namiento del individuo; la aparición de Internet; la recuperación de las emociones; y la ampliación del espacio femenino. Se concluye que todas tienen carácter ambivalente, lo que obliga a reconsiderar cuestiones educativas centrales: la conciencia y regulación emocional; la nueva configuración de la identidad y la intimidad en la red; las relaciones mujer-hombre, más allá de la esfera sexual, y la prevención de la violencia en ellas; o educar para la cooperación en una sociedad individualista.

**Descriptores:** Educación cívica, amistad, internet, emociones, relaciones interpersonales, postmodernidad.

## 1. Introduction

Education is defined by and justifies itself in accordance with two variables: the needs and possibilities that are intrinsic to the person whose role it is to grow, and the needs and possibilities of the social and cultural context in which everyone develops. Each of these is mutually dependent on the other, because the human being is a social creature. More specifically, interpersonal relationships form the basis of human existence (Winnicott, 1981) and are the horizon on which humans can attain self-fulfilment given that the person is not understood alone (Rof Carballo, 1987). Consequently, the objectives of educational activity do not consider individuals in isolation, but above all their fulfilment, which is intrinsically linked to interpersonal relationships (Romero-Iribas & Martínez Priego, 2011). Friendship has a vital role among these.

The philosophical traditions that see friendship as an essential element of the complete life are well known: from the Aristotelian concept (Aristotle, 1994), passing through Kant (1979), to contemporary work like May's (2012). There are also recent studies that emphasise the educational possibilities of friendship as a link with a strong ethical character (Welch, 2013), and as a relationship with significant social potential. As Devere states: "the academic debate is invoking friendship as a model that might illuminate issues related to communication, citizenship, international relations, ethnic and cultural identity, peace and conflict" (Devere, 2013, p. 5). In this sense, we are witnessing a resurgence of the concept of civic friendship, directly linked to civic education.

The relationships between education and friendship can be examined from a variety of perspectives, but two broad positions are especially noteworthy: friendship as a means for improving and developing education (Albrecht-Crane, 2005), and education aimed at establishing and maintaining friendship relations, an aspect that appears to be more important than the former. In both cases, the friendship link has a dimension that is intrinsically temporal and, therefore, historical and cultural. This means that "as the social and cultural context of friendship changes over time, so does the meaning of what it is to be a friend" (Pahl, 2000,

p. 1). Consequently, any thorough study of the education-friendship relationship requires the interpersonal relationships that are its foundation to be placed in their historical and socio-cultural framework. To put this of logical terms, they are the *proximate genus* to which the concept of friendship belongs: friendship is a historically and socio-culturally situated interpersonal connection and must be examined as such.

Accordingly, the aim of this study is to create a map showing the *topography* of interpersonal relationships in postmodernity, insofar as they are the *condition of possibility* of friendship. Analysis of some of the most notable sociological and philosophical premises from the second half of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first century offers an interesting panorama of human bonds at the present day. Starting from them, it is easier to understand the sociological and anthropological substrate in which friendship relationships are now experienced, and so formulate their educational implications.

A review of reference literature in these fields was carried out, involving critical analysis of proposals by the identified thinkers and putting them into dialogue with each other (Bauman, 2003; Giddens, 2008; Hochschild, 2008; Illouz, 2007; Nussbaum, 2008; Sennet, 2006); and authors who have examined friendship in depth since 1975: Blanchot (2007), Bloom (1993), Derrida (1998), Lane (1991, 2000), MacIntyre (2001), May (2012), and Pahl (2000). This made it possible to identify features in interpersonal relationships that, once systematised, show the

existence of four large categories. While not exhaustive, these categories provide an overview from which it is possible to consider how friendship bonds are feasible in the contemporary world and under what conditions. This opens the possibility of performing other studies on the friendship-education relationship.

As it is not possible to explain here fully the methodological process of selecting texts, identifying notes, and establishing categories, this article will only set out the results of the study. In other words, what is shown in this work is the moment of synthesis: we will describe the categories that mark the *topos* of interpersonal relationships and identify some of their descriptive notes.

This study is clearly of interest from the educational viewpoint, reflecting both the fact that the friendship relationship allows and encourages personal and social development, and the more novel view that this relationship has significant potential as a social agent. In effect, friendship seems to be a necessary ingredient for personal fulfilment (Aristotle, 1994; Llano, 2002), and it is simultaneously, the result and focus of freedom (Lewis, 2000). Furthermore, the social dimension of friendship is very important with regards to education because of its capacity for promoting and stimulate social change, its creative potential, its current role as an element in social cohesion (Pahl & Spencer, 2006), and its humanising force (Arendt, 1968). These aspects are all very interesting and open new educational perspectives on civic friendship, but they cannot be examined here[1].

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## 2. Postmodernity and interpersonal relationships: education and friendship

Social, economic, geopolitical, and cultural changes of great magnitude have been happening in twentieth and twenty-first century Western societies: a rapid and universal pace of change; a clear awareness of living very differently from in the past; and the appearance of a new social and political agenda where environmental concerns and social movements are increasingly important (Giddens, 2011). There is a strong belief that nothing can be known for certain and the "grand narrative" has collapsed (Lyotard, 1987); consequently, we are witnessing the discrediting of reason and the triumph of relativism. Further elements must be added to this list, including globalisation, the strong presence and influence of social networks, and the consolidation of the information age. For many people, the complexity of problems and their interconnection is much greater than in other periods, with a resultant increase in systemic thinking (Morin, 2011; Polo, 2003). These changes affect all areas of human experience including education and have had a particular impact on interpersonal relationships.

In this way, postmodernity involves a sufficiently abrupt change for rethinking education to be necessary (Bauman, 2007), and it could be argued that something like a "postmodern education" exists (Barrio, 2008) or a *postmodernisation* that radically affects education (Bernal Guerrero, 2011). But in contrast, there are people who consider the postmodern contribution to the theory of education to be inconsistent (Yuste & Trilla, 2005). On the other hand, there are also those who believe that "there is something about friendship that appears to be quintessentially postmodern. Overwhelmingly friendship has connotations of freedom, choice, individuality and, crucially, subversion" (Pahl, 2000, p. 166).

## 3. A categorical description of interpersonal relationships in postmodernity

In accordance with the analysis of texts on interpersonal relationships in postmodernity that we carried out, four categories were found that draw a topography of these relations and directly affect the experience and comprehension of friendship insofar as it is a human relationship. The first category involves questioning the *individual*, whose leading role is starting to fade. Individualism, commercialisation, the frailty of human bonds, loneliness, and mistrust relate to this category. The second category is the appearance of the *internet* as a new setting for relationships. The transformation of intimacy, online exhibitionism, and the blurring of the public and private are connected to this category. The recovery of the fundamental role of *emotion* in human life is the third category, bringing with it the emotionalising of relationships as its most notable feature. And finally, the *feminine space* and its influence, which includes the growth and feminisation of relationships and the survival of the romantic imaginary. Each of these categories will be briefly presented below, based on the descriptors found in the analysis.

## 3.1. The individual questioned

One of the strongest legacies of modernity is its distinctly individualist character. At the social level, the modern schism between reason and nature leads to the human being going from being regarded as a political animal (Aristotle) to an emancipated individual (Kant). Sociability is not something natural but a consequence of the need to balance personal egotisms; freedom comes to considered, above all, as independence from anything that is not one's self. People become potential obstacles to personal growth and so each individual looks out for his or her own interests (Innerarity, 1990).

However, while modernity strongly stimulated individuality, a "new sensitivity" (Llano, 2002) has taken shape in postmodernity towards alterity (Levinas, 2004) and also from the educational perspective (Ortega Ruiz, 2016). Ideas such as those of Lane and MacIntyre state that the realisation of the human being is intimately connected to personal relationships. MacIntyre argues that every person in their life passes through moments of dependency —childhood, old age, illness— and so the structure of society and the concept of the common good should be organised around this fact. The human being is effectively located in a network of relations of reciprocity in which, how much each individual can give depends in part on what he or she has received, and what the individual can give depends on what has been received (MacIntyre, 2001). On the other hand, the low levels of social cohesion and personal happiness recorded in Western societies, cast doubt on this ideal. Therefore, Lane proposes a paradigm shift to move from an "individualist society", that bases its well-being on increasing income, towards a more "friendly society" (Lane, 2000, p. 77), governed by a sense of belonging and companionship.

Because of this, the route to establishing fluid interpersonal relationships that can solidify into true friendship links appears to have opened. Individualism, the primacy of the individual without bonds, is being questioned, and with it the pedagogic naturalism of Rousseau (Altarejos & Naval, 2000). An educational possibility is opening that is not free from risks, since some of the ideas accompanying the development of interpersonal relationships show clear ambivalences. We will describe three of these that help to temper possible optimism surrounding the defeat of individualism: commercialisation of human bonds, their frailty, and loneliness.

One danger that threatens individualist societies is becoming communities where people mutually exploit each other: if the human being is someone whose realisation depends only on his or her self and who is in competition with other individuals, others become a potential instrument for one's own self-realisation. This way, a functioning logic that objectifies people as it sees them as a means to one's own ends can enter interpersonal relationships: something that has been called the *commercialisation of relationships*.

The influence of the market on human relations in contemporary life is a topic that has been covered at length: Tiqqun's radicalism (2001), Illouz's

emotional capitalism (2007), humanism, constructivist sociology, etc. According to Bauman, interpersonal relationships appear to be equated with commercial relationships of exchange; therefore, time, effort, and money are dedicated to them in the expectation of receiving security, closeness, help, company, or solace in exchange (Bauman, 2003). Here we find a commercial relationship in which people become consumer objects: one is connected to them insofar as they are a source of profit and they are abandoned when this disappears or another product —a relationship— is found that provides more profit.

Alongside this position, on the lines of ambivalence we identified, there are authors such as Lane, May, or Pahl who believe that "the critique of the influence of the market on human relations is largely unjustified" (Lane, 1991, p. 205) because, despite everything, interpersonal relationships separate themselves, by their very nature, from this functioning logic. Consequently, May (2012) considers that the existence of relationships such as true friendship, which is essentially disinterested, is in itself a challenge to the dominant neoliberal paradigm of our times.

In contrast, the importance of personal autonomy to individualism means that relationships are seen as a loss of freedom and not as a route to personal fulfilment, and so *bonds become frail*, they lose strength. Commitment is seen as something oppressive that restricts one's own freedom and the fear of depending on another appears. We are facing what Bauman graphically calls *liquid relationships* and that he describes thus:

Having no bonds that are unbreakable and attached one for all, the hero [of our liquid society] must tie together whatever bonds they want to use as a link to engage with the rest of the human world by their own efforts (...) Unbound, they must connect (...) None of the connections (...) are however guaranteed to last (Bauman, 2003, p. vii).

Another consequence of a society with labile interpersonal bonds is *loneliness*, a shadow that hangs over the Western world. Simmel (1977) turned his attention to the loneliness of the person of today and, more recently, Giddens (2008) has stated that people develop in isolation. It is also apparent that loneliness has a significant effect on the USA and advanced Western societies, and not just among the old but also in young people: there is evidence that many people feel lonely (Bloom, 1993).

Certainly, the dominant culture of egotism and pursuit of comfort and self-interest makes it difficult to establish the deep, lasting personal relationships, such as family or friendship bonds, that provide relief from loneliness. "Loneliness has a more specific and subjective cause (...) the absence of intimacy was the strongest determinant of loneliness. It is the lack of someone to confide in and with whom to share one's feelings and thoughts that is experienced as loneliness" (Lane, 2000, p. 85).

Another consequence of thin fragile bonds is that trust between people is harmed. "The widespread (...) conscience, that all relationships are 'pure' (fragile, breakable, destined to last only for as long

as they are convenient and so with an expiry date) is not fertile soil for trust to take root and bloom" (Bauman, 2003, p. 212).

Paradoxically, trust is becoming more and more necessary for social and personal life, since it is no longer provided by our surroundings and because, at a personal level, there is a fear of commitment that also cannot be reciprocated.

The question that arises within this framework is whether educational activity will be possible in a setting of generalised mistrust, for example the teacher-pupil relationship (Postareff & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2011). In effect, the certainty that arises alongside what is known starts in the student with trust: the student first says *I believe you*, before saying *I understand* (Altarejos, 1988).

### 3.2. The internet

Another reality or category in our methodological approach that helps to draw and understand personal relationships today is the internet.

Thanks to the internet, we live in a highly-connected world with a simultaneous absolute lack of communication. The internet makes a multicultural world visible, putting multiple ways of life and ways of thinking into contact and so giving rise to a new worldview. However, it could be said that there has never been such a quantity of information nor such ease of communication alongside such loneliness and trivialisation of the information's content. It is not uncommon today to find that many people live lives that are genuinely disconnected from those around them, but

are virtually connected to others who are far away and whom they might only know online. It seems that: "the *circulation* of messages *are the message* - don't mind the content" (Bauman, 2003, p. 54).

Furthermore, bonds are quickly and easily established on the internet, and their quantity can multiply exponentially. But they are indirect, mediated bonds with a certain disembodiment of the users. This reveals that it is a *new setting for relationships*, one that requires unprecedented rules. In fact, it shapes the type of imagination that appears, for example, in cyberdates. The internet does not allow an intuitive imagination but rather a prospective one that is "disconnected from one's intuitive, practical, and tacit past knowledge" (Illouz, 2007, p. 222). Similarly, this imagination is marked by the hegemony of verbal language, given that online relationships are, particularly in the cognitive dimension, supported almost exclusively by texts because of physical absence. Communication is hampered because it lacks the information provided by non-verbal language.

*The transformation of intimacy* is a complex matter that can be approached from various perspectives (Illouz, 2009; Giddens, 2008; Baudrillard, 1985), and deserves specific study from an educational perspective. Two elements are especially notable in the relationships between the internet and intimacy: the substitution of authenticity by appearance (Nubiola, 2013) and a new configuration of identity itself, as it has changed from something private to become a public and emotional matter, as Illouz observes. Uploading a profile onto the internet involves turning the self into

something public and visible to everyone. "On the internet, the private psychological self becomes a public performance" (Illouz, 2007, p. 78). It is a technology that presupposes and puts into action an *ego* and means that this public emotional *ego* precedes and shapes private interactions.

On the other hand, the consecration of appearance in the definition of the ego itself is well reflected in the phenomenon of *posturing* that involves adopting a pose to impress those who see, read, or listen to us. The mediated nature of the internet allows for actions such as the possibility of reflecting before acting or expressing something. Therefore, it gives the option of concealing one's own identity or displaying an artificial image of one's self. This becomes problematic when an online relationship is established, given that this is not based on the reality of *who I am*, but on the construct of *who I want to be seen as*. Consequently, being and appearing become confused, and appearance becomes the new paradigm.

Finally, *private lives become public* online, and the logics of both spheres are inverted. We are witness to a constant *exhibitionism* in which what is surprising is not just the *publicness* of the private, but above all the need to publicly show the personal. As Deresiewicz observes:

> The most disturbing thing about Facebook is the extent to which people are willing —are eager— to conduct their private lives in public. (...) Perhaps I need to surrender the idea that the value of friendship lies precisely in the space of privacy it creates: not the secrets that two people exchange so much as the unique and invi-

olate world they build up between them, (...) There's something faintly obscene about performing that intimacy in front of everyone you know. Are we really so hungry for validation? So desperate to prove we have friends? (Deresiewicz, 2009).

Nonetheless, the internet also opens important educational opportunities. The role of the internet in the training and development of civic virtues (Naval & Arbués, 2015) is especially noteworthy owing to its scope.

### 3.3. The recovery of emotions

It seems clear that emotion is another of the categories that help to draw the map of interpersonal relationships nowadays, thanks to the rediscovery of their relevance in human life, their spread into the masculine world (they were previously associated almost exclusively with the feminine), and even because they have come to be seen as a fundamental factor in relationships in the business world. Hochschild, the founder of the sociology of emotion, is one of the contemporary authors who has most emphasised their importance in human life.

On the other hand, we are simultaneously present at a significant *emotionalising* of society and relationships. Some visible consequences of this are the establishment of the *ego* as something emotional or the reduction of human bonds such as friendship to mere sentiment, affect, or affinity (Deresiewicz, 2009).

It is worth insisting that the significance that the emotional dimension of the human being has regained enriches reflection

about on them and their relations, not just because these are nowadays strongly marked by the emotions (emotivism), but also because sociology, psychology, and education are actively concerned with studying this aspect (Damasio, 2006; Hochschild, 2008; Illouz, 2007). Studies such as those by Nussbaum stand out, according to which the various phenomena in our emotional life are correctly explained by regarding emotions as evaluations or value judgements, a novel claim from the rationalist perspective, but one with clear philosophical and psychological antecedents (Scheler, 2005; Lazarus, 1984).

Furthermore, emotions are gradually becoming a recognised part of the masculine realm. The emotional style that has dominated the cultural panorama of the USA since 1920, and that has been so important in providing a language for the ego and social interactions, had an influence on redefining masculinity in the world of work. Nowadays, even professional competence in the company is evaluated in emotional terms: the ability to create social bonds and the capacity to accept and establish empathic relationships with others. As Illouz notes, managers had to incorporate "attention to emotions, controlling anger, and listening sympathetically to others" (Illouz, 2007, p. 4). This also implied notable emotionalising.

It seems unnecessary to state how this category of interpersonal relationships has broken new ground in educational activity, precisely with the development of emotional education derived from, for example, studies on *emotional intelligence* (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Bisquerra, 2013; Gil & Martínez, 2016).

## 3.4. The feminine space and its influence

The final category that helps to draw a topography of interpersonal relationships, and affects the experience and understanding of friendship is the *growth of the feminine space* and its influence. It is clear that the new presence of women in society, resulting from the large-scale incorporation of women into the worlds of work and education, has broadened and reshaped interpersonal relationships, transforming them in society and the family and other intimate relationships.

Relationships between men and women now occur in the private and public spheres, and so the feminine social space has grown, not just through a greater presence and participation by women in the public sphere, but also through the expansion of the intra-space of women in the field of the family and the private sphere. The fact that men and women have become equal in many aspects, has also created an opportunity to enrich relationships between them in that sphere. Similar education, similar social experiences, and the weight of professional relationships in the lives of both have helped to create a space for equality between women and men that shapes their relationships in a different way. Specifically, friendship between women and men finds fertile soil and widespread possibilities in contemporary society that were unavailable until now in Western society, given that, as Aristotle notes, friendship requires a certain degree of equality.

There is however a lack of codes to interpret adequately the phenomenon of friendship between sexes nowadays, and

so this is one of the challenges that arises in the twenty-first century. The current codes are insufficient for explaining this reality without it, for example, being mediated by sexuality, an area where a strong influence of the *romantic imaginary* can still be seen.

Another area to consider in relationships in the contemporary world is what has been described as a certain *feminisation* of the masculine sex. This refers more to openness towards different experiences, capacities, and roles —that inaugurate a new relationship in the family field and in the work and social fields— than to a potential loss of masculinity, although it might be this in the sense of abandoning certain of its roles.

Masculinity has been redefined in the field of work, because, as stated above, since 1920 it had been felt that controlling emotions was part of managerial competences, emotions traditionally having been attributed to the feminine world. The psychologist Mayo discovered that productivity increased if labour relations considered the feelings of the workers. Without being fully aware of it, a process then began "in which aspects of women's emotional experiences and selfhood were incorporated into the new guidelines to manage human relationships in the modern workplace" (Illouz, 2007, p. 15).

The anthropologist Cucó notes in a study on friendship that "alongside the trend for the domestication of community life there seems to have occurred a certain *feminisation of the areas of sociability* and friendship" (Cucó, 1995 p. 79). Since the end of the twentieth century, masculine friendships, traditionally created and conducted in the public sphere, have also moved into the domestic sphere as a consequence of a new reorganisation of work and life in cities.

## 4. Conclusions and discussion

The conclusions that can be drawn from the research objective of these pages, in other words, from drawing up a topography of interpersonal relationships in postmodernity —recalling that they are a premise for friendship relations and their role in education— are somewhat ambivalent, like postmodernity itself.

In effect, modernity focused on the subject, and developed into the experience and theorisation of the autonomous and isolated individual. In this context, interpersonal relationships, and with them friendship, enter a state of crisis. Postmodernity made an important effort to overcome this but does not seem to have achieved it as the commercialisation of relationships, the frailty of human bonds, and the subsequent mistrust and loneliness persist. The internet has led to an expansion of the world, and so there is more space for interpersonal relationships and with them friendship; however, in this new setting for relationships, speed, disembodiment of users, and how intimacy is compromised in cyberspace, are critical questions. The realm of instrumental reason is being overwhelmed by the recovery of emotions; and yet emotivism, the reduction of human bonds to mere emotion, makes it hard to establish lasting relationships. Finally, the growth of the feminine space —perhaps the most

positive of the categories in absolute terms— favoured by the just presence of women in the different areas of human life, has meant that some relationships such as friendship between men and women have been redefined.

Each of these categories, which are connected to the friendship link as one of the objectives of education, insofar as it is part of the fulfilled life and a factor for social development, opens important areas for consideration by educational theory and for the practice of education. Some of them have already been identified. Others derive from the categorical description given up to here.

1. The necessary dialogue of postmodernity with pedagogical naturalism and the need to overcome the concept of *emancipation* insofar as it implies the undoing of bonds. The attempt to articulate emancipation, understood as an absence of bonds, and the intimate human need for interpersonal relationships, makes existence stressful. Autonomy as the highest ideal of education —not as a developmental moment and personality trait— is unrealistic for two reasons: firstly, because education involves being helped by others, and secondly because radicalised independence leads to loneliness. This radical absence of bonds also has an influence on people's relationship with the sacred, as can be seen in the demystification of the world and the disappearance of the sacred.

2. How to educate for cooperation and collaboration —current points of reference in the training of new generations— in a society that is simultaneously plural and multicultural but has a strong individualist heritage.

3. The urgent need to tackle emotional education intentionally and effectively from formal educational spaces too; in other words, promoting the emotional awareness and regulation of pupils at school (Cabello González, Fernández-Berrocal, Ruiz-Aranda, & Extremera, 2006). This includes the desirability of using educational interventions to overcome the reduction of the person and his or her relationships to emotivity, mere sentiment, affect, or affinity.

4. The educational treatment of the different challenges the internet poses. Firstly, the new definition of identity itself, that involves combining appearance and authenticity, something that requires ethical education. Secondly, the transformation of intimacy resulting from the conversion of private life into public on the internet; in other words, education in valuing and respecting intimacy (Martín Montilla, Pazos Gómez, Montilla Coronado, & Romero Oliva, 2016). Thirdly, life in a world that is highly connected and at the same time very solitary, raising the need to humanise cyberspace. Four, the mediation of relationships on the internet that confronts us with a new way of relating where physical presence is not full or immediate, something that has a direct influence on communication.

5. In relation to the *expansion of the feminine space*, central issues arise such as: education for equality and the shared responsibility of women and men in private and public spaces

(Elósegui, 2003); preventing situations of violence; and educating men for a world recently colonised by women, albeit still only in some areas.

Along with these fields, other important areas for research are appearing. On the one hand, the friendship-education relationship must be reconsidered to see how friendship bonds are possible and under what conditions in the contemporary world, considering the importance they might take on in the ethical and civic fields.

Furthermore, education must reconsider the potential of friendship, as overcoming a large part of the challenges and ambivalences of postmodernity shown here might theoretically and effectively be in the hands of friendship as an interdependent link that requires trust, respect, and mutual and consistent affection, based on shared intimacy, and that achieves social cohesion.

## Notes

[1] This question, which started with Aristotle, has been taken up again in the context of civic republicanism by Philip Pettit and in the context of feminist currents —highly visible in the contemporary debate— such as the proposal by Sybil Schwarzenbach who expands the pillars of the concept of Western democracy with civic friendship.

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