Gender-Based Violence in War and (Negative) Peace. A Multifaceted Holistic Approach to Dismantle Patriarchy

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A research carried out by the World Health Organization shows that one in three women experience intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime. Homogeneous accounts of men's violence prove to be inadequate in reading the gender-based violence phenomenon. In this essay, I propose a theoretical recognition of the main literature available to date, to contend that gender-based violence, both in war and in peace, is a fruit of patriarchy, and that only a holistic approach to peace, which is based on a simultaneous acknowledgment of direct, structural, and cultural violence, can provide a reliable base to counter it. Employing some gender social theory, with a more specific resort to those scholarships of international politics which take into account the global debate about peace and war, I wish to help compose a more critical perspective to investigate this complex subject.

Introduction

A research carried out by the World Health Organization shows that one in three women experience intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime (World Health Organization 2021). Men's violence against women is a spread and deep problem requiring multiple interventions, such as including supporting survivors, holding perpetrators accountable, addressing structural inequalities, and centering women's work and activism against violence. Men tend to be more violent than women and direct violence is regarded as a typically male phenomenon. Galtung reports that 95% of direct violence is committed by men, and that there is massive direct male violence at all levels of society, as criminal violence in the family and society, and as political violence within and between communities and with other communities (Galtung 1996). Even though women are often victims of violence perpetrated by men, with the existence of a structure and pro-violence culture in society, women themselves ultimately feel violence is something that cannot be avoided. Even when women are the umpteenth victims of male violence, where women are forced to participate in preserving the culture of violence and even become perpetrators of violence against other women, they do it for the benefit of men.

The analytical structure of this essay has been envisaged as a theoretical recognition of the main literature available to date with reference to the object I assumed, that is, to show that Gender Based Violence (hereafter, GBV) is a direct/indirect fruit of patriarchy and that only an holistic approach to peace, which is based on a simultaneous acknowledgment of direct, structural, and cultural violence, can provide a reliable base to detect and counter GBV. Overall, the essay employs the lenses typical of gender social theory, even though with a more specific resort to those scholarships of international politics which take the global debate about peace and war into account. Reporting some of the main positions which contribute to the

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debate around the topic at issue, this theoretical reconstruction is far from being exhaustive and does not aim at being universal. However, the main reason of adopting such heterogeneous and multifaceted approach is the hope to help compose a more critical perspective to investigate such a complex subject.

After having provided a brief overview related to how the main feminist theories and studies dealing with violence look at the issue of GBV and after having given a sample of the partially flawed methodologies that main research in the field has so far employed, I attempt to show the controversial relationship between masculinity and violence, especially in time of war, and the linkage between femininity and peacefulness, concluding that they are both mostly rooted in a false myth. To that purpose, I argue that war, and so the direct and institutionalised violence which follows, is gendered, sharing those feminist scholarships that emphasise the role misogynistic training and discourses play in shaping military thinking.

In section 2, I illustrate the main current approaches to tackling GBV, and their limitations. Alongside a glance at the historical roots of patriarchy, with reference both to the classical tradition and to its modern accounts, I report some empirical cases showing how men's violence prevention programs are still too focused on homogeneous account of violence, detrimentally to a full grasp of cultural and structural aspects of GBV.

In section 3, I explain Galtung's theory of conflict and his insight of direct, structural, and cultural violence (the so called violence triangle), to finally show how it can provide a useful basis for addressing GBV, when applied to it. The theories and arguments I employ help locate the topic within the more general question whether GBV is something growing out of patriarchy or rather out of its crisis. After summing up the main positions within this debate, I explain the novelties of the the Galtungian approach to solve GBV, emphasising its framework drawn from peace studies, compared to the other scholarships dealing with violence and patriarchy.

In section 4, I attempt to gender Galtung and to apply its model to GBV. After showing the differences between direct, cultural, and structural violence in relation to GBV, I create a dialogue between Galtung's violence triangle and Burrell's triadic approach to men's violence programs, so highlighting the micro, meso, and macro dimension of GBV. To conclude, I stress the importance of care in our societies and the need of incorporating men into feminist theories and practises of care as essential for achieving gender equality and reducing GBV.

I contend that do exist historical, theoretical, sociological, cultural conditions apt to demonstrate with a certain rate of reliability that GBV is a direct/indirect product of patriarchy and that only an holistic approach to peace can proffer a reliable base to detect and counter GBV.

1. *The relationship between masculinity and violence. The masculinity of war*

The rhetoric that traverses dominant discourses about war and peace is dichotomous and split along gender lines: within militarist thinking as well as militarist cultures, a warrior's death is set against a child's birth; male violence against female reproduction. War certainly seems to be men's business, it is mostly men who make civil and foreign battle plans, who invent weapons and supervise

their construction. Men predominate among the spies, police chiefs, judges and governors who construct a peacetime order guaranteed by the threat of violence. More men than women shoot the gun and start missiles, more men than women command them. Traditionally, in most cultures, it has been men's duty to fight while women watch, suffer, applaud, support and forgive (Ruddick 1995).

Militarists use the myth of war's manliness to shape soldierly behaviour and to reward soldiers, boot camp recruits are "ladies" until, trained in obedient killing, they become men. Misogyny is a useful element in the making of a soldier, as boys are pushed to lower and expel whatever in themselves is deemed to be "womanly". Sexist language for women and their bodies is common in military discipline, and even when misogyny and lust are absent, the warrior embodies a typically masculine ideal of camaraderie and lonely heroism. Rarely does anyone, man or woman, deny the masculinity of war.

Ruddick tries to put light upon the myth of men's war and women's peacefulness, arguing that it is not as universal as one may be inclined to think. Virtually no one denies that military thinking is imbued with masculine values. Yet, a boy is not born, but rather becomes, a soldier. Becoming a soldier means learning how to control fears and domestic longings that are explicitly labelled "feminine". The soldier earns the right to violence and sex and, if he fails, he remains "womanly" while losing the right to women.

If war is masculine and abstract, peace seems feminine: women's peacefulness often begins in negation, alienated women insist that they stand outside men's war and are repelled by otherwise respect worthy men who have been transformed by war's rhetoric. Virginia Woolf's *Three Guineas* represents a central place within contemporary feminist peace politics, thanks to its detaching women from men's bloody war (Woolf 1966). I highlight how Woolf's women are "outsiders" different from men, and how their "difference" is deeply rooted in a cosmopolitan appeal for peace based on a gendered critique of war (Persichilli 2025). Many women tended to ground their refusal of war in a history of caring labour. A Soviet dissident writing from exile sounds this message:

«It is natural for women, who give life, to be opposed to war and violence – war of any sort, be it in Vietnam or Afghanistan, and violence against any being. We do not distinguish between guns and nuclear bombs, because all are weapons used for the death and destruction of people» (Mamanova 1984, 13).

Suffragist Anna Shaw asked several years ago:

«Looking into the face of […] one dead man we see two dead, the man and the life of the woman who gave him birth; the life she wrought into his life! And looking into his dead face someone asks a woman, what does a woman know about war? What, what friends, in the face of a crime like that does a man know about war?».

The same point has been reiterated by so many women from so many nations over so many years that it is hard to hear it afresh.

Men's wars, women's peace; a warrior's murder, a child's birth. The dichotomous rhetoric and theory run up against two facts: men are not so warlike and women are certainly not peaceful. Sara Ruddick provides us with copious arguments about it.

Consider first the "masculinity" of war. There is, undeniably, a disproportionate male presence in defence councils and on battlefields as well as a masculinist ideology to back it. The manliness of war is an outcome of several factors. «Considered as a biological class, men *may* have a greater inclination to aggressiveness than women, and this aggressiveness, which is given licence in war, *may* also motivate some of the men who engage in them» (Ruddick 1995, 151). On the other hand, warfare, especially in its contemporary patterns, seems to require, alongside physical force, a tolerance of boredom or the ability to operate a computer under stress, let alone the peaceful tasks of reconciliation, all characteristics that are neither distinctly "masculine" nor heroic.

Very few of the men who partake in war can be said to "make war": most are foot soldiers and workers in the service of campaigns they did not design, about which they were not consulted, and which they hardly share. Even within the military, the amount of suppliers and bureaucrats to active fighters is high. The soldiers who do engage in combat are usually very young men, many of which are conscripted for battle. Some boys fight eagerly, many of the eager boys are deluded by patriotic fervour and by masculine myths, ending up fighting for national interests and causes from which they derive no benefit and which they barely understand. If men were so willing to go to war, Ruddick says, we would not need drafts, training in misogyny, and macho heroes, nor would we have to entice the morally sensitive with myths of patriotic duty and just cause. Indeed, history reveals that men have an even more ambivalent relationship with fighting expected of them than women do with the maternal work for which they are believed to be naturally suited. Some men thrill to battle and to the sexually predatory violence it allows, some others take part with mixed feelings but minimal questions simply because fighting is expected of them. Some of these men later report that they took pleasure in destruction, cruelty and murder, but there are others, as well as these same men on other days, who are ashamed and disgusted by the killing: in every war there are men who, with clear-sighted courage, refuse to fight, often at great cost to themselves.

Women's peacefulness is at least as mythical as men's violence. Women have never been absent from war: whatever the cause, women on both sides of the battle lines support the military effort of their male relatives and mates, women are proud to fight alongside their brothers, in whatever battles their state enlists them.

> «There is nothing in a woman's genetic makeup or history that prevents her from firing a missile or spraying nerve gas over a sleeping village if she desires this or believes it to be her duty» (Ruddick 1995, 154)

Ruddick concludes. War is exciting and women, like men, can be subject to the excitements of violence and community sacrifice it promises. Moreover, next to a personal adventure and economic profit for men and women, war can offer to women the chance to temporarily leave the domestic space they are traditionally confined in peacetime, an unconscious desire which is rooted in the limitedness of their private existence. Nonetheless, women usually justify their militarism as men do, and even peace-loving women, like most men, support organised violence, at least in "emergencies". As historian Sonya Rose has argued, referring to the history of the Second World War, women are understood to bear other kinds of gendered

obligations during wartime, such as maintenance of "moral virtue" in the realm of sexuality and the responsible guardianship of the home and hearth. These were imposed as central responsibilities of citizenship during World War II, and much governmental and popular effort was put on policing the fulfilment of these responsibilities, such as civil defence roles or fire-watching. As their most prominent wartime duties are to family and sexual or familial moral rectitude – the World War II obsession with young women's morality was thus articulated in terms that constructed moral subjects as responsible citizens – women's service to the state is indirect, and mediated by their familial roles. Like some men, women can be fierce and enthusiastic militarists or, like some other men, see war as a catastrophe to be avoided but collude with it, relinquishing to leaders political and military appraisals they do not intend to understand. Most women, like most men, believe that violence can be met only by violence and that the virtue of a cause justifies the horrors done in its name. Although women and men support war for reasons that transcend gender, war also excites women in gender-related ways. War offers the adventurous real and imagined freedoms from feminine duty: in wartime a woman may carry secrets behind the lines, blow up the troop train, free prisoners, or torture them. It is possible that many women do not succumb to the romance of war and are rather horrified by the idea of sacrificing lives of male children for the sake of the homeland. Yet war enables even horrified women to engage in deeds that partake of received notions of glory, honour, nobility, civic virtue. When war ends, mothers nurse the survivors just as, at first, they prepared munitions and then put gold stars in their windows. Having applauded their children's efforts from the first school test, they could not shift their behaviour when the legal force of the state combines with community excitement to draft them for war. According to Ruddick, a pure maternal peacefulness does not exist and cannot be invented.

2. *The main current approaches to tackling GBV, and their limitations*

If Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity is the most influential theory in this field (Connell 2005), diverse streams of radical, socialist, intersectional, and queer feminist scholarship have focused on the many connections between men, masculinities, and violence. It is fundamental to state that there is not a singular feminism, a singular feminist theory of men's violences, or a sole feminist approach to GBV. Rather, there is an articulated plethora of different feminist views applied in diverse contexts. First, several key feminist theories regard GBV not only as discrete and visible acts, but also as patterns of coercive control (Stark 2007). Such theories cast men's violence as a continuum from the everyday to the extreme (Kelly 1996). Second, individual accounts of GBV are insufficient by themselves to portrait the phenomenon at issue; a structural analysis of patriarchy is essential as well (Connell 2005). Hooks speaks of "imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy" while showing how GBV is inseparable from a broader systemic analysis of inequalities, so proffering a wider interlocking structural framework (hooks 2004). For hooks, and many feminist theories in the field, GBV is rooted in unequal structural and relational arrangements of power which confer men dominance over women – and some men dominance over other men (hooks 2003). As Hearn et al. write, «Violence

is structure, practice, process and outcome of domination» (Hearn *et al.* 2021, 35). However, as Mclnerne and Archer state, across this complex constellation of different feminist positions, a common thread reveals the multitude of men's violences and notes that it is men's practices, masculine norms, and patriarchal structures which must be examined and transformed to prevent men's violence against women (Mclnerne, Archer 2023).

The history of patriarchy is as long as mankind's, and patriarchy has been one of the founding concepts of gender studies, having led to the development of a plethora of theories that aim to identify the basis of women's subordination to men. Literally, patriarchy means rule by a male leader of a given social unit. The patriarch, typically an elder of the society, has legitimate power over the other members of the social unit, including other men, especially the younger ones, and over all women and children. However, since the early twentieth century, feminist writers have used this concept to refer to a social system of male domination over women.

In classical patriarchal theory, the father is not simply one of the two parents, but the parent, and the one capable of generating political rights. Both Jewish and Christian traditions have for centuries depicted women in a negative light, emphasising their innate moral depravity, their power to seduce men to the point of bringing about their downfall, thus revealing the necessity that women be submissive to the will of men, thus justifying acts of violence and coercion against women as a consequence of their sin (Persichilli 2025). By submitting to men, women are thus saved, redeemed, and protected from their own depravity. In the *Genesis*, God gives man the prerogative of "ruling" over woman, thus curbing her seductive powers and becoming master of her sexuality and desires. This is how chastity, modesty, and submission became the three guard dogs of the female body and desire, and have been powerfully reinforced throughout the ages through constant vigilance and indoctrination, and, ultimately, physical coercion. In the tradition of medieval Christianity, women are generally regarded as men's possession and as creatures to be dominated. In the *First Letter to Corinthians*, Paul of Tarsus states that if a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; a woman should, since she is the glory of man (CEI 2008, 9). Augustine of Hippo believes that if the head of man is Christ, the head of woman is her husband (Agostino di Ippona 1988).

In the modern age, women's condition changed only apparently, for women passed from being fathers' property to being brothers' property. As Pateman argues (Pateman 2018), with the institution of the social contract men ensured that the law of male sexual right remained operative and allowed them to gain material and spiritual benefit from the subjugation of women. Women were in fact deprived of a basis for economic independence, through the separation between the world of work and the domestic world, and through the consolidation of the patriarchal structure of capitalism. Sir William Blackstone, in the eighteenth century, succinctly stated the legal consequences that a woman faced when entering into a marriage contract, according to what in common law was known as the *Doctrine of Coverture*:

«By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection, and cover, she performs everything; is said to be […]

under the protection and influence of her husband, her baron, or lord; and her condition during her marriage is called her *coverture*» (Blackstone 2005, 182).

Men's violence prevention is often built upon a social constructionist approach which examines the culturally, historically, and politically constructed dimensions of gender and unveils an understanding of masculinities as plural and changing. Such multiple masculinities understanding suggests there is no one singular or inevitable way to be a man. Pascoe and Bridges deny a universalist view of masculinity, stating that masculinities are not "transhistorical or universal'' and that the differences among men can be as essential as the differences between men and people of other genders (Pascoe and Bridges 2016). Therefore, it is essential to study in an intersectional fashion the complex ways that men's experiences with masculinities and violence are impacted by their race, sexuality, and class identities (among others) and so the ways that men can experience both privilege and oppression at the same time.

Since feminist scholarship attempts to spotlight the linkages between men, masculinities, and a plurality of violences, it is no surprise that homogeneous accounts of men's violence are inadequate in reading GBV. Mclnerne and Archer use the expression "homogenous violence" to describe GBV approaches which disproportionately or exclusively focus on individual, often physical, acts of violence. Such work masks the complexity of men's violences. Edstrom et al. also note the preponderance of programming focused on individual men's attitudes and lack of attention to structural violence (Edstrom *et al.* 2015). Burrell's research on activists working with men in the UK presents more evidence of this problem (Burrell 2018). His interviews revealed a frustration that some efforts to prevent men's violence – specifically university programs – limited their focus to certain types of violence (e.g., only sexual violence). Burrell denounces a lack of attention to structural violence: «work with men is too often on changing individual attitudes, leaving patriarchal structures that provide the foundations for men's violence largely untouched» (Burrell 2018, 459).

I will now draw from the Australian context to provide a couple of empirical cases in which a focus on homogeneous account of violence is privileged. In Australia, many programs have been proposed in recent years to work with boys and young men in schools and family support agencies. However, these education programs concerned with violence prevention often emphasise a relationship between witnessing violence as a child and becoming a perpetrator of violence as an adult, supporting the cycle of violence thesis and promoting therapeutic and educational interventions with boys (Indermaur 2001).

Rather than taking into account feminist understandings of masculinity, power and the privileged status of boys in gender relations, many of such programs focus on developing boys' self-esteem and communication skills, (Mills 2001) so rooting the cause of men's violence in the developmental and psychological aspects of the individual perpetrator (Boyd 2007).

A second instance showing that the primary prevention level is seen more often than not as working on the attitudes, values and beliefs of men that underpin violence, rather than on interventions into structurally unequal gender relations, is offered by

an application of the public health epidemiological model of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention to intervention strategies dealing with GBV. In fact, if in the original health education context, primary prevention focuses on community education (Mulder 1999) and the introduction of new values and thinking processes in relation to the health issue being addressed, when this conceptual model was applied to violence against women, primary prevention would focus on attitudes and behaviour change.

While some health promotion frameworks do acknowledge structural factors, they are less successful in addressing these in their interventions. Given the gendered power inequality in society and the prevailing social structures which reproduce men's violence, Mulder (1999) has questioned whether these public health concepts, which have their origins in the epidemiological and bio-medical model, will be successful in preventing GBV. In fact, when we frame social problems in terms of immediately feasible intervention strategies, we are engaged in a political act of accepting prevailing assumptions and ideas about the problem.

Shifting our attention to the European continent, we notice that the situation is not much different. A meta-analysis of evaluations of programs for perpetrators in Europe, conducted as part of the Daphne IMPACT project (Lilley-Walker et al., 2018), found that from the initial focus on cultural and social dimensions addressed by the first pro-feminist programs, European interventions have adopted more psychologising approaches. Their objectives are to activate behavioural change through the therapeutic relationship with the perpetrator, the deconstruction of distorted cognitive systems, and the identification of strategies to prevent abuse. In this context, it is interesting to note that the indicators used in the evaluative studies analysed refer to the reduction of recidivism, individual empowerment, behavioural change, awareness of the impact of violence, and, to a lesser extent, the deconstruction of sexist and misogynistic stereotypes.

As a possible solution to GBV, Burrell proposes a 'triadic approach' to working with men that addresses men (individually), masculinities (culturally), and patriarchy (structurally). He argues such an approach can help men «make sense of the micro, meso and macro dynamics through which violence against women is perpetuated, and how they relate to their own lives, personally and politically» (Burrell 2018, 456).

3. *Galtung's Violence Triangle. Novelties and limitations*

In 1964 the already mentioned Johan Galtung, one of the founders and main figures in peace research, expanded the concept of peace and violence to include indirect or structural violence. The expanded nature of violence led to an extended definition of peace, where peace is not only the absence of war and violence (negative peace), but also absence of structural violence (positive peace) realised through the integration of human society.[1] Whereas negative peace seems to be

[1] The terms "negative" and "positive peace" were first introduced by Galtung in Galtung (1964). It must be noted that in 1964 Galtung did not specifically mention the word "structural violence" but "human integration". In 1969 Galtung defines violence as being «present when human beings are being influenced so that their actual somatic and mental realisations are below their potential realisation», thus including structural violence. For a more detailed account of Galtung's notion of structural violence, see Galtung (1969).

pessimistic, positive peace is shown to be optimistic and can be realised through communication, human understanding, peace education, international cooperation, dispute resolution, arbitration, conflict management, and so forth. Since personal and direct violence are often built into the social structure, it is more sound, to Galtung, to focus upon the wider picture created by structural violence, as this would reveal the causes and effects of violence and conditions for peace.

Coming to GBV, the Galtungian perspective enables to locate the latter within the more general debate according to which GBV either stems from patriarchy and from its historical contintuation or, conversely, is fuelled by an ongoing crisis of masculinity. Nowadays, masculinist movements often argue that men, particularly in the face of feminist initiatives, have become a disadvantaged group, to the extent that a recent transformation of femininity has never been paralleled by a similar activity on masculinity, in which men should have deconstructed patriarchal categories of manliness. Such distance between women's and men's condition is deemed to produce in men insecurity about their identity and social role. Therefore, where patriarchy is struggling to maintain itself amidst social shifts (Fraser 2016), violence remains a crucial mechanism for stabilising its foundation. A key dimension of this violence is the reassertion of a rigid binary gender order that naturalises and upholds normative masculinity and femininity through coercion. Within this order, white masculinity is constructed as the dominant subject, while femininity is positioned as subordinate, reinforcing patriarchal structures of exploitation.

According to these narratives, sexualised violence operates as a regulating and stabilising instrument in the face of women's liberation, while (re)producing and maintaining the binary gender order and its associated power dynamics. Connell's already mentioned concept of "hegemonic masculinity" shows how the binary gender system determines who is permitted to exert, and who is expected to submit to power and dominance. Constructing femininity as inherently passive and weak positions feminised bodies as natural and 'legitimate' targets for violence, reinforcing their subordinate role within the gender hierarchy. Simultaneously, white, heteronormative bodies, associated with strength and dominance, are perceived as capable of defending themselves.

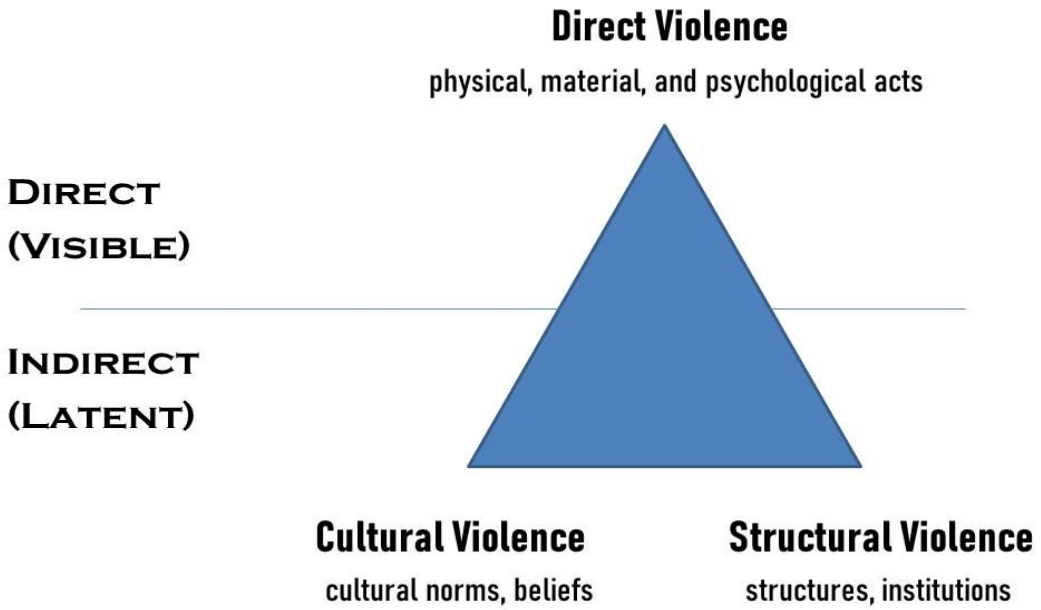
Galtung's understanding of direct and indirect violence is not new to those sociological theories that have long emphasised how direct violence is only one face of the broader phenomenon, being it buttressed by more subtle forms of violence. Bourdieu's account of symbolic violence and Walby's explanation of the relations between structures of patriarchy, only to mention some of the main contributions to the debate, already highlight that GBV is both a direct and indirect outcome of patriarchy. In fact, to Bourdieu, symbolic violence is a form of non-physical domination where the power of a dominant social group is imposed on a subordinate group, often without conscious coercion. It is a "gentle, invisible" form of violence that operates by making the dominant group's norms and values seem like the "natural" or "common sense" way of doing things. This process is reinforced through social structures like education and the media, leading the dominated to internalise their inferior position and accept social hierarchies as legitimate. Coming to gender issues, social conditioning creates "habitus" or dispositions that cause people to willingly and unconsciously comply with gender norms that reinforce male

dominance. In the same fashion as Bourdieu, Walby argues that patriarchy should not be seen as just individual men dominating individual women, but as a set of interlocking structures embedded in society. She identifies six structures of patriarchy, which shape women's lives in both the public and private spheres. Household, paid work, the state, male violence, sexuality, cultural institutions form a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.

What the Galtungian approach adds to the other scholarships dealing with violence and patriarchy, is a framework drawn from peace studies in the attempt to resolve GBV. Peace studies and men's violence prevention are highly connected but often deatched fields. This is particularly clear in the lack of engagement with the concept of peace in men's violence prevention programs (Hearn et al. 2021). As we saw for the case-studies of men's violence prevention programs carried out in the Australian context, a predominant focus on individual responsibilities and behavioural change of the perpetrator prevents from grasping the interdependent relationships amongst violences, peaces, and peace-work strategies in addressing violence against women. In the rest of the article, I show how adapting Galtung's theory of conflict to men's violence work can enrich the latter by incorporating both heterogeneous concepts of men's direct, structural, and cultural violences, and positive and negative peaces. While complex notions of violence are not new to peace studies, Galtung's work can enrich feminist scholarship and offer an accessible tool for practitioners in the ways in which it introduces men's violences to those who may be less familiar with the concept.

To Galtung, direct violence consists of physical, material, or psychological acts of harm. These are discrete acts of violence manifested by discernable actors. In contrast, indirect violence is a hidden form of violence which causes harm to people, although not in the form of a punch thrown or a bullet fired; it is harm deriving from social and cultural arrangements. Galtung delineates indirect violence into two further categories: structural and cultural. Structural violence is the harm caused by social structures and institutions. This is the «non-intended slow, massive suffering caused by economic and political structures in the form of massive exploitation and repression» (Galtung and Fischer 2013, 173). For example, gender inequality, as I will argue later, is a form of structural violence that causes harm to individuals in societies. However, there is not necessarily a single isolatable act of violence that we can call gender inequality. Instead, it is a series of structural arrangements within societies that produce an outcome that causes harm. Galtung notes that this violence is buttressed by the second category of indirect violence: cultural violence. Cultural violence is regarded as a set of cultural norms that cause harm. Such cultural ideas «can be used to justify, legitimize direct or structural violence» (Galtung and Fischer 2013, 41), and once accepted as norms, show how «the act of direct violence and the fact of structural violence are legitimized and thus rendered acceptable in society» (Galtung and Fischer 2013, 42). What is important is that Galtung envisages direct, structural, and cultural violence as three interconnected points of a conflict triangle, that is, these three points compound one another (Galtung 1969).

Figure 1. *Galtung's Violence Triangle*



Galtung notes, «[t]here are linkages and causal flows in all directions» of the triangle and the connections within the triangle show us that «violence breeds violence» (Galtung, Fischer 2013, 47). With Johan Galtung's conception of structural violence and cultural violence, I will argue how patriarchy can be seen as the main cause of violence. In that view, patriarchy places men with their masculinity in a dominant position and women with their femininity in a subordinate position. Patriarchy can be read as institutionalisation of male power in a vertical structure, with a very high correlation between position and gender that is legitimised by culture, and often appears as direct violence with men as subjects and women as objects.

While Galtung is considered one of the most influential scholars in peace studies, his work is not without challenge. Before approaching to the application of Galtung's theories to GBV, I feel first to briefly engage with recent feminist critiques of his work. While Galtung delineates gender as one variable in the complex equation of violence, feminist perspectives from within peace studies argue the relationship between violence, peace, and gender is significantly more consequential. Scholars like Confortini, Alexander, and Hewitt and True note that Galtung studies the relationship between gender and violence by examining the structural, cultural, and direct violence of patriarchy and by looking at gender as a conflict analysis variable (Confortini 2006; Alexander 2019; Hewitt, True 2021). They argue that Galtung's work on conflict needs to engage gender more fully as a socially constructed dynamic practice embodied within power relations. This is not to say that gender is the only or most important lens, but rather to note that all aspects of violence have a gendered dimension to them; thus, violence itself is gendered. As Cockburn makes clear, a comprehensive gender perspective on violence is not just an extra or an

aside; it is a necessity as gender links a continuum of forms of violence, temporal states of violence, and of realms of violence in society (Cockburn 2004). All that said, if violence is so fundamentally gendered it follows that our violence detection and reduction efforts must be gendered too. Using Galtung's theories to read GBV thus requires an intentional focus on gender and feminist analysis.

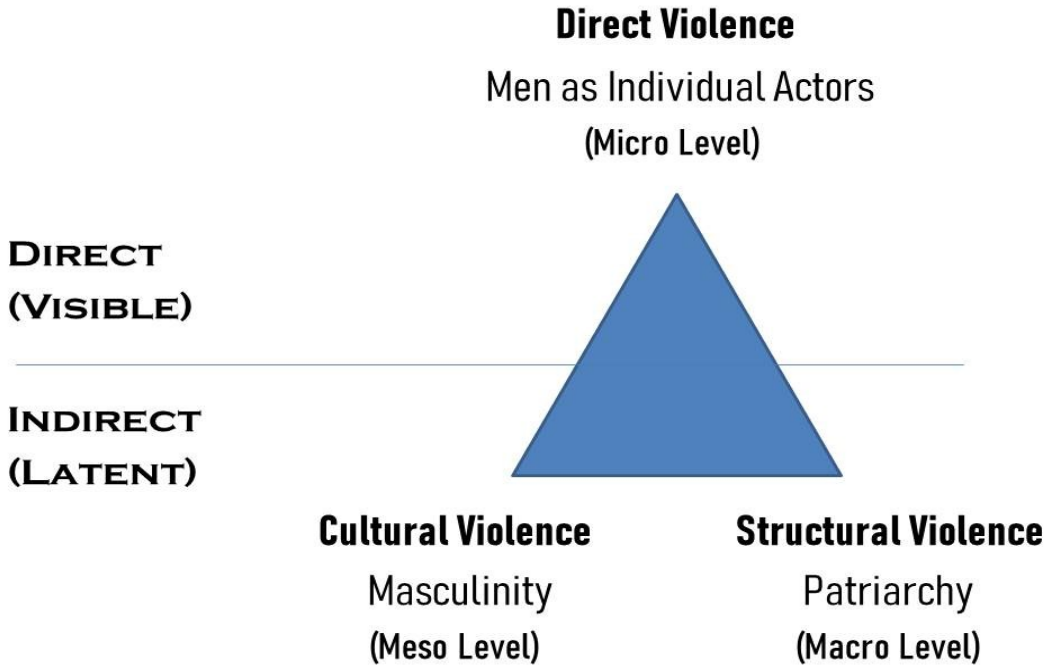
4. *Gendering and potential practical applications of Galtung's model*

Galtung's violence triangle provides a call for more heterogeneous conceptions of violence and adds much to the existing feminist and GBV literature, by offering a framework for men's violences. Adopting a Galtungian approach enables to challenge the false dichotomy between individualised and systemic violence and highlights the interdependencies between men's violent acts, cultural gender norms, and patriarchal structures. I strongly believe that we will never reach a satisfying level of understanding of, and consequently fight against, the GBV phenomenon if we do not engage with a holistic approach which considers *each and together* the three forms of violence. My appeal resonates, for example, with Flood's comments that men's violence must be simultaneously understood as «coercive, structural, and complex» (Flood 2019, 30). Further, despite her valid criticism of his work, Confortini notes that Galtung's theory offers a practical framework «within which violence against women can be seen in the larger context of societal violence» (Confortini 2006, 356). Thus, by highlighting the connections amongst violences, the framework allows for an examination of the linkages between men's violences and the wider inequalities within what hooks calls the «imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy» (hooks 2004).

I will now attempt to give some instances in which Galtung's Violence Triangle can be applied to specifically GBV cases, prior to getting to some more general conclusions about the relationship between patriarchy, GBV, and ways to counter it. I owe much of these classifications and applications to McInerney and Archer's thinking, teaching, and discussions with men involved in men's violence prevention programs. Most of the answers provided come out of question such "What type of men's direct, cultural, or structural violence are present in your community?" and "In what ways do men's various forms of violence intersect and compound?" I will start with the case of direct violence. Men's direct violence against women consists of: acts, threats of violence, and patterns of coercive control, as well as how such acts interact with other forms of direct violence. Specific examples may be individual acts and patterns of physical, sexual, emotional, and psychological violence, abuse, and coercive behaviour. Specific ways in which women may also be targeted for direct violence based on intersecting forms of marginalisation, for example, homophobic misogynoir directed at Black trans women. Regarding, instead, patriarchal structural GBV, it consists of social, political, and legal inequalities reproduced by patriarchies, as well as the ways in which such gendered structural violences interact with wider social inequalities. Some examples are: gender inequality across society that includes women's limited access to social and material resources, gender pay gaps, second shift domestic labour, and laws limiting women's rights, power, and wellbeing. In addition, specific ways in which women may be targeted by compounding forms of

structural violences, for example women living in poverty. Last but not least, cultural violence. Patriarchal cultural GBV is realised through: sexist, homophobic, and transphobic gender norms, as well as the ways in which other harmful cultural norms interact with them. Some specific cases: sexist cultures including depictions of women as helpless and men as dominant, social norms underpinning rape cultures that objectify and hypersexualise women, cultural ideals of masculinities and femininity that reinforce binary roles and exclude trans and non-binary people, essentialism, and male-centric gendered hierarchies. Specific ways in which women may be targeted for compounding forms of cultural violence are, for example, intersecting forms of racism and sexism which target Indigenous women. Galtung's approach highlights the need to simultaneously address all three violences and their linkages. Applied to GBV, this analysis aligns with Burrell's triadic approach and could include explorations of men as individual actors, masculinities as gender norms constructed and embedded in culture, and patriarchy as a structural arrangement (Burrell 2018).

Figure 2. *Applying Burrell's Triadic Approach to Galtung's Violence Triangle*



This analysis also complements an intersectional lens to examine how they are situated within a wider context of violence. McInerney and Archer so optimistically conclude:

«We have found that this framework provides an accessible entry point to discuss how to categorise and think about the many forms of men's violences against women, how to understand the ways different forms of men's violences fuel and sustain one another, and how we can consider addressing them both separately and collectively. While Galtung's framework for violence is not the only perspective needed, we have found it to be an effective entry point, a helpful catalyst for deeper

conversation, and a holistic account of the many forms of violence MVP [Men's Violence Prevention] programs seek to address» (McInerney and Archer 2023, 81).

Galtung sees the issue of violence as a universal humanitarian problem. Although he did not deny the fact that many women were victims of violence, both in the form of direct, cultural and structural violence, Galtung did not mean that men were never victims of violence. Galtung sees humans as positioned, both naturally and physiologically and gender as men and women. With many reasons, the differentiation of men and women is the source of the violence that befell women. Thus what is needed is the quality of human beings, both men and women who are conducive to reducing violence at all levels. Herein lies the value of educational conflict resolution that he offers. Therefore, when patriarchy is considered a source of violence, what must be formed is parity, namely equality between women and men rather than matriarchy. And when assuming that the feminine nature is more likely to be prone to creating peace, Galtung offers a solution so that all humans have that feminine character, whether they are male or female. Women have the potential to change the world. There will be no positive peace, without the similarity of views and cooperation for mutual benefit between the sexes.

Patriarchal and masculine community structures, for Galtung must be replaced with equality and cooperation between men and women, by developing a more conducive femininity for the realisation of peace. When men and women both have the potential for violence, even with different levels, they actually have the same potential to eliminate violence. Speaking of the structure of the country, Galtung stated that the existence of men and women with low empathy would have the same effect, namely to bring violence everywhere. For Galtung, men and women can work together to eliminate violence, both direct violence, violence in the structure of society and the state, and cultural violence. Inclusiveness, mutual respect for differences, the ability to understand others, caring, mutual care, loving one another, seeing things holistically, are important. And basically through socialisation, all humans, both men and women can have these positive qualities. Galtung's recipe for a mutual caring work of men and women jointly, in order to eradicate violence, can be further buttressed by those feminist scholarships which emphasise the role of care in societies, and its potential to eliminate a gender inequality which automatically brings to violence.

According to Tronto and Fisher (Fisher, Tronto 1991), care is not only a disposition, but chiefly a practice. To interpret care as a practice gives an alternative to conceiving of care as a principle or as an emotion, for practice involves the use of both thought and action together, and their direction toward some ends. To conceive of care as a practice and not only as a disposition prevents care from being sentimentalised and romanticised, and hinders the traditional divisions between a caring private realm and a not-caring public realm and the enforcement of the ideological construction that women are more emotional than men, and men are more rational than women. In this association of women with caring, what is lost is the reality of the complexity of caring, what is gained is a division of spheres that would serve to relegate women and other caring people. In addition to care being attached to sentiments and opposed to rationality, care is also devalued in its association with the private sphere (Tronto 1994). Since care is relatively disguised in our society, it

is somewhat difficult to detect that in our society caring does not work in an egalitarian manner. For Tronto, the distribution of caring work and who is cared for serves to maintain and to reinforce patterns of subordination: those who care are made still less important because their needs are not as important as the needs of those privileged enough to pay others to care for them. This pattern of "privileged irresponsibility", which allows some people not to care about what it is important to them, if reveals on one hand an empirical truth, it shows on the other a hidden process according to which caring needs are being met through a process that distorts reality and makes care invisible. Tronto wishes the beginning of a new political era where to place care and those social groups who provide it at the centre of the public debate:

> «To recognise the value of care calls into question the structures of values in our society. Care is not a parochial concern of women, a type of secondary moral question, or the work of the least well off in society. Care is central concern of human life. It is time that we began to change our political and social institutions to reflect this truth» (Tronto 1994, 180).

Engaging men in a feminist theory and practices of care can be pivotal in order to redefine women-men relationship in a less patriarchal way and to construct peace while removing GBV. Engaging men in feminist care involves challenging those traditional constructs which often emphasise dominance, emotional suppression, and the use of power and control, and encouraging men to embrace a more caring and empathetic version of masculinity. This can be achieved through public policies and programmes focusing on gender-inclusive early education, awareness campaigns and positive role modelling, among other initiatives. Engaging men in feminist care should emphasise the importance of consent, communication, and mutual respect in all relationships, whether intimate, familial, or social.

From Moura's research (Moura 2024) and her projects, it is clear how men's involvement in caregiving roles, such as parenting and eldercare, should be encouraged and supported. Policies and workplace practises that promote work-life balance and shared caregiving responsibilities can help break down traditional gender roles and foster more caring and equitable societies. Also, collaboration with male allies and engaging men in supporting and having an active role in care practises can be highly effective. Men who actively support gender equality and care can work alongside women and feminists to challenge harmful norms, advocate for policy changes, and promote cultural shifts towards care and non-violence.

Incorporating men into feminist theories and practises of care is essential for achieving gender equality and reducing GBV. This is why Moura proposes a new paradigm of "caring masculinities" which seeks to address these issues by reconceptualising masculinities and placing care at the forefront. By advocating for a feminist theory of caring masculinities, the objective is to contribute to the disruption of dominant models of masculinity and promote more equitable and compassionate forms of gender identity. This involves not only understanding and analysing the social constructions of masculinities but also actively working to challenge and transform them through legislative and initiative-based interventions.

Conclusions

GBV is a direct/indirect consequence of patriarchy and only a holistic approach to peace, which is based on a simultaneous acknowledgment of direct, structural, and cultural violence, can provide a reliable base to detect and counter GBV. Adopting heterogeneous and multifaceted approaches to the examination of GBV is fundamental to compose a more critical and comprehensive perspective of such a complex subject. Since Galtung envisages direct, structural, and cultural violence as three interconnected points of a conflict triangle, adopting a Galtungian approach enables to challenge the false dichotomy between individualised and systemic violence and highlights the interdependencies between men's violent acts, cultural gender norms, and patriarchal structures. Patriarchal and masculine community structures, for Galtung, must be replaced with equality and cooperation between men and women, by developing a more conducive femininity for the realisation of peace. When men and women both have the potential for violence, they actually have the same potential to eliminate violence and the same duty to eliminate violence together. Inclusiveness, mutual respect for differences, mutual care, mutual love, and socialisation are the qualities and tools to be employed holistically in order to realise peace. I believe that a Galtungian approach can learn from and resonate with a feminist analysis of violence, respond to problems related to homogenous violence in GBV that Flood and Burrell have spotted, and pave the way for novel and innovative possibilities for both challenging violence and promoting more peaceful paths forward.

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