Facing Patriarchy:
From a Violent Gender Order to a Culture of Peace
Discussion Guide for Reading Groups
Bob Pease

Introduction

The Facing Patriarchy (Zed 2019) discussion guide was inspired by a guide produced by Holly Hammond, Clare Land and Pru Gell in 2017 to support people to self-organise into groups to read and discuss Clare Land’s book Decolonizing Solidarity: Dilemmas and Directions for Supporters of Indigenous Struggles. (For more information, see www.decolonizingsolidarity.org/book-club.) That guide was used to a resource for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to build a support base among non-Indigenous people for Indigenous struggles. This guide has a similar purpose of encouraging men who aspire to be allies in feminist struggles and feminists to explore ways in which men can work in solidarity with women against patriarchy. It provides a framework to encourage people to read the book and create a situation where they can discuss it with other interested people and more deeply process the book’s insights and how they could be put into practice.
The discussion guide provides groups with questions to engage with as they read the book. Session plans and an overall timeline are also provided as a guide which can be used as is or adapted as necessary.

Please get in touch with Bob Pease bob.pease@utas.edu.au if you are interested in getting involved in or starting a reading group.

**About *Facing Patriarchy* the book**

One of the main arguments in *Facing Patriarchy* is that gender analyses of violence against women have been depoliticised and accommodated to a neoliberal government policy response. While the term ‘gender’ is sometimes used in government policies and planning documents, often when employed in relation to violence against women, it simply refers to sex categories, of men and women, and individualised conceptions of gender roles. As an alternative, this book locates men’s violence against women within the structures and processes of patriarchy. The book also explores links between men’s violence against women and other forms of violence by men, in relation to boys and other men and men’s involvement in military conflict, wars and terrorism, as well as environmental harm such as ‘man’-made global warming.

A nuanced conceptualisation of patriarchy is outlined that accounts for men’s structural power over women and the intersections of gender power and other forms of structural inequality, patriarchal ideologies, men’s patriarchal peer relations, the exercise of coercive control in family life and the deeply embedded patriarchal sense of self experienced by individual men. These different levels, or what I call the ‘pillars of
patriarchy’, provide the basis for a coherent feminist conceptual framework to both understand and address men’s violence against women.

_Facing Patriarchy_ could not have been written without the contribution of feminist women in the violence prevention movements which span over 40 years who have challenged, educated and supported me in my activist and intellectual work over the course of those decades. The book aims to give something back to those social movements.

**How to get a copy of the book**

The book is available for order through bookshops in Australia. You can also purchase a copy through Book Depository in the UK or directly from Zed Books in London. The book will also be available through many libraries throughout Australia. If your library does not have a copy, they may acquire one on your request. It is also available for e-readers in Kindle or e-pub format.

**About the author**

Bob Pease is currently Adjunct Professor in the Institute for the Study of Social Change at the University of Tasmania and Honorary Professor in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Deakin University. He was formerly Chair of Social Work at Deakin University and Professor of Social Work at the University of Tasmania. He has been involved in profeminist politics with men for many years, was a founding member of Men Against Sexual Assault in Melbourne and continues to be involved in community education and campaigns against men’s violence against women.
Getting started

You will need:

- Someone to organise the book reading group.
- Someone to facilitate the group.
- Around 5 – 8 people or more who want to participate (it is preferable to have mixed groups of men and women).
- Somewhere to meet.
- An agreed time and place that suits everyone.
- An agreed time for each session (two hours is suggested).
- Time to read the chapters before each session.
- If you are discussing the book in an all-male group, it is important to be mindful of the dangers of collusion. In your introductory meeting, discuss how you will address collusion and defensive postures that avoid addressing the more challenging issues.

Timeframe and Themes

The Facing Patriarchy reading group works through the book in a roughly linear way from the beginning to end over eight sessions. The book has 12 chapters (and an introduction) but I have broken it up into eight themes, each linked to one or two chapters.
The suggested timeframe for running a *Facing Patriarchy* reading group is 8 meetings, each one month apart over an 8 month period. However, of course, groups could meet fortnightly and complete the book in 4 months or weekly and complete the book in 2 months.

**Session 1**

Theme: Introduction and historical context of the book (also to introduce members, hear motivations for being involved, explore ideas about men’s involvement in addressing patriarchy and setting ground rules for participation).

Chapter covered: Introduction.

**Session 2**

Theme: Rethinking frameworks and policies addressing men’s violence against women

Chapters covered: 1 and 2.

**Session 3**

Theme: Structures and ideology as two pillars of patriarchy

Chapters covered: 3 and 4.

**Session 4**

Theme: Homosociality and coercive control as two pillars of patriarchy

Chapters covered: 5 and 6.
**Session 5**

Theme: Patriarchal masculinities and men’s complicity with the pillars of patriarchy

Chapter covered: 7.

**Session 6**

Theme: Gendering men’s public violence against men and militarism, war and terrorism

Chapters covered: 8 and 9.

**Session 7**

Theme: Gendering global warming and environmental violence.

Chapter covered: 10.

**Session 8**

Theme: Overcoming a violent gender order

Chapters covered: 11 and 12.

**Discussion questions for Facing Patriarchy**

Depending upon the experiences of members of the group, some of the suggested questions that follow may be more relevant than others. Also, it may not be possible to cover all these questions in the time you’ve made available. Choose the questions that have most resonance and interest for group members and those that are most useful for members’ personal and political practice. Of course, in discussing the book, other questions may come from within the group. Thus the suggested questions are not
presented as exhaustive of the kinds of conversations and discussions that may evolve in response to the book.

**Introduction**

1. What is your previous experience discussing men’s violence against women?
2. Why have you decided to read and discuss this book?
3. What questions do you have prior to reading?
4. Bob Pease says that he regards writing as a form of resistance (page 4). How useful do you think that academic writing and theory is for political practice? When is it most useful? When is it less useful?
5. Bob Pease outlines his experiences of being involved in violence prevention over a period of 40 years. What has been your own involvement in violence prevention? What are your observations of changes in violence prevention during the last 40 years? What do you think has been achieved and what has been lost during that time?
6. What do you think about a man writing this book? What are the benefits and dangers of men getting involved in anti-patriarchy work?
7. Bob Pease says that his work has been informed by his engagement with various forms of feminism (page 7), which means invariably that he is critical of some other forms of feminism. Is it ok for men to comment on particular feminist perspectives or should they avoid expressing views about different forms of feminism?
Chapter One

1. Bob Pease says that ‘While the public health frame has allowed violence against women prevention to reach larger audiences, it has also limited and depoliticised anti-violence work’ (page 17). What do you understand as the main premises of the public health approach to violence prevention? What does Bob Pease mean when he says it has de-politicised and de-radicalised anti-violence work? Do you agree with this assessment?

2. To what extent do you think that the public health model has contributed positively to understanding the dynamics and causes of men’s violence against women, and in developing interventions about what can be done about it?

3. Lois Heise proposes an ecological framework that involves causal factors at the levels of personal history, micro-system and exo-system as well as macro-system influences. What criticisms does Bob Pease make about the ecological model of violence prevention? Why does he suggest that it de-radicalises feminist analysis? Do you agree or disagree with his critical assessment of the framework?

4. What is meant by risk assessment frameworks? Why does Bob Pease think they are problematic in assessing the likelihood or not of women being vulnerable to men’s violence? To what extent do they explain the causes of men’s violence?

5. Current violent prevention policies emphasise the importance of the ‘evidence base’ in understanding and responding to men’s violence against women. Bob Pease says that evidence-based practice models ‘privilege(s) a narrow form of empiricist evidence and excludes or marginalises other forms of knowledge’ (page 30). Is he rejecting the value of evidence altogether are just particular forms of
evidence? To what extent can the notion of ‘evidence’ effectively inform violence prevention?

Chapter Two

1. Bob Pease notes that ‘The promotion of gender equality has been espoused as an important part of the prevention of violence against women for many years’ (page 31). What is generally meant by gender equality objectives in the current context and in what ways does it influence the levels of men’s violence against women? Why might increasing levels of gender equality lead to an increase in men’s violence against women?

2. How are high levels of men’s violence against women in the Nordic countries understood given that they have achieved gender equality in many aspects of government and policy?

3. Bob Pease cites Maria Eriksson as saying that part of the problem is that Nordic countries are both gender equal and patriarchal simultaneously (page 42). What does Eriksson mean by that?

4. To what extent do you think that feminist engagements with government have been successful in advancing the interests of women and in addressing men’s violence against women? Are there ways in which feminist engagements with government have been co-opted? If so, what examples come to mind about these co-optations?

5. From their comparative analysis of progressive state policies on violence against women around the world, Htun and Weldon note that autonomous women’s movements applying pressure on the state is the most critical factor influencing
progressive policy change (page 46). What constitutes feminist social movements and organisations in your local context? From your experiences and observations of the women’s movement in your context, what contribution do you think feminist social movements have had on violence against women policies?

Chapter Three

1. How valuable do you think that the concept of patriarchy is in understanding men’s violence against women? What are the main criticisms that have been levelled against the concept? How valid are these criticisms?

2. What are the common terms that are employed in analysing violence against women that ignore the concept of patriarchy?

3. How do you respond to Gouldner’s argument that feminist theories cannot account for why such a small percentage of men are physically violent towards their female partners? (page 55).

4. What are the implications of intersectionality analyses for understanding patriarchy?

5. How do you understand each of the pillars of patriarchy that Bob Pease outlines?

6. Why do you think the term ‘patriarchy’ declined after the 1970s? Do you think that the concept of patriarchy is coming back into critical gender theorising?

7. What do you see as the consequences of not talking about patriarchy?

Chapter Four

1. How important do you think language, in describing men’s violence against women, is in shaping how we understand and respond to it? Give examples of
gender neutral framings of violence? What is the issue of using gender neutral terminology? How would you respond to someone who says that ‘violence is a human issue’?

2. Bob Pease, drawing upon Michael Salter, notes that in high income countries, primary prevention of men’s violence against women focuses on changing gender norms and community attitudes rather than changing the material conditions of women’s lives (page 74). What is meant by this distinction and why is it important?

3. What does Bob Pease mean when he says that community attitudes and social norms are euphemisms for patriarchal ideology?

4. What would it mean to shift violence prevention from changing norms and attitudes to changes in structural relations of gender? Are there limitations in refocusing on structures of gender relations compared with social norms and community attitudes?

Chapter Five

1. What do you think of Bob Pease’s suggestion that men demonstrate their manhood in relation to other men more than in relation to women? (page 77). What does this mean for men’s relationships with women and with other men?

2. What are the implications of homosocial bonds between men for understanding mateship in Australia? Do you agree with the analysis of the ‘dark’ side of mateship? Can mateship include gender, race and sexual diversity or is it inevitably limited to white straight men? (If you are discussing this book outside of Australia, consider the relevant form of homosocial bonding in your context).
3. To what extent do you agree with the argument that male contact sports are a central part of patriarchal culture? (page 83). How do they act as training grounds for hegemonic masculinity and what is their relationship to the pillars of patriarchy?

4. Given the analysis of homosocial bonding in sports, fraternities, the military, workplaces and male peer support groups that support patriarchy, do you think that there are ways in which men can bond with each other that are not at the expense of women? If so, what would this form of homosociality look like?

Chapter Six

1. What do you see as the positive and negative consequences of defining men’s violence against women in the family as ‘family violence’?

2. What is meant by coercive control and how is it different to the more common understanding of violence against women?

3. To what extent do you think that expanding the definition of violence to include emotional and psychological abuse, financial control and patriarchal expectations about women’s domestic labour has been successful in linking men’s physical violence to forms of coercive control? (page 94).

4. How should feminist theory explain the minority of women who commit violence? Are there ways of explaining women’s violence without buying into the argument that if women do it too, it cannot be about gender and patriarchy? (page 95).

5. How successful do you think Johnson’s typology of violence is in incorporating both feminist and family violence approaches? (page 98). What does Bob Pease say are the shortcomings of the typology?
6. Do you agree with Evan Stark’s claim that coercive control should be the main focus of intervention in domestic violence, rather than physical violence? (page 101). What would this mean for violence prevention practice?

7. What contribution do you think that the gendered division of household work makes to wider gender inequalities in the public realm and men’s violence against women?

Chapter Seven

1. Do you agree with Bob Pease’s claim that all forms of masculinity (including the non-hegemonic forms) reproduce patriarchy? (page 110).

2. To what extent are psychoanalytic engagements with masculinity useful in understanding men’s resistance to change? (page 113).

3. What are the benefits and dangers of focusing on the costs for men of patriarchy and dominant forms of masculinity? (page 115).

4. Can masculinity be transformed from a negative and destructive form to positive and egalitarian form? (page 117).

5. Why does Bob Pease question the concept of alternative masculinities as being useful in challenging patriarchy?

Chapter Eight

1. Do you agree with Bob Pease’s argument that there are commonalities in the violence that men enact towards women and the violence they enact towards other men? (page 125). What are these commonalities?
2. What would it mean to shift violence prevention efforts from women as victims of violence to men as perpetrators of violence both towards women and other men? (page 126).

3. How useful is it to analyse patriarchy as not only a gender order that involves men’s domination over women but also as involving hierarchies among men whereby some men dominate other groups of men? (page 128).


5. How can men’s violence against men be understood in terms of the pillars of patriarchy?

6. Do you agree with the argument that all forms of violence whether perpetrated by men or by women, are connected to patriarchal and oppressive gender relations?

Chapter Nine

1. What are the implications of understanding the links between men’s violence against women and levels of militarism in society? (page 139).

2. Is the notion of a ‘just war’ morally defensible? (page 141).

3. What does Howell mean by ‘martial politics’ and to what extent does it illuminate how warlike relations of power are normalised in society? (page 142).

4. If we gendered terrorism, how would that change responses to extremist violence? (pages 145-150).
5. To what extent does women’s increased involvement in the armed forces and combat challenge the relationship between militarism and patriarchy? (page 150)? Should women be encouraged or discouraged from joining the armed forces?

6. To what extent is it possible to conduct violence prevention activities within the military?

Chapter Ten

1. Is it valid to refer to global warming as a form of gendered ‘structural violence’? (page 153-154).

2. What is the relationship between men’s domination of nature and men’s violence against women? (page 157-160). Can ecofeminism avoid charges of essentialism?

3. Is there a place for men in ecofeminism?

4. How can the dominator approach to nature be understood in terms of the pillars of patriarchy? Can men overcome a dominator approach to nature? (page 161).

5. How useful is Plumwood’s notion of ‘dualism’ in understanding men’s domination of nature and women? Is it possible to move beyond dualistic thinking? (pages 162-163).
Chapter Eleven

1. What are the pros and cons of engaging men in violence prevention on the basis that they are the ‘good’ men who need to challenge the violence of other ‘bad’ men? (pages 167-169).

2. What are some examples of the women’s sector engaging men in violence prevention? How has the women’s sector changed as a result of engaging men in violence prevention? (pages 171-172).

3. Bob Pease suggests that anti-violence work with men can be usefully informed by anti-racist practice and critical whiteness studies (page 172). What contributions does critical whiteness studies make to engaging men in violence prevention?

4. Bob Pease argues that all men are complicit in varying degrees in the reproduction of patriarchy (page 175). On what basis does he argue this and what does it mean for engaging men in violence prevention? Do you agree with this argument? If you are a man, and if you agree with the argument, can you talk about instances of your own complicity?

5. What is the contribution of Iris Marion Young’s social connection model of responsibility for understanding men’s complicity in patriarchy? (pages 177-180). How does this approach influence strategies to prevent men’s violence?

Chapter Twelve

1. Most violence prevention campaigns are based on the premise that the prevention of men’s violence against women requires men to embrace a new vision of ‘what it means to be a man’ (page 182). What are the pros and cons
of using an alternative notion of what it means to be a man as a strategy to prevent men’s violence?

2. Can men embrace care, positive emotions and relationality as part of a renewed masculinity or do men need to break with masculinity and manhood to develop a feminist ethic of care? (pages 185-189).

3. What are the limits and potential in relation to gender equality and violence prevention of men becoming more emotional? (pages 189-191).

4. If you are a man, what has been your experience of trying to enact practices that depart from traditional masculinity?

5. Bob Pease suggests that men’s incapacity to recognise the vulnerability of women to violence arises in part from their own sense of masculine invulnerability (page 193). What would it mean for privileged men to recognise their ontological vulnerability?

6. Bob Pease proposes that care in solidarity with women provides an alternative framework for engaging men in violence prevention (page 195). What are the differences between this approach and the dominant narrative of ‘engaging men’?

7. Bob Pease concludes his book by restating that his aim is to provide a resource for men to educate themselves about patriarchy and to challenge them to come to terms with their own place within it, to face patriarchy as a necessary step to overcoming it (page 196). To what extent do you think that the book achieves this aim?

8. What was the most significant learning that you experienced reading and discussing this book?
9. How can you make use of what you have learned? What practical actions can you enact? Can you identify something new that you can commit to, to address some aspect of patriarchy interrogated in the book?