology and professional instruments to achieve “a romantic culture based on cooperation and solidarity” (p.8).

The experience described in these pages shows how starting from the hegemony of romantic love, simplistic and homogenising, in the process of reflection with young people a certain progress towards the recognising the singularity of each person can be seen and, consequently, openness to the plurality of visions and experiences of love. “The more opportunities we give young people to have positive experiences of relationships and reflect on them, the better their chances of constructing ways of loving that allow relationship needs, interests and problems to flow without abandoning the field of equality” (p.61).

The book is organised in five chapters which are in turn divided into two larger sections. The first section has the title ‘Personal and social change’ and includes

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chapters I, II and III; the second section is called ‘Explicit and implicit elements in loving relationships’, and comprises chapters IV and V.

The first chapter addresses the foundations of the project: loving bonds and their organising models. Regarding the former, it reflects on what ideas we use in relation to love and how our mind operates with regards to it. It also brings up how, despite the real variety of loving experiences, the hegemonic model of the heterosexual couple, whose (ideal) love is omnipotent, exclusive and lasting, something that has been called romantic love, is still strongly present in the western imaginary. It also sets out the theory chosen to tackle this topic, the organizational models theory, which is based on the premise that we interpret our personal universe “through the deployment of mental processes based fundamentally on the selection of some elements of experience [rejecting others] to which we attribute a particular significance and which we relate to each other to reach given conclusions” (p.21). This enables us to give meaning to our experience and undertake lines of future action, justifying their use in this project.

In the second chapter, an intervention with a group of 40 young people from university is described in which their perceptions on loving conflicts are transcribed, that arise from the analysis of a specific case. We start to verify the link between how a person feels, thinks and acts but inscribed in a specific moment and place, in a cultural context, in other words, the connection between the private and the public, a fundamental link for the authors of this work.

Chapter III describes research performed with 30 young people. It describes the process of generating thought and reflection that leads us to discern the possibilities of change, the hope that young people educated in the premises of romantic love can break the through its boundaries and build healthy and equitable loving bonds. Analysing and debating specific conflicts, comparing them with the foundations of romantic love, would encourage them to create ways of resolving critical situations with those romantic scenarios, that among other questions seem to limit our ability to act when presenting love as a force over which we have no control, something ethereal and abstract. This could encourage them, which was the intention with this experiment, to guide their loving relationships along more cooperative lines.

Ideas about love in adolescence are summarised in the last two chapters (IV and V) through a study performed with boys and girls aged between 14 and 16 using drawings and the written word. Through this, we discover the new and old elements included in their imaginaries, and again there is space for hope with the appearance, alongside old ideas of romantic love, of other approaches linked to the culture of equality. The last paragraph of the book opens the door to the need to continue this research and other types that attempt to continue to modify other preconceived and damaging ideas about love.

One of the most valuable aspects of this approach is the subject chosen, love, which the authors justify because it is an area where the bond between the personal and the social is obvious and so it is a fertile ground for encouraging simultaneous individual and

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collective change in young people. Something similar happens with the theory of organizational models, also used sensibly here, as this makes it possible to link individual experiences with those of the culture, based on the mental construct that is the result of the interaction between the individual and his or her physical and sociocultural setting.

The research process that the team of authors perform is rigorous and theoretically well grounded. It is prudent in its scope but enthusiastic about the possibilities into which it gives an insight. Consequently, it offers hope about the possibility of guiding loving practices and imaginaries towards more healthy, free and equitable models. “Loving relationships are too important to allow patriarchal capitalism to shape them in its image and likeness” (p.7) they explain in the introduction. The approach is linked to the social movements and the demand for another model of society, given that “love and feelings [...] are a constituent part of the social fabric and it also affects the political” (p.164). Not naming love in all of its possibilities means meekly accepting the single model, that limits our creativity, creates dissatisfaction and entails social control of great significance. And separating love in a couple from the other loving relationships in our lives (family, friendship...) weakens us as we do not apply what we have learnt in one of these relationship fields to the others.

If love is absent, not only in the field of education but also in society, politics or economics, an in-depth treatment of it becomes a fundamental strategy for profile raising. Naming love, thinking about love, sharing experiences of love, mean accepting our responsibility not to perpetuate hegemonic unfair models, something which social and educational silence and the lack of alternative visions of love undoubtedly contribute to the fossilisation of. The research carried out shows how romantic love is still strong as a paradigm among young people, with examples in the text such as the one described in Chapter II when, being aware and analysing a situation of male violence from a position of relational ethics, a high percentage of the group of young people proposed prioritising the preservation of the loving bond when resolving it. The idea of love above all else is still present in our imaginary.

One thing that might enhance this excellent work is to expand the concept of the couple to include other sexual orientations. While we understand, as the authors state to justify their choice, that the heterosexual model is the dominant one (and the one about which there are the most myths), clarifying this diversity in the interventions could serve both to put all sexual orientations on the same level of possibility and to attempt to ensure that non-heterosexual ones are not permeated by the model of romantic love, as indeed also happens.

“Love, education and change” is, therefore, recommended for a specialist readership and also a broad range of readers linked to educational work with young people: education and psychology professionals essentially, for whom this work will be very useful. The methodology used is reproducible, as it clarifies their postulates and shows the instruments they used in their intervention with young people and how they

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analysed them. Similarly, a broad bibliography facilitates the substantiation of any educational activity that is proposed in this sense.

Furthermore, the work, which is not unduly difficult to understand, even for those from outside the fields of psychology and education, will be of interest to anyone interested in making a psychosocial approach to love. It is also useful, and this is no small matter, for carrying out a personal review of one's own loving feelings, of our mechanisms for thinking about love, which is something that is spoken about too little, even in adulthood and beyond romance ☺