



ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Which important aspects
can we take into account to include
the gender perspective in organizations?



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Introduction

In the following section we will analyze proposals from a feminist perspective for organizational transformation, towards **non-patriarchal models**. To do so, we will get to know some fundamental ideas and concepts.

As we grow and develop both personally and collectively in a patriarchal capitalist society, the **organizations we form and build are generally marked by patriarchal and capitalist dynamics**, even when our values and objectives come from a point of view that is critical to the actual system.

Looking at some of these **patriarchal dynamics in organizations**, we can highlight, for example, how people who work in organizations (even volunteers) work beyond their means, under conditions of great stress, doing a lot of extra hours, and often with low remuneration. Most of the time and tasks which are visible and remunerated are focused on productive work, and hardly any time is dedicated to the care of the team, to listening how people are doing in their work, and how are the processes being applied.

It can also be observed that in the organizations, the usual rank dynamics in society dominate: men speak more, occupy more space and set the work agenda. Women are more in charge of care and usually carry out the role of emotional support, care and mediation in the teams, often in the shadows and without visibility.

There are also other dynamics of abuse of power in organizations in reference to other axes of oppression, from white people to racialized people, from normotypical people to people with functional diversity, etc.

Finally, in **youth organizations**, the violence models in society are replicated. It is common to find cases of harassment by monitors or youth workers who harass girls and adolescents, sometimes with impunity, or harassment at work. There are still no specific channels for reporting harassment and sexist violence or public and firm positions on the part of the organization on sexist attitudes that are not tolerated.

In order to work with organizations in incorporating a gender perspective into their formal and non-formal structure, we will work in 3 dimensions:

I. Organizational structure and processes transformation

II. Care work and reconciliation

III. Gender-based violence in organizations

PATH I: ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

It is essential to look inside the organizations since there are many values, attitudes and subjectivities that are implicit within the capitalist and heteropatriarchal system that we have **internalized**, and that automatically guide and/or affect our ways of doing things.

Two levels of structure in a group

There are two different levels to understand the main structure of an organization, which are very different and provide different and complementary information:

| A **formal or explicit structure**: which everybody should know, that is common for all, and it is related with the organigram, the formal positions (finance manager, project coordinator, etc.), how the tasks are distributed, who takes the important decisions and where (governance model).

| A **non-formal or implicit structure**: which is not clear for everybody, or different people could have different ideas about it, because it is not discussed explicitly in meetings, but it has a strong impact in the processes and interactions between the people. For example: who takes care of people's needs, who takes care of the common space, who really executes the tasks.

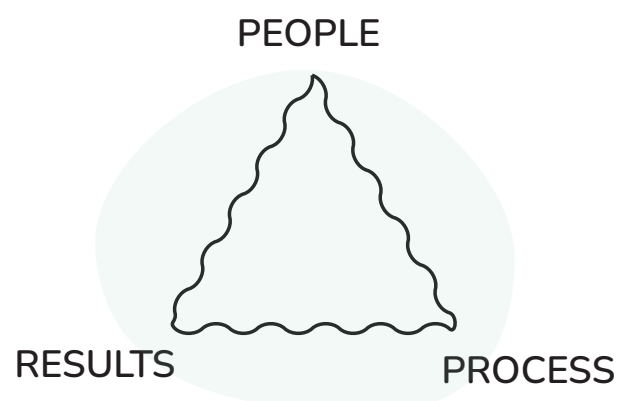
It is very important that formal structure incorporates the implicit one, those tasks, roles and spaces that are essential for the survival of the organization, but are usually invisibilized and not valued or remunerated.

It is also essential to be aware of **governance** models and processes, how and where decisions are made within the group. The governance structure is an important aspect to ensure that all people's needs and voices are included in the decisions. There are decision-making models such as the increasingly popular Sociocracy, which combines agility with embracing diversity and taking all voices into account.

Three pillars in a group

One of the main proposals of feminism in the life of organizations and group dynamics, is to pay as much attention and give importance to **processes and people** as we give to the results.

In the patriarchal capitalist economy, priority is given to the result, the goal or the product/service that will generate income. Other aspects for a good life in a team are devalued, neglected or forgotten.



Feminism proposes to take care of other two important pillars in the life of a group, apart from the results. One of the pillars is the **process**, the ways we achieve those results. It is in these processes that we can be aware and learn about the different power dynamics which occur, and how we can avoid abusing from that power; instead we should share it and give voice to the people who do not find it easy to speak up in the group.

The other pillar is the **people**: how they feel in relation to the tasks, with the team? Is there any tension or discomfort? It is very important to know how people feel regarding the team, because it gives the group a lot of information about what is happening in the group system, and because we want to take care of the needs and desires of the ones that are part of the organization.

Four spaces we must look after

We must look at and take care of four fundamental spaces¹ in the life of a group or an organization:

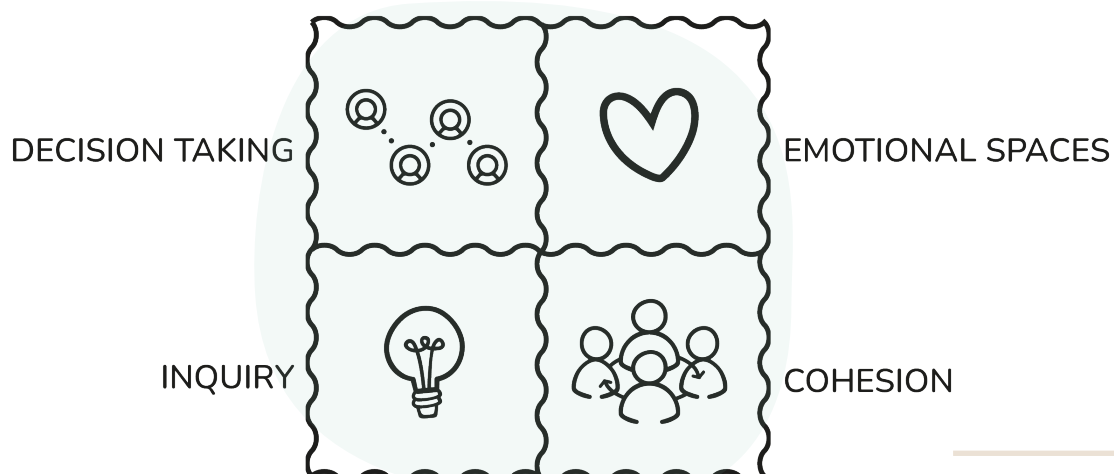
| **Decision-making space:** the best known or the most common in groups meetings or assemblies.

| **Inquiry space:** this is a space in which it is easier for the group to bring collective intelligence into play.

| **Emotional space:** usually relegated to the informal structure in groups. It is the space in which we bring the emotions of the people who are part of the team and for conflict transformation.

| **Cohesion and celebration:** this space, which is also usually outside the formal structure, allows the group to be more united and resilient, thanks to the creation of positive relationships between the people part of the organization.

Of these spaces, the last two are **often forgotten** in the formal structure of organizations, and are fundamental spaces for taking care of people and the diversity in groups.



¹ José Luis Escorihuela

Leadership

Leadership is also a key aspect in the organizational structure and processes, and a necessary role in teams, although it could bring tensions because of the power this role has, or rather the abuse of power.

From GATE process, we promote that leadership is not only a person, but a role, and that rotates: this means that different people can have the possibility of leading in different moments, depending on their interest, knowledge, abilities, needs, competences, etc.

To promote sharing responsibilities of power, generating co-leadership or rotating and transformative leadership, there are different measures that can be implemented. This makes it possible for all people in the entity to occupy positions of greater power and responsibility, and develop leadership skills.

The way of leading for each person is different, and promoting diversity in the way of leadership is also an important aspect in a healthy group. The leadership style will depend on each person's abilities and values, attitudes, talents, interests, etc.

The idea of power sharing requires us to be aware of the role that **rank** plays in face-to-face interactions. Rank implies differences in power.

Power and rank

POWER is the position of privilege a person has in a group, in the world. Power has a strong influence on group processes. We all have experiences around this topic. And it is also important to know that it moves a lot of emotions and sensitive stories. For example, when there are tensions and conflict, power is one of the main elements to understand.

It is a complex topic, because it is very **dynamic**, it changes all the time. Power also happens in a **relationship**: in a certain moment, one person has more power than the other.

To understand better power is necessary to understand the concept of rank. **Rank** consists of the power and privileges - earned or inherited - that one receives from society, community, or for oneself.

Rank is the difference in power at a given moment: high - low. Rank is an issue that affects all people. Everyone has more and less rank than someone else in a specific moment (it can change every minute). **The problem is that most of us are aware of the rank or power we don't have, but forget the rank or power we do have.** Being unaware of one's own rank and privilege constitutes a large part of our communication difficulties and relational problems.

Something important to highlight about rank and power is that it is not possible to let go of your rank. Even if you do not like it, you cannot take it out.

So what can we do? What we can do with privileges and power is to become **aware** of these privileges and **not use them to abuse** but share the power.

“The goal is not to transcend, but to appreciate the rank and use it constructively”
says Arnold Mindell.

When we talk about **privilege**, we talk about an advantage - something that gives us power. Sometimes the word ‘privilege’ also refers to a special pleasure or honor as in saying “it is a pleasure to be with you”.

Generally, privilege is thought of as belonging to the few compared to the many - such as education, which on a global scale is a privilege of the few.

Types of Rank

Process Work² defines four types of rank. The first two are external (or societal) and more related to how society is structured. The next ones are oriented to how we are structured inward (or personal), i.e. how we feel about ourselves.

| External

|| Social Rank: This has to do with the social status one receives based on what the mainstream culture values and supports. Some factors that determine social rank are gender, race, religion, class, health and abilities (disabilities), age, sexual orientation and education. It is also the structural rank associated with structural positions of power: teachers, parents, bosses and leaders of organizations all have rank structures in relation to students, children, employees and adherents of organizations. Structural rank is seen in hierarchies in our businesses, organizations and governments; structure elevates the positions of some over others.

|| Contextual rank: Rank is also a function of context. For example, when you are in a group you know well, you might have a higher rank than the person who is just joining the group, or more than you have in a different group.

² Process Work, also called Process-Oriented Psychology, is a theory of depth psychology and a set of techniques developed by Arnold Mindell and associated with transpersonal psychology, somatic psychology and post-Jungian psychology. Process-oriented psychology has been applied in contexts including individual therapy and work with groups and organisations. It is known for extending dream analysis to bodily experiences and for applying psychology to global issues such as socio-economic disparities, diversity issues, social conflict and leadership.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Process-oriented_psychology



A man with glasses and a beard, wearing a mustard yellow jacket over a white t-shirt and brown trousers, stands leaning against a yellow wall. He is looking down at a smartphone in his hands.



A person with long red hair, wearing a dark green jacket and light-colored trousers, stands on the left side of the frame, partially visible.



A woman with curly hair, wearing a black vest over a light-colored shirt, sits at the wooden table, looking at a laptop screen.

A man with curly hair and glasses, wearing a brown long-sleeved shirt, sits at the wooden table, typing on a laptop.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, sits at the wooden table, holding a cup of coffee.



| Internal

|| Psychological Rank: This relates to how we feel about ourselves. It includes how we deal with childhood and family traumas. If some of us have good self-esteem, this person has a higher psychological rank than that person who is depressed, abandoned and feeling a lot of suffering. Our psychological rank can be assessed by how centered we are and our ability to flow, open and express ourselves.

|| Spiritual Range: This has to do with the relief and sense of well-being that comes from feeling some source of energy greater than ourselves. It can be an affirmative experience that supports us from deep within in times of difficulty. Some people from oppressed groups may have spiritual rank by having resisted and survived their suffering. They will have gained the conception of not wanting for themselves the oppression they have suffered. Spiritual rank gives us a sense that we are supported by something larger than our life or our culture, which enables us to withstand hardship and to create community.

Identifying what mechanisms are operating in relation to power is fundamental to reduce inequalities and the discomforts they create in relationships. Some characteristics that increase people's capacity for influence and power are easier to identify. For example, gender, age, knowledge, experience, length of time in the organization, etc. Others are more difficult, like personal rank.

The awareness of these differences allows us to pay attention and introduce mechanisms to correct the inequalities that can be generated in relationships due to power dynamics. So, for example, in relation to gender and the difference in participation of men, women and non-binary people in a meeting, it is very important to regulate speaking times and turns in meetings to ensure that all people, regardless of their privileges, have the opportunity to speak and give their opinion.

PATH II: RECONCILIATION AND CARE WORK

In our patriarchal capitalist society we live in, the work that sustains and takes care of life is not remunerated, and never has been. This work has historically been done by women.

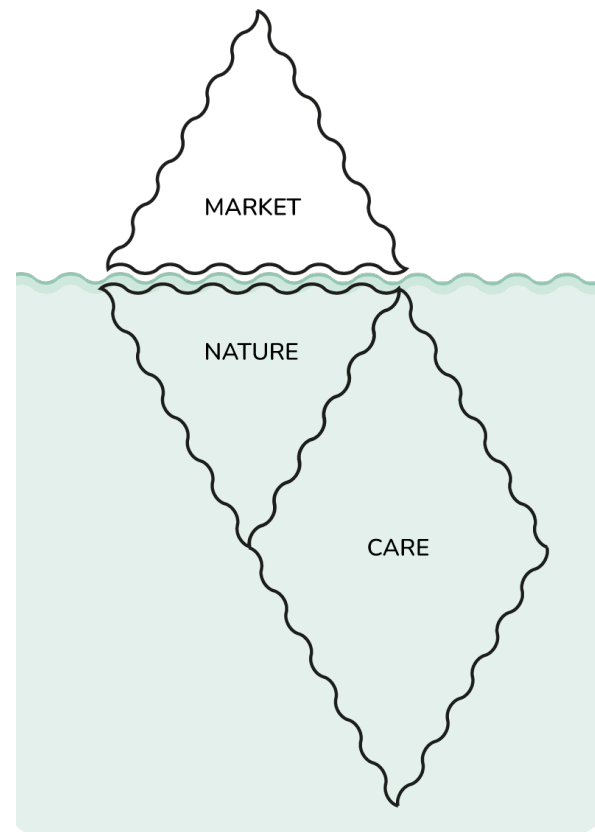
This implies that while men workers can do a better job having someone - women - taking care of them and their homes and families (elder people, children, etc.), women cannot access the same job opportunities because of the same reason. This is also happening with environmental costs: capitalism is not taking into account essential costs like social and environmental ones.

Care work

Care work is understood as the right of people to decide on the use of their own time and to participate in the different areas of their personal, family, working or civic life³.

Care is to manage and maintain life and health on a daily basis, to take care of the physical and emotional well-being of bodies, one's own and others⁴.

Care work is the invisible base of the economic system. It is understood that care is the responsibility of women, and is performed most of the time without monetary compensation. Unpaid work often acts as a cushion that absorbs the costs of readjustments of the economic system.



The fact that care work is not being paid or measured, it remains invisible and is not taken into account in policy making. In this sense, surveys are a key tool to end this vicious cycle. Care's invisibility means that it only enters the public debate when care needs are not being met.

Some examples of care work in organizations:

- | Maintenance or logistic jobs (tidying up, replenishing breakfast, calling maintenance technician, coordination with suppliers)
- | Emotional care or team management, such as mediation, conflict transformation, listening of the difficulties in the team (that usually is not even a formal role in the structure)
- | Invisibilized roles of representation, networking or informal relationships.

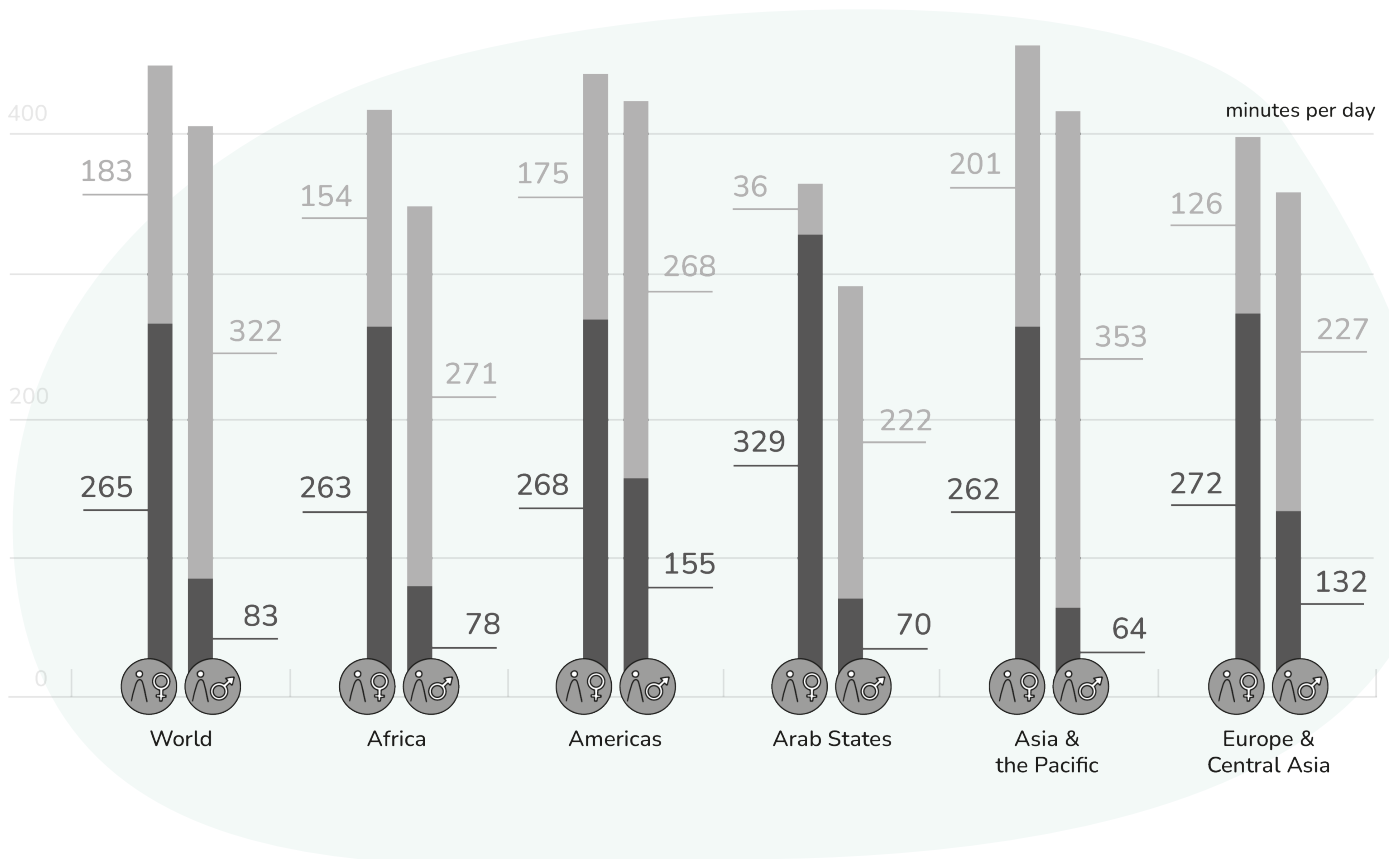
It is essential that we develop tools to make these jobs visible, recognized (by naming them, and assigning time and resources) and remunerating them. Also it is important to rotate and distribute them.

³ <https://maresmadrid.es/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Gui%CC%81a-de-ana%CC%81lisis-de-pra%CC%81cticas-de-corresponsabilidad-en-la-economi%CC%81a-social-y-solidaria.pdf>

⁴Orozco, 2012

■ Unpaid care work

■ Paid work



Reproductive work

Reproductive work are those tasks that sustain and help to develop the work in an organization. Reproductive work is essential for the development of monetized projects and yet they are invisibilized and undervalued. Without this work, the “productive” one could not be possible.

Some examples are:

- | Maintenance or logistics jobs, such as tidying up, replenishing breakfasts, calling maintenance technicians, coordination with suppliers,
- | Jobs that have to do with more emotional care or team management, such as mediation, accompaniment, conflict resolution, care
- | Invisibilized jobs of representation, networks or informal relationships.

Co-responsibility implies the equal assumption, between men, women and non-binary people - as well as between people and the different agents in society- of the responsibilities, rights, duties and opportunities associated with care and meeting the needs of life. In this distribution, it is also necessary to take into account that there is a dimension of care of the environment, in an environmental and community sense, which is part of what we propose as co-responsibility⁵.

⁵ <https://maresmadrid.es/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Gui%CC%81a-de-ana%CC%81lisis-de-pra%CC%81cticas-de-corresponsabilidad-en-la-economi%CC%81a-social-y-solidaria.pdf>

It is essential that we develop tools to make these jobs visible, that we recognize them, name them, remunerate them, rotate them and distribute them. Some examples of measures implemented to recognize reproductive work:

| In some organizations, there is no difference in monetary recognition between any of the tasks that are performed, in this way, it is equally valued the execution of a training as organizing the material in the deposit room.

| Another interesting proposal is that reproductive and care tasks should be rotated and performed by all the people who are part of the enterprises.

In any case, it is important to make visible all the reproductive tasks that are necessary for the execution of the business activity or organization, and these should be accounted for in some way, valued and always remunerated. It could also help that everybody is responsible of some reproductive tasks in the organization.

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is the responsibility of **companies and organizations to ensure that the care for which people working there are responsible outside the entity is possible, adequate and compatible with the development of work.** One's own self-care, rest, leisure, social life, training must also be reconciled.

Some examples of reconciliation measures in organizations are:

| Improving the working conditions of the people who work in the organizations.

| Favoring labor flexibility, including for example more days of free disposal for the realization of care tasks.

| Extending the relationships to which the labor law reduces who you can take care of (not only children, but also parents, people living with you, close friends, ect.)

| Facilitating the reductions of working hours and work leaves.

| Giving more autonomy in the execution of the work, thus allowing greater flexibility of the working day and self-management of teleworking.

Other proposals are taken by the organization to ensure care, for example, implementing educational childcare areas in working hours, or financing of travel for dependent children and other accompanying persons when people have to travel for work.

Reconciliation is key to allow women to have the same job possibilities than men, and to finish with the "*glass ceiling*": a metaphorical invisible barrier that prevents certain individuals from being promoted to managerial- and executive-level positions within an organization⁶.

⁶ <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/glass-ceiling.asp>



PATH III: PREVENTION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN ORGANIZATIONS

Gender-based violence

As EIGE points out “gender-based violence is a phenomenon deeply rooted in gender inequality, and continues to be one of the most notable human rights violations within all societies. Gender-based violence is **violence directed against a person because of their gender**”⁷.

All people can experience gender-based violence, but the majority of victims are women and girls, and non-binary people.

Forms of gender-based violence

| **Physical:** it results in injuries, distress and health problems. Examples of this kind of violence are strangling, pushing, and the use of weapons. In the EU, 31 % of women have experienced one or more acts of physical violence since the age of 15.

| **Sexual:** it includes sexual acts, attempts to obtain a sexual act, acts to traffic, or acts otherwise directed against a person’s sexuality without the person’s consent. It’s estimated that one in 20 women (5 %) has been raped in EU countries since the age of 15.

| **Psychological:** includes psychologically abusive behaviors, such as controlling, coercion, economic violence and blackmail. 43% of women in the 28 EU countries have experienced some form of psychological violence by an intimate partner⁸.

Pyramid of violence in organizations and groups⁹

VIOLENCE AS A RELATIONSHIP MODEL

The pyramid of sexist violence is a graphic representation in which a relationship is established between extreme physical violence and other more invisible forms of violence, many happening at work spaces. Through the subtle forms of violence, the most extreme forms of violence are consolidated and made possible to emerge and become naturalized¹⁰.

⁷ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-based-violence/what-is-gender-based-violence>

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-based-violence/what-gender-based-violence_en

⁹ Please also see our Infographic: The Pyramid of Violence

¹⁰ <https://virtualpsychcentre.com/the-pyramid-of-male-violence/>

The patriarchal system is based on violence to control and keep the inequalities for centuries and centuries. To have control of their power, different forms of violence and domination have been exercised - by men, institutions, persons in dominant roles, in work spaces, etc.- to ensure that people do not reverse gender roles.

Moreover, one of the main characteristics connected with masculinity is violence; and as masculinity is the most valued gender role in our patriarchal system, violence is too. **Our socialization system of hierarchy and power is based on domination and violence.** And this is also affecting our organizations.

This is also why we are thought to be attracted to violence since we are little:

| **Men** are educated in this system of domination and power to be violent: they relate with others through violence, violence means power and social prestige. *They naturalize the exercise of different types of violence, and having violent attitudes reinforces their belonging to the “men crew”.*

| **Women** learn to tolerate, and even more, to be attracted to this violent role: violence, domination and control are naturalized and synonymous with love and attraction.

The forms of violence expressed at the base of the pyramid, although they are less extreme or visible, were not less serious. These forms of violence affect people's lives and the way they perceive and relate to each other.

They sustain and allow the most extreme violence to occur. Allowing, tolerating and normalizing this daily violence is what makes possible the reinforcement of gender inequality and the consolidation of men holding more power than women and other gender diversities.

First level: the type of violence that can occur in an organization that can never be tolerated. If someone perpetrated this type of violence, they would be expelled from the organization. Write down this in the top stage of the pyramid.

Examples: Sexual harrasment/ physical or phycological violence.

Second level: the type of violence that even though they are extremely serious, can be handled by the organization. These types of violence are ostensibly damaging to the people of the organization and actions to prevent them should be implemented.

Examples: Discrimination attitudes/ insults

Third level: less visible types of violence. These examples are still harmful but work in more covered ways.

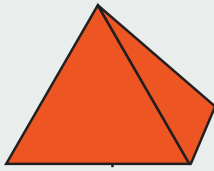
Example: invalidation/ glass ceiling

Fourth Level: Even more invisible types of violence. It is possible to work with them but in the end it's not fair and not nice to tolerate them.

Examples: Mansplaining/jokes



PYRAMID OF VIOLENCE

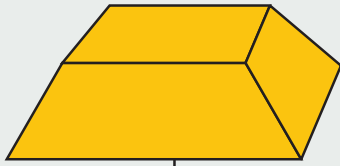


First level:

the most extreme and severe types of gender based-violence.

Examples:

murder, rape, sexual assault, physical, emotional and financial abuse.

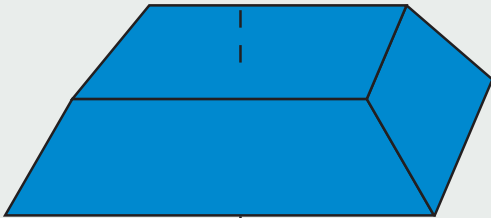


Second level:

extremely serious types of violence, which requires immediate response and prevention.

Examples:

Harassment, threats and verbal abuse.

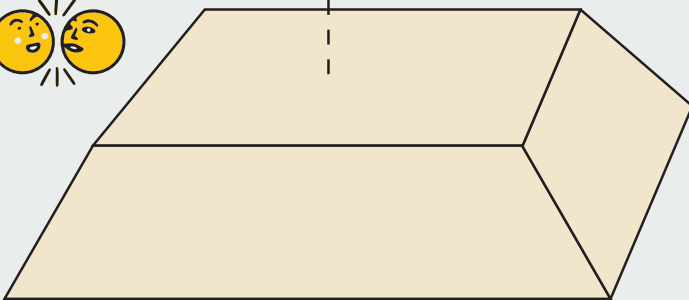


Third level:

less visible types of violence. They work in more covered ways, but are still harmful.

Examples:

Traditional roles, rigid gender-based stereotypes, glass-ceiling.



Fourth Level:

even more invisible and accepted types of violence.

Examples:

sexist/homophobic/transphobic jokes, problematic language, objectification, mansplaining.

Microaggressions

Microaggressions is a term used for brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative attitudes towards stigmatized or culturally marginalized groups¹¹.

Women and other gender identities are victims of microaggressions in everyday life, which they are made to feel inferior, sexually objectified, and bound to restrictive gender roles stereotypes¹².

¹¹ Derald Wing Sue et al (2007) Racial microaggressions in everyday life: implications for clinical practice, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/17516773/>

¹² Kaskan ER, Ho IK (2016). *Microaggressions and Female Athletes. Sex roles*

Microaggressions can be classified as:

- | micro-insults
- | micro-assaults
- | microinvalidations

Some examples of microaggressions at work are:

- | A man refuses to wash the dishes at work (it is “women’s work”).
- | Someone making unwanted sexual advances towards another person.
- | To refer to men by their surname (Lewis, Sanchez) and to women by their name (María, Anne, Laura).
- | A man says that he “helps” in the care work of the office and team, assuming that this work is a women’s work and he is helping, not participating in equality.
- | Making comments about how a woman is dressing or looking.
- | “*Mansplaining*”: a man explain something to a woman in a way that is seen as patronizing or paternalistic.
- | Referring to female colleagues with names such as “sweetheart” or “love”.
- | “*Manterupt*”: men interrupting women in meetings.
- | A man repeating what a woman or another person with less privileges said, and taking all the credit and recognition.

