

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY

VIOLÊNCIA DE GÊNERO E MASCULINIDADE HEGEMÔNICA

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ABSTRACT: This article discusses the relationship between gender-based violence and hegemonic masculinity in contemporary society, focusing on the social transformations that shape male behavior. The objective is to understand how traditional masculinity—associated with the virile, powerful, and successful man—sustains violent practices. The investigation was based on the doctoral dissertation *Men in Motion: A Qualitative Study of Masculinity in Generation X and Generation Y* (2025), which identified unexpected issues concerning the traditional male figure, highlighting aspects relevant to understanding violence within the private sphere. A qualitative study was conducted with two focus groups, using the IRaMuTeQ software and thematic analysis. The results indicated the persistence of hegemonic masculinity among both Generation X and Generation Y, despite differences in behavioral patterns between these generations. It is concluded that gender-based violence remains linked to cultural structures of domination, coexisting with ongoing processes of transformation in male identities.

KEYWORDS: Gender-based violence. Hegemonic masculinity. Private sphere. Parenthood.

RESUMO: Este artigo discute a relação entre violência de gênero e masculinidade hegemônica na contemporaneidade, com foco nas transformações sociais que atravessam o comportamento masculino. O objetivo é compreender como a masculinidade tradicional, associada ao homem viril, potente e bem-sucedido, sustenta práticas violentas. A investigação se baseou na tese de doutorado *Homens em movimento: pesquisa qualitativa da masculinidade na geração X e geração Y* (2025), na qual foram identificadas questões inesperadas sobre o homem tradicional, aspectos relevantes para a compreensão da violência no espaço privado. Foi realizada pesquisa qualitativa com dois grupos focais, utilizando o software IRaMuTeQ e análise temática. Os resultados indicaram permanências da masculinidade hegemônica nas gerações X e Y, apesar de apresentarem diferenças de comportamento entre elas (gerações). Conclui-se que a violência de gênero permanece vinculada às estruturas culturais de dominação, coexistindo com processos de transformação identitária masculina.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Violência de gênero. Masculinidade hegemônica. Espaço privado. Parentalidade.

RESUMEN: Este artículo analiza la relación entre la violencia de género y la masculinidad hegemónica en la actualidad, centrándose en las transformaciones sociales que afectan el comportamiento masculino. El objetivo es comprender cómo la masculinidad tradicional, asociada al hombre viril, poderoso y exitoso, sustenta las prácticas violentas. La investigación se basó en la tesis de doctorado *Hombres en movimiento: investigación cualitativa sobre la masculinidad en la generación X y la generación Y* (2025), en la que se identificaron cuestiones inesperadas sobre el hombre tradicional, aspectos relevantes para comprender la violencia en el ámbito privado. Se llevó a cabo una investigación cualitativa con dos grupos focales, utilizando el software IRaMuTeQ y el análisis temático. Los resultados indicaron la persistencia de la masculinidad hegemónica en las generaciones X e Y, a pesar de que presentan diferencias de comportamiento entre ellas (las generaciones). Se concluye que la violencia de género sigue vinculada a las estructuras culturales de dominación, coexistiendo con procesos de transformación de la identidad masculina.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Violencia de género. Masculinidad hegemónica. Espacio privado. Paternidad.

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who, like the author, spent their childhood, adolescence, and even part of their adult life without the internet knows how different everything used to be. People communicated by phone, letter, and telegram. Research was conducted in books, encyclopedias, and dictionaries, and print newspapers and television were the main sources of news.

Education was traditional, and the roles of men and women were clearly distinct. The ideal family was structured as a descending hierarchy: father, mother, and children, in which the man was responsible for the public sphere and the woman for the private sphere. In most households, the man was expected to be the provider, and the woman, the caregiver—a complementary expression of these hierarchical domains. In fact, this nuclear family model—which emerged from the rise of the urban bourgeoisie in the 18th and 19th centuries—is just one expression of the human family; yet, despite other forms that have existed over time, they all share the common trait of the man's superior social position.

Since the 2nd or 3rd millennium B.C., various societies—India, China, Iran, Judea, and the Aztecs—have been characterized by patriarchy, a term used to describe a male-dominated social structure. Gender inequality around the world and in Brazil is sustained by a patriarchal culture that prioritizes the accumulation of wealth and the perpetuation of traditional values.

Thus, according to the *Michaelis* dictionary, the term “patriarchy” is defined as a social and political system in which authority and control are exercised predominantly by men. This definition reflects a social structure in which men occupy positions of power and leadership, while women are relegated to subordinate and dependent roles.

Patriarchy is characterized by a hierarchy that privileges the masculine and limits gender equality, influencing family, social, and institutional relationships. Those who grew up in such a family structure experienced the demands placed on women, who were subjected to a traditional upbringing in which the values were chastity, obedience, and good manners—in short, submission.

This reality led me to reflect on how a woman's life path seemed to be limited to getting married and having children, reflecting a narrow view of women's role in society; and so I went on to study, to understand what place I occupied in society, in the family, and within myself. My first degree was in Social Work (it had been my childhood dream to do social work), and from there it was a short step to earning a bachelor's degree in Psychology (I was doing psychotherapy). Continuing on my path of learning, I earned a degree in Gestalt Therapy from the Sedes Sapientiae Institute (SP), a degree in Couples and Family Therapy from the Pontifical

Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP), and then completed a master's degree on Machismo in 2019 at PUC-SP and a doctorate with the thesis *Homens em movimento: pesquisa qualitativa da masculinidade na geração X e na geração Y* in 2025, also at PUC-SP.

As a systemic family, couples, and individual therapist in my private practice since 1983 and as the director for the past 19 years of the non-governmental organization (NGO) Instituto Casa Yasmin, which serves vulnerable populations, I felt the need to seek knowledge because I, too, was experiencing, living through, and feeling all the consequences of the transformations of postmodernity. I agree with the view of Prof. Dr. Rosa M. S. Macedo (2009) that “the postmodern paradigmatic perspective acknowledges that reality is constructed by the observer as part of what is observed” (p. 69). It is thus understood that the role of the couples, family, and individual psychologist is of paramount importance today.

The psychotherapist acts as a facilitator for their client, guiding them toward an understanding of their conflicts and emotions, which are likely related to the beliefs and values of their family of origin. The psychotherapist is an attentive and empathetic guide who provides a space of respect, thereby enabling a compassionate understanding of the client's difficulties so that they can chart their path with greater clarity and understand what their role was and is within the family system, seeking to gain self-awareness through the repetitions of their family history so that, perhaps, they may ‘be’ a person who is freer with themselves.

To better understand this traditional man, it is necessary to observe the complexity of the transformations taking place in society, politics, the economy, the family, and gender issues—with the pandemic causing changes in the behavior of all of us as human beings, compounded by the economic crisis, political radicalization, and the growing and recent demands of women in protests against harassment, femicide, the many cases of rape and domestic violence reported by the media, it is evident that, even today, there are men who believe themselves to be superior and the owners of women, able to treat them as they see fit, with attitudes that reinforce sexist behavior—which, given women's new status, is considered regressive, prejudiced, and culturally unacceptable.

These developments have helped to challenge male supremacy, although these transformations are still ongoing and evident in the attitudes of hegemonic masculinity.

Continuing with the understanding of this man—who was raised to be strong, a provider, and virile—he finds himself alone, unsure of how to act or even identify what he feels in the face of women's demands and the social transformations that pressure him to change. In his

desperation over the loss of power, points of reference, and recognition, he may resort to violence as a misguided form of self-defense and survival.

According to the *Mapa da Segurança Pública 2024*, 17,009 suicides were recorded in Brazil in 2023, corresponding to 8.6 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants (Brasil, 2024). Approximately 78% of the cases recorded in the first half of the year involved men. These figures suggest that the rigidity of traditional masculinity—marked by the denial of vulnerability, self-care, and emotional expression—may be associated with psychological distress, illness, and male mortality.

What should be done with this man? He is expressing conflicts, insecurities, and fears. This is not about justifying violence, but about understanding it in all its complexity. We must help him understand himself and break free from the cultural trap of patriarchy, which legitimizes a hegemonic model of masculinity as the only possible, correct, and victorious one—and one that is impossible to achieve—and which is itself part of the cultural trap designed to maintain male power.

Given the above, the significance of this article lies in its ability to contribute, based on my study *Homens em movimento: pesquisa qualitativa da masculinidade na geração X e na geração Y* (Angelico, 2025), and to shed some light on the issue of hegemonic masculinity (the provider, virile, and successful man) and the possibility—even if it is just a small academic study—of initiating a shift in the cultural beliefs and values that so heavily burden men and demand of them an ‘impossible empowerment’ to achieve.

Regarding Generation X (ages 40 to 55), the father—who does not feel his masculinity is threatened by caring for his child—feels satisfied and generous, opening up to his emotions. Another important point to note is that men of Generation Y (ages 26 to 39) grapple with issues of hegemonic masculinity but are aware that they need to change, despite their traditional beliefs and values. They feel insecure around women, who are more confident and working, and they are the first generation to be financially poorer than their grandfathers and fathers, unsure whether they will have children or get married.

Both men and women are the product of a social construct that has endured for centuries and is changing very slowly, just like all beliefs, customs, and traditions that are very difficult to change.

HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY

“To be a man is to bear no resemblance to anything feminine” (Kimmel, 1996).

In Brazil, it has only been about a century since sexist ideology has been discussed and questioned. It is present in the economic, social, and political systems, in religions, in the media, in the educational system, and within the family unit. In this system, women are subjugated to men, denied the right to self-expression, or forced by a sexist society to serve the will of their husbands or fathers, characterizing a traditional patriarchal regime.

As Giddens (1991) points out, postmodern machismo is a new phenomenon that feeds on the old patriarchal culture and reaffirms it through the vices and compulsions of post-traditional society. It manifests itself in exhibitionism, boastfulness, the pleasure of domination, and the imposition of cruelty for its own sake, corrupting values associated with individualism as a universal principle, social responsibility, and civic solidarity. This hierarchical structure, in which the masculine occupies a position superior to the feminine, translates into a sexist ideology that has been present in society for millennia.

The assertion that “a man is only a man at certain moments, while a woman is a woman throughout her life, at least throughout her youth” (Badinter, 1993, p. 3) supports the argument that the imperative ‘be a man’ is not as self-evident as it seems and that masculinity is not as natural as we are led to believe. Being born a boy is not enough: being a man involves a constant effort to prove one’s worth. In contrast, women do not need to continually prove that they are women. According to the author, people act as if femininity were natural, while masculinity must be earned, often at a high cost. Men themselves and those around them show so little confidence in their sexual identity that they frequently demand proof of their masculinity.

When addressing the concept of machismo, it is important to distinguish it from hegemonic masculinity. While machismo corresponds to a system of beliefs, values, and practices that sustains gender inequality between men and women, hegemonic masculinity refers to the dominant cultural model of what it means to be a ‘real man,’ influencing behaviors and social expectations. According to Badinter (1993), this standard is, to a large extent, unattainable: although many men strive to approach this ideal, ambiguities and contradictions persist in their daily lives, given the multiple demands imposed by this model of masculinity.

According to Connell (1995):

Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as a gender practice that embodies the accepted response to the problem of patriarchy's legitimacy, which guarantees (or seeks to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (Cornell, 1995, p. 77)

This concept shows us that hegemonic masculinity does not have a fixed standard, as it is underpinned by social structures and norms that change over time and across different places, and that have gender discrimination as a fundamental aspect of domination.

This *way of being a man*—which reproduces and legitimizes sexist oppression—is a form of masculinity that has been gradually questioned and deconstructed. Gender-based violence extends to any situation in which a sexual difference is used to justify gender inequality.

Building on the above, Angelico (2019) notes that:

... men face a difficult position in society, due to how they were raised, how they are perceived, how they are held accountable, and what is expected of them. The cultural processes, values, and beliefs of patriarchy are deeply ingrained in the attitudes of both Brazilian men and women. Macho ideology is present in society, particularly in relation to work and sexuality, where men define themselves through their masculinity. (Angelico, 2019, p. 67)

Broadening his perspective on masculinities, Maciel Jr. (2013) notes:

the main objective of critical studies on men today is to understand how masculinities are constructed, produced, and reproduced, assuming that they are varied and changeable over time (history) and space (culture), within the same society, throughout the life cycle and individual biography. (Maciel Jr., 2013, pp. 50–51)

Changes in gender relations have led to a reexamination of privileges and traditional models of masculinity. In this context, debates about male identity point to a crisis in contemporary masculinity, marked by the need to redefine male identities and roles.

THE CRISIS OF MASCULINITY

According to Ramos (2000), a discussion about the *crisis of masculinity* emerged in the 1980s in the U.S. and in the late 1990s in Brazil. But what kind of crisis is this? According to the author, drawing on Trevisan (2021), masculinity is not in crisis, since it is, in and of itself,

a gender that exists in a state of permanent and endemic crisis within patriarchal society. In this sense, masculinity is not a given but something that is constantly sought after. For the author, the achievements of feminism did not cause the crisis; they merely made it more visible (Ramos, 2000).

According to Alvim and Souza (2004), the new psychology of men emerged belatedly in the face of urgent problems, as men were heavily represented in various situations of social and behavioral vulnerability, such as substance abuse, homelessness, violence, estrangement from their children, deaths by homicide, suicide, accidents, and stress-related illnesses. The authors further assert that the delay in addressing these issues has contributed to a current crisis in the relationship between men and women (Alvim & Souza, 2004).

A survey titled HeForShe, conducted by UN Women (2016), revealed that 95% of women and 81% of men surveyed agree that Brazilian men are sexist. The study also points out that stereotypes associated with masculinity create difficulties for men themselves: 66.5% said they do not talk to friends about their fears and feelings; 45% would prefer not to feel obligated to be financially responsible for their families; and 45.5% would like to express themselves in a less harsh or aggressive manner but do not know how. From this perspective, it also does not seem easy to deal with the image of the ‘tough hero’ and the ideal of virility, which demands constant displays of strength, power, and the ability to provide. More recent data from the same initiative show that 56.5% of men would like to maintain closer and more affectionate relationships with their friends, while 54% would like to have greater freedom to explore unusual hobbies without being judged (UN Women, 2016, 2021).

But, as Bourdieu (2010) points out, male privilege is also a trap:

and finds its counterpart in the constant tension and restraint—sometimes taken to the point of absurdity—that imposes on every man the duty to assert his masculinity in any and all circumstances. (Bourdieu, 2010, p. 64)

For him, the family plays the primary role in reproducing domination and the masculine worldview, since it is within the family that the experience of the sexual division of labor—and the legitimate representation of that division—is imposed from a very early age.

Trevisan (2021) notes that the ‘disintegration’ of the masculine is linked to historical transformations that have begun to make it impossible to sustain the myth. Continuing his line of thought, he says:

today, masculinity is undergoing challenges and transformations on a global scale. Its myths are proving to be extremely fragile, victimized by the very “illusion of masculinity” that patriarchal society has painstakingly created to construct the “true man”. (Trevisan, 2021, p. 21)

According to the author, “hate groups that launch attacks on feminism on social media and the rise in cases of rape and femicide worldwide can be seen as symptoms of an ongoing crisis” (Trevisan, 2021, p. 29).

What we observe in the statements of the authors of this article is how the established standard for hegemonic masculinity is practically impossible to achieve, leading to conflicts, ambiguities, and suffering for men.

Although the origins of patriarchy are lost in time, to this day, the patriarchal system is viewed as a model to be followed, guiding all economic, social, and political life, including the Church and the State.

According to Souza and Ramires (2006), beginning in the 1970s, social, economic, political, and technological transformations—such as the women’s and minority rights movements, women’s entry into the labor market, the spread of the media, the birth control pill, the legalization of divorce, and the shift toward a service-based economy—began to challenge and soften the traditional role of men, leading to significant changes in both their public roles and their private lives.

Since the mid-20th century, with or without a crisis, the public image of masculinity has been ambivalent, and men have come under scrutiny, perhaps less in the public sphere than in the private one. Clinical practice and a myriad of studies on family and marital relationships indicate that it is in the domestic sphere—the division of household chores, the demand for marital and sexual satisfaction within marriage—and in participation in the care of children that the greatest demands for, so to speak, behavioral change are identified. The extent to which this generates a crisis of masculinity (or masculinities) as a social construct differs from what occurs in the day-to-day life of the family, particularly when it comes to intimate relationships—which is what we are interested in understanding in depth.

Contemporary transformations have led to shifts in male identity. According to Bauman (2001), liquid modernity is marked by the instability of traditional reference points, which can lead many men to experience the loss of domestic and economic authority as an identity crisis. In this scenario, violence tends to function as an attempt at the symbolic restoration of male power. Kimmel (1996) emphasizes that the crisis does not stem from men themselves, but from

the very ‘recipe for masculinity,’ which also underpins the oppression of women and minorities. In this context, a discussion arises regarding gender-based violence and the behavior of traditional men in contemporary society.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Violence is understood as a public health problem and can be defined, according to Minayo and Souza (1997), as any intentional act perpetrated by individuals, groups, institutions, classes, or nations against other people, causing harm and physical, social, psychological, and/or spiritual damage.

Violence associated with hegemonic masculinity can be understood as an unconscious defensive response to the fear of losing individuality, historically linked to the role of provider and to the construction of a sexuality centered on so-called ‘phallogentric power.’

When we talk about male violence, the focus is on gender-based violence. This concept is broader than the notion of violence against women, as it also encompasses children, adolescents, and subaltern masculinities, which, according to Connell (1995a), refer to men who do not conform to the standards of hegemonic masculinity.

According to the Rio Grande do Sul Public Defender’s Office (2022), gender-based violence encompasses any form of physical, psychological, sexual, or symbolic aggression motivated by gender identity or sexual orientation. Historically, women have been among the primary victims of this type of violence, according to the Public Defender’s Office, due to the unequal power relations that structure society. Data from the *Atlas da Violência 2026* highlight this asymmetry by showing that, while men constitute the majority of victims of homicides and deaths from external causes, women account for the highest rates of domestic violence and femicide, demonstrating that gender-based violence operates through distinct yet interrelated dynamics (Cerqueira & Bueno, 2026).

In this context, male violence can be understood as a social and historical phenomenon associated with patriarchy, gender socialization processes, and the consolidation of hegemonic masculinity. More than just individual behavior, it constitutes a learned social practice that is often legitimized as a form of identity affirmation, based on ideals of power, strength, and virility. Thus, violence should not be understood as inherent to men, but as a culturally constructed mechanism whose effects impact both direct victims and the very social image of masculinity in contemporary society.

According to Bourdieu (2010), so-called symbolic violence constitutes a social practice through which power relations shape behaviors and identities. Meanwhile, the systemic family therapist Bowen (2004) asserts that gender-based violence is associated with family patterns that span generations and can be transmitted as relational models within the family system.

In the clinical practice of family therapy, this argument typically means that violence is viewed as a learned relational pattern; it can be unlearned and transformed; the therapeutic focus includes communication, emotional regulation, beliefs about masculinity, and intergenerational family dynamics. In other words, therapy does not view male violence as ‘human nature,’ but rather as behavior constructed within specific social and family contexts.

Furthermore, violence perpetrated by men constitutes a serious social and public health problem in Brazil, as we can see from data in the *Atlas da Violência 2024*, which indicate that more than 90% of intentional violent deaths in the country victimize men, and the majority of perpetrators are also male (Cerqueira & Bueno, 2024). In the context of domestic violence, men predominantly act as perpetrators, especially in marital and family relationships.

Data from the *Mapa da Violência 2025: Homicídio de mulheres no Brasil* indicate that Brazil ranks fifth worldwide in femicides, highlighting the persistence of conservative and patriarchal social structures (Waiselfisz, 2015). Furthermore, the country has the highest rates of murders of transgender and gender-diverse people. According to data from Transgender Europe (TGEU), cited by Nogueira (2024), this violence is associated with a patriarchal logic that privileges hegemonic models of masculinity and marginalizes those who do not conform to heteronormative expectations².

In Brazil, men are predominantly the perpetrators (domestic violence, family violence, rape) and victims of violence, including lethal incidents (firearms, robberies, homicides), accidents (car accidents, fights), and risky health behaviors. Male socialization remains strongly marked by emotional repression and a glorification of risk. Men are less likely to seek health services, take fewer preventive measures, and are more resistant to seeking care—all of which are directly linked to cultural patterns of masculinity (Brasil, n.d.).

From a theoretical perspective, authors such as R. W. Connell (1995b) and Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) demonstrate that hegemonic masculinity is organized around attributes

² Heteronormativity (from the Greek *hetero*, ‘different’, and *norma*, ‘rule’ in Latin) is the norm, the standard, or what is considered normal in a society in which a person is heterosexual—that is, feels attraction to the opposite gender. It is a term used to describe situations in which sexual orientations other than heterosexuality are marginalized, ignored, or persecuted by social practices, beliefs, or policies. This includes the idea that human beings fall into two distinct and complementary categories: male and female; and that sexual and marital relationships are normal only between people of different sexes.

such as power, control, virility, rationality, and domination, often sustained by the denial of vulnerability and emotional repression. In this model, violence—whether symbolic, psychological, or physical—emerges as a legitimate means of maintaining male authority, especially when men perceive threats to their position of power, whether in the private sphere (family, romantic relationships) or in the public sphere (work, social status).

Kimmel (2013) argues that a significant portion of male violence is associated with experiences of fear and the perception of failing to meet culturally established standards of ‘being a man.’ In this context, violence functions as a mechanism for reaffirming identity in the face of frustration, loss of status, and tension arising from contemporary social transformations, such as the advancement of women’s rights, the pluralization of gender identities, and the reconfiguration of family relationships. The author refers to this process as ‘threatened masculinity’ and highlights that feelings of humiliation, failure, or symbolic impotence can trigger violent responses as an attempt to restore wounded masculinity (Kimmel, 2013). These reactions may be directed at others—women, children, and men in subordinate positions—or turned against oneself, manifesting in self-destructive behaviors such as substance abuse, involvement in fights, and suicide.

Violence as a structural component of hegemonic masculinity

According to Connell (1995b), hegemonic masculinity is based on a normative model of dominance, virility, and power, in both the public and private spheres. In this context, violence functions not as a deviation, but as a regulatory mechanism and a legitimized means of maintaining women’s subordination, establishing hierarchies among men themselves, and reaffirming authority whenever it is perceived as threatened.

Violence as an emotional language

As evidenced by the documentary *O silêncio dos homens*³ (Papo de Homem, 2019)—based on a project that interviewed more than 40,000 people,—hegemonic masculinity often relies on the denial and ridicule of attributes associated with femininity, such as emotional intelligence and care.

³ This film is part of a project that surveyed more than 40,000 people on the topic of masculinities. In addition to the documentary, this study also resulted in a resource book containing public data, produced through a partnership with the Social Information Consortium (CIS) at the University of São Paulo (Papo de Homem, 2019).

In the face of this repression, contemporary studies indicate that violence acts as an impoverished form of emotional communication. Deprived of an adequate symbolic repertoire to express fears, frustrations, and psychological suffering, many men convert pain into anger, transform vulnerability into aggression, and use physical force as a means of expression. Aggression, therefore, emerges as a direct symptom of the emotional denial socially imposed on men.

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE FOR MASCULINITY

Physical and mental health issues among men

The consequences of the violent hegemonic model are reflected, first and foremost, in men's physical and mental health issues. Data from the Ministry of Health indicate a higher incidence of risky behaviors among the male population, resulting in high rates of alcohol abuse and higher mortality from external causes, such as accidents and homicides (Brasil, n.d.). Suicide, which disproportionately affects the male population—accounting for about 8 out of every 10 cases recorded in the country—drastically highlights the self-destructive nature of this pattern.

This dynamic is exacerbated by emotional repression and the difficulty in seeking help, generating what Courtenay (2000) defines as 'male violence against oneself,' characterized by isolation, silent suffering, and low adherence to health care. Paradoxically, this masculinity sustained by aggression proves to be fragile and dependent on the submission of others, since, as Connell and Messerschmidt (2013) point out, the more rigid the gender model, the greater its instability and vulnerability in the face of social change.

Social and intergenerational impacts

Male violence undermines family bonds, affects child development, and perpetuates cycles of gender inequality. It is, therefore, a phenomenon that extends beyond the individual and constitutes a collective and structural issue. It is neither natural nor inevitable, but rather the result of historical socialization processes that associate masculinity with power, control, and the denial of vulnerability. In Brazil, official data from the *Mapa da Violência* show that these models impose a high social, human, and economic cost, affecting men themselves in particular.

Addressing male violence requires intersectoral public policies, gender-sensitive clinical practices, and educational initiatives that promote plural, caring, and emotionally responsible masculinities. Investing in the transformation of masculinities is a central strategy for reducing violence and promoting public health.

As a result, the social image of the violent man comes to be associated with risk, threat, and an inability to cope with frustrations in a constructive manner. This negative image affects not only those who commit direct violence but also, in a diffuse way, men as a social category, generating mistrust, surveillance, and, in some cases, stigmatization.

Paradoxically, it also reveals a subjective impasse: many men continue to be socialized to emotional hardness, psychological silence, and the resolution of conflicts through force, while at the same time being expected to adopt empathetic, dialogical, and nonviolent attitudes. Without adequate symbolic and institutional spaces to reshape their identity, some of these men respond with resistance, resentment, or an escalation of violence—including against themselves, through self-destructive behaviors, substance abuse, and suicide.

Another key aspect of this understanding is the public man and the man in the private sphere—the subject of our study—who, with women working outside the home, has been expected to take on the role of caring for children, handling household chores, and making the necessary changes.

PUBLIC MAN AND PRIVATE MAN

When we speak of the public figure, we are speaking of hierarchy, power, prestige, and inequality—phenomena that persist to this day, where these figures remain in a stable position despite the challenges and the impact of the internet, websites, and the digital world, which criticize and address their role in society—such as cases of harassment, violence, and hate groups targeting women, among others.

In the public sphere, men can still maintain their hegemonic performance; in the private sphere, they reveal aspects of subjectivity that the public sphere allows them to conceal: emotional fragility, emotional dependence, sexual insecurity, and fear of abandonment.

As Michael Kimmel (1996) argues, traditional masculinity is constructed as a performance in the presence of other men. In the domestic sphere, however, this performance gives way to intimacy—and it is precisely there that the hegemonic ideal can be undermined.

In the private sphere, this man faces demands for emotional dialogue, the exposure of vulnerabilities, expectations of shared household responsibilities, and challenges to his authority.

This contrast gives rise to a phenomenon we might call ambivalence: a powerful public self and an insecure private self. It is this insecure private self that we will address later on.

CONTEMPORARY FATHERHOOD

To understand men in their private lives, it is necessary to place them within the context of the domestic sphere. A man becomes a father when a child is born, but the experience of fatherhood goes beyond the biological reality. In recent decades, fatherhood has undergone significant changes. Traditionally, the father was seen as someone relatively detached from family dynamics, whose presence was associated primarily with compliance with social norms and the role of provider. Changes in family structures and the demands of contemporary society have called for a new model of fatherhood, in which the father assumes a closer, more participatory, and jointly responsible role in family relationships (Rodrigues & Gonçalves, 2011).

In families organized according to the traditional logic of provider-caregiver complementarity, fatherhood was exercised predominantly through indirect care—represented by financial support and authority—while motherhood was associated with the direct care of children.

The concept of parenthood emerges with the arrival of children and involves the processes of child-rearing, education, and socialization. This role requires parents to have the skills to nurture, guide, protect, and adapt to the different stages of child development (Minuchin, 1982). The birth of a child brings about a significant transformation in the family structure, requiring adjustments in the marital system to meet new parental demands. Initially, the parental subsystem organizes itself to meet the child's basic needs, such as care and feeding; later, it expands to include functions related to guidance, education, and socialization.

This process requires a constant renegotiation of boundaries between spouses, the extended family, and other external influences (Lamela et al., 2010; Minuchin, 1982). Throughout a child's development, the parental subsystem must continually adapt to new demands without losing the mutual support characteristic of the marital relationship. Parental roles become progressively more complex as the child grows (Frizzo et al., 2005).

It is important to note that family routines and the division of child-rearing responsibilities constitute not only a recurring source of marital conflict but also a factor associated with a decline in marital satisfaction (Bogdan et al., 2022). This finding highlights how the normalization of women's responsibility for caregiving still represents a significant source of tension in domestic life.

In this sense, it is essential to understand that the prevailing conception of masculinity in each historical period provides the framework for the exercise of fatherhood. Masculinity and fatherhood have maintained a relationship of mutual influence throughout history. While in the past the father figure was equated with the role of provider, today fathers are also expected to perform caregiving roles and demonstrate emotional involvement (Souza, 1994).

Studies by Faria (2003), Fender (2016), and Machado (2021) reinforce this perspective by demonstrating that paternal involvement tends to produce positive and satisfying experiences for men. However, other authors, such as Cervený and Chaves (2010), note that the stereotype of the father as the family's financial provider and the mother as its emotional provider still persists, even when both parents work full-time jobs with equivalent work hours.

Faria (2003), in a qualitative study of groups of fathers, analyzed the conflicts experienced in the journey of fatherhood, their characteristics, and the paths of transformation forged by the participants. The study demonstrated that these conflicts are related to tensions between patriarchal and post-patriarchal models of masculinity and parenthood.

According to the author, there is often a disconnect between the conscious conception of what it means to be a contemporary man and father and the unconscious content associated with masculine archetypes present in culture, which still value the figure of the provider, heroic, and conquering man (Faria, 2003). This tension helps explain many of the challenges men face in developing new ways of exercising fatherhood today.

In fact, Del Priore (2013) emphasizes that the concept of fatherhood has taken on new forms in recent decades—shifting from oppressor to friend—and continues:

today, parents do not play—or do not wish to play—a purely authoritarian role ... The father's role, on the contrary, is to facilitate the child's development, from his biological reality as a small living being to his maturity and social integration. Preferably with responsibility and affection. Even his economic role has diminished, thanks to women's work and the mother's income. (Del Priore, 2013, p. 182)

This impact of transformation and social change has led men/fathers to reflect on their role in contemporary society, moving away from the imposition of power and masculinity to fulfill their role as fathers in a horizontal relationship with their wives and with greater equity in domestic, educational, and social responsibilities.

All of this aligns with the original aspirations of the feminist movement, which, according to sociologist Michael Kimmel (1996), expects men to be ethical, emotionally present, and accountable for their values in their interactions with women, as well as with other men; in other words, directly or indirectly, feminism promotes contemporary masculinity.

In light of these changes, we can say that new forms of masculinity may be emerging in the private sphere: caring masculinities; egalitarian masculinities; and models based on vulnerability and dialogue.

The tension between these emerging models and the traditional model of the father—who is more rigid, distant, and authoritarian—characterizes the contemporary landscape of fatherhood. In this context, violence can be understood both as a form of resistance to change and as a symptom of the ongoing transitions.

Based on this understanding, we will present the author's doctoral dissertation with the aim of deepening the analysis of the conflicts and social markers that influence the behavior of contemporary men. Among these factors, the following stand out: economic crises, greater female independence, diversity in gender and family structures, the transition from a production-centered economy to a service-oriented one, as well as the growing influence of the media, the internet, and other sociocultural transformations that have led men to rethink their identity, their roles, and their relationships.

MEN ON THE MOVE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF MASCULINITY AMONG GENERATION X AND GENERATION Y

The objective of this study was to identify how cisgender heterosexual men belonging to Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979) and Generation Y (born between 1980 and 1994), in their private lives, are processing their emotional issues within the home, in their relationships with their partners, in their roles as fathers, and in their daily lives, in the face of the generational changes taking place in the digital world, in society, at work, within the family, and in interpersonal relationships.

To foster this understanding, insights will be presented that broaden the perspective on the topic based on the concepts of masculinities, gender, sexuality, fatherhood, and generational

changes. The aim is to identify potential challenges and struggles present in the private lives of these generations, as well as to understand whether there are generational differences related to male behavior and gender constructions.

The qualitative research was conducted using focus groups, a method characterized by group interviews. After transcribing the collected data, a textual analysis was performed using the IRaMuTeQ software. The results pertaining to Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979) and Generation Y (born between 1980 and 1994) were initially analyzed and presented separately. Next, themes corresponding to each identified group were identified, enabling the analysis to be carried out and the final results to be obtained.

To complement the analysis of Generations X and Y in Brazil, research was conducted on the major political, economic, and social events that occurred between 1965 and 1994, as well as on the lifestyles, behaviors, and cultural transformations that marked this historical period.

Another important aspect of this study relates to the fact that, with the arrival of the 21st century, the concept of generations in sociology began to be reexamined from a new perspective. In addition to differences in social class, gender, ethnic-racial, and cultural inequalities began to be taken into account. In this context, it is essential to revisit the trajectories of past generations to understand the collective initiatives of current generations and the challenges they face.

Based on this set of theoretical frameworks, historical data, and empirical findings, the results and discussion pertaining to each generation studied will be presented separately.

Results and Discussion for Generation X (men aged 40 to 55)

The results indicate that Generation X men experienced significant social changes related to gender relations and family life. This is the first generation to have witnessed the massive entry of women into the labor market, a process that significantly altered domestic dynamics. In this context, women began to shoulder responsibilities related to paid work, household chores, and child-rearing, leading to changes in the expectations placed on men.

Faced with these changes, participants reported feeling pressure to participate more actively in household chores and child care. The family environment has come to function as a veritable social laboratory, in which motherhood and fatherhood are constantly being redefined. While facing challenges related to the redefinition of gender roles, these men also report

personal satisfaction in the role of fatherhood, demonstrating greater emotional and affective involvement with their children.

However, generational changes also give rise to insecurities. Many participants expressed doubts about how to raise their children in a social context different from the one in which they were raised. One of the interviewees sums up this perception by stating: “There’s no manual for raising kids; you’ll raise them the way it has to be done. One person or another will chime in, tell you how to raise a child—you know what I mean? And then you’ll see how it goes.”

The data also reveal a certain resistance to the expansion of women’s autonomy and changes in gender relations, highlighting tensions between traditional values and new social expectations. When comparing their experiences to those of their parents, participants acknowledge that they face challenges distinct from those experienced by previous generations. As one interviewee reported: “I see that today I have different challenges than my father did back in the day, right? You know what I mean?” This perception demonstrates that contemporary fatherhood is shaped by social transformations that require new ways of adapting to and negotiating family roles.

Results and Discussion for Generation Y (men aged 25 to 39)

Men of Generation Y exhibit characteristics distinct from those observed in Generation X. Known as digital natives, they grew up in a context marked by the expansion of the internet, digital media, and communication platforms—elements that have significantly influenced their socialization, identity formation, and perception of gender relations.

The participants demonstrated greater openness to social change and new experiences, prioritizing personal development and professional fulfillment over starting a family. Furthermore, they work in environments that bring together different generations, transforming these spaces into important social laboratories for exchange, learning, and the clash between traditional and contemporary values.

However, this generation also faces specific challenges. The participants experience the effects of economic instability and changes in the labor market—factors that make it difficult to maintain traditional models of masculinity. Despite social transformations and greater access to information, the results reveal that values associated with hegemonic masculinity remain present in their beliefs and expectations.

This situation leads to conflict and suffering. Many men report feelings of inadequacy and insecurity, especially in their relationships with women, expressing doubts about whether they are accepted and about what role they should play in contemporary romantic relationships. One of the participants expresses this perception by stating: “In my father’s day, he had greater stability and could maintain that role: ‘Oh, I was raised to be the breadwinner.’ And maybe today, I can’t.”

The results suggest that Generation Y experiences constant tension between traditional models of masculinity—which are still socially valued—and the new relational and professional demands of the contemporary world. This scenario highlights the challenges men face in constructing more flexible masculine identities in a context marked by profound social, economic, and cultural transformations.

FINAL CONSIDERARIONS

To understand the phenomenon in its entirety (gender-based violence and hegemonic masculinity), we must look beyond the individual perpetrator and analyze the structure that shapes him. The contemporary crisis is not one of ‘being a man’ in and of itself, but of a traditional hegemonic model that no longer meets the demands of a pluralistic, democratic, and egalitarian society. The challenge lies in constructing masculinities that do not rely on violence as a means of asserting identity.

The central question is not merely ‘Why do men kill?’ but ‘What kind of masculinity are we creating—and what kind of masculinity do we want to build going forward?’

This includes rethinking how boys are raised within the family, at school, and in society; how men learn (or fail to learn) to express themselves emotionally; the role of the media and culture in perpetuating stereotypes; limited access to men’s mental health policies; and the absence of positive models of masculinity that value dialogue, shared responsibility, and empathy.

This involves emotional education, active fatherhood, gender equality from childhood onward, public policies for prevention and support, and the strengthening of support networks that allow men to talk about their pain before it turns into aggression, thereby cooperating in the construction of new models of masculinity—ones that are more humane, pluralistic, and capable of coexisting on an equal footing.

In conclusion, based on the results of this research, it can be stated that there have been—and continue to be—many generational changes. Men are seeking to adapt to the new realities and changes/adjustments taking place in the world and in Brazil, including the transformations stemming from the digital world—such as artificial intelligence and social media, among others.

We cannot fail to take into account that, in the modern world, men seek to build and maintain their identities amid constant change. They struggle to connect with groups that are also in flux, trying to preserve their identities for a brief period, but they face the transience of these connections as ongoing processes.

An important point to note is that, in the exercise of fatherhood, this generous father—who finds satisfaction in caring for his child and learning to recognize both his own emotions and those of his son—does not feel threatened or judged in his masculinity, and is able to express his feelings and affection in a spontaneous and relaxed manner.

What is happening to men cannot be analyzed in isolation. They are both products and agents of a world in transition. If many are experiencing crises, fears, and resentments, it is because the old model of masculinity no longer offers answers, and the new one is still under construction.

Men need a space to speak—to talk, debate, exchange ideas, and reflect on the values and beliefs that so oppress them and demand something impossible to achieve: a masculinity in which they cannot feel, cry, or love without guilt.

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