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A Counterbalance of Four Tenets on Gender
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UNIVERSITAT ROVIRA I VIRGILI
DEPARTAMENT D'ESTUDIS ANGLESES I ALEMANYS

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Abstract

This paper counterbalances four popular tenets – or core beliefs – around gender with cross-disciplinary findings and alternative explanations that contrast, complement, or expand their narrative. It covers *the social construction of gender*, the *gender pay gap*, *gender-based violence*, and *the patriarchy*. The first tenet is contrasted with studies on sex differences, the origins of sexual reproduction, and toy preferences observed in babies and monkeys; the second with studies on differing workplace preferences by gender; the third with studies on the differing violent tendencies of the sexes, and the fourth with historical facts and studies on sociology, evolutionary psychology, and biology.

Keywords: the social construction of gender, the gender pay gap, gender-based violence, the patriarchy, gender

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1. Introduction

A tenet is a core belief on the basis of which other beliefs can be formed and sustained. An example of a tenet is *god exists*; if one believes this tenet, many things can be believed on the basis of this core belief, and many others cannot be believed; many things might also become harder to believe, while others might become easier.

I think our beliefs may dictate our fate by conditioning our actions. The four tenets covered in this paper are quite widespread and our perspective on them could influence our present and future life, work, relationships, and family. This paper aims to define the tenets and then offer well-founded alternative explanations for them. For this, it gathers findings from multiple sources and disciplines, in pursuit of a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of their related topics, with the ultimate goal of fostering individual and collective harmony and well-being.

If education is collaborating in the pursuit of the truth – which I understand as accuracy at describing reality – and critical thinking is developed when we practice finding truth among contradicting positions – so common in this modern world – this may be one of the best topics to cover nowadays, in alignment with these two principles.

2. The Social Construction of Gender

According to Goldie (2014), in 1955 “John Money first used the term ‘gender’ in a way that we all now take for granted” (Goldie, 2014). According to “Gender” (2023), *gender* “includes the social, psychological, cultural and behavioral aspects of being a man, woman, or other gender identity” (“Gender”, 2023). More ideological definitions include the theory of the social construction in the phrasing, for example: “Gender refers

to the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed” (*Gender and health*, 2019). According to *The Social Construction of Gender* (2016), social constructionism is “The idea that social institutions and knowledge are created by actors within the system, rather than having any inherent truth on their own” (*The Social Construction of Gender*, 2016), which can be the most radical and ideological definition among those cited.

Simone de Beauvoir’s book *The Second Sex* (1949) is considered by many the seminal work of modern feminist theory (Chaperon, 2014), the start of the second wave of feminism (Plessix Gray, 2010), and the main reference supporting the idea that gender is a social construct (Colenutt, 2021). The same idea is furtherly developed and perpetuated by many authors, notably by Kate Millett’s *Sexual Politics* (1970), Michele Foucault’s *The history of sexuality* (1976), Donna Haraway’s *A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the 1980s* (1985), Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* (1990), and Anne Fausto-Sterling’s *Sexing the Body* (2000) among others.

The degree of the perceived or proposed social construction of gender varies depending on the radicality of who is asked, and, sometimes, on when they are asked. For example, Judith Butler herself says that *constructed* means “not real” (Williams, 2014), that “nobody is a gender from the start” (Big Think, 2011), but also, in 2021, that “none of us are totally determined by cultural norms” (Jules, 2021). Still, her feminist classic *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (Butler, 1990) wants to deconstruct not only gender, but sex itself: “perhaps this construct called ‘sex’ is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all” (Butler, 1990). Finding a clear and simple stance from an author such as Butler can

be difficult. But this does not impede people to take the idea in a direct and radical way that is so commonly found. A typical example of this is Freud (1994) saying that “many categories such as race, nationality, homosexuality, and gender are arbitrary social constructions created to fill some human purpose based on sociopolitical rather than biological or ‘natural’ considerations” (Freud, 1994); *arbitrary* being a key word implying that gender has no foundation beyond the sociopolitical realm. Another example, an article from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, laments that some “people might still believe in the biological differences between the sexes” (Haseley, 2020).

The claim that gender is a social construct can be destabilized with an internet search for papers on sex differences. From the field of social psychology comes the article *Gender differences in personality traits across cultures: robust and surprising findings* (Costa et al., 2001). The study analyzes data from more than 21.000 samples from twenty-six different cultures, and it concludes that, cross-culturally, personality “differences are broadly consistent with gender stereotypes” (Costa et al., 2001). If sex were an arbitrary social construction, different cultures would show different traits related to gender; but this is not the case, therefore, this study destabilizes part of the tenet. The same paper expresses surprise at the finding that “contrary to predictions from the social role model, gender differences were most pronounced in European and American cultures in which traditional sex roles are minimized”; more on this later, when exploring the gender wage gap. The same study tries to explain this “surprising finding” (Costa et al., 2001) with “the attribution of masculine and feminine behaviors to roles rather than traits in traditional cultures” (Costa et al., 2001) among other ideas, but its authors, as it is quite normative, limit themselves to their field – in their case the psychological sociocultural

domain. This is a common problem with specialization and disciplinary expertise: limiting the study to a field while ignoring or excluding any other pertinent and valuable source of knowledge, even at the most basic level, to the detriment of the scholar and scientific aim of seeking truths.

Returning to *the social construction of gender* – and moving closer to the hard sciences – from the realm of neuropsychology comes *Toy story: why do monkey and human males prefer trucks?* (Williams & Pleil, 2008). This article references many of the science documenting how female monkeys and female human babies prefer dolls, while male monkeys and male human babies prefer cars and other similar classically masculine toys (Williams & Pleil, 2008). This confirms that each sex tends to display certain differentiated behavioral traits that are strongly marked biologically, and that they align with the traditional gender roles and gender stereotypes.

Another way to contradict the tenet of *the social construction of gender* is through hormone research. It is a well-known fact that many transsexual people take hormones. If gender were only socially constructed, this would not be the case. To this somebody could reply that they only do it to change their body. However, the typical female and male hormones, estrogen and testosterone respectively, the same that transsexual people take, are proven to deeply affect mood and behavior. Low testosterone levels in men, for example, produce “lethargy, fatigue, decreased sense of well-being, reduced physical and mental activity, diminished libido, increased sweating, depressive mood” (Schubert & Jockenhövel, 2005) and other symptoms. A good level of testosterone in men “causes both prosocial and antisocial status-enhancing behaviors” (Dreher et al., 2016). Estrogen in women is linked with “social behavior, learning and memory” (Galea et al., 2017), “emotional well-being,” “depression,” “anxiety,” and “mood disruptions” like

“premenstrual syndrome, premenstrual dysphoric disorder, and postpartum depression” (Hoffman, 2008). Therefore, hormones are another way to illustrate the clear link between biology and gendered behavior that is quite in alignment with the traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

In the field of evolutionary biology and ecology, the article *What do isogamous organisms teach us about sex and the two sexes?* (Lehtonen et al., 2016) explains that bigger sex cells in females are constant across all multicellular organisms and most life forms (Lehtonen et al., 2016) – also Nieuwenhuis & Aanen (2012) and Gilbert (2000) – meaning that a higher direct reproductive investment and specialization has been a feminine trait since the beginning, something that becomes multiplied in mammals and humans with pregnancy and lactation. From breastfeeding to the cellular level, female reproductive investment can be linked with *food* and *feeding* (Gilbert, 2000), because as Chadwick (2023) explains, mitochondria, in charge of feeding the cells, is inherited from the mother, as mitochondria are only found in female eggs but not in male sperm (Chadwick, 2023). As Gilbert (2000) explains, the egg is bigger because of the accumulated material that will feed the embryo if fertilized, while a sperm will make fecundation possibly if it reaches the egg and does it before that the rest of competing sperms. Eggs are non-motile – passive – while sperms are motile – active (Gilbert, 2000). Passivity “is advantageous because it facilitates less expenditure of energy and helps the cells to store extra nutrients for rapid embryo development” (Toppr, 2020).

Many women in the harder sciences seem to have little problem with the nature of “sex roles” (Lehtonen et al., 2016). Or at least this can be said of Prof. Hanna Kokko, from the University of Zurich, one of the three authors of the first scientific article in this paragraph that reads that “the origin of male and female sexes, kickstarts the subsequent

evolution of sex roles” (Lehtonen et al., 2016), linking the concept of *sex roles* with the biological origins of female, male, and sex itself. Indeed, the birth of sexual reproduction leads to the birth of femininity and masculinity, and many early sexual beings already shown differentiated physical traits and linked differentiated behavior (Roberts, 2014).

Sexual reproduction is so good at perpetuating life that it is found in most life forms, from fungi to plants and animals (Nieuwenhuis & James, 2016). Within the animal kingdom, 99,9% of species reproduce sexually (Phillips et al., 1990, as cited in Zubair, 2022), and “in nearly all vertebrate species, sexual reproduction is binary and it involves male and female” (Hadhazy, 2011).

If gender were a social construct, constructing gender would require a society. However, gender – as differentiated behavior linked with sex, male or female – is not only about two thousand million years older (Zimmer, 2009; Cavalier-Smith, 2010) than any society (Kennedy, 2022), but it is also about two thousand million years older than any plant (Kenrick & Crane, 1997), animal (University of Oxford, 2019) or human (Stoneking, 2008).

We humans, products of nature and sex itself, have been on the idea of deconstructing sex and gender for about 70 years (Money, 1955; Money, 1985) of the 15,000,000 we have existed.

3. The gender pay gap

The gender pay gap takes a simple fact and explains it in an oversimplified ideological way. The simple fact is that, on average, men, earn more money than women. This could be considered neutral and morally devoid. But it is not the case, because the

tenet from this section assumes that this disparity is caused by discrimination against women. As summarized by Soken-Huberty (2021), “feminism boils down to ending gender discrimination” (Soken-Huberty, 2021). *The gender pay gap* (2020) says that “The gender pay gap measures a broader concept than pay discrimination and comprehends a large number of inequalities women face in access to work, progression and rewards.” Some formulations of *the gender pay gap* add the phrase *for the same job* to the formulation, rendering something similar to *men are paid more than women for the same job*. Here is an instance from an article by Jessica Dickler (2016) for the CNBC: “An unpleasant truth: Women still earn less than men for doing the same job.” (Dickler, 2016). Notice the absence of the word average in the phrasing, which can make people forget that it refers to a statistic. The part *the same job* also has its interest as it also refers to a statistical finding, and when it is included, it comes from comparing salaries withing the same job title or category. Categories such as *bartender* or *chemical technician*, as seen in Haan (2023) and *2023 Gender Pay Gap Report* (2023). What is extremely hard to find is precisely what many people think the *gender pay gap* means: a woman getting paid less than a man in the exact same job under the exact same conditions and producing exactly the same value. That is not found because it is illegal, and if some company got sued for that, nowadays they would get fined, and many people would hear of it.

A simple way to contrast this tenet is this thought experiment: If women could be easily paid less for doing the exact same job, what business owner would not want to cut costs by hiring as many women as possible in order to maximize their profit? Many businesses would be hiring as many women as possible if that could be a way to increase their profit. Still, this is only a simple thought experiment.

A formulation of the *gender pay gap* adding *by the same employer* is rare. Forbes's article by IESE Business School (2022) is an exception. Its title reads "Gender Pay Gap Persists Globally, Even For Same Jobs Within Companies" (IESE Business School, 2022). But then, the text reads "substantially the same" job. The article is based on the large-scale analysis Penner et al. (2023), with many authors – mostly sociologists – that finds gaps from 7% to 26%, depending on the country, for the same job positions within the same companies. The kind of companies or job positions are not revealed or I couldn't find them. The only hint I could find, from a supplementary file attached at the end of the article, reads: "For very large establishments, the number of employees was limited to 1,000 randomly selected employees." Penner et al. (2023). So the analysis is made, even partially, on averages based on employees in very big companies, were they could be working far away from each other, which perhaps could explain part of those gaps. Again, it compares wages from people with the same job titles, but we do not know if they work less or more hours, if they earned any incentives, if they do some kind of extra work, if they negotiated a different deal and it was given to them, etc. The authors acknowledge the "numerous challenges" at "ensuring that analytic decisions that are appropriate in some contexts are not problematic in others", which implies very complex multifactorial variables which could be calculated in many ways; it also says that "factors like parental leave policies, the availability and prevalence of part-time work, and the relevance of occupations and firms" differed from sample to sample; and that the data is collected from different "contexts with different gender regimes and where paid work is organized very differently" (Penner et al., 2023).

An interesting trend observable in reports of *the gender pay gap* is a clear emphasis on the convenience of closing the gap – achieving a state where women and

men earn the same on average – without actually saying much or anything about why this should be achieved or why men earning more is a bad thing. I assume that the presumed underlying belief driving the aim must be the tenet of discrimination against women, or the tenet of the oppression of women by men – or a similar explanation, or any other. But the reason is very often left unstated. This could arguably be understood as the assimilation and integration below conscious level of the ideological tenet. Looking intentionally for statements of the reasons to close the gap, I found the following example from a professional services webpage titled *The Current State of the Gender Wage Gap* (Slayton Search Partners, 2022). The text concludes that “narrowing the gender wage gap is of critical importance.” In an early paragraph it states that the “gender wage gap is just one indicator of gender discrimination,” while indicating the “underrepresentation of women at the senior level” (Slayton Search Partners, 2022) as the only other mentioned indicator of that said discrimination against women. As said, the emphasis on the “critical importance” of closing the gap is supported by simply stating once that having a gap is an indicator of “discrimination,” without any further proof, explanation, or justification. In other words, what it says is that as long as women on average earn less than what men earn on average, it means there is discrimination. Narratives like this often resemble a chicken and egg situation, where there is a gap because there is discrimination, and there is discrimination because there is a gap. Getting back to the article, it says that the company was hiring more men than women and that “their next step was to determine whether this was because of discrimination in the hiring process or a lack of diversity in candidate sourcing” (Slayton Search Partners, 2022). This implies that they only conceive – or only choose to mention – two possible options explaining the smaller number of women in the company: either the company discriminates against women, or the company

follows inadequate hiring procedures. But, what about people's free will and preferences? Is it that crazy to even consider the simple possibility that less women than men might be interested in working in the company or in its field? Slayton Search Partners (2022) comment a case from a particular company covered by an article (Gautier & Munasinghe, 2012) for Harvard Business Review, subsidiary of Harvard University. The article starts by revealing that the analyzed company employs thousands of software engineers (Gautier & Munasinghe, 2012). As covered further in this section, this simple fact already explains a lot about the situation in the company. The article (Gautier & Munasinghe, 2012) continues by saying that the company had the "problem" that "in the organization as a whole, women were paid on average 33% less than men" but that "when comparing women to men with similar job titles, skills, and company tenure, this pay gap shrank to a mere 3%" (Gautier & Munasinghe, 2012) –notice the word *similar*, and the gap being reduced by 30% to a 3%. But this is still "a problem" and the "company's experience is unfortunately not unique" (Gautier & Munasinghe, 2012). The article proposes a sophisticated framework with six "distinct but interrelated dimensions of equity" to help companies make "evidence-based decisions" in order to better "invest their equity budget" (Gautier & Munasinghe, 2012) but still, as mentioned before, there is almost nothing justifying the insistence on closing the gender gap, only the vague possibility of discrimination at some level, and the drill that equity in the workplace must be achieved – the word *equity* appears 16 times along the 14 paragraphs in the text – it could be a SEO trick. The ideas in this article align with those in that by Jessica Dickler (2016) for the CNBC. Dickler's text reads "addressing pay equity and ensuring equal pay for equal work is important but what gets lost is the opportunity gap" because "we can't say there's equitable pay when there isn't equitable representation at the highest paying jobs" (Lydia

Frank, as cited in Dickler, 2016). These articles are the first ones I explored, one looking for an example including a formulation of the tenet which included *for the same job*, and one looking for an example that talked about the *gender pay gap* and offered any reason as to why it should be closed. Interestingly, they both say broadly the same. They both mention the concept of *equity*, which according to dictionary.com means “fairness,” “justice,” and “impartiality” (Dictionary.com, 2023). Both articles imply that their idea of what would be fair, just, and impartial would be reaching a situation where women earned the same amount of money on average as men, and were women were as present as men in all the job positions, hierarchies and levels. And I suspect that this is only justified if one believes that the situation where this is not the case can only be explained by discrimination against women, an idea so taken by granted as factual, and so expected to be accepted or assumed by everybody that there is little need to even mention it and much less to justify it or question anymore. It turns out that, in alignment with Rumi’s quote “Look for the answer inside your question” (*Quote by Rumi*, 2022), both articles indeed already dismantle big part of their own assumption when they themselves acknowledge that the gap is partially (Dickler, 2016) or almost totally (Gautier & Munasinghe, 2012) caused by women’s average lower position jobs. Therefore, the gap is not actually caused by women getting paid less for the same job, but because women have lower-position jobs with their according lower salary. And this comes only from the logic embedded within these two randomly-found articles that urge their readers to close the gap – again, without saying much about why this should be done.

A random article I found looking for female software engineers has this headline: “Progress for Gender Equality in the Tech Industry? The Percentage of Female Software Engineers in 2023” (*The Percentage of Female Software Engineers*, 2023). Then, as

expected, it tries to explain the absence of women in tech by discrimination, in this case by citing *The Second Shift* (Machung, 1989). According to just the headline of the article, gender equality would mean having the same amount of female software engineers as male software engineers. A simple question that can arise from this is: Do as many women as men want to be software engineers? And if that was the case, would not *justice* or even *equality* look like an amount of men and women in the field in accordance to their own average personal interest on it? What if this is mostly already the case, and we are creating problems out of thin air? More on this in the following paragraph. Getting back to the headline in the article, it seems that at some moment some people started confusing *equality* as *equal opportunity* with *equality* as *equal outcome* and *sameness*. And then confused the lack of sameness and equal outcome with a metric signaling discrimination or injustice. This is not only logically wrong, but it can create real injustices (Britannica, 2022, June 21; SA Aiyar, 2022). And it also contains a seed of victimhood and powerlessness by picturing people as passive agents who are being controlled by external forces and who have little agency and free will on their own. And this agency and free will is precisely one of the main causes of the gender pay gap.

Before in this paper, an article describes a company trying to help another become more *equitable* by having more women within their thousands of software engineers (Gautier & Munasinghe, 2012) and the fact that the job positions where for software engineers is said to explain a lot about it. Then the following questions are made: “Do as many women as men want to be software engineers?” and “What about people’s free will and preferences? Is it that crazy to even consider the simple possibility that less women than men might be interested in working in the company or in its field?” The first section on the social construction of gender cites a cross-cultural study on personality traits by

gender (Costa et al., 2001) where the authors make the “surprising finding” that “contrary to predictions from the social role model, gender differences were most pronounced in European and American cultures in which traditional sex roles are minimized.” All of this can be explained by the gender-equality paradox.

The gender-equality paradox is “one of the most surprising results in social science in a decade” (Dynomight, 2021). Its authors Stoet & Geary (2018) are not, as seems to be quite common, feminist sociologists specialist only in social sciences. David Geary, from the University of Missouri, is “a cognitive scientist and evolutionary psychologist” interested in “the biological bases of sex differences”; he has several books and “more than 330 articles and chapters across a wide range of topics, including cognitive, developmental, and evolutionary psychology, education, biology, and medicine” (*David C. Geary, 2023*). Gijsbert Stoet is a Prof. in the Faculty of Science and Health of the Essex University who has worked “in the field of anatomy and neurobiology,” has “a background in cognitive psychology and neuroscience,” “focuses on a variety of topics in the fields of health, personality, cognitive, and educational psychology,” and is interested in “gender differences,” in “how boys and girls learn and achieve, and in “how gender differences are expressed in adults” (*Homepage of Gijsbert Stoet, 2018*). Both authors have a cross-disciplinary view and their approach and understanding of the sexes and gender has deep roots in the hard sciences apart from the soft sciences. Their abstract acknowledges that “The underrepresentation of girls and women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields is a continual concern for social scientists and policymakers.” They conclude that adolescent girls are as good and sometimes better than adolescent boys in two thirds of the countries they analyzed; and that “in nearly all countries, more girls appeared capable of college-

level STEM study than had enrolled.” The most interesting conclusion is this: “Paradoxically, the sex differences in the magnitude of relative academic strengths and pursuit of STEM degrees rose with increases in national gender equality.” And confirming it in the other end, “A mediation analysis suggested that life-quality pressures in less gender-equal countries promote girls’ and women’s engagement with STEM subjects.” In other words, what this means is that in the countries that score higher in gender equality fewer women choose STEM fields; and in countries scoring lower in gender equality, women chose more often STEM fields. So the countries that invest more money, energy, policy and resources in persuading women into STEM fields is precisely where they chose them the least. This means that investing money, energy, and resources to persuade women into STEM fields might be a waste of said resources. If the last decades have likely been the ones when *gender equality* has been promoted the most, the “Gender pay gap in U.S. hasn’t changed much in two decades” (Aragão, 2023). That happening with women in STEM fields is not unique. It also happens with men in nursery. In Norway, only 10% of the nurses are men (Sjetne, 2019), whereas in the African region, the highest I could find, 35% of the nurses are men (Distribution of Nurses, 2018), followed by Saudi Arabia with a 32% of male nurses (*Male Nurses Worldwide*, 2012). It seems men around the world are not too interested in nursing. In the first section of this paper, Williams & Pleil (2008) show that female monkeys prefer playing with dolls and male monkeys prefer playing with cars (Williams & Pleil, 2008). Accordingly, a simpler and broader restatement of the main finding from the study of the gender-equality paradox is this: When women and men have the opportunities and freedom to choose, they choose what they naturally prefer.

Lapp (2020) draws this conclusion from other sources and without mentioning the gender-equality paradox: “What if at the root of some of the disparities in men’s and women’s work is not victimization but a more empowered reality—women acting on their own preferences?” (Lapp, 2020)

The gender-equality paradox does not explain the whole cause of the pay gap. Indeed, big part of it is caused by women’s job field and type preference – in Norway, for example, a nurse earns 82% of what a software engineer earns (*Registered Nurse, 2023; Software Engineer, 2023*). It turns out that there are many aspects stemming from men’s and women’s different average work preferences that contribute to the gap: Colleta (2022) tells us that women prioritize “roles that allow them to integrate work and life in a healthy way” and “work/life balance”, they value flexibility, the location of work, and, being able to choose, “an easy commute to work” (Colletta, 2022). Burbano et al. (2020) say that they “demonstrate the universality of gender differences in preferences for meaning at work using a cross-country survey covering individuals in 47 countries”, that “these differences become more pronounced with greater levels of education and economic development, suggesting that their importance is likely to increase over time.” and that “preferences for meaning” help “to explain the under-representation of females in higher-paying industries” (Burbano et al., 2020). And they use “Gender Segregation by Occupation” and “Job Preferences” as keywords, no *gender inequality* or anything similar.

Catherine Hakim is a sociologist from the London School of Economics. As explained by Kanazawa (2009), “Hakim’s work shows that only about 20% of women in western industrial societies are as career-centered as men are,” “Another 20% of women do not want to pursue a career at all and would prefer to focus on their family,” and “The

remaining 60% want a bit of both – a part-time work combined with family” (Kanazawa, 2009). Indeed, Hakim (2006) concludes that “enduring sex differences in competitiveness, life goals, the relative emphasis on agency versus connection” are a root cause for workplace disparities. She says that despite the “feminist emphasis on equal opportunities” that “assumes that sex discrimination is the primary source” of the workplace gender disparities, “some careers and occupations cannot be domesticated” and that it “poses limits to social engineering.” She reveals that “recent research shows that high levels of female employment and family-friendly policies reduce gender equality in the workforce and produce the glass ceiling” (Hakim, 2006). Therefore, not only this kind of social engineering may be useless (Stoet & Geary, 2018), but it may also increase what it tries to reduce (Hakim, 2006). Naturally occurring imparities can be perfectly ok, and perhaps we are seeing problems where there are none. What can be more difficult to understand is how achieving this parity by forcing people to act against their natural preferences, in the name of satisfying a statistical symmetry, could be good for anybody. Hakim (2006) closes the abstract saying that “preference theory is the only theory that can explain these new trends, the continuing pay gap and occupational segregation” (Hakim, 2006). She also covers Farrell’s (2005) classic work on the subject, of which she says: “A polemical but nonetheless useful summary of the research evidence on explanations for the pay gap, and why occupations chosen by men generally pay more than occupations chosen by women, is given in *Why Men Earn More*” (Hakim, 2006).

Why Men Earn More: The Startling Truth Behind the Pay Gap -- and What Women Can Do About It is a book by Warren Farrell from 2005 with more than 280 pages exploring the multiple factors causing the wage disparity by gender (Farrell, 2005). I read the book some years ago, but I am going to refer to the summary by Zecovic (2017). The

last part of the title of the book – *What Women Can Do About It* – can be a quite counterintuitive for many people: He doesn't encourage anybody to fight anything systematically, like some could think after reading such a title; instead, analyzing the reality of the situation, he encourages the average woman who wants to earn more money to do precisely more of what men are on average doing more – which at the same time, of course, explains the factors that really cause the gap. He encourages women to “Choose a field in technology or the hard sciences, not the arts or social sciences (pharmacology vs. literature),” to choose to work “in sleet and heat” instead of “indoors and neat (FedEx deliverer vs. receptionist)”; to choose jobs “where ‘you cannot psychologically check out’ at 5 p.m. (corporate attorney vs. librarian)”, or in fields with “lower fulfillment (engineer vs. childcare professional)” which tend to have a “higher pay”. The encouragements continue with “Choose fields with higher financial and emotional risks (venture capitalist vs. supermarket cashier),” work “the worst shifts during the worst hours (private practice medical doctor vs. HMO medical doctor,” work “in ‘unpleasant environments’ (prison guard vs. restaurant hostess),” choose “Updating pays (sales engineer vs. French language scholar),” “Choose your specialty’s more lucrative subfields “(surgeon vs. psychiatrist),” “Work more hours,” “Have more years of experience” or “years of recent uninterrupted experience with one company;” “Work more weeks during the year,” be “absent less often from work,” “Commute to jobs that are farther away,” “Relocate, especially to undesirable locations at the company’s behest,” “Travel extensively on the job,” “Take on different responsibilities and bring in business,” “Take on bigger responsibilities,” “Require less security,” get “more relevant training,” “Have higher career goals, to begin with,” “Do more in-depth job searches,” etc. All of them choices that make you earn more money. Even capitalize on gender equality policies and “Get hazard pay without the

hazards (female administrator in the Air Force vs. male combat soldier in the Army).” And “Above all, produce more.” (Farrell, 2005, summarized and cited by Zecovic, 2017). Zecovic (2017) selects a few quotes from the book. These two are among them: “It seems like a simpler solution to blame men for the pay gap than to engineer your own bridge to higher pay,” and “When you follow your bliss, it’s the money you’ll miss.” (Farrell, 2005, as cited by Zecovic, 2017).

Hakim (2006) says that her own book (Hakim, 2004) is a “less polemical review” (Hakim, 2006) of the same kind of research literature covered by Farrell (2005). Hakim’s (2004) abstract reads that the “analysis draws on sociology, economics, psychology, labour law, history and social anthropology.” She “tests” and “considers” many factors, including all the typical related feminist theories like “the patriarchy theory,” “Sex discrimination,” “the pay gap, the glass ceiling, and the impact of European Union policies.” Less ideological factors are, for instance, “work-life balance, part-time work, flexible hours, homeworking, career patterns across the life cycle, labour mobility, labour turnover, the returns to education,” and “occupational segregation.” She analyzes “historical developments over the twentieth century, based on censuses,” and “case studies of people working in occupations undergoing dramatic change.” She draws comparisons “between the USA, Britain, other European countries, Canada, Australia, and also China, Japan and other Far Eastern societies.” The conclusion of all this work covered in the book’s 280 pages is this: “the diversity of women's life goals and lifestyle preferences is increasing” and “This explains the growing polarization of women's employment and many contradictory recent research results.” So, again, job disparities are mainly a consequence of women’s and men’s opportunities and free will.

4. Gender-based violence

According to Google's first result *What Is Gender-Based Violence?* (2023), "Gender-based violence is a phenomenon deeply rooted in gender inequality" that "continues to be one of the most notable human rights violations within all societies." It refers to "violence directed against a person because of their gender. Both women and men experience gender-based violence but the majority of victims are women and girls" (What Is Gender-Based Violence?, 2023). Perhaps the most radical take on *gender-based violence* is the definition of "violencia de género" – "gender violence" – which is "aquella que se ejerce sobre las mujeres por parte de quienes estén o hayan estado ligados a ellas por relaciones de afectividad (parejas o ex-parejas)" – meaning "that which is exercised over women by those who are or have been linked to them by affective relationships (partners or ex-partners)" (*Definición de Violencia de Género*, 2016).

The first definition suggests that intersexual violence is majorly men on women. The second can easily be understood as completely denying the possibility of violence by women on men. Both definitions convey what I understand to be the typical interpretations of the concept and of the reality on the matter – arguably the first, less radical, being more common globally. This section explores scientific literature and individual experiences that contrast with these beliefs.

Erin Pizzey considered herself a feminist during the second wave (Erin Pizzey, 2023). She "is known for having started the first and currently the largest domestic violence shelter in the modern world," a shelter visited in 1972 by "U.S. feminists, who set up similar ventures in the United States" (Erin Pizzey, 2023).

Erin received "bomb threats and boycotts" from "militant feminists" because "her experience and research" concludes "that most domestic violence is reciprocal, and that

women are equally as capable of violence as men.” (Erin Pizzey, 2023). Lewis (2020) says, in *The Atlantic*, that Pizzey did “fall out with feminism” because “She thought that the mainstream women’s movement treated men as the enemy, that women’s own capacity for violence was being understated, and that in dysfunctional relationships, both sides drive a vicious cycle that leads to ‘addiction to violence.’” (Lewis, 2020).

Similarly, Stockley & Campbell (2013) – an interdisciplinary study – concludes that “female aggression takes diverse forms” that usually favor “relatively low-risk competitive strategies” most likely “due to constraints of offspring production and care”; and that, accordingly, “indirect aggression is a low cost but effective form of competition among young women.” Reynolds et al. (2018) offer a more concrete example of that – confined in their study in the field of romantic competition – concluding that women lean towards gossip and reputation destruction, and that they confirm that it works at socially harming the target (Reynolds et al., 2018). Bonnie Marcus (2016), in an article for *Forbes*, reports an aligning finding on “Female Rivalry In The Workplace”. She reports a pattern of female bosses being manipulative and indirectly aggressive with their female employees. She explains a case in this way: “Her boss will chastise her, belittle her, and unjustly accuse her of committing some horrific mistakes. And she does this in public. Cara is beside herself with anger and frustration. She fears her reputation will suffer” (Marcus, 2016). Perhaps reputation destruction may explain a lot about cancel culture – a recent way to refer to vicious and personally-damaging censorship – and about the polarization in the traditional media, social media and politics.

Getting back to the studies on intersexual violence, Whitaker et al. (2007) analyzes data on “18761 heterosexual relationships” and concludes that “In nonreciprocally violent relationships, women were the perpetrators in more than 70% of

the cases”, which means that women are the violent partner in the majority of heterosexual relationships where only one partner is violent. Cross et al.’s (2011) study concludes that “Men’s greater use of direct aggression is not evident in studies of intimate partner aggression,” that “men lower their aggression in the context of an intimate partnership and that this is an effect of the target’s sex”; in contrast, “women raise their aggression in the context of an intimate partnership and this is an effect of intimacy with the target” (Cross et al., 2011). This means that men lower their aggression towards their partner because they avoid being physically violent towards women, while women allow themselves to be more aggressive with a man with whom they are involved. A possible rephrasing or expansion of this, more in the style of evolutionary psychology, could be the following: Men and women tend to disfavor physical violence on women as they are the potential bearers of the next generation of the species; and this is logically amplified in the context of intersexual relationships when the woman is the potential bearer of the direct offspring of both – then women may capitalize on this, consciously or unconsciously. Anne Campbell’s (2013) conclusions align with this reading when she says that “From an evolutionary perspective, I argue that the intensity of female aggression is constrained by the greater centrality of mothers, rather than fathers, to offspring survival” (Campbell, 2013), or when she and Stockley say that women favor low-risk form of violence “due to constraints of offspring production and care” (Stockley & Campbell, 2013).

Curiously, the husband’s version of the facts surrounding the following case align with these tendencies described. Betty Friedan is the author of the feminist classic *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963. According to Altabe (2005), Betty accused her ex-husband of hitting her, and he started a campaign, not to criticize Betty, who he

describes as “‘brilliant’ but ‘ugly’”, but to clean his name of the “false statements about beatings she suffered at his hands” (Altabe, 2005). Altabe (2005) explains that “He conceded being violent with her, saying he was forced into it by her bad temper,” that “He contends it was her violence that prompted” it, and that he “never initiated violence with her, never.” This is a particular case, and, based on this, its one person’s word against another’s. Still, his description aligns with the broad findings described before. A case apart would be that of the early feminist author Héra Mirtel, who killed her second husband and was suspected of killing her first one, as mentioned further in this paper.

In alignment with the famous quote “Everything is about sex except sex, which is about aggression” (Quote Investigator, 2018) – often attributed, perhaps wrongly, to Oscar Wilde with the word *power* instead of *agression* (Quote Investigator, 2018) – sexual reproduction and violence seem to have deep connections. Anne Campbell (2013) links women’s aggression, including physical aggression, with the availability of “men and their resources” and women’s age. Peters et al. (2002) – a study on 3,969 cases of male-perpetrated partner-abuse from a “single police precinct in a large urban area over a 14-year period” – partially confirms the hypothesis that one of the goals of “male-perpetrated domestic violence” is the “control” of “female sexuality, including the deterrence of infidelity,” concluding that “younger, reproductive age women incur nearly 10 times the risk of domestic violence as do older, post-reproductive age women” and that this is not “attributable solely to mateship to younger, more violent men” (Peters et al., 2002). Goetz et al. (2008) confirms the part about infidelity, concluding that “paternity uncertainty plays a central role in intimate partner violence” that may “deter female sexual infidelity” and “function as an anti-cuckoldry tactic, with its occurrence related to suspicion of female sexual infidelity” (Goetz et al., 2008).

In sum, all of this section has evidence contrasting with the common understanding of gender-based violence, and it supports the idea of a complex reality where every sex is more or less violent in different contexts, for different reasons and in different ways; something that could be phrased as: violence has no gender exclusivity, but it has gendered styles.

5. The Patriarchy

According to Harper (2020), as covered in Online Etymology Dictionary, the first recorded usage of the word *patriarchy* dates back to the 16th century and it means "ecclesiastical province under a patriarch; church government by patriarchs". The first recorded usage with the current non-ideological meaning of "system of society or government by fathers or elder males of the community" is from 1630s (Harper, 2020). According to Valentine (2020), "The etymology, or history, of the word patriarchy begins in Greek and extends through Latin before landing in English", and it comes "From Latin *patriarchia*, from Byzantine Greek *πατριαρχία* (*patriarkhía*), from Koine Greek *πατριάρχης* (*patriárkhēs*, "patriarch"), from Ancient Greek *πατρία* (*patría*) and *ἄρχω* (*árkhō*)." According to O'Reilly (2010) *patriarchy* means *rule of fathers*, but the more commonly attributed literal meaning seems to be *rule of the father* (Guy-Evans, 2023; Folbre, 2023; Sultana, 2012; Adams, 2005).

Mesopotamia, from around five thousand years ago, is the first known civilization (Kennedy, 2022). It is interesting that the feminist author Renee Gerlich acknowledges that "the origins of patriarchy in the West are generally traced to Mesopotamia" (Gerlich, 2018). She says that "before Sumer was patriarchal, it was matrilineal" (Gerlich, 2018); but matrilineality does not negate patriarchy, and patriarchy is not only patrilineality. So

she, adhering to basic principles of truthfulness, cannot say that there ever was a matriarchal society, because, as Encyclopaedia Britannica's *Matriarchy* entry (2022, December 16) summarizes, there have been popular theories arguing that societies were matriarchal before being patriarchal but they are "now discredited," and the "consensus among modern anthropologists and sociologists" is that matriarchal societies "have never existed" (Britannica, 2022, December 16). Millet also knew this: the second chapter of her *Sexual Politics* reads "our society, like all other historical civilizations, is a patriarchy" (Millett, 1970). This means that criticizing *the patriarchy* can literally mean criticizing civilization itself.

One of the earliest defenses of the idea of ancient matriarchies comes from Johann Jakob Bachofen's book *Das Mutterrecht* (Bachofen, 1861). Interestingly and conveniently, this book was a major influence for Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (Fluehr-Lobban, 2016) – the fathers of Marxism and communism – and also for the early French feminist writer and activist Héra Mirtel, who imagined the utopic Herland, ruled by women in her novel *De la Patrie à la Matrie* (1920) – and who, curiously, killed her second husband and was suspected of killing her first one too, something that perhaps has some symbolical links with her possible repudiation of the *rule of the father*.

The names of Engels and Marks also appear many times in the two feminist iconic books I scanned as a test: *The second sex* (Beauvoir, 1949) and *Sexual Politics* (Millett, 1970). These influences and references establish early links between feminism, and Marxism and communism; links that clearly prevail today. Accordingly, the same two authors from these two books are included in the Marxist Internet Archive (Kate Millett Archive, 2017; Simone de Beauvoir Archive, 2023).

Within feminism, *patriarchy* has the same meaning of *social system ruled by men*, but with a negative connotation. As Hill & Allen (2021) explain, the name *patriarchy* is adopted and theorized as “the systematic oppression of women” by ideologues “in the 1960s-1980s” (Hill & Allen, 2021); more prominently, according to Soken-Huberty (2021), by “radical feminism,” one of the three kinds of feminism that emerged during the second wave from the 60s and the 70s – the other two being “mainstream/liberal” feminism, and “cultural feminism.” Radical feminism “wanted to reshape society entirely, saying that the system was inherently patriarchal and only an overhaul would bring liberation” (Soken-Huberty, 2021).

One of the most classic popular references supporting the feminist idea of *the patriarchy* is the book *Sexual Politics* by Kate Millett (Bindel, 2017), based on her doctoral dissertation – which interestingly begins “with a close reading of a scene of anal rape (Doherty, 2016). The book “developed the notion that men have institutionalized power over women, and that this power is socially constructed as opposed to biological or innate”; and it set “the foundation for a new approach to feminist thinking that became known as radical feminism” (Bindel, 2017). Beauvoir (1970) and many others had already proposed the Marxism-applied-to-gender idea of the oppression of women by men. As with *the social construction of gender*, the idea of *the patriarchy* is furtherly explored and perpetuated by many researchers, with popular examples being Gerda Lerner’s *The Creation of Patriarchy* (1986), Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (1970), Angela Davis’s *Women, Race & Class* (1983), Eleanor Leacock’s *Myths of Male Dominance* (1981), Gayle Rubin’s *The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex* (1975), and *Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality* (1984).

The famous feminist anthropologist Margaret Mead set a strong precedent in 1928 with her influential work *Coming of Age in Samoa* (Mead, 1928), a “work that laid the foundation for the sexual revolution of the 1960s” (Popova, 2014) and that was posthumously discredited by many other anthropologists, most famously by Dereck Freeman’s *Margaret Mead and Samoa: The Making and Unmaking of an Anthropological Myth* (1983). The description of Freeman’s work in the Australian National University’s website (Freeman, 2017) reads that Samoan adolescence is “far from the relaxed transition to adulthood that Mead ascribed to permissive childrearing and tolerant sexual attitudes” but “a time of frequent stress in an authoritarian society with punitive methods of childrearing and restrictive regulations against premarital sex” (Freeman, 2017). It also says that “Freeman's book thus corrects a towering scientific error” and that the “aim is not to blame Margaret Mead but to understand how her error could have occurred and become basic to the doctrine of cultural determinism” (Freeman, 2017). *Cultural determinism* is a key word here, that links Mead’s and feminist cultural anthropology’s ideas perfectly with social determinism and social constructivism, which are similar ideas if not broadly the same. In a related and more holistic tone, Freeman’s work also covers “painful but important generalizations about how the truth in Science can sometimes be obscured by theory and how theory can sometimes be twisted by ideology” (Freeman, 2017).

The following are example definitions of *the patriarchy*, and common related narratives and associations, coming from academic papers and articles: Strid & Hearn (2022) say that *the patriarchy* “can be conceptualized as a system or systems producing and reproducing gendered and intersectional inequalities, and men's power and women's subordination.” Monk (2001) writes that “early theorizing ... elaborated the concept of

patriarchy—social control by men originating in the authority of the father—as the source of women's oppression.” Nash (2020) says that the “Patriarchy is a system of relationships, beliefs, and values embedded in political, social, and economic systems that structure gender inequality between men and women” and that “Patriarchal relations structure both the private and public spheres, ensuring that men dominate both.” In *Male Dominance*, Sanday (2001) paraphrases Pateman (1988) saying that “Men now rule the public domain not as fathers but as men”; that “In the family context, women are subordinated first to their fathers and then to their husbands” and “In the context of public life they are subordinated to men” (Pateman, 1988, as paraphrased by Sanday, 2001). Strid & Hearn (2022) say that “the concept of patriarchy is necessary to understand violence,” and relates “patriarchy and violence”. Guy-Evans (2023) says, in the Simply Sociology website, that “patriarchy and sexism create a system in which women are oppressed both socially and economically”; that “Patriarchal ideology is the idea that men have more power, dominance, and privilege than women”; and that “Sexism, meanwhile, is prejudice or discrimination... typically directed against women and girls” that “manifests” in “forms of discrimination, such as denying women equal opportunities in education or employment” (Guy-Evans, 2023) and adds the example of women being “paid less than men for doing the same job” (Lerner, 1986, as paraphrased by Guy-Evans, 2023).

The Asian Pacific Institute on Gender Based Violence website says that “Power sets the agenda for patriarchy,” and that “Patriarchy is about the social relations of power between men and women,” and a “system for maintaining class, gender, racial, and heterosexual privilege and the status quo of power” that relies “both on crude forms of oppression, like violence; and subtle ones, like laws; to perpetuate inequality”; it also says

that “Patriarchal beliefs of male, heterosexual dominance and the devaluation of girls and women lie at the root of gender-based violence. Patriarchy is a structural force that influences power relations, whether they are abusive or not.”

Contrasting with these views, Pateman (1988) says that patriarchy theory comes from “contractarian theory” and that it is not possible to put it into a “progressive use”, adding that “feminists” who try to do it “are misleading themselves” (Pateman, 1988).

As covered in The Art and Popular Culture Encyclopedia (*The Inevitability of Patriarchy*, 2020), in 1973, Steven Goldberg publishes his book *The Inevitability of Patriarchy: Why the Biological Difference Between Men and Women Always Produces Male Domination*; a book with a quite self-explanatory title based on cross-societal evidence from anthropological research. Goldberg “refines” and reinforces his argument in 1993 with *Why Men Rule*, offering more evidence from different fields. Of course, the backlash against his work was strong. The example mentioned in the article of the critiques it received comes, unsurprisingly, from “Marxist anthropologist” Eleanor Leacock saying that Goldberg’s theories are “simplistic and irresponsible.” Another – arguably less partial – review covered in the same entry comes from sociologist Catherine Hakim (2004) who finds ““strengths and weaknesses”” in Goldberg’s theory and says that “Goldberg’s thesis has yet to be fully proven,” but that it “is the only theory that can explain some of the more inconvenient facts about women as well as men.” Hakim prefers, in general, her *preference theory* (2004), but I argue that both theories – whether on the basis of the biology of the sexes (Goldberg, 1973) or on women’s preference (Hakim, 2004) – broadly say the same: That the polarity and intersexual dynamics observed stem from human nature itself and not from cultural, social or political constructions isolated from it.

Covering the classical meaning of *patriarchy* – also included in the ideological take of *the patriarchy* – the same or similar different workplace choices by each sex that explain the wage gap and the prevalence of men in higher job positions can most likely also explain big part of the prevalence of men in positions of high power and authority – which usually are just job positions – and possibly men achieving high levels of success and recognition with their work.

Another related factor that may contribute to produce male authority is “the greater male variability hypothesis.” It is surrounded by controversy and many people have tried to debunk it, but when they have, other people debunked their supposed debunking. Examples of this are Kane & Mertz (2012) debunked by Arden & Hill (2021), and Harrison et al. (2021) being debunked by Marco Del Giudice & Gangestad (2022). The hypothesis, firstly observed by Darwin as “ubiquitous across the entire animal kingdom” (Cronin, 2023), describes a trend for the variation in skills and desirability within males to be bigger and more extreme than within females, who otherwise tend to cluster closer to the mean. This means that the extremes show a tendency to be male populated, for good and for bad – what Helena Cronin calls “More dumbbells but more Nobels” (Cronin, 2023). This could explain part of the prevalence of patriarchies, and at the same time part of the statistics like homelessness (*Share of Homeless*, 2022) and imprisonment (*Number of Prisoners*, 2021), among others, being predominantly male.

Another simple fact that links biology with patriarchy is Dreher et al. (2016) report that testosterone in men “causes both prosocial and antisocial status-enhancing behaviors” (Dreher et al., 2016).

The inclination by some women to prefer higher status men; often referred to as *hypergamy* (Whitney, 2021), could also be promoting patriarchy while at the same time

could explain men's higher tendency to focus on work, money and status explained in *the gender pay gap* section.

Here also, the nature of the sexes and their preferences can explain much of the complex reality beyond the tenet.

6. Limitations and further research

This study is immensely limited. It is done by a single person, with all the unchecked subjectivity and bias it could entail. It is done in a relatively short period of time and has a limited maximum number of pages.

I chose the four tenets covered to be the most essential ones and I thought that they can potentially include and explain other related tenets – or part of them. But perhaps more essential tenets could be thought of. Beyond this four, many other tenets could be covered.

Having mentioned bias, the premise taken of counterbalancing these tenets tint the whole work. Accordingly, the focus has been placed on the findings that contradict the tenets, which conditioned not only the kind of sources explored, but sometimes also the data selected from the sources. A better representation of the reality around this topic could be expressed in a more open and neutral context, which is what I originally intended to do but discarded mainly because of space and time limits.

In relation to the concept of *the patriarchy*, the study covers just a historical fact. History could be an interesting and rich field to explore further.

This paper barely comments on why these ideas are so prevalent and widespread; it barely covers the political aspects – in which I'm not particularly interested – the

psychology of ideologies or the parts of human nature that some ideologies can amplify, such as tribalism – us vs them – or villainization.

On a deeper level, this work does not cover archetypal psychology, which is the most abstract approach I can conceive and the one I originally intended to favor. Archetypal psychology – or *analytical psychology*, or *depth psychology* – is a holistic discipline which can link biology, psychology, instincts, feelings, politics, culture, mythology, and religion, among other aspects and manifestations of human nature and human behavior. I refer, mainly, to the work of Carl Jung and his followers and *influencees*, and more specifically to the concepts of *the collective unconscious*, the *anima* and the *animus*, and the archetypes of *the devouring mother* – or *terrible mother* – and the *puer aeternus* – or *eternal child*, or *the high chair tyrant*, or the related, but often more superficial, *peter pan syndrome*.

Finally, this paper does not cover the concept of *fatherlessness*, which can be deeply expressed within archetypal psychology, but can also be conveyed with the simplicity of readily available statistical data on the consequences of father absence.

The following section synthesizes this paper and presents the general conclusions I want to emphasize in a way that aligns with the wisdom contained in the following two quotes:

“Uncertainty is an uncomfortable position, but certainty is an absurd one” (A Quote by Voltaire, 2014).

“For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong” (A Quote by H.L. Mencken, 2014).

7. Conclusions

Radical understandings of the concepts of *the social construction of gender*, *the gender pay gap*, *gender-based violence*, and *the patriarchy* are wrong when they presume or carry the connotation that men clearly and unidirectionally oppress women. They are simplified ideological interpretations of an otherwise complex reality which seems to be profoundly shaped by the unfathomable richness of human nature, where each sex shapes or complements the other in multiple ways.

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