

# MEN, EQUALITY AND NEW MASCULINITIES



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**MEN,  
EQUALITY  
AND NEW  
MASCULINITIES**

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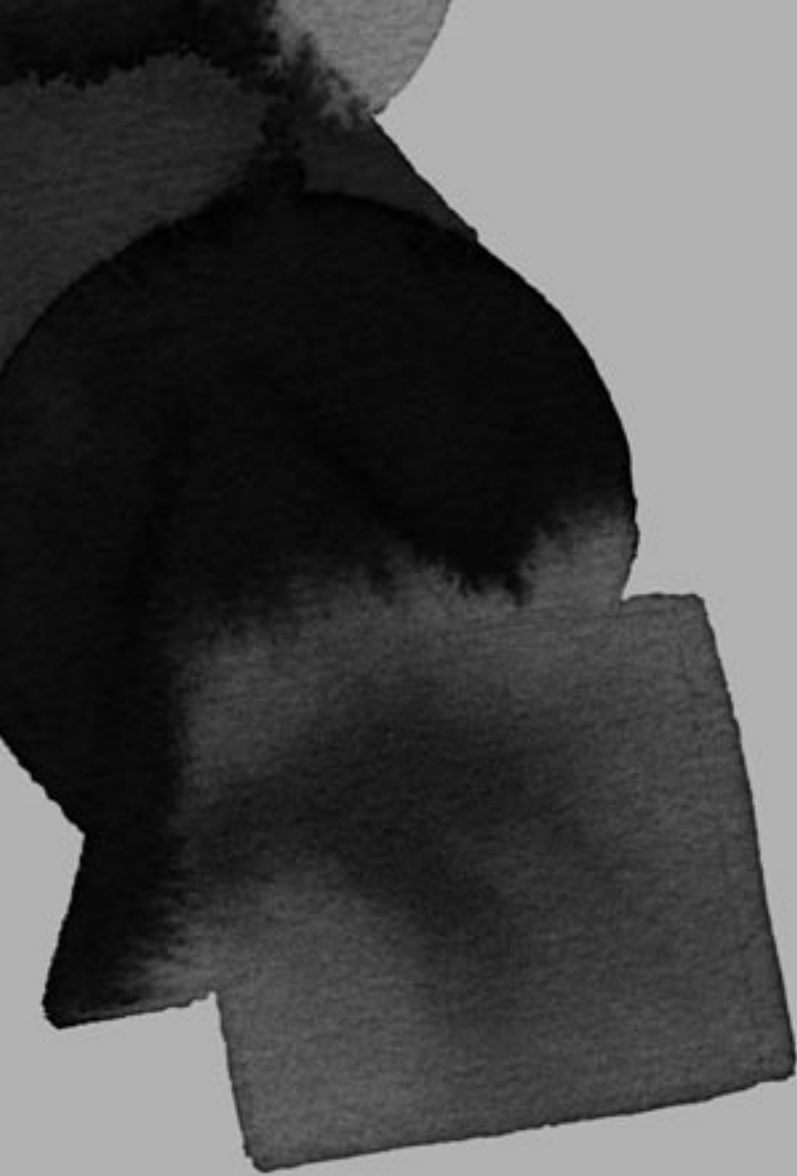
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# P RESENTATION







This guide has been prepared by Gizonduz, an initiative launched by Emakunde (The Basque Women's Institute), and is designed to promote personal and social involvement of men in the goal of equality between women and men.

The first edition of this guide was made in 2008 in Basque and in Spanish, but interest in it and the need to bring its contents to a wider audience has led us to publish a second edition in English which you now hold in your hands.

The guide, forms part of the activities taking place within the Gizonduz initiative and aims to enhance understanding and reflection on issues of gender equality. Moreover, it aims to promote change in men at a personal and social level regarding their attitudes and behaviours to the basic right of equality. The guide, therefore, analyses the influence of gender socialization in the

construction of traditional masculinity and the consequences that this hegemonic masculinity brings to bear on the integral development of men. A process of development which attempts to address individual needs and is not limited in function to a set of values, expectations, stereotypes, roles, etc. which have been traditionally assigned to men by virtue of the mere fact that they are men.

Apart from the consequences that hegemonic masculinity brings to bear on men, the guide also focuses on the negative impact this has on equality in general and therefore, in the living conditions and position of women and more specifically in the intimate relationship which exists between traditional masculinity and the grave social problem of violence against women.

While we have seen that women have been incorporated into contexts that were traditionally reserved for men, this process is not being accompanied in equal measure by the involvement of men in domestic work, care giving, values, functions, tasks ... which historically, have been considered feminine. But to achieve a more egalitarian society, along with changes and developments featuring women requires the participation and involvement of men, since the achievement of equality is a process that affects all people, women and men alike and from which all benefit.

The social and personal benefits which equality affords has lead to the fact that an increasing number of men, with an ever increasing degree of influence have created new egalitarian models relating to different forms of masculine identity. These latter are what are known today as new masculinities. These new masculinities bring many positive consequences to bear on men in the area of personal development and in their private lives. Furthermore, they contribute greatly to the construction of a more egalitarian society and the positive advancement of equality between women and men.

Regarding this work many Basque men are participating in the creation and deepening awareness of egalitarian models of masculinity. They take part in discussion groups, personal growth and training or have joined associations of Men for Equality with the objective of implicating themselves socially and politically in fostering equality between women and men in our society.

So, with this guide we aim to bring these and other reflections to all men with the intention that they should become aware of the negative consequences of traditional masculinities in their own lives, in the lives of women and in society at large and to promote a change in attitudes and behaviours of men that will lead to a greater commitment to equality.

The challenge for this century must therefore be the construction of a new social model that is more democratic, fairer and egalitarian. To this end it is imperative that men are ever more willing to question the traditional model of masculinity and to engage actively alongside women in the quest for a world that is better for all and facilitates integrated human development for both men and women.



María Silvestre Cabrera  
Director of Emakunde  
The Basque Women's Institute



1. **E**QUALITY OF WOMEN  
AND MEN



This material is, therefore, intended to encourage men to become aware and reflect on the injustices that the current patriarchal system which places women in a structural position of subordination to men generates, and about the adverse impact of these stereotypes and gender roles on which that system rests.

One of the greatest challenges facing us in this century must be the construction of a new, more democratic, just and equitable social model. To this end it is essential that men should be increasingly willing to challenge the traditional model of masculinity, to renounce the privileges which the patriarchal system affords them, to relieve themselves from the burden of a misunderstood masculinity, and commit alongside women, to the active pursuit of a better world for everyone thus increasing opportunities for human development for both women and men.

Equality between women and men is rooted in our society as a universal legal, political and ethical principle, which is present in interpersonal relationships, and is also recognized in various international documents on human rights. In this vein, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, proclaims the principle of equality of women and men. Through the Treaty of Amsterdam, the equality of women and men is formally enshrined as a fundamental principle of the European Union. For its part, the Spanish Constitution and the Statute of Autonomy of the Basque Autonomous Community (The BAC) proclaim the right to equality and freedom from gender discrimination and requires public authorities to promote conditions and remove obstacles to equality between people is real and effective, especially since legal equality is not necessarily bourn out in reality.

In The BAC, Act 4 / 2005 of 18 February for the Equality of Women and Men, has as its ultimate goal 'the advancement towards an egalitarian society in which all people are free and autonomous, both in public and private, to develop their personal abilities and make decisions without the constraints of traditional roles and stereotypes based on gender, and which takes into account, and values equally the distinctive behaviours, aspirations and needs of women and men.'

The traditional roles played by men and women in our society are experiencing a significant but uneven transformation. The change is particularly visible and significant in the case of women. Their increased participation in the labour market, their access to all education at all levels, greater presence in the training and culture and to a lesser extent, in the areas of power and decision making, are creating social changes which favour the advancement of our society towards equality between women and men. These changes would have been impossible without the fundamental contribution of feminist movements and without the effort of all those women who have worked anonymously for the rights of all women.

However, data regarding the labour market, social and political participation, violence against women, sharing of domestic work and the feminization of poverty continue to reflect an unequal society and demonstrate the existence of a hierarchy in relationships and social ranking of men and women. This situation stems from the stereotyping and cultural patterns of conduct based on gender which assigns women responsibility for the domestic sphere while men inhabit the public domain.

Moreover, there is increasing consensus relating to the acceptance of women's rights to equality. It also recognizes the need and desirability that men should participate more and that they be jointly responsible as a matter of social justice. That they assume the responsibilities associated with it to share necessary household chores, responsibility in reproduction and care giving, and the adoption of a more egalitarian stance free from sexism. So, while changes in the attitude of women and their incorporation into the workplace, has made a fundamental contribution to human development in our society, changes in the attitudes of men and their inclusion in the practice of and struggle for equality are pending. The positive evolution of our democracy largely depends on this.

This new model of coexistence not only benefits women but also men and society as a whole. While it is true that the current patriarchal social system grants men as a group certain privileges for example; they enjoy higher levels of income and greater power and more authority in the public sphere. At the same time they also benefit from the fact that it is largely women who shoulder the responsibility for domestic and care work. It is no less true, however, that this system, based on the rigid differentiation of roles and gender expectations, bears its costs on men too. In general they have a lower life expectancy, are more prone to drug addiction, traffic accidents, more serious industrial accidents, being imprisoned or becoming the victims of violent death.

In short, we live in a society that, in addition to discriminating against women, creates dissatisfaction in both men and women. Therefore, the challenge facing us in this century must be the construction of a new more democratic, just and egalitarian social model. It is essential that there be ever more men willing to challenge the traditional model of masculinity, to waive the privileges that the patriarchal system gives them, liberate themselves from the burden of a traditional or hegemonic masculinity, and to actively engage, alongside women, in achieving a new society of free people. For it is equality insofar as it can broaden our life's horizon which makes us into better people and will therefore make real men out of our men folk.



## 2. **R**EASONS FOR THE CHANGE IN MEN TOWARDS EQUALITY





The lack of awareness, involvement, and sometimes the evasion and plain refusal on the part of men to consider issues of equality has come to impede both social and personal progress of women, men and society as a whole. For public policies of equality it represents a societal limitation that will be difficult to overcome.

There are political, ideological and ethical reasons why society should expect, demand and encourage that many more men should foster attitudes, perceptions and practices of equality. These reasons have to do with the fact that equality is a value of coexistence and indeed, a human right.

Changes in men towards equality are of direct benefit to the women closest to them. For example, switching from a situation of unequal sharing of the burden of care to one of equal involvement may allow them more time and opportunities to progress personally and professionally.

At the same time equality has direct benefits for men too. To become a man conscious of issues relating to equality signifies the shouldering of responsibilities regarding not only the care of others but also the care of oneself with concomitant advances in self-esteem, greater potential for personal growth, better relationships with women and fellow men, among many other advantages.

There are also practical reasons and direct benefits of the change in men towards a more egalitarian outlook which are enjoyed by the whole of society. In fact, countries with a higher index of human development, which is to say, with greater respect for freedom and development of the capacities of individuals are by nature, more egalitarian. But it is very likely too that countries with greater equality or greater achievements on equality of men and women develop more rapidly and increases the quality of life of their citizens. This is due to the fact that equality is a powerful tool against welfare dependency and the economic burden imposed by cultural exclusion and marginalization.





### 3. **S**OCIALISATION AND MASCULINITY



Sex is a category associated with biological characteristics which people possess. It establishes the female-male division, a category which does not change over time and across cultures.

Gender, however, is a socially and culturally constructed category, which comes to define what is understood in every society and culture as feminine and masculine. It therefore, limits what values, behaviours and expectations should be specific to men and which are specific to women. The feminine and masculine is, however, learned and can therefore be modified. It is gender which explains gender inequalities between men and women in our society.

One learns to be a man or woman, boy or girl, and that definition is determined even before birth (when choosing names, the decoration of bedrooms, clothes which are bought ...). Human beings are obliged to learn to be what and who they are and the learning of gender is one of the first and most important lessons taught by the family, school, different religions and by society at large. The importance of learning about gender is enormous since it forms the foundation of our personal identity. The process of internalisation, understanding and acceptance of the rules and collective values which govern our coexistence is known as socialisation. The effectiveness of this process resides in the fact that the rules are universal but nuanced by a sexist concept of social structure. It therefore rewards those who comply but punishes or even excludes those who do not.

Thus, girls and boys are transformed into women and men through a process of socialization that is responsible for promoting attitudes that are considered appropriate for each sex, or to punish those who do not conform to the established roles and stereotypes.

This process does not affect all people equally. It does not reproduce the exact models but gives rise to widespread patterns of behaviour or hegemonies that tend to reproduce the stereotypes attributed to masculine and feminine.

In the society and culture in which we live, this process of socialization bears serious consequences for the lives of women and men. Sexism is a natural limiter which reduces the likelihood of people developing their true potential and therefore represents a drag on the individual and collective freedom. Sexist socialization in a patriarchal system discriminates and oppresses women and at the same time limits the capacity of men.

Gender stereotypes and how they function:

<b>When someone's behaviour is</b>	<b>In girls we say they are...</b>	<b>In boys we say they are...</b>
Active	Nervous	Restless
Insistent	Stubborn	Tenacious
Sensitive	Delicate	Effeminate
Easygoing	Coarse	Sure of himself
Uninhibited	Naughty	Likeable
Obedient	Docile	Weak
Temperamental	Hysterical	Passionate
Audacious	Impulsive	Valiant
Introverted	Timid	Thoughtful
Curious	Nosy	Intelligent
Prudent	Judicious	Cowardly
Selfish	Egotistical	Defensive of his own
Stubborn	Aggressive	Strong
Changeable 'moody'	Capricious, Fickle	Able to recognise their mistakes

Table taken from: Vázquez, Norma. El ABC del género. Asociación Equipo Maíz.

The same behaviour is interpreted and valued differently depending on the sex of the protagonist. Furthermore the process of education enhances or discourages certain types of behaviour in distinctive ways. Thus a boy is corrected for being 'too delicate' if he departs from the model of strength assigned to the male stereotype.

One must bear in mind that this is neither a conscious process nor an individual creation, but the result of sexist socialization process, which aims to 'naturalize' gender stereotypes which on being created, shared and supported by the underlying yet dominant social structure are rendered invisible.

This gender based process of socialization achieves a high degree of homogeneity in terms of behaviour, concerns, feelings, ways of relating with others or expectations for the future. All this conspires to create a fabric of social expectations and images of what 'ought to be' which is a reference system on which we can rely in the development of ourselves be it through acceptance or resistance.

This 'ought to be' creates gender roles, which are defined as a set of perceived behavioural norms, a set of roles and expectations associated with the particular mind set, male or

female, in any given social group or system. Thus, men are associated with the male role, a role related to social prestige and the public. They are expected to be strong, active, independent and courageous. Meanwhile, women are associated with the feminine role, a role with little prestige and related to the private sphere, household chores or care. They are expected to be sentimental, passive, dependent and fearful.

The results of various workshops in various secondary schools in 2007 provide meaningful data on the duration, prevalence and strength of stereotypes and gender roles in The Basque Autonomous Community. When questioned, 'What are men like?' and 'What are women like?' In all cases adolescents agreed that women are; sensitive, hysterical, intuitive, caring, gossipy, fastidious, clean, timid ... The men were defined with the following adjectives: risk takers, violent, sporty, unfaithful, active, rough, scatter brained. It is far from trivial that in each and every one of the workshops conducted the same stereotyped images appeared.

Another important element to consider in the process of socialization is language. Language, both verbal and written is a symbolic construction of cultural consensus, the use of which may express support for and help create a new and egalitarian image of gender relations or alternatively, further deepen and maintain inequality. Therefore, through language we represent the world in which we live, how we reason, how we identify, feel, and where we stand. If this language speaks only in masculine, sexist terms, which do not represent men and women on an equal footing it will only contribute to the maintenance of inequality in our society. Replacing generic male references for inclusive concepts such as 'humanity' or 'people' not only helps to represent women better, but also to mitigate the over representation of men.

Nevertheless we must bear in mind that the essence of the concept of gender is not only to be found in stereotypes, roles and language. Gender also describes the actual and unequal power relations between men and women and how these relations are internalised.

Among the various mechanisms of socialization, role models for men or masculine references play an important part. The family environment can be critical in a process of change towards more egalitarian attitudes. The model of an egalitarian father for his children can be the starting point of a new masculinity characterised by committed care giving.

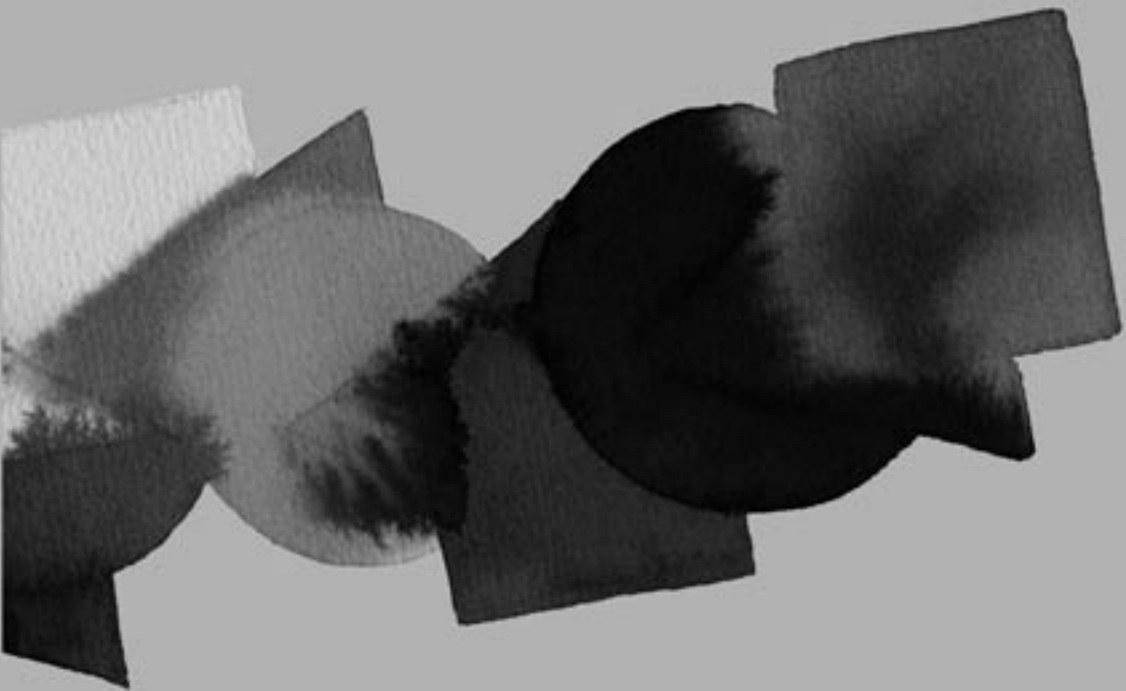
Homophobia is one of the basic mechanisms for perpetuating the patriarchal ideology of masculinity.

In the definition of the model of the heterosexual man, attitudes which are considered to be feminine and men who behave as such are rejected. This rejection was based on a con-

ception of male sexuality defined by heterosexuality, which limits and penalises emotional relationships, intimacy and complicity between men. In this way the hegemonic model encourages us to reject homosexuality and consider homosexuals as 'less manly'.

Each culture has a set of codes, stereotypes and roles that govern the behaviour, attitudes and expectations of men in society. We could say that there is a cultural definition of masculinity, which permeates and determines the various male identities. Thus, what is expected of men, what they are and what they collectively identify with as men, is the response to a human construct, so that the characteristics that define masculinity are neither innate nor natural but are learned through socialisation. But this does not mean that there is a unique masculine identity. Neither is there a closed model of masculinity, because when we look at reality we find different ways of being human, conditioned by age, social class, ethnicity, status or sexual orientation, etc.. We could, therefore, speak of a dominant or hegemonic model of masculinity for each society and moment in history, but with a diversity of male identities and ways of being a man in our society. Men are one part of humanity, but have been representing themselves as the natural pattern and model of the whole of humanity.





# 4. **H**EGEMONIC MASCULINITY



When we talk about traditional masculinity we are referring to a set of values, beliefs, attitudes, myths, stereotypes and behaviours that legitimises and endows men with the power to exercise it.

Androcentrism is a partial view of the world that believes that what men have done is what has made mankind or, conversely, that everything that mankind has done is the result of the actions of men. It involves the thinking that what is good for men is good for humanity, and leads to the belief that the male experience includes and is the measure of human experiences. In short, androcentrism values only what men have done.

We understand patriarchy as a form of political, religious and socio economic organisation based on the idea of male authority and leadership, which grants the dominance of men over women.

Traditional masculinity is therefore based on an androcentric vision of the world within a patriarchal social and cultural system based on the idea of male authority and leadership. A system in which there is a predominance of men over women, where the structures of production and reproduction of power is largely grounded in inequality between men and women

Why is the traditional model of masculinity maintained? Quite simply because the social structure that maintains it has not in itself changed substantially. There has been only an apparent change and abandonment of old norms and structures. Women have taken a step forward in the quest for equality but most men have failed to move towards a more egalitarian outlook.

## **4.1. MEN AND POWER**

The experience of power in men is internalized through the socialization process. Their first reference to what power is and how and by whom it is wielded is to be found in their own patriarchal family. It is worth bearing in mind that our perception of gender structures becomes firmly fixed in our identities before the age of five. The experience, learning and internalization of power in men is therefore profound and very early.

Power can be defined as the capacity and potential of people to think, act and develop skills, in other words, the capacity and possibility to exercise control over other people.

For men the importance of having and controlling power corresponds with the second definition. Power *over*, understood as the ability to impose definitions and interests on external as well as their own affairs. This has been the dominant view through which hegemonic masculinities are constructed and the power has been defined and reproduced by this social group throughout history via a historical, psychological and social feedback process. Thus, power and masculinity have become related through a historical process of mutual reproduction to the extent that masculinity, the forms of power exercised and their distribution have come to define each other through history. By virtue of this process the power wielded by men has created a hegemony which ensures that men continue to find themselves in a position of power and privilege generation through generation.

But the experience of power in men presents many contradictions. As Michael Kaufman points out '... social power of men is the source of their power and individual privileges, but also a source of their individual experience of pain and alienation ... recognition of such pain is a means to better understand men and the complex nature of the dominant forms of masculinity.' Thus, we find that pain, isolation and emotional deprivation are the counterpart to this understanding of power.

## 4.2. MEN AND EMOTIONS

One of the main problems faced by men relates to their emotional education which tends towards '0' or what amounts to the same, the repression and denial of emotions.

We could say that this is the other side of the coin of 'male compulsory service' (or what is expected at all times of men), that strength is one of the structural elements of being masculine. Expressions which are still commonly used such as 'Boys don't cry', 'You have to be strong' or 'That's for girls' still reflect a stereotyped pattern of masculinity and conquest that are still associated with the idea of 'becoming a man'.

By this means, the world of affection and emotion lies beyond the basic defining elements of hegemonic masculinity. When a man is seen to be sensitive, empathetic, shows vulnerability, knows how to give and seek solace, expresses his emotions and is not competitive, he is automatically distanced from the hegemonic model.

On the other hand, the tendency of the majority of men to blame external factors and to forget or even reject any form of introspection means that from an early age they are trained to be fit and competitive in the spatial domain while they are not trained in the development of emotional skills.

This leads to low tolerance of frustration and ineffective mechanisms to develop and manage everyday emotions such as sadness, fear, and especially those related to vulnerability, which is easily confused with weakness.

This in turn creates men more emotionally and affectionately dependent on other people especially women, although it might seem contradictory to the idea of strength and self-assurance as defined by hegemonic masculinity.

Consequent to this we see the appearance with ever increasing frequency, of single men who are in effect emotionally deprived and confronting relational difficulties. Such men have been labelled as 'the lonely males'.

### **4.3. MASCULINITY AND THE CULTURE OF RISK TAKING**

A part of male identity is based on continually demonstrating one's skills against other men. This heroic model pays scant regard to safety in seeking recognition from others. The affirmation of this masculinity demands continuous demonstrations of bravado, which vary significantly depending on age. Many men adopt attitudes that trivialise security and are based on risky behaviour and demonstrating their 'courage' as a confirmation of their virility and their worthiness as men.

These risk behaviours are also based on the way in which for the most part male identity conceives the body as invulnerable. It is this conception that leads many men to have a reckless attitude and disregard for injuries and pain, as can be seen in activities such as drug use, driving and sexual relations.

Risk taking behaviour developed in modern Western societies, in particular driving represent a clear example of the consequences of the reckless behaviour of many men.

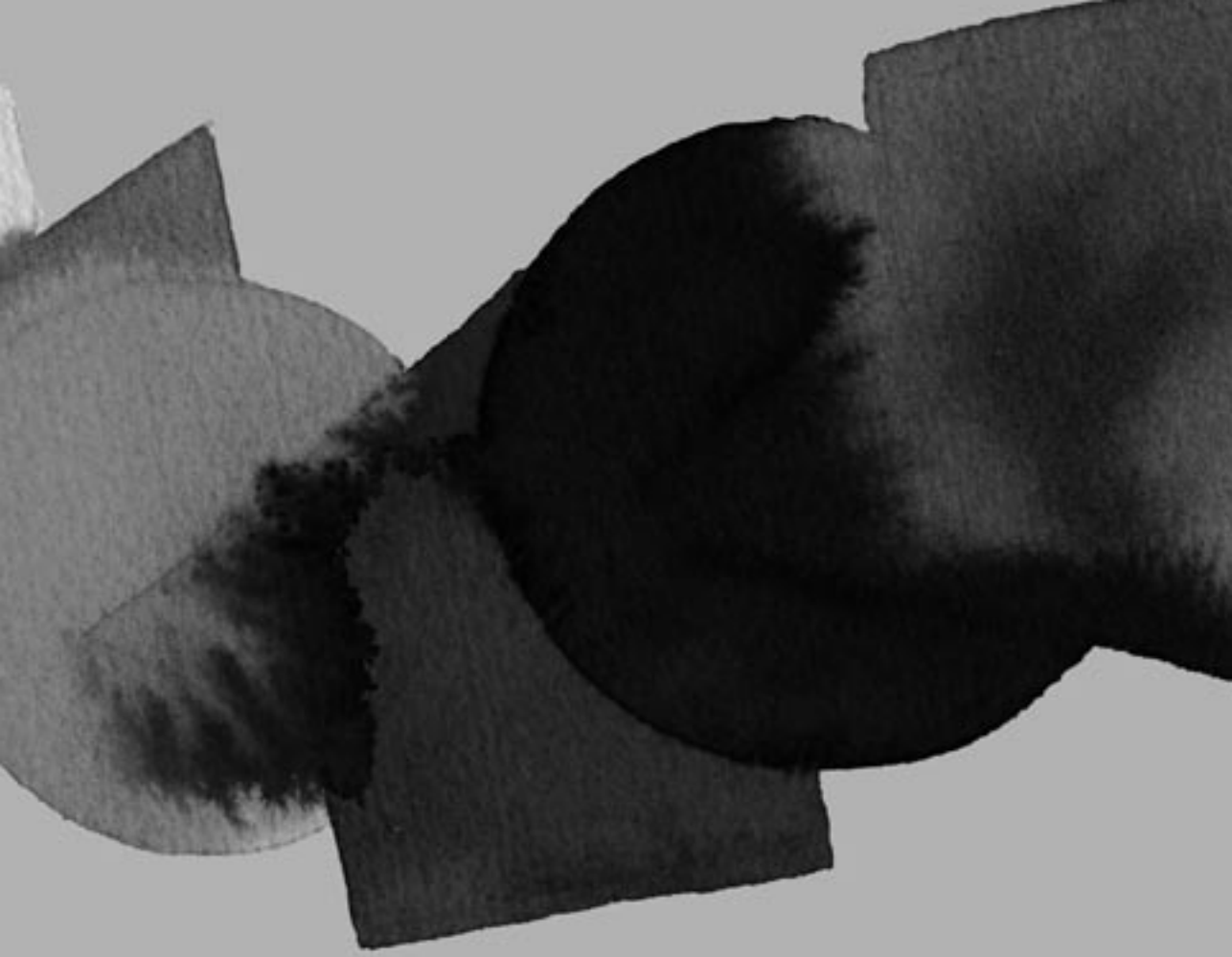
Public risk taking behaviour of this nature is not to be confused with self-destructive attempts. These patterns of behaviour are identified in hegemonic masculinity in which men must negotiate their status through public demonstrations. Such attitudes can be understood both as forms used by men to save and preserve their own image in the public sphere where public is understood to mean not only in the presence of others, but situations in which they act in reference to others. Men not only use their bodies, but flirt with risk feeling that they 'should' do so in order to be considered 'men'. The damage which in some cases

occurs as a result of risky behaviour is the undesired consequence of attempts to test and affirm their virility<sup>1</sup>.

Not all models or traditional hegemonic masculinity take their mandates to self-destructive extremes. But in the final submission of the hegemonic model of both femininity (anorexia) and masculinity there is a high propensity to risk life in the service of gender affirmation, bringing this subjective element to the principal identifying feature of the person. Work-related accidents, car or motorcycle accidents, participation in high risk sports, the acquisition of sexually transmitted diseases or AIDS through unprotected sex, fighting and even the participation in armies and armed conflict, or violent or paramilitary groups, are some of the extreme practices which fall within the model of hegemonic masculinity.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Emakunde. Figures on the situation of women and men in Euskadi 2006.



## 5. THE PROBLEMS OF GENDER FOR MEN





The hegemonic model of masculinity imposes on men a stereotyped and narrow way of thinking, being, living and acting in the world. This pattern of sexist masculinity which allows men to occupy a privileged position from which they wield power has serious consequences for women. But it also brings negative consequences for the men themselves, which is defined as 'problems of gender for men'.

These problems, which are considered specific to masculinity since they significantly affect men, are also a consequence of the same sex-gender system and gender socialisation. Thus, men (though by no means all in the same degree), through the hegemonic model of masculinity not only create serious problems of gender, but are also the protagonists in the suffering.

The fact that in The Basque Autonomous Community men live on average 7 years less than women<sup>1</sup> or that the Spanish State has 2,000,000 widows and 200,000 widowers is substantial evidence of the consequences of hegemonic masculinity and in particular help to illustrate the consequences of gender issues for men. The explanation for these significant demographic differences are complex and multi-causal, but are closely related to the lack of a culture of self-care in men. They are, moreover, the direct consequence of a positive assessment of risk and the legitimization of violence as traits of manliness and the self-assertion of masculinity.

One must bear in mind that self-care and health also have a strong gender component: In the majority of cases the experience of male education reinforces the idea that taking care of themselves and others, is feminine while strength, courage and daring are male attributes.

Men make up the bulk of people with addictions to illegal substances. In fact, in our Community, men account for 72% of people with problematic use of drugs<sup>1</sup>. In the Spanish State, over 80% of people dying from drug use are men<sup>2</sup>.

Likewise, men are the protagonists in the vast majority of crimes and this explains their high presence in the prison population (in 2006 they accounted for 93% of inmates in prisons in the BAC)<sup>3</sup>. In 2005, persons convicted of murder in the State, 423 were men while 21 were women<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Drugs and Euskadi 2006. Directorate of Drug Dependencies. Basque Government.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Spanish Observatory on Drugs.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Directorate of Penitentiary Institutions, Ministry of Interior.

<sup>4</sup> Source: General Council of the Judiciary.

Furthermore, of the 80 people killed in road traffic accidents in 2007 in our Community 63 were men representing almost 80% of drivers involved in those accidents<sup>5</sup>. Regarding the Spanish State, according to data supplied by the Traffic Department, in 2005, 3652 people were killed on the road (79% men). Of these, 2357 were car drivers (91% of drivers who were killed were men). In the same year there were 186 women car drivers killed while in the case of males the figure is 1284 (7 times more). With respect to motorcycles, 10 women were killed compared with 142 males (14 times more). If we talk about drivers of commercial vehicles (ambulances, trucks, vans, buses) the ratio is 9 to 202 (22 times more in men). In the case of professional motorcyclists 4 women died, compared to 326 males (81 times more)<sup>6</sup>.

Men are also disproportionately represented in suicide rates, which stood at 12.6 for them versus 3.9 for women<sup>7</sup>. According to Eustat, in The Basque Autonomous Community 70% of people who commit suicide are men.

School failure in men is much higher than in women and is growing especially in the age category of adolescence. In the Basque Autonomous Community, the total student school failure has a gendered impact because while in girls account for 10.8% of cases, in boys 20.3%<sup>8</sup>.

But it is not our intention to victimise men, but rather to illustrate the impact and the specific problems generated by traditional masculinity and sexism in men. Exposing and naming the disadvantages that hegemonic masculinity causes can be a valid strategy in the assessment of changes in men in favour of equality. Perhaps they might be convinced to lose their privileges and gain a better quality of life.

Furthermore, the extent to which men are socialized to play the role of main provider of economic support for families, suffer greater pressure in the employment field to lengthen the working day, making it practically consume their lives in production. This in turn leads to them not fulfilling their true potential and capabilities, particularly those that relate to the fields of reproduction and affection. Not to mention the cost of misunderstanding and even in some cases social rejection, suffered by those men who dare to go beyond the prevailing social role and publicly assume behaviours and roles traditionally seen as 'feminine'.

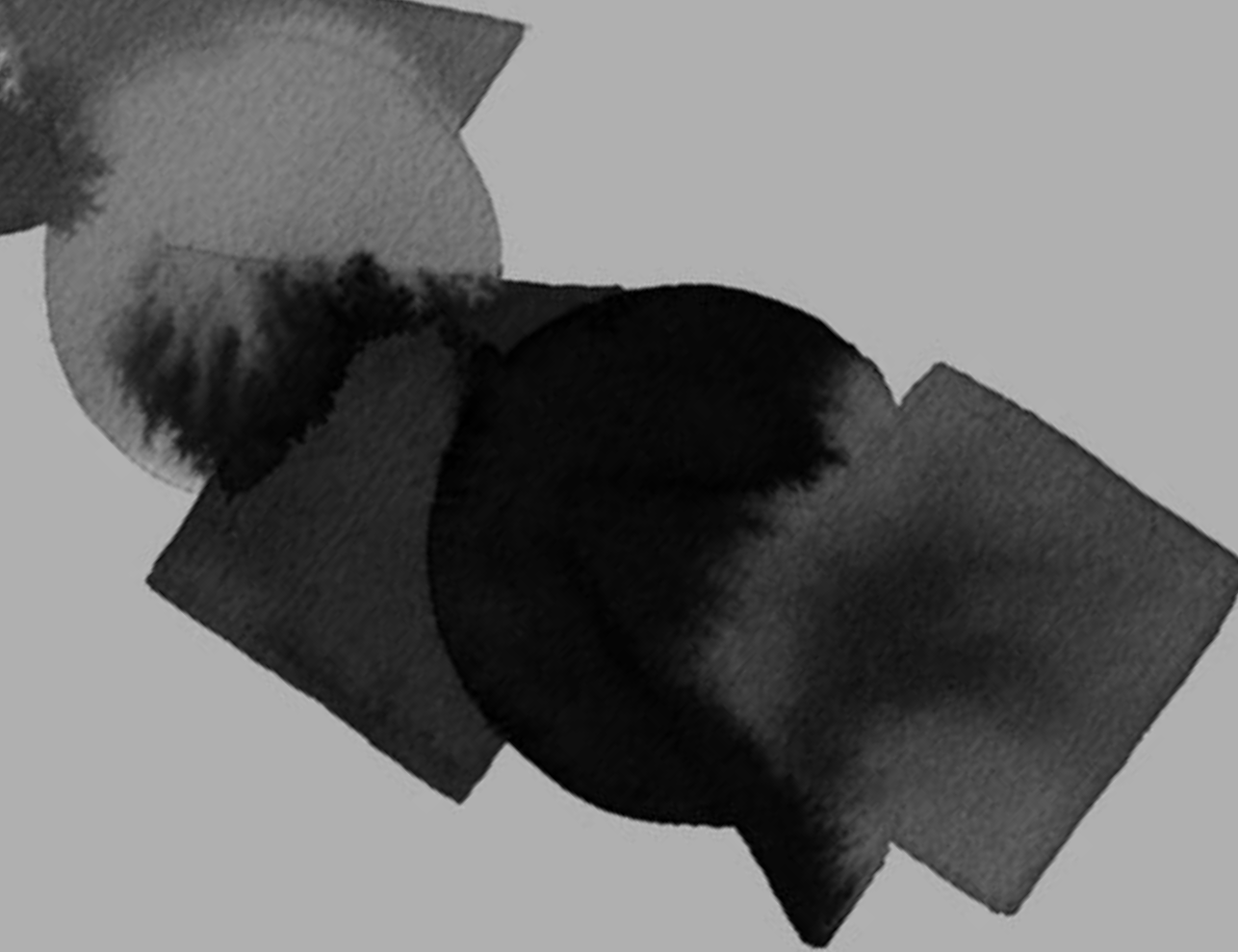
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<sup>5</sup> Source: Statistical Yearbook of Road Traffic for 2007 from the Traffic Department of the Interior Department of the Basque Government.

<sup>6</sup> Annual report of traffic accidents Traffic Department 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Source: Monitoring of gender inequalities in health.

<sup>8</sup> System of Education Indicators. Ministry of Education. 2004.



## 6. **MALE VIOLENCE**



Violence as a social phenomenon is linked to the construction of male identity in our society. It forms part of male socialization process to a much greater extent than in women. And although physical violence in our society is diminishing in its legitimacy, we find that its use continues to persist in many men.

Violence is used by some men against women and although it takes different forms it is also used as a means of resolving conflicts with other men. It is also used on occasions against oneself. Thus, some men exercise violence on the understanding that it is a legitimate and effective tool for resolution of conflicts. Violence between men, nevertheless, does not have the cultural constraints that defines violence against women.

## **6.1. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Violence against women far from being a private problem is a social and political problem, as the preamble to the states of the Organic Act 1 / 2004 of 28 December on Integral Protection Measures against Gender Violence manifests 'as the most brutal symbol of division in our society. It is violence that is directed at women by simple virtue of the fact that they are women and because they are perceived by their aggressors as, lacking the minimum rights of freedom, respect and decision making.' In the legal text itself reference is made to a technical definition of 'battered woman syndrome', which states that; 'the assaults suffered by women as a consequence of socio-cultural constraints that act on men and women, placing them in a subordinate position to men and manifesting in three basic areas of relationship; abuse within intimate relationships, sexual assault in social life and harassment in the work place'.

According to statistics from the Interior Department of the Basque Government in the Basque Autonomous Community, in 2007 two women were murdered by their partners or former partners. In the State and, according to Interior Ministry figures, between 2001 and 2007, 443 women were killed by their partners or former partners. Murder is the visible part of a much deeper phenomenon and is extended as part of other types of violence.

In this regard, in 2007, in the BAC 3223 complaints were filed with the Basque police force for violence against women within partnerships and 274 complaints of crimes against sexual freedom<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Department of Interior of the Basque Government, February 2008.

## 6.2. SOME MYTHS ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

There are a number myths or distorted ideas, unproven and extended socially, in relation to male violence. One tends to think that only certain types of men abuse their partners, while reality demonstrates that there is no such thing as a typical abuser, and that age, physique, social status, religion or temperament, are not determining factors. Studies reveal certain characteristics and one can talk of certain common features shared by a significant proportion of men who batter their partners.

It is often said that the perpetrators are mentally ill, but this factor would affect only a minority of them<sup>2</sup>, and it is proven that there is not a causal relationship between mental illness and violence against women. While some abusers use alcohol and other drugs<sup>3</sup>, this only acts as a risk factor and not as a justification or explanation of violence. In fact, a large number of violent men attack their partners when they are sober. Another myth has to do with 'impulsive' nature, and uncontrolled men who engage in violence when in fact most men who abuse their partners are not violent in other areas of their lives. Moreover, a large percentage of male abusers are violent only in the context of the family<sup>4</sup>, but have the tendency to consider violence as a legitimate means of resolving conflict.

The culture of inequality between women and men is directly related to control over the other person exercised by male abusers.

Other risk factors are certain psychosocial traits that some men have, such as difficulties in facing conflict situations appropriately, especially when they are of a personal nature, or that they have little or no ability to communicate their feelings and talk about their emotional problems. Authoritarianism also tends to hide a strong personal insecurity and a corresponding emotional dependency and to develop attitudes of control, surveillance and jealousy toward their partners.

The abuse is sustained not only by a conception of a particular model of traditional masculinity, but also by frustration and failure at not being able to attain the standards set by that model. This is because imposed social and personal expectations (success, value, safety, strength) are very difficult to achieve<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> According to data from the 2006 report of psychological treatment programs for batterers dependent on the Provincial Councils of Bizkaia and Alava and Vitoria-Gasteiz, only 25% of men attending had a prior psychiatric history.

<sup>3</sup> According to the reports referred to in the previous note, 38% of batterers were abusing alcohol.

<sup>4</sup> According to the reports referred to in the two previous notes, 78% of abusers do not exhibit violent behaviour outside the family context.

<sup>5</sup> Fernández-Llebrez, Fernando: Masculinity and Gender Violence. Why do some men abuse their partners (women)? Granada, April 2005.

As Ruben Mejia<sup>6</sup> points out, 'the typical masculinity is unachievable and therefore a source of frustration, isolation and ignorance that leads to men having to go around demonstrating their masculinity by for example, engaging in risky behaviour or complicity ... This is because they continue to experience feelings which they can neither suppress, control, or for that matter even identify'.

### 6.3. MICRO MACHISMOS

Micro machismo is a term coined and developed by Luis Bonino which refers to behaviours and habits of male domination and violence in everyday life and in relationships. Micro machismos are often unconscious and barely perceptible practices, but they act at large and tend to perpetuate an unfair distribution of rights and opportunities between women and men.

To understand these 'micro machismos' one must take into account that relations between men and women take place in a context where it is not only differences that are at play, but above all inequalities and asymmetrical power relationships and their corresponding strategies of domination. These practices encompass a wide range of manoeuvres that pervade male behaviour in the everyday. The micromachismos would therefore constitute 'micro abuses' which act to ensure that the man maintains his dominant gender-role, creating a network that subtly traps a woman on a daily basis and limits her personal autonomy.

Some micromachismos are manifested in everyday activities such as having free time for housework since the man's partner assumes responsibility for these when they could otherwise be shared more equitably. There are many more: failure to recognise the economic value of housework and the raising of children, men believing that their arguments entitle them to 'get away with it', hiding behind the difficulty in expressing their feelings as a means to avoid talking, explaining themselves, committing themselves, accepting the sharing of household chores without assuming a management role, not standing by waiting, for example, to figure out what to buy or take out of the refrigerator; resisting a raise or professional promotion of their partner; controlling the time, criticizing how to perform household chores, etc..

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<sup>6</sup> Reference taken from the chapter 'Becoming a man' from the on line course for intervention with men from a gender perspective in AHIG, 2007.

## 6.4. THE IDEAL OF ROMANTIC LOVE AND PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS

As a basic institution in our society the family relies heavily on romantic love. This conception of love is a social construction of the West which establishes a model of love that when it fails (and it fails a lot) creates frustration and disappointment. Furthermore, it has significant negative consequences in intimate relationships and even encourages violence against women.

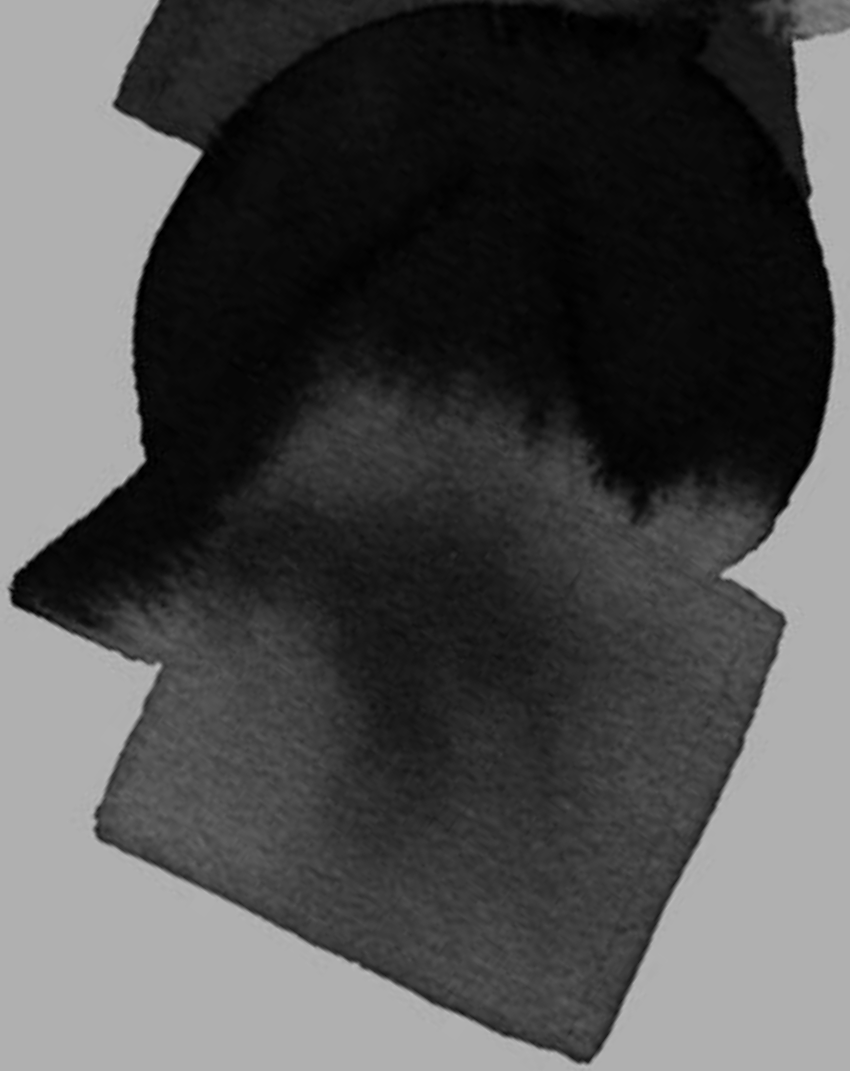
Romantic love as presented by the Western culture overcomes many difficulties, impossible love, a taste for the misfortunes of love, the idealization of the loved one ... All this fosters respect and understanding of another person or respect between equals but shows the same love as a passion that implies suffering

Film and literature imply that it is the serious obstacles which confront us that magnify a loving passion. All this, coupled with jealousy and a tragic vision of the relationship, are synthesized in well known expressions such as 'I can not live without you' or 'I am nothing without you'.

This myth of love becomes tangible in our society as an idealised relationship between partners and has clear consequences in everyday life. The ideal of passionate love and encouraging acts creating a relationship, a particular way of loving behaviour, where sacrifice for the other person is rewarded and at the same time, forget their own lives and personal expectations for personal growth.

This idea of love is strengthened especially in the education of women, while in the process of socialization of men it is of lesser importance.





## 7. **W**OMEN FOR EQUALITY



Although it is evident that many of the basic elements of traditional masculinity are still in force today, one of the hallmarks of our society is its dynamism and capacity for social change. These dynamics, driven primarily by changes led by women, are not alien to men.

## **7.1. SOME DATA RELATED TO CHANGES AT THE SYMBOLIC LEVEL**

One of the biggest changes that has occurred in our society in recent years has been precisely the establishment and consolidation of equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities between men and women in the hegemonic social discourse.

Thus, the majority of Basque men are in theory, in favour of gender equality. In this respect, the study Opinions of the population of the BAC in relation to equality of men and women, conducted in 2004 by the Sociological Research Offices of the Presidency of the Basque Government shows that 77% of men (compared to 86% of women) or attached reasonable or great importance to equality between women and men, while 79% of men (compared to 88% of women) said more measures should be taken to promote gender equality.

The vast majority of men considered that their assumption of the following attitudes would be an effective method in reducing or eliminating inequalities between the sexes: the sharing of household chores, thus setting a clear example to their sons and daughters (94%), considering women as their equals, giving value to their desires, opinions, work, etc.. (93%); being critical of disrespectful behaviour towards women with their peers and friends (92%), assuming that equality has benefits for them too (88%), and being active in the defence of the rights of women (89%).

We can therefore affirm that symbolically and theoretically, there has already been a great transformation in our society, particularly in men, towards a more egalitarian position. But the great paradox is that in the main field of play there still exist great inequalities, such as the involvement of men in the care giving, domestic and reproductive tasks. The theory of equality is far from being reflected in practice, as will be discussed below.

## **7.2. SOME DATA RELATING TO REAL CHANGE**

The statistics on the sharing of domestic work between men and women and care, the use of leave, and reduced working hours, also reveal the existence of large discrepancies according to gender.

One of the indicators that most clearly reflect the inequality between men and women is the number of hours they spend on domestic work and care giving. While men in the BAC spend on average 1 hour and 32 minutes, women spend 3 hours and 50 minutes<sup>1</sup>. These figures reflect the asymmetry as a clear guideline of relations between men and women in the private sphere, and also mean that most men with her dedication to reproductive and care work, do not cover their own needs, so women are forced to assume that part of the job that corresponds to their partners. But this is an international trend, since men of the European Union spend on average only 7 hours per week on housework, regardless of their work schedule. Women who work part-time spend on average 35 hours per week on housework and 24 hours if they work full time<sup>2</sup>.

The unequal distribution of domestic work and care is also seen in care of the elderly in that men dedicate 0.58 hours, compared with 1.57 hours for women. Meanwhile, the average time devoted to the care of children is 2 hours in men, compared with 4.1 hours in women. This last figure is significant since the biggest change in men's involvement in care giving has occurred in the care of children.

Another significant finding relates to paternity leave and although there is an ever increasing number of men who benefit from these rites or opt for reduced working hours, in 2006, Basque men accounted for only 6.1% of people benefiting from aid for shorter working hours and leave to care for people granted by the Basque Government<sup>3</sup>. Likewise, only 3.5% of men have shared with their partner, maternity / paternity 2006<sup>4</sup>.

### **7.3. SO, WHAT'S HAPPENING TO EQUALITY?**

If 94% of men accept as something positive the sharing of household chores and 93% considered women as their equals, why do only a third of them do the housework? Or why in 2006, did only 3.8% of men share paternity leave with their partner? Clearly, the incorporation of women into the public sphere has not been via a revolving door whereby men would be seen to join in equal measure in the domestic sphere. This lack of male involvement in care can only mean that it is women who have to assume these responsibilities. This means that in practise women operate a double or even triple shift, which in some sectors has been defined as 'the obligatory existential effort demanded of women'.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Survey of Uses of Time. Eustat. 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Source: Virtual School of Equality. Women's Institute.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Department of Justice, Employment and Social Security of the Basque Government.

<sup>4</sup> Yearbook of Labour and Social Affairs. Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. 2007.

Furthermore, when the division of housework is not equal, women are forced to opt for part-time jobs, seek help in the family (mother or grandmother) to care for their sons and daughters, relinquish any hope of having personal free time, or withdraw from the labour market.

Another significant finding is that some studies suggest that the presence of a male partner in the home increases women's work by 8 hours per week, generating a similar or even greater amount of work than having another child. This implies that the work they do does not compensate for the amount of extra work they generate. In fact, women who head their families as single parents spend less time on domestic work than those in a relationship.

An equal division of domestic responsibilities would promote equality between men and women as it would facilitate similar opportunities for professional development and social and political participation.

One might say that there are now 5% of men who can clearly define themselves as egalitarian, while a third of men would be reactionary or 'aggressive' towards changes in favour of women<sup>5</sup>. The key would therefore lie with the vast majority of 'confused'<sup>6</sup> men, who assume equality as a value and principle but do not practice it on a stable and conscious way. So the challenge to achieving equality is to attract more and more men to adopt egalitarian positions, men who today belong to that silent majority.

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<sup>5</sup> Bonino, Luis. Men versus change in women, contribution of the Congress 'Men with the new social order.' Emakunde. 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Lucas, Manuel. EPS, March 13, 2005.





## 8. **C**HANGE IN MEN





The processes of change in men have been produced both individually and collectively. Men have organized around the idea of equality for the last 20 years have focused on strategies for personal growth. Only in recent times have there been moves to give these initiatives a more public or social character.

## **8.1. WORK GROUPS FOR THE LIBERATION OF MEN**

The work of these groups has as its fundamental axis the analysis and deconstruction of the restrictive and harmful effects which gender socialization represents for men. They start with the observation that the dominant stereotypes of masculinity are harmful to the personal welfare of men, while the male role of emotional disability causes in many cases pain and isolation, leading men to risk taking behaviour, over-exploitation and violence.

The form of organization and action of such groups employs as their principle tool the group of men themselves. The events become meeting places where group trust and intimacy are fostered the sexist model of masculinity is revealed and deconstructed. Although these groups focus fundamentally on the personal and psychological level, they are also involved in raising public awareness, denouncing violence against women, promoting men's health, masculinity, and so on.

## **8.2. MEN FOR EQUALITY**

It should be clarified that both the men's liberation movement and the men's movement for equality share many things in common. In many cases they occupy the same space, thoughts and practices. Occasionally, groups from the men's movement for equality drive the creation of groups for reflection and personal growth, while initiatives and dynamics arising from the liberation groups also create groups of men for equality. Although the two movements often overlap, if the male liberation movement tends to focus on the harmful effects of the personal sexist socialization of masculinity, the anti-sexist movement has a greater projection towards the social and political. It focuses on power and male violence, the analysis of injustices and the benefits afforded to men through their adoption of a more egalitarian outlook.

The men's movement for equality aims to initiate a process of reflection and practice necessary to achieve personal change in men towards a more egalitarian stance. As a complementary and parallel strategy to the empowerment of women, they propose the 'moral

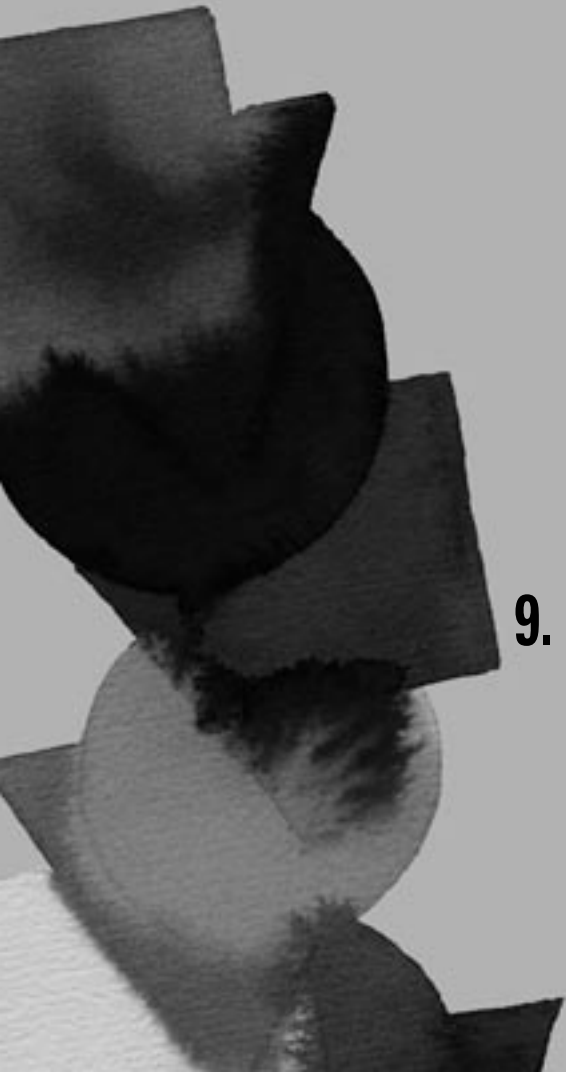
disarmament'<sup>1</sup> of men or, similarly, the critical analysis of self-identity of men. One of the most important characteristics of this movement is the recognition that patriarchy as the basis of a society marred by injustice and inequality, sets men at an unfair advantage by the mere fact that they are men, and thus raises the battle cry 'be prepared to lose privileges in order to win equality.'

These are therefore some of the axes that different groups of men's movement for equality have in common:

- The commitment of men for personal change (expression of emotions, frustration management, experience of sexuality, commitment against homophobia...)
- The active struggle against violence towards women and gender discrimination.
- Equal assumption of their responsibilities in caring for people
- The support, promotion and demonstration of positive models of masculinity (male caregivers, pacifism, sensitivity ...)
- Men's commitment to the change in the public sphere (create a critical mass of men to promote equality, uphold reconciliation strategies, giving up of power so that it might be transferred to women, proposing legislative changes ...).

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<sup>1</sup> Sáez, Hilario. *Políticas de género para hombres*, página 3.



9. **S**OME IDEAS FOR  
CHANGE IN MEN



In the process of building an egalitarian society between women and men it is necessary to change men's attitudes towards more egalitarian practices equal partnership between women and men, both in private and public. Beyond the theory, it is important to start afresh from the acceptance that male models are an expression of our time and culture but to the extent that they reinforce inequality they must be challenged and revised.

Not all men manifest gender stereotypes or sexist behaviour equally, but to question, review and deconstruct the hegemonic masculine model in which all men have been socialized and the mechanisms by which this unfair system is perpetuated can be a good starting point in correcting the damage that sexism has dealt to both women and men.

In this review of masculinity, an attempt to overcome the traditional isolation of men in the area of the emotions and affections to grow as people who value affection, would favour the existence of more free and autonomous citizens.

To walk away from risky behaviour by encouraging behaviour which invests in the care of the individual and not on external displays that seek the recognition of other men, has an immediate impact on health of not only those men themselves but of women too.

The active participation of men in the social struggle against violence towards women may also be a positive element. Men have to take an active position in denunciation of this and other types of violence. The contribution of men in combating violence against women through their intolerance of violence against women, be it physical, sexual or psychological

To deepen the change in men towards gender equality it is also necessary to remove the processes and discourses of social legitimization of violence as a method for resolving conflicts. In resolving conflicts it is important to opt for dialogue based on respect for the dignity of others and on negotiation and freedom of personal choice.

This change also involve a rethinking on the part men play in the public sphere and in positions of power since a society with equal access to all areas of decision making and organization and equal opportunities for both men and women is more democratic.

Taken as a whole the changes demanded of men requires support that they might make women's demands for equality their own. At the same time it is vital that men neither support nor take advantage of discriminatory situations in order to maintain or increase their influence in political, social or economic contexts.

The reconciliation between the worlds of work and personal/family life demands equal involvement of men on the understanding that the completion of household work and caring

giving are also masculine responsibilities. A commitment to this change can begin with the use of paternity leave and reduced working hours.

To invest in a more egalitarian future we must also take into account the need for a change in the way men relate to other men. Through the recognition of the plurality of masculinity, the diversity of options and sexual orientations and a firm commitment to all areas of life and in standing against homophobia and transphobia.



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