Rejecting Violence, Reclaiming Men

How Men's Work against Gender-Based Violence Challenges and Reinforces the Gender Order

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Abstract

This study maps out and explores the reactions to and strategies of men working against men's violence against women and LGBTI people. It is based on interviews with men in gender-based violence prevention in South Africa and builds on previous research on women's organising and men's roles in feminism. It provides an analysis of dilemmas and challenges that they face and the strategies that they have developed, navigating in a feminist field and as men practising what could be seen as a challenge to the power and privileges of the social category of men. Using feminist theory and the theoretical concept “hegemony of men”, I critically interpret the potential for men to undermine men's privilege, arguing that efforts to create new masculinities reinforce the gender order and that the gendered context leaves little room for men's counter-hegemonic practices. I argue, finally, that a feminist emancipatory project is better developed by seeking identifications beyond the social category of men than within a framework of reforming masculinity.

Keywords

Masculinity, masculinities, gender, feminism, gender-based violence, violence against women, South Africa, gender equality, movements

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1. Introduction

“You're in the right place” is what most people I meet in South Africa say when I speak about my research on men's work against men's gender-based violence. Most of the time they are referring to the part about men's violence, not the “work against” aspect. South Africa, however, *is* the right place to study men's gender-based violence *and* men's commitments to counter it.

South Africa is sometimes called “the rainbow nation”, sometimes “the rape capital” of the world. These epithets highlight some of the contradictions of post-Apartheid South Africa, where public policies and a uniquely progressive constitution, built on non-racism and non-sexism, are undone by continuing social inequalities and violence.[1] The country stands out as having some of the highest levels of men's violence against women; the female homicide rate is six times that of the global average[2] and in a population-based survey, 28 percent of men admitted to having raped.[3] Men's violence forms an acute threat to the health and lives, rights and participation in society of women and LGBTI[4] people as well as to the consolidation of democracy.

South Africa has a strong legacy of women's organising. In the struggle against Apartheid, women raised women's liberation as part of the project of national liberation. Women have organised within trade unions to make feminist claims and pressure was successfully put on the government in shaping the country's first democratically adopted constitution, placing gender equality at the heart of it.[5] In the 1990's, around the time of the first democratic elections in South Africa, some organisations working with female survivors of men's violence also started working with male perpetrators. Others initiated work with men on issues around HIV and AIDS, health, parenthood and violence against women.[6] Many donors also began to acknowledge the correlation between gender inequality and the spread of

[1] L. Walker, 'Men Behaving Differently: South African Men Since 1994', *Culture, Health and Sexuality: An International Journal for Research, Intervention and Care.* vol. 7 no. 3, 2005, p. 228.

[2] R. Jewkes, G. Lindegger & R. Morrell, 'Hegemonic Masculinity/Masculinites in South Africa: Culture, Power, and Gender Politics'. *Men and Masculinities*, vol. 15 no. 1, April 2012, p. 14.

[3] R. Jewkes et. al., 'Gender Inequitable Masculinity and Sexual Entitlement in Rape Perpetration in South Africa: Findings of a Cross-Sectional Study'. *PloS ONE*, vol. 6. no. 12, December 2011, p. 4.

[4] Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersexed people.

[5] S. Meer, Struggles for Gender Equality: 'Reflections on the Place of Men and Men's Organisations'. *Osisa Open Debate*, no. 2, 2011, pp. 8-9.

[6] Ibid., p. 20

HIV/AIDS and identified work with men and boys as an effective way to tackle the epidemic.[7] Similarly within the academic field, public health researchers interested in prevention started turning their attention to men who perpetrate violence.[8] Today, South Africa is home to one of the internationally leading organisations in this field, Sonke Gender Justice Network, and a range of institutions work actively to target and engage men and boys in violence prevention. Active attempts to involve men in health promoting and violence preventive efforts are more developed in South Africa than in many other countries. At the international level as well, working with men and boys has become a common approach to gender equality in development interventions and has on several occasions been identified as a priority by the United Nations.[9] Despite all this, it is telling that, in conversation, most people do not register that my research focus is on *men's work against* men's violence. It has long been seen as a "women's issue" and it is still unusual for men to engage in this work.

This study is based on interviews with men who work against men's gender-based violence. I am interested in how men enter the feminist field in work that potentially threatens men's power and privileges and what happens when they do so. As a focus on men, boys and masculinities in gender equality reform efforts gains more international recognition, it is important to study the conditions and effects of men's entry into an area of work and activism that has long been dominated by women; where women have, to a large extent, been subjects while men have been objects (or not of interest at all). Men's violence against women is a global scourge and all efforts are needed to stop it. However, men's involvement in gender equality work has been seen to shift resources and the spotlight from women's empowerment, which draws attention to a set of questions concerning the roles of privileged groups in resisting oppression.[10] Are counter-hegemonic practices possible from a position of hegemony? How can the privileged undermine their own privilege?

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to analyse and discuss how the gendered political order is challenged and reproduced in men's work against men's gender-based violence. At the centre are the experiences of

[7] Ibid., p. 14, compare C. Christopher, S. L. Dworkin, D. Peacock, 'Men's Perceptions of Women's Rights and Changing Gender Relations in South Africa: Lessons for Working with Men and Boys in HIV and Antiviolence Programs '. *Gender and Society*, vol. 26 no. 1, February 2012, p. 98.

[8] R. Jewkes, G. Lindegger & R. Morrell, p. 19.

[9] K. Bojin, 'Feminist Solidarity: No Boys Allowed? Views of Pro-Feminist Men on Collaboration and Alliance-Building with Women's Movements'. *Gender and Development,* vol. 21, no. 2, 2013, p. 366.

[10] M. Flood, 'Men's Collective Struggles for Gender Justice: The Case of Anti-Violence Activism'. In *The Handbook of Studies on Men and Masculinities,* R. W. Connell, J. Hearn & M. Kimmel (eds), Thousand Oaks, California, 2003, p. 462, compare K Bojin, p. 366 & S. Meer, 2011, p. 14.

men in gender-based violence prevention in South Africa, their strategies as well as the reactions of others to their work.

The point of departure is that an analysis of that which is seen as unusual can help identify the construction of the legitimate, normal, possible and that which is perceived as "politics-as-usual"[11]. In her book about the Greenham Common peace camp, Sasha Roseneil focuses on the "non-routine, extraordinary political action through which women seek social change"[12] and with a similar approach Maud Eduards studies women's organising and the resistance to it in her book *Förbjuden handling* [*Forbidden Act*][13]. Departing from that which is seen as deviant and that aims to challenge the status quo gives these authors a unique point of view from which to understand the established order.

I will use a similar approach. I start my analysis in interviews with men who work against men's violence and their descriptions of reactions to them in professional, private and political contexts as well as their own strategies in the face of these reactions. Setting off from these accounts I will attempt to understand what creates resistance, what spurs praise and how different reactions relate to the gendered political order. In the analysis of the interview material, interpreting the different understandings of what causes men's violence as well as the roles of men in prevention become central as these understandings underly the strategies adopted. A form of agenda for men's roles and strategies in preventing men's violence takes shape in the material and will be analysed and critically interpreted starting from the following question: *What kind of gender politics is produced in men's work against men's violence and how can it be understood to challenge and/or reinforce the boundaries of the gendered political order?*

How the informants navigate as men in a feminist field and in a society permeated by gendered power structures draws attention to how men can challenge those, but also to the fact that their involvement can reproduce the very power relations they seek to dismantle. A second question that will be analysed is therefore: *What do the reactions to men's work to prevent men's gender-based violence and the strategies that these men use tell us about the potential of and political space for men to challenge men's power?*

In entering a field dominated by women with the aim of taking a stand against violence – one of the results of and keys to men's power – men in gender-based violence prevention can be seen as questioning their own privileges, something that men do not usually do; yet they are not identified as

[11] R. W. Connell, *Masculinites (2nd ed.)*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2005, p. 204.

[12] S. Roseneil, *Disarming Patriarchy: Feminism and Political Action at Greenham*, Open University Press, Buckingham, 1995, p. 2.

[13] M. Eduards, *Förbjuden handling* [*Forbidden Act*, my translation], Liber, Malmö, 2002, p. 9.

women. This places them in an ambivalent position of access to and refusal of gendered power; as disloyal bearers of the gender order. Their ability to move in and out of access to power and privilege gives them a unique position from which we can understand how the gendered political order is upheld, contested and negotiated.

Previous Research

This study is located at the intersection of two research fields. The first contains studies on feminist organising, which is often synonymous with women's organising, against gender oppression and men's violence. The second is research on masculinities, especially on men and change and – to the extent that this exists – on men as subjects of feminist struggles. My understanding is that these two fields have not been sufficiently linked but can successfully be so to explore how masculinity is challenged and reproduced in men's feminist organising.

While the field of (critical) masculinity studies has blossomed during the last decades, the focus has been on multiple masculinities and relations of power within the category of men rather than between women and men. A substantial pool of empirical work exists that analyses the construction of masculinities in different contexts and settings, for example in schools and in gay communities.[14] In South Africa, R. W. Connell's theory on hegemonic masculinity[15] gained momentum among researchers at the end of the 1990's as a tool to analyse social hierarchies between black and white men. Since then, alongside a continued emphasis on race, South African work on masculinities has focused on the concept of hegemonic masculinity to explain the high levels of violence in the country.[16] In terms of analysing men's gender-conscious activities, Robert Morrell categorises men's organisations in South Africa in three clusters: those that defend male privilege, those that deal with a crisis in masculinity and those that work to advance gender equality.[17] This study focuses on organisations and actions within the third category. Some less empirically based work discuss the possibilities and/or risks of men engaging in gender equality work in South Africa, often making the case for alliance-building with the women's movement.[18]

[14] R. W. Connell, *The Men and the Boys*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2000, p. 9.

[15] R. W. Connell, 2005, further explained in Theoretical Framework, pp. 7-8.

[16] R. Jewkes, G. Lindegger & R. Morrell, pp. 20-21.

[17] R. Morrell, 'Men, Movements and Gender Transformation in South Africa'. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, vol. 10, no. 3, Men's Studies Press, 2002, pp. 316-319.

[18] See for example S. Meer, 'Feminist Contributions, Challenges and Claims'. *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, vol. 27 no. 1, 2013 & B. Khumalo, 'The Role of Men in the Struggle for Gender Equality: Possibilities for Positive Engagement', *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, Special Focus Issue, 2005.

Empirical studies that focus on men as feminists are, as Linn Egeberg Holmgren puts it, "few in comparison with all those texts that discuss the (im)possibility of the position"[19]. Her own dissertation, based on interviews with men in Sweden, is an exception. The focus of her study is how men understand and construct themselves and their practices as men and feminists in the interview context and in a national setting characterised by "state feminism"[20]. An important conclusion that Egeberg Holmgren draws is that there is little room for feminist, non-heteronormative and anti-racist transformation work within established gender equality politics, which instead constructs men as subjects of gender equality in the capacity of heterosexual men. Feminist men, even when they attempt to dissolve masculinity, are positioned as those "good men" that they are trying to deconstruct.[21]

Others who deal with feminist or anti-sexist men in their research are Bob Pease and Connell. In his dissertation, Pease explores how men participating in a men's group can challenge patriarchal discourses through the constructions of new masculinities and "profeminist" subject positions.[22] Connell, in her interviews with men in the Australian environmental movement, analyses how they came to relate to feminism going back to childhood and relationships within the family.[23]

Roseneil[24] and Eduards[25] show how women's collective organising in itself – more or less irrespective of political agenda – is conceived of as threatening and met with resistance. Women who make political demands without men challenge the supposed gender neutrality of the established political order and the heteronormative idea of harmony between women and men on which it is built. The results from research on women, however, are not easily transferred to men's feminist organising since a key conclusion is that women's collective organising is threatening in itself.[26] Eduards claims that the resistance to women's organising without men shows that the established political order is permeated by masculinity and that men are naturalised as political subjects.[27] What happens then when men, as the naturalised political subjects in a gendered political order, organise against one of the expressions of men's power; violence against women and LGBTI people? This remains a rather open question in empirical research and one that I will explore in this study.

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[19] L. Egeberg Holmgren, *IngenMansLand. Om män som feminister, intervjuframträdanden och passerandets politik* [*No Man's Land. Men as Feminists, Interview Performances and the Politics of Passing*], Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, Uppsala, 2011, p. 42. My translation.

[20] L. Egeberg Holmgren, pp. 12-14.

[21] Ibid., p. 103.

[22] B. Pease, *Recreating Men: Postmodern Masculinity Politics*, Sage Publications Ltd., London, 2000.

[23] R. W. Connell, 2005, chapter 5.

[24] S. Roseneil, 1995.

[25] M. Eduards, 2002.

[26] Ibid., p. 103.

[27] Ibid., p. 106.

I will also analyse how men in gender-based violence prevention navigate in the social, political and private spheres and what strategies they have developed in the face of the reactions they are confronted with. This approach is similar to the one employed by Egeberg Holmgren in the sense that the exploration of men's strategies partly becomes an analysis of how their positions as feminist men/men in gender equality work are put into practice. However, this study distinguishes itself from Egeberg Holmgren's work not only in terms of national context and focus on gender-based violence prevention; it is also less interested in the self-understandings of the informants and to a greater degree seeks to describe how they are understood by others and to interpret what this tells us about the gender-political landscape. This also distinguishes the present project from the works by Connell and Pease previously mentioned, where the process of coming to relate to feminism is the focus.

While previous research has generated important insights into the resistance to women's organising and men's self-understandings as feminists, there has been a lack of engagement with the reactions to men doing gender equality work and how they actually do this work. In a recent issue on men and violence in the South African research journal *Agenda*, the editors raise a number of questions about men's roles in the project to end violence to which they request answers:

> What is the understanding of gender equality that men bring to these initiatives? Who determines the gender equality agenda? Within the framework of existing gender discourse, how is the emergence of these organisations read in society more broadly? And what does it mean for male-headed organisations to be accountable to women's organisations?[28]

These are a few of the questions that this study deals with. Insights from research on how men construct themselves as feminists will be helpful in understanding men's strategies in gender-based violence prevention and the way they construct the roles of men in gender equality work. Research on resistance to women's feminist organising contributes to the analysis of reactions to men's work against men's violence. In the following chapter, I will outline the theoretical concepts that guide my interpretation of these results – men's strategies and the reactions to these – in terms of how they challenge or reinforce the gender order.

[28] K. Ratele & L. Vetten, 'Men and Violence'. *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2013, pp. 8-9.

2. Theoretical Framework

In the following, I will give an account of the theoretical base of this study; how I understand gender and power and its relation to violence. I will also introduce a number of concepts derived from feminist theory and explain how these will be used as tools in the analysis of the material.

Gender, Men and Hegemony

In this study, the categories of women and men are understood as social constructions and gender is seen as a social practice that reproduces relations of power.[29] This view is informed by a non-essential ontology shared by feminist theory in such different traditions as post-structuralism, queer theory and some strands of radical feminism. Gender is something that is actively constructed – as opposed to biologically given – and a way in which social practice is ordered. This means that gender is an ever changing, historical and contextual process that nevertheless structures social practice in specific ways at specific points in time. Understanding the actions of individuals as structured in this way means understanding the categories of women and men as gender projects. These can change, but are at a particular place and point in time relatively stable. Gender, in other words, is historic and relational. It is relational both in the sense that women and men are constructed in relation to each other and in the sense that this is a relation of unequal power where women are subordinated to men.[30]

The terms "masculinity" and "femininity" refer to patterns of gender practice; social practices that relate to the structure of gender. Masculinity and femininity are configured in, for example, the actions of individuals, sexist images in the media and gendered power hierarchies in workplaces.[31] Critical masculinity research often points out that there is not one but a multiplicity of masculinity patterns. Between and within societies there are different ideals for men, different ways of enacting manhood and a range of conceptions of what a man is. Within this diversity of masculinities there are relations of hierarchy where some masculinities are dominant and others subordinated.[32] One of the most influential theorists within the studies of masculinities, Connell, has conceptualised the form of masculinity that at a certain point in time is culturally exalted as "hegemonic masculinity", defined as

[29] R.W. Connell, 2005, pp. 71-74, compare J. Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, New York, 1999, pp. 9-11 & M. Eduards, *Kroppspolitik. Om Moder Svea och andra kvinnor* [*Body Politics. On Mother Svea and Other Women,* my translation], Bokförlaget Atlas, Stockholm, 2007, p. 28.

[30] R.W. Connell, 2005, pp. 71-74.

[31] R.W. Connell, 2000, pp. 27-28.

[32] Ibid., p. 10.

"the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women"[33].

Hegemonic masculinity as a theoretical concept has, however, been criticised for becoming hegemonic in itself. It has been understood to privilege analysis of construction of masculinities rather than gender groupings – women and men – themselves.[34] Jeff Hearn suggests that the focus on masculinities as social constructions and practices risks re-naturalising the category of men as something pre-social. In other words, the categorisation of people as women and men is more hegemonic than any particular way of being a man or a woman or any set of gendered cultural ideals. Hearn claims that "[t]he category of "men" is far more hegemonic than a particular masculinity, hegemonic or otherwise"[35].

My understanding is that gender not only dictates *how* to be a man or a woman, it also prescribes *that* you are a man or a woman.[36] Viewing "men" as hegemonic entails seeing the construction of hegemony both as a matter of forming gender groupings themselves and a matter of men's position of interpretative prerogative in relation to women. Although the category of men (like women) is a social construction open to debate and change, it is a well-established category that affects social and material relations and arrangements and confers upon members privileges and power that they exercise and/or contest. Approaching the material from the point of view of the hegemony of the category of men, in other words, involves "addressing the double complexity that men are both a social category formed by the gender system, and dominant collective and individual agents of social practices"[37].

The concept of the hegemony of men provides a useful tool for analysing the potential of men's counter-hegemonic social practices within a gender system and as part of a dominant collective. This is not to dismiss the analytical usefulness of "hegemonic masculinity" but a matter of choice of focus. While the concept of hegemonic masculinity would probably allow for a better understanding of how certain masculinities are shaped and formed or for an analysis of relations of domination and subordination between men of different social positions, this is not the aim of my study. I focus on what membership in the social category of men gives rise to in terms of social and political possibilities as well as constraints and how these are challenged and reinforced in men's work against

[33] R.W. Connell, 2005, p. 77.

[34] J. Hearn, 'The Sociological Significance of Domestic Violence: Tensions, Paradoxes, and Implications'. *Current Sociology*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2013, p. 161.

[35] Ibid.

[36] F. Ambjörnsson, *Vad är queer?* [*What is queer*?, my translation], Natur och Kultur, Stockholm, 2006, p. 112.

[37] J. Hearn, 'A Multi-Faceted Power Analysis of Men's Violence to Known Women: From Hegemonic Masculinity to the Hegemony of Men'. *Sociological Review,* vol. 60 no. 4, 2012, p. 596.

men's violence. The terms “men” and “women” will be used here with the understanding that these categories are both discursive, non-essential and material in the sense that they affect social and material relations[38].

Men's Violence

While not all men use violence and not only men use violence, *men are the main perpetrators of violence* in terms of physical, emotional, psychological, economic and material violence and the threats thereof.[39] In this study, men's violence is understood as direct, physical inter-personal acts and as a structural, societal pattern that reproduces power relations and the social categories of men and women.[40] In other words, it is seen as both a cause *and* an effect of gender power relations with implications for society as a whole – not only the perpetrators and victims of violence.

Violence is available as a resource to demonstrate that one is a man and of reproducing difference from women: “Being violent is an accepted, if not always acceptable, way of being a man”[41], Hearn writes. Feminist theorists have also shown how men's violence against women is sexualised in a double sense: 1) In the sense that it often takes a sexual form as in rape and 2) in the sense that men's power and domination over women is sexualised and eroticised. Men's violence against women is thus intrinsically linked to dominant notions of heterosexuality and relations between women and men.[42]

Needless to say, individual men's relationship to violence is complex and ranges from being a victim of violence to a perpetrator – or both or neither of those – and the use of violence may result in a range of consequences depending on one's position and context as an individual man. However, though men's violence against women may in some cases and contexts contradict the dominant ideas of what a man is, it can nevertheless reinforce masculine ideas and ideals through its potential or threat.[43]

Men's violence against women and LGBTI people is understood here as constitutive of the social categories of men and women and central to men's power. The work against gender-based violence is therefore seen as intrinsically linked to issues of gender norms and power – whether this link is intentional or unintentional. Often, but not always, this work is explicitly formulated as part of feminist or gender equality struggles. It is against this backdrop that men's work *against* men's

[38] The same applies for how the term ”race” is used.

[39] J. Hearn, *The Violences of Men. How Men Talk About and How Agencies Respond to Men's Violence to Women*, Sage, London, 1998, pp. 35-36.

[40] Ibid., p. 15.

[41] Ibid., p. 37.

[42] M. Wendt Höjer, *Rädslans politik. Våld och sexualitet i den svenska demokratin* [*The Politics of Fear. Violence and Sexuality in the Swedish Democracy*], Liber, Malmö, 2002, pp. 27-28.

[43] J. Hearn, 1998, p. 37.

violence will be analysed. How are gendered norms and power contested and/or reinforced when men challenge men's violence?

Violence against women and gender-based violence are terms that are often used interchangeably. The United Nation's *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women* states that:

> "[V]iolence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.[44]

The term gender-based violence thus refers to the violence committed against women because they are women. I recognise that men's violence against women is the most widespread form of gender-based violence but that other forms also exist. Violence against LGBTI people in the form of hate crime is in this study viewed as a form of gender-based violence, as it often relates to the perception that lesbian women, gay men and bisexuals, as well as transgender and intersexual people, challenge the idea that a "real" woman and man are heterosexual. The construction of the social categories of women and men is thus closely tied to heterosexuality.[45] Men's violence against LGBTI people is in this study seen as constitutive of gender categories and gendered power in much the same way as men's violence against women, and this form of violence is better incorporated in the analysis with the term gender-based violence than with the term violence against women. Gender-based violence is also a term that is frequently used in the material, in previous research as well as in theoretical literature.

However, the term gender-based violence needs to be problematised as it is void of both victim and perpetrator and based on the (unspecified) gender of the victims and survivors of violence. The tendency to not speak of men as a gendered group and to focus on the victims of violence rather than the perpetrators is a telling consequence of the hegemony of men. It is therefore important to point out that *gender-based violence* in the following should be understood as *men's violence against women and LGBTI people*. These terms will be used interchangeably.

Men and Politics

A key aspect of the hegemony of men is that men are not seen as a group and individual men not seen as gendered in the same way that women are. Eduards writes that men dominate the political sphere while at the same time conveying the message that they are not there by virtue of being men.[46] She states that "[t]hey stand for a combination of natural presence and complete absence"[47]. This

[44] *United Nation's Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*, 1993, Article 1.

[45] J. Butler, pp. 9-11, 68.

[46] M. Eduards, 2002, p. 106.

[47] Ibid. My translation.

presence/absence can be seen as part of gendered power and privilege, where the presence is naturalised and normalised to the extent that it takes the form of absence. While women's limited access to political domains is explained and understood in terms of gender, men in the political sphere are not understood as men but as citizens.[48] In other words, men are naturalised as political subjects and politics-as-usual is masculine politics. A question that will be explored in this study is if men's work against men's violence, viewed as a form of gender politics, reproduces politics-as-usual or challenges the gender-neutral political subject by exposing it as a man.

Men and Change

A fundamental premise of feminist theory is that men as a socially dominant collective are in a position of power over women and thereby enjoy certain privileges. While acknowledging that men have different positions depending on factors such as race, class and sexuality, the basic understanding is that all men enjoy *some* benefits – respect, institutional power, control of one's life and services from women – by virtue of being men. Connell describes this as a "patriarchal dividend".This dividend has been underestimated in anticipations of a large "men's liberation" movement seeking to free men of rigid gender norms and stereotypes, Connell argues.[49] Overthrowing the current gender order is not necessarily in the interest of men.

The patriarchal dividend is not always something that men are aware of at an individual level. Bob Pease claims that the non-recognition of privilege is a key aspect of privilege. One does not see the things one feels entitled to as benefits but rather as the natural state of things.[50] This is an important point of entry in an analysis of men's work against men's violence, as it addresses the problem that men may benefit from their positions as men even if they are critical of that position. Pease and Michael Flood write about the tensions between men's socially constructed or patriarchal interests and their emancipatory interests in undermining patriarchy, speaking about the importance of men realising their stakes in feminist futures.[51] David J. Kahane, however, claims that socialisation and structures of power are relatively immovable and that men deceive themselves if they think they can seize being part of the problem.[52]

From the theories introduced above, we can expect men as a group to have interests in maintaining the gender order. This understanding relates to a debate on men's roles in feminism regarding experiences

[48] M. Eduards, 2002, p. 17.

[49] R.W. Connell, 2000, p. 202.

[50] B. Pease, *Engaging Men in Men's Violence Prevention: Exploring the Tensions, Dilemmas and Possibilities.* Issue Paper 17, Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2008, p. 9.

[51] B. Pease, 2008, p. 10, compare M. Flood, 2003, p. 459.

[52] D. J. Kahane, 'Male Feminism as Oxymoron' in T. Digby (Ed.), *Men Doing Feminism*, Routledge, New York, 1998, pp. 213, 222.

of oppression. From the perspectives of standpoint and radical feminism, the experiences of being a woman (sometimes referring to biology but often to gender as a social construction and position) forms a knowledge base from which to formulate counter-hegemonic epistemologies and politics of resistance to patriarchy. Men lack those experiences and the epistemic privilege of oppressed groups and therefore do not have access to the tools to challenge the gender order.[53]

The notions of men's joint interests and lack of necessary experiences of oppression, however, has been questioned. Connell claims that while men in general gain from the patriarchal dividend, some groups of men do not. Men might share interests with women as workers, as part of the LGBTI community or in experiences of being racialised, and their patriarchal interests are therefore cut-cross by relational interests with women. In other words, it is possible for men to pursue those interests that they share with women and to develop a politics in support of feminism.[54] Ideas of a potential alliance politics relate to intersectionality theories, where multiple systems of oppression – gender being but one – are understood to intersect rather than work independently of one another. Structures such as gender, race, class and sexuality together create complex systems of identification and oppression.[55] Certain groups of men can also be subordinated to certain groups of women, a conclusion that not only complicates the issue of the role of men in feminism; within poststructuralist feminist perspectives and queer theory, the claim that all women share a common experience as women has been criticised as reifying essentialist notions of gender that fuel inequalities. This understanding opens up new space for men – and women – in feminist projects to create change by abandoning gender categories altogether.[56] Developing new subjectivities that go beyond updated versions of masculinity and femininity to refute gender binaries holds the potential for challenging the hegemony of men by dissolving the gender categories themselves.

In this study, I take a theoretical position that combines ideas from radical feminism, challenging men to oppose masculinity, and post-structuralist feminism highlighting how gender categories create systems of dominance and subordination. Gendered power relations are movable and anyone can be a motor of that change; there is nothing essential in the categories of women and men and no biology that determines who can be a feminist subject. I acknowledge that there is no one male position or unified male experience, and that individual men have different access to the power and privilege attached to the social category of men. And indeed, men take part in feminist struggles every day; in their intimate relationships, through research, activism or union work. However, the way that the

[53] S. Harding, 'Can Men Be Subjects of Feminist Thought?' in T. Digby (Ed.), *Men Doing Feminism*, Routledge, New York, 1998, pp. 184-185.

[54] Connell, 2000, p. 204.

[55] P. De los Reyes & D. Mulinari, *Intersektionalitet. Kritiska reflektioner över (o)jämlikhetens landskap* [*Intersectionality. Critical Reflections on the Landscape of (In)Equality*, my translation], Liber, Malmö, 2005, pp. 8-10.

[56] S. Harding, p. 191.

gender order structures social and material relations and the social practices of individuals should not be underestimated. The power and privileges that are conferred upon men are not something that individual men can just do away with, any more than feminist women can simply grab a hold of power. Because of the position of the social category of men in the gender order, even men's counter-hegemonic practices risk reinforcing the hegemony of men. In the current project, men's work against men's violence might be constructed as reinscribing men as naturalised political subjects or as protectors of women. My position, then, is not that all men oppress all women or that men cannot question or challenge the gender order. Rather, I argue that change is possible but not easy. It is with this understanding that I will analyse the strategies pertaining to reactions to men's work against men's violence and critically interpret what this means in terms of challenging the hegemony of men.

3. Methodological Approach

What guides this study is the idea that men in what can be described as feminist work are in a unique position of access to and rejection of men's power, from which we can understand how the gender-political boundaries are drawn and re-drawn. At a first level, I try to understand how men navigate in a feminist field, the reactions to them and their work, and the kind of gender politics that these strategies and responses result in. At a second level, I critically analyse strategies, responses and the politics generated in terms of how they challenge and reproduce the gender order. In other words, it is a project of *understanding* as well as of *critically interpreting* a material.[57]

I apply an approach that can be termed abductive. Abductive research strategies seek to generate theoretical concepts on the basis of empirical findings, while recognising that such findings are always theoretically informed.[58] Theories in abductive approaches "are used, not to mechanically derive a hypothesis to test (as in deduction), but as a source of inspiration, seeing, and interpretation in order to detect patterns"[59].

In the current project, I have aimed to make an analysis that starts in the material and that is not completely conditioned by the theoretical framework.[60] The interview transcriptions were therefore thoroughly gone through, coded and structured using categories identified in the material rather than derived from theory. Only after the central themes had been identified and preliminary understandings formulated were theories actively applied to interpret the material. However, the analysis in a sense started at the stage of drafting the research problem and the interview guide, since these are theoretically informed processes. The feminist theoretical perspective also comes with a certain sensibility or leaning toward certain themes; it influences the vision of the researcher. While this does not need to be considered a problematic bias as the theoretical framework has been described and is a precondition for the study, it has made it all the more important to start the analysis in the empirical material.

This approach means that I try to understand the informants' descriptions but also use theoretical tools to interpret what they say, which sometimes means going beyond and against the informants'

[57] Compare M. Wendt Höjer, 2002, p. 38.

[58] R. Thornberg, 'Informed Grounded Theory'. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 56, no. 3, 2012, pp. 247-248.

[59] Ibid., p. 247.

[60] Compare M. Wendt Höjer, 2002, p. 46.

understandings as well as relating them to the political problem that underlies this study. How men's work against men's violence is received and how the informants counter these reactions is analysed empirically. Theoretically, these reactions and strategies are interpreted in terms of the counter-hegemonic potential of men's engagements in this field and how it may challenge and reinforce gendered power structures.

Material

This study is based on in-depth interviews with nine informants. The interviews were conducted in English, using a semi-structured interview guide and recorded for transcription purposes. While other methods, such as media analysis, could have produced insights into public views on men's work to prevent men's violence, the material would be restricted to this one form of response. Speaking with men who do this work themselves enables capturing the responses that they experience in their professional and private lives, in media debates, at parties or in church, with family as well as with colleagues. It is also the only way to access their own practices without undertaking extensive participant observation, which was not conceivable within the scope of this study. Indeed it would be hard to study their strategies in any other way; a strategy is not always visible and can, for example, take the form of avoiding certain practices. Last but not least, the informants have extensive knowledge about where one crosses the boundaries of being perceived as "a real man" or how men's relation to violence can be framed in ways that are perceived as legitimate. In the conversations with the informants, knowledge and analysis is co-produced, which is an added value of interview studies.[61]

Selection of Informants

Three basic criteria guided the selection of informants: 1) Gender, in this case people who identify as men, 2) a current or previous active involvement in work against men's violence against women and/or LGBTI people and 3) a base in South Africa. Starting with these criteria, personal contacts were used and online research carried out to identify potential organisations and state departments from which informants could be drawn. A decision was made to focus the selection of informants to national organisations, however for the sake of a creating a spread in terms of organisational form and focus areas, two informants who have been involved in a gender activist group at a specific university were included as well as an employee of the Triangle Project, an organisation mostly active in the Western Cape province. This was also a question of accessibility, as this delimitation entailed conducting interviews with informants based in three different locations: Pretoria, Johannesburg and Cape Town. In the end, the selection consisted of nine people aged between 20 and 50 years from the NGOs *Sonke Gender Justice Network* and *Triangle Project*, *the Department of Women, Children and People with*

[61] S. Brinkmann & S. Kvale, *Den kvalitativa forskningsintervjun*, *uppl. 2:6* [*The Qualitative Research Interview, ed. 2:6,* my translation], Studentlitteratur AB, Lund, 2009, p. 70

Disabilities (DWCPD), a gender activist group at the University of Rhodes as well as *the United Nations Population Fund* (UNFPA). A spread in terms of organisational form and focus areas was sought to generate a wide scope within the material and to allow for comparisons of experiences from different locations in the field of prevention.

Whether the informants see themselves as feminists has not been a selection criteria nor a question raised in the interviews since the focus of the study is not on men's self-understanding as feminists, nor on how they construct that position. The informants selected for this study are all active in organisations that link gender-based violence to gender inequality and are understood here as working within a feminist field. Having said that, it can be added that many of the informants do identify as feminists and that no one has rejected such an affiliation.

The reason for focusing on men in gender-based violence prevention, rather than some other form of feminist organising, is that opposing men's violence against women has been one of the main bases for men's organising in feminism and so remains.[62] As previously mentioned, there is a growing consensus that men and boys must be involved as "partners" in prevention; that is, as actors rather than targets. It is thus important to follow what happens to the links between gender-based violence prevention and feminist struggles as more men become involved.

Interview Guide and Interview Situations

The first step to constructing the interview guide[63] was taken from the theoretical framework of the study and the ambition was that the interviews would generate as much material as possible from which to analyse how the gendered political order is challenged and/or reinforced. Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann call this approach "pushing forward", meaning keeping the analysis in mind at every stage of the research process.[64] This does not mean that the interviews were around theoretical concepts but that these concepts informed the focus of the interviews. The questions were kept at a descriptive level; the informants were asked to describe a response that they remembered or a strategy to bring other men on board, rather than asked to analyse if their work could challenge gendered power relations. In other words, I was interested in their social practices rather than their understandings or interpretations.

The interview guide was developed in several stages. A first draft was peer-reviewed by a fellow student, updated and then piloted in an interview with a woman involved in gender-based violence prevention in Sweden. The pilot interview along with a written summary and a debriefing served as a

[62] M. Flood, 2003, p. 458.

[63] Appendix I.

[64] S. Brinkmann & S. Kvale, p. 147. My translation.

useful trial of the questions. Input from the university supervisor resulted in additional adjustments before a second pilot interview was conducted with a man involved in gender-based violence prevention in South Africa. As this interview generated interesting material and the informant gave his permission, it was decided that it would be included as part of the study. Only minor changes were made to the interview guide following this second pilot interview, changes comparable to the ones that took place between each interview according to the circumstances in that specific conversation.

The interview guide was semi-structured. Every interview would contain follow-up questions, questions of clarification, interpretation, specification, probing as well as direct questions. Silence and nodding were also actively used as ways to encourage the informant to develop a thought or a new angle to the issue at hand. The question that guided the construction of the interview guide was *how the informants navigate the field and what this tells us about the field*. *How* is the focus of the interviews while *what this tells us* is the focus of the subsequent analysis. However, several of the informants would spontaneously relate their experiences to theoretical understandings of gender and politics as well as to gender structures and power relations. This was anticipated; the purpose for not systematically asking for such accounts was to not forge theorising. When informants did provide a gender analysis to their experiences, it was further explored together with them in the interview. An example of a follow-up question from an interview reads as follows: "*So, if I understand you correctly, tying new meaning to, for example, gender categories could have the unintended effect of instead just reproducing that gender category?*".

In other interviews, it was a challenge to encourage the informants to speak about their work specifically as *men* in gender-based violence prevention. For some of the informants, this position did not present them with a dilemma. This tended to shift the focus of the interview to what they did generally in terms of gender-based violence prevention rather than the reactions to their work or their strategies as men in this field. While the lack of a gendered power analysis of one's own role was thought to be an interesting result in itself and function as a sort of telling silence, I considered it important not to be content with such results to make theoretical arguments at the expense of not really understanding the informant. I would in such cases ask follow-up questions to probe the analysis of the informant and to give him a chance to comment on my analysis, for example by asking:

> [Y]ou're telling me that it's easier for you than for your female colleagues to go out and speak to men about, for example, gender-based violence. That, in my interpretation then, could be sort of reinforcing gender norms because it means that you sort of play into the fact that men don't listen to women? Do you see what I mean? Do you see that as a dilemma?

This was a way to simultaneously move the conversation forward and to make sure that the informant had been understood correctly.

Analytical Process

After each interview, a summary of what had been said, immediate impressions and interpretations were written down. The summary served as a complement to the transcriptions and as a reminder of the immediate overall picture of the interview. The interview was then transcribed and each generally resulted in 10 pages of written text. As this is not a linguistic study, it was not considered important to capture all silences and sounds accurately. However, the transcriptions follow the recordings closely, including expressions such as "uhm" and "eh". In cases where sections of the interviews were deemed irrelevant to the topic of the study, they were not transcribed but summarised.

When all the material was in place, the interviews and summaries were read several times. From each interview, the general themes were compiled into a list. Parallel to this there was a process of taking note of interesting reflections, interpretations and "analytical threads"[65]. The list of themes was narrowed down to those relevant to the research question and divided into three sections: *responses*, *strategies* and *understandings*. "Men as change agents" and "rejecting privilege" are examples of themes in the s*trategies* category while "spotlight and resources" and "not a real man" are found in the *responses* category. The *understandings* category contained themes related to how the informants understood violence or men's roles in gender-based violence prevention as well as theoretically identified themes, for example "heteronormativity". Every interview was then gone through again and what was said relating to each of the identified themes was put into one or several of 29 columns representing a theme.

As previously mentioned, the approach to start the analysis in the material was driven by an ambition to give the material a chance to speak for itself and for themes to emerge empirically rather than be found with a theoretical searchlight.[66] This meant that while a feminist theoretical perspective served as a base, the complete theoretical framework was only put in place after the material had been coded and structured, as it was only then that it became clear which theoretical concepts would be relevant to understand the material at hand. For example, the role that the South African constitution or the anti-Apartheid struggle plays in men's understandings of men's roles in gender-based violence prevention in South Africa could not be foreseen using only feminist theory and has called for a contextualisation of the analysis pertaining to the national. Starting in the material has also made the analytical process sensitive to the complexity of men's experiences and strategies. While one informant, for example,

[65] K. Widerberg, *Kvalitativ forskning i praktiken* [*Qualitative Research in Practice*, my translation], Studentlitteratur AB, Lund, 2002, p. 137. My translation.

[66] Ibid., pp. 144-145.

speaks of immense support from the women's movement and how feminists ask that more men be involved, others will relate stories of resistance and distrust. Theoretical tools to interpret the material were then only actively applied at a second level of the analysis, generating new insights into for example the relationship between masculinity and nationalism.

The analysis takes place on two levels. The first level of analysis contains my reconstructions of reactions, strategies and underlying ideas: How is men's violence against women and men's roles in prevention portrayed or understood here? I then take the analysis to a second level, making theoretical interpretations and asking what these reactions, strategies and understandings mean in terms of challenging or reinforcing a gendered political order.[67] Through this interaction between the empirical material and theoretical concepts, the 29 themes could be subsumed within 11 more general rubrics where for example the themes “creating buy-in” and “human rights and the constitution” have been sorted under the rubric *Using Masculinity to Challenge Masculinity.* In each section, quotes from the informants are used to add understanding to and illustrate the interpretations made. Sometimes a quote is used to represent a common idea or opinion in the material, at other times to illustrate a differing view; which of the two is relevant will be clear in each case. The ambition has been to create a more or less equal spread in quotes used from the different informants, so as not to focus the analysis on what was said in one particular interview. The quotes are reproduced word for word but expressions such as “uhm” or “eh” have been removed to improve readability.

Political Reflexivity

Although research interviews can generate a unique material and often be a positive experience for both interviewer and interviewee, they are not unproblematic. They hold a power asymmetry where the interviewer defines, leads and decides when to finish the conversation and has monopoly of the subsequent analysis.[68] I have tried to minimise the effect of the power dynamics inherent in research interviews by providing the informants with written and verbal information about the topic of the study, explaining how the material and quotes will be used and offering to send transcriptions. The informants could withdraw at any stage of the process and they are anonymised in the text. In fact, the interviews are not analysed or presented with an individual focus as the informants and the way they construct meaning are not the primary study objects. Rather, their experiences are the starting point from which I attempt to understand social patterns. As pointed out by Karin Widerberg, this approach makes the ethical aspects of interview studies less complicated, since the informants are not analysed as individuals but as bearers of social patterns.[69]

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[67] Compare Wendt Höjer, 2002, p. 46.

[68] S. Brinkmann & S. Kvale, p. 48.

[69] K. Widerberg, p. 67.

The interviews focus on a topic that the informants are versed in and where we share a common ground due to my professional background in gender-based violence prevention primarily in Sweden but also in South Africa, if to a much smaller degree. Being a white woman, I have hoped to transcend some of the potential barriers created by race, language, gender and national contexts through the shared ground in working with gender-based violence prevention.

Beyond the interview situations, studying projects with emancipatory ambitions in itself highlights the importance of political reflexivity on the part of the researcher.[70] My background in the NGO sector and in gender-based violence prevention has been helpful in the sense of contextualising the material and analysing it in the light of the conditions of that work, rather than simply theoretically. I am convinced that if research is to contribute to feminism and emancipatory projects in general, it needs to try to understand the complexities in political practices and what happens at the intersection of theory and practice. The ambition, therefore, has been to highlight how some practices might reproduce the same power relations that they aspire to challenge while trying to understand why this happens and – of course – also emphasising potentially counter-hegemonic and emancipatory practices. Men's violence against women is a huge problem and I am wary of producing results that would have negative effects on the project of getting more people involved to stop that violence. On the contrary, the aim of the study is to contribute to and develop men's work in gender-based violence prevention as part of a broader feminist project.

[70] Compare L. Ekström, *Jämställdhet – för männens, arbetarklassen och effektivitetens skull? En diskursiv policystudie av jämställdhetsarbete i maskulina miljöer* [*Gender Equality – For the Sake of Men, the Working Class and Effectiveness? A Discursive Policy Analysis of Gender Reform Efforts in Masculine Environments]*, Stockholms universitet, Stockholm, 2012, pp. 89-90.

4. Analysis

The analysis is divided into two parts: reactions and strategies. The emphasis is on the second part, for the simple reason that the material pertaining to the informants' own strategies is more comprehensive than that focusing on the reactions from others. A final concluding section summarises the results of the analysis and discusses these in terms of the potential for men's work against men's violence to challenge the gendered political order and contribute to an emancipatory feminist project.

Reactions

Not Real Men

The resistance to men who work against men's violence takes various forms and ranges from explicit and aggressive resistance to more subtle expressions. None of the informants, however, describe violent resistance. A recurring theme is that men who are involved in gender-based violence prevention are met with allegations of failing to be "real men". Engaging in protests against rape or working with women's empowerment is seen by others as emasculating and several of the informants describe being called "*lady*", "*sissy*", "*pansy*", "*pussy*" or viewed as gay. While these kinds of reactions are mostly voiced by men, women are also described as sometimes supporting masculinity and resisting change. An example is a mother questioning one of the informants for sharing household chores with his female partner. A number of the informants describe how men are opposed to them for "*speaking for women*", "*advocating women's issues*", "*identifying with women's issues*", "*standing up for women*" and "*being sympathetic with women*". "*People were very derogatory; some, even friends, would say 'Yeah, here's this man who speaks for women"*", one informant says.

Interestingly though, one of the informants explicitly questions the notion that men who work against men's violence are seen as "less of men":

> But I don't remember a response where people like 'What's wrong with you as a man, you must be a traitor or you must be gay or you must be a sissy', you know what I'm saying? Like I think that's the stereotype, that it immediately conjures up sort of belligerence in other people but... I don't know, I think we tell that story over and over again and I think it becomes a truism.

This statement suggests that there is a discourse or a script that reproduces itself in men's descriptions of how they are perceived when involved in gender equality work. The same informant also states that experiences of resistance are likely to be mediated by factors such as class and race. In other words, it

is possible that different men face different responses depending on their positions in a society permeated by intersecting structures of hierarchy and subordination. The fact that this informant has mostly experienced affirmative reactions might, according to himself, be related to his social and economic position. Judging from the material in this study, this seems a plausible interpretation, but an intersectional analysis would demand a different theoretical framework and sampling process than the present one. A topic of interest for future research, however, is to study how men are met depending on social status and position as well as discursively analysing a similar kind of material as the one presented here.

Discussion

Constructing men as "not men" can be understood as an expression of how masculinity and men as a social category are constructed through processes of differentiation from women.[71] Men who are seen as taking sides for what is understood as women's interests or rights are perceived as not conforming to masculinity and as a result are seen as "lesser men". Inherent in these reactions is the idea that women are inferior to men; suggesting that a man is a woman is therefore an insult. That men who are understood to challenge men's collective interests are called gay is not only a clear indication of what identities and groups are constructed as inferior to men but also an expression of what Judith Butler has called the heterosexual matrix; that body, desire and gender must be coherent in a specific way for a subject to be comprehensible within the gender order. In other words, a body perceived as masculine is expected to perform masculinity and desire a body that is perceived as feminine, that enacts femininity and desires men.[72] Heterosexuality is thus constitutive of the gender order and homophobia works as a key tool in policing how masculinity and men as a social category are constructed.[73] Apart from being conceived of as something emasculating, for men to relate to something that mainly concerns women also seems to be provocative in and of itself. Advocating women's rights is seen as taking sides: the wrong side. In other words, in addition to not being seen as real men, men who work against men's violence are also perceived as traitors to other men.

Eduards describes how women who organise politically without men are ridiculed, accused of not being "real" women and of hating men. She argues that the established democratic order rests on heteronormative ideas of cooperation and harmony between women and men, ideas that are challenged when women organise and make political claims without including men.[74] However, "politics-as-usual" also builds on homosociality, a strong and silent loyalty between men.[75] If organising separately from men and breaking the heterosexual contract of politics is what Eduards would consider a

[71] R.W. Connell, 2005, p. 68.

[72] J. Butler, p. 68.

[73] M. Flood, 2003, p. 464.

[74] M. Eduards, 2002, p. 78.

[75] Ibid., p. 106.

“forbidden act” for women, then perhaps organising with or “for” women can be understood as a forbidden act for men. A way of opposing the homosocial contract and dragging its gendered nature – that it is in fact a contract between men – into the light by choosing solidarity with those who are excluded, namely women. If women's political practices and demands as women force men to see themselves as a group rather than as a gender-neutral norm or as citizens, it seems as though men's political solidarity with women has the same effect. Men and women are punished in a similar way for breaking that contract; they are not “real” men and “real” women. A real woman cooperates with men but the reverse does not apply; a real man does not cooperate with women.

Violence As an Individual – Not a Structural – Problem

A second form of resistance from men is based on the idea that men are entitled to abuse women, which especially implies a right to sometimes “discipline” a female partner. Many men, according to the informants, make references to religion, tradition or culture to defend men's right to use violence against women. Others are described as accepting that men should not abuse women while resisting gender equality and claiming that the two things are unrelated. In fact, one informant says that it is when he has tried to connect the dots between gender inequality, men's daily (non-violent) practices of domination, sexist verbal expressions and violence that he has encountered the most aggressive responses:

> And you try to tell people that look, it [men's violence against women] happens in that, inside the context of patriarchy, it's not just like an abomination. A lot of people are not willing to accept that situation. So that's when I saw the biggest resistance to the idea, people are all like, it's almost like they want to deal with the symptoms kind of thing.

The most consistent response, he says, has been to individualise violence rather than to see it in a context of gender and power. The idea that as the majority of perpetrators are men, men have a responsibility to become involved in preventing gender-based violence has been rejected with reference to the fact that men are also raped. Sensationalising instances of violence and blaming men's violence on female victims are other responses that informants recount.

Discussion

When men involve themselves in gender-based violence prevention and claim a specific responsibility as men, it can be understood as suggesting that men are a group and that men as a group cause structural problems. It constructs men as a gender rather than a meta-category and violence as a gender-related problem. Claiming that gender inequality fuels gender-based violence suggests that everyone can prevent it by working to transform gendered power relations. When *men* make this analysis and claim complicity in gender inequality, it might be harder for other men to reject than when it is presented by women. This could explain why some men would take a gendered power

analysis of men's violence against women as a personal attack and why discussing men's responsibility as a group seems to generate the most aggressive resistance. Sensationalising, individualising and blame-shifting, reactions that the informants describe, can be understood as ways to dismiss these disturbing accounts. It constructs men's violence against women as something that happens in a power vacuum, as an abomination as the informant puts it, in an otherwise harmonious relationship between women and men.

There is, as argued by Eduards, a big difference between speaking of and taking responsibility for men's violence as a biological, individual or collective problem.[76] While it is possible and quite common to speak about women, as a group, as victims of violence, it is not legitimate to speak about men as perpetrators. As was noted in the theoretical framework, most definitions of violence are void of a perpetrator; we often speak of violence against women but rarely about men's violence. To avoid speaking about men as a group, violence must be individualised and constructed as a deviance rather than a structural and widespread problem. “It is as if many women and men must be involved, preferably all, for it to become a gender-related problem”,[77] Eduards writes.

Men After All

Women are generally described as welcoming men's engagement with issues of gender-based violence, with the exception of female feminists and/or women from the women's movement. On an individual level, some of the informants describe initial scepticism and being tested by women who suspect that they are only there to “score points” or get a free campaign t-shirt. These reactions are described by men who have become involved in settings dominated by women and their experiences show that these circles have become accommodating after they have demonstrated genuine engagement. Others, mainly those who work in organisations that focus on targeting and involving men and boys, describe more enduring distrust from women. This can take the form of being ignored at meetings or being told outright that men have no place in meetings concerning women's empowerment or gender equality issues. While the last type of response seems to relate to ideological ideas of female separatism and men's inability to understand women's experiences, the informants also describe a sense that some women are afraid that men will take over the struggle and thereby reproduce gender oppression. As expressed by one of the informants:

> [T]hey don't trust men. They argue: ‘Well, men are beneficiaries of patriarchy, how, why must we trust them that they will do things that are in our interest? Men are coming into this because they now want to dominate and take over the space and they want to take over the money' […].

[76] M. Eduards, 2002, p. 115.

[77] Ibid. My translation.

The issue of funding relates to an organisational level rather than an individual one and is repeated by several informants. They describe, and often confirm, a perception within the women's movement that a lot of public attention is being paid to the work with men and boys for gender equality and that this has shifted resources and the spotlight away from the women's movement. This, of course, could be understood as a form of reproduction of gendered structures and could wear off on the perceptions of individual men working in such organisations. It is telling that the informants who describe such reactions are the ones who are or have been working in settings focusing on gender-based violence prevention through work with men and boys rather than ones who work more broadly on women's empowerment or with an overall focus on women and girls.

Discussion

Michael Flood states that it is understandable that feminists have been hesitant about men's participation in campaigns against violence since men carry a "sexist backpack". Public reception to their work is shaped by gendered power structures, manifesting itself in greater media attention, more funding and disproportionate praise for their efforts in comparison with those of the women's movement.[78] In South Africa, such criticism is made within a context of development cooperation and limited donor funding, further explored in an article by Shamim Meer:

> The power that men have over women, and the possibility that it may not be in men's gender interests to transform gender relations or achieve greater equality, were ignored. […] As donors began to impress on women's organisations that working on gender means bringing men into their organisations, and as donor funding sought out men's organisations, the number of men prepared to engage in such work grew. The demand, in other words, led to a supply.[79]

Despite their efforts, the informants are perceived by feminists as being men, after all, with the privileges and power that come with the position. The reactions from the women's movement in many ways encapsulate the debate about men's role in the feminist struggle, outlined in the theoretical framework. It centres around men's lack of experiences of gendered oppression and the suspicion that men are driven by patriarchal rather than emancipatory interests in entering feminist struggles, or on the conclusion that men's potentially counter-hegemonic practices are undone when attention is quickly transferred from women to men. As argued by Kahane, "discussions of male feminism have to deal not only with the extent of men's commitment to giving up privilege, but the ways in which male privilege surpasses the agency of individuals"[80]. However, there is a slide towards determinism in these perceptions of the role of men in gender-based violence prevention that seem to suggest that anything that a man does perpetuates masculinity. A form of essentialising that in a sense, as

[78] M. Flood, 2003, p. 464.

[79] S. Meer, 2011, p. 14.

[80] D. J. Kahane, p. 223.

formulated by Patrick D. Hopkins, stop men from being feminists and make men out of them.[81] In other words, even as men try to question men's power and privilege, they are reinstated in that gendered order when they attract levels of support that are rarely granted to women and when they are construed by feminist women as inherently patriarchal.

Ideal Men

The positive responses mainly come from women. Some of the informants who describe resistance and scepticism from the women's movement also state that there is a lot of support of them as men, as well as of the organisations they represent, from female feminist professionals and activists. This is described as women wanting men to work side by side with them, or that they are being welcomed as one of too few men engaging with these issues. "*We need more men like you*" is something that several of the informants are told by women in the women's movement. Some also speak about fruitful partnerships with women's organisations.

From women in general, the responses are described as mostly positive, supportive, embracing and affirmative. A reaction described by one informant that repeats itself in the material is:

> [W]omen will be like 'Great, we have men like you', you know. 'You need to come and have a word with my husband, you need to come and have a word with my son. Your wife is a lucky woman', you know.

Some of the informants describe being construed as experts and as ideal, good or safe men. Talking about a training on men's violence against women that he conducted in a mixed-gender group, one of the informants says that some of the young female participants, when the cycle of violence was discussed, started crying and said "*we wish we could get boyfriends or even husbands like you*". Another informant says that some men take advantage of this position and translate it into possibilities of dating and sex. As opposed to reactions constructing them as *not men*, these responses suggest that they are seen as men who can educate others on how to become *better men*. They are also, contrary to being perceived as or outright called gay, constructed as heterosexually desirable; as good, safe partners and fathers.

Some of the informants also recount affirmation in terms of invitations to speak at functions or meetings specifically extended to them *as men* in gender-based violence prevention. Others speak about opportunities for work and travel, being interviewed for radio and television and everyone requesting their business card. One informant says: "*[W]hen you walk into a room of people it's like you are this new breath of fresh air, you know. And everybody wants to breathe that or to inhale that.*" Another concludes that men who do this work probably receive a disproportionate amount of attention

[81] P. D. Hopkins, 'How Feminism Made a Man Out of Me: The Proper Subject of Feminism and the Problem of Men'. In T. Digby (Ed.), *Men Doing Feminism*, Routledge, New York, 1998, p. 41.

and affirmation because it is seen as unusual and different. The spotlight, thus, is a source of scepticism from parts of the women's movement but also a source of affirmation of both individual men and organisations that target men and boys.

When asked to compare their experiences to those of female colleagues, many of the informants say that it is easier for them as men to reach out to and get their message across to women as well as to other men. In their experience, people listen more to men than to women. Women who do the same work as they do are objectified and sexualised rather than listened to or are perceived as overly aggressive and as people who "think too much". These results are consistent with studies on students' perceptions of female and male professors teaching gender inequality, where men are perceived as more objective and open-minded while women are seen as angry, biased and "anti-male".[82] In particular, connecting with men seems to be easier for men. This is explained by some informants as an effect of men's ability to personalise and reach other men with their own stories, for example of how one has changed. It is also depicted as a result of gendered power structures:

> [S]ometimes we go to a meeting. A woman colleague will do a presentation. People will say 'Yeah, no, but I don't understand', you know. And then [...] I stand up and I explain virtually the same thing. 'Oh, yeah, now I get it'. So you realise that there are also blockages that are not necessarily in terms of common sense but they are more gendered.

Because some men will not listen to women, a few of the informants state that women welcome them to speak on their behalf:

> So if they see a man advocating for their rights and talking about women, they appreciate it. Because they see a person who will be able to penetrate men. Even those who do not believe, you know, women can talk to them.

Discussion

These responses suggest that there are a number of constraints as well as possibilities for men's work against men's violence to challenge gendered structures. Flood argues that when men teach about gendered oppression, there is a risk of reinstating men in a position of being an expert or an authority, especially when telling women that they may not be as free as they think they are. While creating space for questioning men's power and privilege, they may simultaneously and implicitly ask to be trusted and excepted from being seen as carriers of that privilege.[83] The responses described here suggest that this is what happens when men speak of and act against men's violence against women. Ironically, by speaking about problems caused by men, the informants are positioned as good and safe, heterosexually desirable exceptions. Naming and discussing structures seem, in the perceptions of

[82] M. Flood, 'Men as Students and Teachers of Feminist Scholarship', *Men and Masculinities,* vol. 14, no. 2, 2011, p. 47.

[83] Ibid., p. 48.

others, to place them outside of those structures. When pointing to the powers and privileges of men, or the violence of men more specifically, they are constructed as a *different type of man*. Distancing oneself from violence and violent masculinity seems, in other words, to have the effect of creating categories of good and bad men.

These constructions are problematic in several ways. They may conceal the privileges and the power that men have access to whether or not they are critical of it and reproduce men in the role of protecting women from (other) men's violence. Eduards describes this as a familiar trope, from the soldier who is prepared to die to protect "women and children" to the father who controls his daughter or the gentleman who does not let his wife go out on her own.[84] When men are constructed as protectors of and spokespeople for women, women are left in a position of being protected, where they might have to accept the conditions and definitions set by the protector. It is not a relationship on equal terms, no matter how positively men speak of women or how much they promote women's rights.[85]

Strategies

In the following part of the analysis, I will describe how the informants act in the face of these responses. I label their varying practices to communicate their message or to be accepted as men in a feminist field as strategies. I then analyse how the different strategies construct the problem of men's violence against women as well as the role of men in gender-based violence prevention, and critically interpret how these strategies work to challenge or reproduce gendered power.

Recreating and Reclaiming Men

One of the responses described in the previous section was the one given the label "not a real man". Several of the informants describe their strategies for acceptance as well as to prevent gender-based violence in terms of redefining what that is: What does it mean to be a man? One method is to convince men that they do not have to assert their manhood through violence, alternatively stating that it is unmanly to abuse women. "*So if you do that [use violence against a woman], you must know that you are not doing that because you are a man because real men would never do that,*" says one informant. The redefinition of manhood is also described more broadly as constructing alternative masculinities, nurturing men's feminine sides as well as promoting a caring and loving attitude. Some informants describe appealing to men's experiences of not being able to live up to notions of what a "real man" is. The purpose is to convince men that being economically dependent on a female partner, sharing household chores or showing emotions does not make one less of a man. One informant recalls a workshop conducted with university students in which he asked them:

[84] M. Eduards, 2007, p. 21.

[85] Compare Ibid., p. 22.

> 'How many of you have been told that if, that you're not a man if you're crying or if you have, like you know, emotional sensitivity like that and you've been told you're not a man?' And I said, 'Put your hand up', and then, like, a lot of guys put their hands up. […] [T]hat was a nice experience.'

In these constructions, I understand the problem as being defined not as the gender categories in themselves and the hegemony of men as a group, but specific elements of how the category of men is constituted. The strategy, then, is to redefine what a man is and create space for more gender equitable, non-violent masculinities.

Some informants describe a need for men to reclaim the identity of being a man from perpetrators of violence and to distance themselves from the violence that other men are committing in their name (as men). Contrary to understandings of masculinity and men as gender projects, constituted by processes of violence and domination, this implies that there is an essence to men – a male core – that has been distorted and can be re-instated by *real* men. This strategy mimics the construction of men involved in gender-based violence prevention as "not men" by reversing the game; here, violent men are not men. There are also strategies that could best be placed within a theoretical framework centring on multiple masculinities, where informants describe some masculinities as destructive while there are others that are caring and loving and should be promoted. Distinctions are also made between good men and other men, as in this example:

> But, then again you think: How many men do these acts? How many men do we have in this country? Clearly, it's a very small number of men [who use violence]. We've got good men here and for the sake of those good men, we just have to carry on […].

Interestingly, such interpretations of the problem and how to tackle it can run parallel to understandings of men's violence as a cause and effect of masculinity and men's complicity in upholding power structures that fuel violence. The task, in all these cases, is to promote a more gender equal construction of what a man is.

Some of the informants themselves also reaffirm that they are men in various ways. One says that he used to have the idea that if you speak out against men's violence, it will make you appear less of a man. Now that he no longer subscribes to that perception, he engages more freely and passionately in feminist activities. Another informant says that no one has ever told him that he is not a man but if that were to happen, they would immediately learn that he *is* a man, implying that he would somehow assault the person making such a claim. This is followed by laughter and should not be given too much analytical weight as it is probably meant as a joke. However, it does shed light on how violence is deeply implicated in the construction of masculinity, a powerful resource to demonstrate that one is a man and how also men who work to prevent men's violence relate to violence – if only symbolically or

rhetorically. More importantly for the current analysis, these examples suggest that being seen as a man is important not only strategically – to get other men on board – but also personally. One informant working for an organisation focusing on rights of and services for LGBTI people speaks of struggling with the stereotypical idea that gay men are not men. In his role, he attempts to demonstrate that being gay is a lifestyle that does not change who you are (a man). He says:

> […] I am involving myself to a lot of programmes that are run by men so that they can see that being a gay man doesn't mean that you are not part of the men's programmes. You are a part of the men, you are a man, you are facing the challenges, you are facing GBV[86] that is taking place, you are also a part of that, you can fight for (sic) GBV as well.

Discussion

I understand the framing of violence as a problem caused by specific versions of masculinity as a result of the reluctance to speak about men as a group.[87] In these descriptions, women have largely been removed from the analysis which, instead of focusing on men's power over women, centres on creating new masculinities. Creating this division between good and bad men creates the possibility to relate manhood or masculinity to the ability to distance oneself from violence.[88] This allows men to challenge men's violence while still being perceived as men (with the power and privileges that come with the category) and to discuss men and violence without being made suspects of complicity in that violence. Implicit or explicit in these descriptions is also the notion that men need to distance themselves from violence for the sake of saving masculinity (rather than saving women). Maria Jansson and Maria Wendt, in an article analysing a Swedish public campaign against men's violence against women, claim that the message that "real men do not hit women" frames violence as something that should be settled between men. It is through discussions between men that change will be brought to women and by establishing that real men do not hit women, men can be construed as a brave collective that takes responsibility for a problem that they have not created.[89] These strategies suggest that men should deter from using violence because it is unmanly, not because it violates the rights of women. Rather than dismantling the category of men, the task is to recapture it from those who have soiled it with violence. Masculinity, in other words, is worth fighting for.

While several heterosexual informants experience taking part in gender-based violence prevention as something potentially emasculating, for the informant working in an LGBTI organisation, the opposite is true. Being involved in gender-based violence prevention seems, in this case, to function as a resource to affirm that one is a man and as a point of entry into the category of men. Slightly

[86] GBV is an abbreviation for "gender-based violence".

[87] Compare M. Eduards, 2002, p. 115.

[88] Compare M. Jansson & M. Wendt, '"Heja Uffe!". Så legitimeras mäns överordning' ['*"Go, Uffe!". How Men's Domination is Legitimised*', my translation], *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift*, vol. 4, 2006, p. 15.

[89] Ibid.

simplified; heterosexual men are constructed as gay and gays are constructed as men through gender-based violence prevention work. In other words, involving oneself with other men in gender-based violence prevention seems to work to subsume oneself into the heteronormative gender order and to distance oneself from women and femininity. This suggests that to become a legitimate subject in established gender equality politics requires that one is understandable within a heteronormative gender framework. The roles of men in gender equality presented in the material focus on men as partners to women and as fathers, in other words in capacities of heterosexual men, which could explain the need for men in gender-based violence who are not heterosexual to confirm that they are still men. It also sheds light on why gender-based violence prevention could function as a resource to demonstrate masculinity.

Abandoning ”Men”

There is one approach described in the material that clearly diverges from the understandings and methods described above in that it does not focus on engaging men *as men*. The informant recounts trying to shed light on how current configurations of the social category of men creates health and rights problems for women and men. In other words, addressing men in the sense of making them aware of the “costs of masculinity”. However, the solution is not seen to be changing notions of what it means to be a man or to appeal to men as actors of change in their positions as men:

> So I'm much more likely to talk about, you know, active citizenship or, you know community mobilisation than I am to talk about engaging men. You know we *do* want to change men, but I'm not sure we always want to do that within this framework of manhood.

The perception conveyed by this informant is that speaking of “real men” or attempting to construct new masculinities can reinforce gender binaries, which in turn is seen as creating the breeding ground for men's violence. However, he claims that the male identity for many men is so important that it would be un-strategic for him to speak about abolishing manhood if he wants to get men on board in a project of gender transformation and violence prevention. This may be especially true in the South African context, where race oppression during colonisation and the Apartheid era emasculated non-white men in the sense that they (like non-white and to a lesser degree white women) were treated as subordinates, symbolised for example in the common usage of the word “boys” when white people addressed black men. According to Robert Morrell, black men's resistance to race oppression was often simultaneously a defence of their masculinity.[90]

Discussion

Rather than destabilise the gender order, the strategies focusing on recreating masculinity seem to re-construct men as political subjects and protectors of women. The assertions that men in gender

[90] R. Morrell, 2002, p. 322.

equality work are not “unmanly” and that they are expected to take part *as men* reproduces gender binarity and the heterosexual matrix.[91] Attempting to dissolve masculinity, however, does not seem to be a viable strategy to involve men. Joining a movement and becoming a man seems to be a more appealing offer than joining a movement and abolishing men. In other words, the most acceptable construction of men's roles in gender-based violence prevention builds on affirming that men should be men. This raises questions about the potential of men's work against men's violence to challenge the hegemony of men and what space there is within the framework of men's prevention of violence to question masculinity. Focusing on men in other capacities – as citizens or community actors – can be seen as a middle ground between the possibly deterring suggestion to abolish men and the counterproductive project to establish a new male identity. In the current study, however, this is a marginalised strategy in comparison to those that focus on men as men.

Emphasising the “Costs of Masculinity”

Several informants describe how they reach out to men by highlighting the costs of gender inequality for men. One informant says:

> We've kind of mostly focused on patriarchy as this system that advantages men vis-à-vis women, but it disadvantages most men as well. Both in terms of marginalised men and their relationship to powerful men, but also even the powerful men. [...] In South Africa, men kill men at like ten times the rate that they kill women. In some communities it's twenty times. And a lot of that is about performing manhood, it's about demonstrating that they're not weak, that they're not sissies, that they're not, that they *are* real men. So, masculinities is a public health fiasco.

Strategies include making men aware of how norms and stereotypes have had negative consequences for them in terms of for example diseases, alcohol abuse and pressure to be a protector and breadwinner; expectations that are hard to live up to. The benefits of gender equality, especially from having more gender equitable relationships with women, are also stressed. Sharing chores in the home is claimed to have spin-offs such as meaningful conversations, more time together and better sexual relations. Focus is placed on changing societal norms and expectations, by some informants claimed to often be transmitted to men by their mothers and female partners, as well as institutions:

> How do we change our young boys, how do we create safe spaces for men to talk about these issues, the challenges that they have? Men who grew up in a society where they are told ‘You are a provider'. When they don't have jobs, what do they do? Because, the only thing that they know now is to be aggressive to prove that they are still men in the home. Because when they are not bringing bacon home, nobody treats them seriously. If your definition of a man is someone who works, who brings home to the family, what does it mean when that man doesn't bring that? That means he's not a man. So, how else do they assert their manhood? They have to do something to assert that ‘By the way, I'm still a man'. And the nearest and easiest thing that they do is violence.

[91] L. Egeberg Holmgren, p. 102.

Men's violence against women is constructed here as a consequence of the problems that men suffer in the gender order rather than a question of upholding men's power.[92] In fact, men's violence against women is presented in this quote as a question of *men's powerlessness*.

When women are addressed by the informants in these discussions, they mainly emerge as transmitters of destructive norms to their sons and partners alternatively described as hardworking citizens, mothers and partners who deserve men's respect and contributions. One informant speaks of how women's empowerment is beneficial to society as a whole:

> [Y]ou will never go wrong if you go the route of women empowerment. You empower this woman, you empower the whole nation. You empower even this man who is refusing to give this woman a chance to, you know, to be empowered.

This statement is preceded by a description of how women struggle to provide for their families and manage to make ends meet with little resources while men waste whatever little money they have on alcohol.

Discussion

The strategy presented and exemplified above can be interpreted as appealing to men as victims of masculinity and beneficiaries of gender equality. The underlying understanding in these messages is that the gender order and masculinity create a range of problems for both women and men and that men need to be freed from the societal norms that create patterns of men's oppression against themselves, other men and women. As Linda Ekström writes in her analysis of the representations of men's violence against women in the policy documents of a Swedish gender equality organisation focusing on men and boys, women and men are depicted as jointly subordinated. The structures of dominance and subordination are placed, rather than between women and men, outside of the gender categories.[93]

Ekström notes that the fact that women are not frequently mentioned in problem representations focusing on the negative consequences of men's hegemony for men themselves does not mean that women are not implicitly construed in certain ways. On the contrary, she claims that the trope of men as psychologically injured and emotionally restricted by the expectations on them as men contains an implicit comparison with women who emerge as whole and complete in terms of not having to live under the pressures of masculinity. The constructions of men as victims of masculinity and beneficiaries of gender equality might idealise women's experiences and depict women as the privileged or lucky party in the gender hierarchy.[94] The example given above of how women's

[92] Compare L. Ekström, p. 118.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Ibid., pp. 122-123.

empowerment is presented as the best route to development may certainly be true on many occasions, but I also understand it as both an idealisation of women and an argument for gender equality that instrumentalises women's rights as an issue of national development. Given what will be argued in a coming section about the conflation between men and the nation, men's interests and national interests[95], it can also be understood as constructing women's rights as a men's cause.

Rather than questioning the patriarchal dividend and what men gain from women's subordination, this strategy presents gender equality as a "win-win" situation or a question of double emancipation and gender inequality as a joint loss for women and men.[96] Indeed, many men suffer from structures of domination and subordination and this approach may be effective in making men realise their stakes in emancipatory projects. However, it also risks underproblematising men's power and men's roles as leaders, decision-makers and owners of capital. What is privileged is a focus on the men who fall outside of masculinity norms rather than those who live up to them.[97] As Hearn argues, men's feelings of loss in the gender order are better understood and questioned by a refocus from certain masculinity constructions to a politicisation of men's power and the hegemony of men.[98] Hearn claims that instead there has been a detachment between masculinity and gender power in much research and analyses of men and gender.[99] This takes its most tangible form in the material when men's violence against women is represented as a consequence of men's powerlessness, a representation that may overshadow the effects of the gender order on women in terms of violence, lacking safety and limited access to political and economic power. It also inevitably leads to the question: If violence is a consequence of powerlessness, why are the majority of perpetrators not women?

Michael Kimmel instead claims that men's feelings of powerlessness are often a result of a sense of entitlement to power and privilege.[100] In other words, while a lack of power does not automatically lead to violence, not accessing the power that one feels entitled to might. This interpretation seems to be the missing link in analyses that explain men's violence with men's powerlessness. Understanding men's violence as a result of men's powerlessness shows how deeply implicated violence is in the notion of what a man is; inability to live up to gender norms leads men to use violence, and the use of violence confirms membership in the category of men. The question, then, is: If violence is intrinsically linked to the construction of the social category of men, can strategies that focus on men *as men* and on asserting manhood prevent violence? There is an underlying assumption in these

[95] See the section *Using Masculinity to Challenge Mascuinity*, p. 38.

[96] Compare R. W. Connell, 2000, p. 202.

[97] Compare L. Ekström, p. 120.

[98] J. Hearn, 2012, p. 596.

[99] Ibid.

[100] M. Kimmel, 'Who's Afraid of Men Doing Feminism?', in T. Digby (Ed.), *Men Doing Feminism*, Routledge, New York, 1998, p. 63.

strategies that relations of domination and subordination can be done away with while men and women as social categories are retained. This implies that there is a natural core to men and women that lies beyond the social. If, however, men and women are seen as constructed through relations of power where violence produces masculinity and difference from women, emancipatory projects must address those categories themselves to challenge the violence of men.

Addressing Men as Agents of Change

One form of reaction described is men feeling personally attacked when confronted with men who speak of men's gender-based violence. A strategy to bring men on board that many of the informants recount is to use positive messaging and to appeal to men as agents of change rather than as (potential) perpetrators of violence: *"We are not saying to men 'You are a rapist'. We are saying 'You can stop rape'. In other words, you are giving a perspective that says 'I can play a positive role here' [...]".* One of the informants mentions the names of some of the most wide-spread gender-based violence prevention campaigns in the country: "'*One Man Can', 'Brothers for Life', you know, 'Men Care', 'Men Engage'. It's not 'One Man Shouldn't' or 'One Man Mustn't'. So the framing is very deliberately positive*".

Merely reporting on men's perpetration of violence is also claimed to reproduce the idea of the inevitability of men's violence, a message that is described as neither true nor strategic. Instead, speaking about the change that has already occurred and the growing number of men who are saying no to violence and who are living in more gender equal ways can inspire more men to do the same. Being a role model is something that several of the informants practise in their own lives. A strategy to instil gender transformation in their environment is living by example, talking to other men and thereby working to change masculinity one man at a time.

Related to the idea of positive role modelling is that of taking active roles as men on the issue of men's violence. This strategy is visible in the material both at an individual level and on an organisational level. Many of the informants describe their work or activism in terms of not being quiet, speaking out, being visible, taking a stance, being blunt and passionate and challenging men who commit violence. Men should take a leading role in campaigns against violence and organisations are described as taking on the mission of challenging powerful men in society and holding them accountable for their actions with regard to gender-based violence and gender inequality. The fact that it is only a small number of men involved in prevention work and the resistance that they have faced has spurred some of the informants to take on more active roles and to be more passionate. Some of the informants describe how, with time, they have become less diplomatic and apologetic when talking to other men about violence. One of the informants describes his personal shift in approach when facing perpetrators of violence:

> I've confronted people and called them ‘bitches' and stop what they're doing cause it's very unmanly in my opinion. So those kind of things like, whereas before I'd say ‘Please don't do it', right now I'm like ‘Eh dude', like ‘that's fucked up, you're fucked up for doing that, your friends won't tell you but I'm telling you cause it's the truth and it's what everybody is thinking. You're a fucking asshole for doing that and as far as you and I are concerned, we're not friends, nothing'.

It becomes clear in the conversations that violence is often present in the lives of the informants and that gender-based violence prevention becomes not just a question of policy, campaigns or programmes but also a question of how to act in one's daily life. Advising women who are abused and condemning male perpetrators in one's social circles are recurring stories. One informant speaks of the importance of not just talking to the victim of violence but also of challenging the perpetrator to say:

> 'Look, you are a manifestation of this thing [patriarchy], you need to stop that and I'm not saying that you are alone, I am complicit in it so if we are both recognising our ownership, we can do something about it'. And not just constantly, you know, pass the buck and say that 'Oh, it's up to y'all [women] to figure it out'. No, no, it has to work both ways.

Here, the understanding is that women have been fighting gender-based violence without men for too long and that it is up to men, as the main perpetrators of violence and as beneficiaries of the hegemony of men, to take ownership together with women; to take an active role as men instead of “passing the buck” to women. Taking on an active role is described as important in the interviews mainly for three reasons: To feel better about oneself, to show other men that they can take part in gender-based violence prevention and to take responsibility as men for something that men are the main perpetrators of.

Discussion

I have stated that talking about men as a group or as a political category becomes problematic, in the sense that it often raises opposition, because of the hegemony of men and men's privilege to form a meta-group.[101] Jansson and Wendt, however, claim that the resistance to talking about men as a group mainly surfaces when there is no space to talk about a positive manhood or masculinity.[102] The strategy described here balances between trying to engage men to stop a problem mainly caused by men and the provocation involved in addressing men as a group. Instead of focusing on problems caused by men, men are appealed to as agents of change and positive role models, as in the examples of the public campaigns *One Man Can* and the international network *Men Engage*. This can be understood as a necessary strategy to activate men on issues that they have been reluctant to engage with and to recognise that men's violence is not a women's problem. Addressing men as a group may also destabilise the hegemony of men as it forces men to see themselves as a political category with certain interests, privileges and powers rather than as a gender neutral meta-group.

[101]Compare M. Eduards, 2002, p. 157.

[102]M. Jansson & M. Wendt , p. 16.

However, ascribing to men the power to act by virtue of membership in the category of men and urging them to create change *as men* also risks reinforcing gender patterns.[103] As Connell argues, "anti-sexist politics must be a source of disunity among men, not a source of solidarity"[104] since the grounds for mobilisation is a struggle *against* the interests that they share. The more focus on "being positive about men", Connell claims, the less focus on issues of social justice.[105] The centrality of positive messaging to men and the construction of a new, positive masculinity sends out warning signals of homosociality and individualisation of issues of social, political and economic inequalities between women and men.

Pease claims that "what is missing in much violence prevention work with men is a conceptual framework that adequately explains the links between men, masculinity, patriarchal culture and violence", a framework that could name men as the main perpetrators of violence, challenge gendered power relations while at the same time not be rejected as "male bashing".[106] The strategies described here might avoid being labelled as "male bashing" but at the expense of problematising men's power and with the risk of reinforcing men's positions as political subjects.

A similar problem presents itself in how the informants themselves speak and act and what understanding of men's roles in violence prevention these accounts convey. When informants speak about taking active roles, challenging other men, speaking out and taking leadership, masculinity is echoed in a way that can seem irreconcilable with feminist projects of challenging the gender order. This is especially true when informants speak almost violently of challenging other men, calling them "assholes" or saying that they are unmanly for using violence. The counter-hegemonic potential in punishing a man who uses violence by calling him "bitch", a derogatory word for woman, is highly questionable. But also more sedate accounts of men speaking out against violence as men seem to repeat established notions of men as active and potent political subjects. Renunciation, as stated by Connell, can be a highly masculine act, requiring and communicating individual will-power.[107] Thinking about themselves as political actors might not pose a challenge to men's self-understandings in terms of gender, especially not when the project evolves around protection of women.

Unsing Masculinity to Challenge Masculinity

One source of resistance described in the section on reactions was cultural, religious and traditional concepts that men (and to a lesser degree women) refer to in order to defend gender inequality as well as violence. Such concepts, however, are also used to connect with men. Reinterpreting or reframing

[103]M. Jansson & M. Wendt , p. 16.

[104]R. W. Connell, 2005, p. 236.

[105]Ibid.

[106]B. Pease, 2008, p. 12.

[107]Compare R. W. Connell, 2005, p. 132.

the meanings of texts, practices and values that people ascribe to are strategies to create buy-in from those who would otherwise oppose women's empowerment. One of the informants describes approaching traditional leaders from the perspective of cultural values that are normative in their lives, making sure that trust and understanding is built and from there challenge sexist understandings of gender and violence:

> […] I then problematise it and say ‘You can argue that women wearing short skirts are asking for it. But let's look traditionally, what did women wear in African societies? Next to nothing! I mean a mini-skirt is even decent', you know. And I say ‘But does that mean that women were raped in the olden days [...]?'. Of course all of them will say ‘No, no, no, they weren't'.

Other informants speak more generally of the importance of humility and of going slow when approaching others in gender transformative work. It is stressed that one has to meet them where they are and be diplomatic in order not to scare them away. Respecting community structures is also considered important, for example approaching traditional leaders before speaking to other people in the community and securing their buy-in first. One informant speaks of how to address men in rural areas:

> [W]hen you go there you don't talk to them as if you want to take *every* dignity that they have, you know. You need to communicate with them in a way that shows that they are still valued and they are most valuable members of communities. But also the other people's needs and considerations needs to be, you know, looked at when issues and decisions are taken. But you need to introduce that in a very, very good way. For instance, if you go to a rural area […] and you want to address a community gathering where your head men will be there and you are a woman, you wouldn't go there wearing trousers. Because the first thing that they will see, they will se a disrespect.

This strategy could be described as using patriarchal structures and concepts to challenge masculinity. Rather than questioning or provoking men, they are appealed to in their roles as leaders and bearers of culture, religion and tradition.

A related approach is to actively and explicitly ground one's work in human rights and the South African Constitution. As expressed by one informant:

> Another thing, what about the constitution of the country? […] I mean as long as that thing [a harmful cultural practice] is not within the framework of the constitution of the Republic of South Africa, that thing should be removed. You see. *Anything* that is not aligned to the framework of the constitution cannot be tolerated.

The constitution is described as playing a normative role in society and in many people's lives and can therefore be used as a tool to reject harmful traditional practices and promote rights of women and LGBTI people. Human rights are also referred to as a framework for discussing more controversial

issues such as gender equality and LGBTI rights specifically. One informant imagines how he might communicate around LGBTI rights with someone in a workshop:

> 'Now let's talk about somebody who's homosexual for example. […] Do they have a right to life? Do they have a right to a name? Do they have a right to safe sex? [...] And why do they have that? Because they are human beings and that's why we have human rights, because they are entitled to that because they are also human beings.'

Discussion

What kind of gender politics is produced through these strategies and what might the effects be in terms of a challenged or reinforced gender order? I have argued that men are the naturalised political subjects and that politics as usual is permeated by masculinity. Public institutions are linked to men both in the sense that they are often dominated by men and in the sense that men's conditions tend to be equated with general conditions.[108] In the construction of the idea of the nation, several feminist theorists have shown how men are also symbolically made into central actors, tied to its often glorified past and future and as defenders of its borders and its women.[109] This conflation between men and masculinity on the one hand and the nation and the public on the other can help us understand why religion, culture, the South African Constitution and the human rights framework become central in men's strategies to engage other men in work against gender-based violence. Gender equality and the rights of women and LGBTI people become less threatening when they are presented as part of those ideals that men are bearers of or when men are appealed to as protectors of those rights in their capacity of leaders. The South African Constitution, grounded in a human rights framework and created shortly after the first democratic elections, plays a pivotal role in South African society, its post-Apartheid history and to the country's self-image. Its central location in the nation building project and men's symbolic position, as understood in feminist theory, as the nation's defenders can explain, at least in part, why it is an effective tool for advancing the rights of women and LGBTI people in conversations with reluctant men.

It can also be noted how a glorified version of African history, where women allegedly were not raped, is employed to convince men that men's violence cannot be blamed on women. This is of course a shaky argument since history can be invoked as an argument for just about anything, and certainly *for* men's violence against women, but can be understood to work to bring men on board precisely because of men's identifications as bearers of history. These strategies can be understood as using gendered structures and institutions to challenge men's power and privileges. While they can function to convince men of the rights of women and LGBTI people, they might simultaneously reinstate men as protectors and bearers of culture, religion, law as well as national values and traditions.

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[108]Compare M. Jansson & M. Wendt, pp. 18-19

[109]Ibid., p. 20, compare M. Eduards, 2007, pp. 20-21.

While the strategies described above could also be used by women and LGBTI people, the message might be shaped by the messenger in the sense that the results in terms of challenging heteronormativity and a male norm might differ. Since all of the informants identify as men and the majority of them as heterosexual, the discussions on the rights of women and LGBTI people that they recount tend to take the form of (cisgendered[110], heterosexual) men discussing or defending the rights of "others". One informant stresses the need of the organisation to listen to and learn from the LGBTI sector since "*we are not treated like that ourselves*", which implies that LGBTI people are not and could not be part of the organisation he represents. Stating that "*they are also human beings*" constructs heterosexuality as the norm for what is human and puts oneself at a safe distance from that subordinated identity. When these conversations happen between men or between heterosexuals, the risk is that who is to be included in human rights, culture, tradition and the constitutional protection appears as something for men and heterosexuals to settle amongst themselves, reinforcing the hegemonic positions of those categories.

Passivity and Renunciation

One of the reactions described in the previous section was that of being construed as an ideal man, a position that some of the informants struggle with. Several informants describe how they try to deal with the risk of reproducing the same gendered power structures that they try to transform as they are given disproportionate attention and affirmation. Men who do gender equality work, several informants claim, must simultaneously recognise and be uncomfortable with the privileges that they are given as men, for example by questioning when they are listened to more than their female colleagues. Not taking advantage of the position as an ideal man and avoiding falling into stereotypical behaviour is described as requiring men to be disciplined, responsible and have integrity. An example of how men should act when faced with women who idealise them in a romantic way is given by one informant:

> So very simply, if you're running a workshop with men and women as your participants, don't sleep with the women there. Don't sleep with the men in there either. […] [T]he same applies when you're at a conference or you, you know, be thoughtful and respectful and act in ways that are principled and have integrity, you know, don't exploit it.

It is also stressed that men have to practise what they preach and bring gender equality ideals into their private lives, for example by engaging in joint decision making and sharing chores with their female partners. Rejecting gender stereotypes and power is described as requiring hard work and staying on one's toes:

[110] Cisgender is the indentity of a person whose self-perception of their gender matches the gender they were assigned with at birth.

> Norms that have been transmitted to you from birth are very difficult to change. […] It takes time and I consider myself as a work in progress. Because I know, I don't want for a minute to suggest that I'm a perfect, you know, new man.

Monitoring that men in gender-based violence prevention align both their public and private practices with gender equality goals also seems to be a key issue at an organisational level. Setting high standards for staff, challenging each other in the workplace and making sure that men who take part in violence prevention or gender equality training and programmes bring their new perspectives to their relationships, families and social circles are some of the methods described.

One informant suggests that there should be an ethical code for men who enter into gender equality work and possibly a screening for past perpetration of violence. The code would state what is expected of men in terms of embracing women's rights publicly and privately, consequences if one fails to live up to those minimum standards and what kind of support is available to change behaviour. The screening would not necessarily serve to exclude men who have committed violence but for the sector not to be caught unaware and for male activists to promise commitment:

> [W]e should know that we can work with men, that there's a huge potential for them to be change agents, but at the same time, there are certain expectations that should not be compromised when you are working in this sector.

Concurrently with wanting to take active roles and being visible as men in gender-based violence prevention, the informants stress the importance of men taking a step back and allowing women to express themselves. This strategy seems to be somewhat opposed to the one previously described as men taking active roles. One informant says:

> [I]t's very easy for men to come into this space and want to claim leadership of this sector, you know, because we grow up being groomed to be leaders. We get to a space, we dominate by our discretion.

There seems to be an act of balancing between taking ownership of the question of men's violence as men and being sensitive to the risk of reproducing men's privilege and power, something – as described previously – parts of the women's movement have criticised men in the field of doing. While several informants say that they understand those sentiments and try to deal with them by not being too vocal, this is also described as a dilemma that causes frustration. One informant says:

> [I]n other words, the only way that I can make a contribution in this society is to sit down and be quiet and die in my corner so that I don't bother those that feel 'Actually, men should not be heard'. And, is that the kind of society we want? Does that really make women therefore achieve fuller equality in that they speak more, and speak by themselves and men don't feature in that discourse? Men keep quiet and therefore that *then* makes the society equal? I don't know […].

Other informants, however, are not familiar with this criticism from the women's sector and describe the challenges that they face in terms of a shortage of men in gender equality work. The issue to be solved, then, is not the *role* of men in gender-based violence prevention but the *small number* of men. One of the informants, when asked if he sees the fact that people listen more to him than to his female colleagues as a dilemma, responds: "*It is a dilemma because, I mean, I cannot be all over the place.*"

Discussion

Contrary to conceptions of the existence of good and bad men, good and bad masculinities, the strategies described here suggest that all men are "bad" in the sense of carrying a sexist backpack. These descriptions focus more on the hegemony of men as a group and men's power in relation to women than on hegemonic and multiple masculinities and hierarchies between men. Radical feminist ideas of men's experiences as all together patriarchal have been strongly questioned as universalist and essentialist in much feminist theory. However, as noted by Egeberg Holmgren, these assumptions continue to play a pivotal role on an individual level for men in feminism.[111] This seems to be true for several of the informants in this study, some of whom combine ideas of multiple masculinities and men's painful experiences of the gender order with accounts of the inevitability of men's reproduction of gendered power. However, none of the informants seems to think of men as impossible subjects of feminist knowledge and practice. "Confessing" to privilege, recognising gendered structures and being suspicious of men are formulated as steps to gender transformation and greater equality. The message conveyed is that men need supervision and guidance to become subjects in feminist struggles or in women's empowerment. Challenging the hegemony of men, in these accounts, becomes a question of education and of establishing support systems and ethical codes.

For some informants, there is no contradiction in men's work against men's violence. Difficulties are understood as a shortage of men in this work and the strategy is mainly to be active and visible as a man and thereby encourage more men to follow suit. For others, the situation is more complicated and some of the informants speak of the importance of taking a step back. In her interviews with men in the Australian environmental movement, Connell calls men's active choice of passivity a project of renunciation. The underlying understanding of this strategy, Connell claims, is that sexist behaviours towards women are the core of patriarchy and that the main contribution a man can make is to hold back from such actions.[112] A dilemma is presented in the material between wanting to take active roles as men in gender-based violence prevention while not wanting to take over the women's struggle. Being a good man, in the sense of condemning violence and speaking out for women, means being a bad feminist in the sense of taking over women's spaces and platforms. It seems hard to reconcile these two positions – man plus feminist becomes an oxymoron – which creates frustration. How are men to

[111] L. Egeberg Holmgren, pp. 34-35.

[112] R. W. Connell, 2005, pp. 131-132.

prevent men's violence against women without reproducing men's power? This is not only the overarching question in this study but also a very real question in the lives of some of the informants, especially when faced with resistance from the female feminists whose missions the informants try to support.

The challenge is thus dual: how to avoid reproducing the hegemony of men and how to be accepted by the women's movement? The strategy on both levels seems to be to recognise one's privilege, work on changing oneself and allow space and time for women to speak amongst and for themselves. An aspect of this, explored by Egeberg Holmgren and Hearn, is how men construct themselves as feminists *in the interview context*. In their analysis, men pass[113] as feminists in the research interviews by confessing to failures in keeping to feminism, through acknowledging women's separatism as a method and by agreeing to not being let in because of their gender. Problematising the roles and questioning the possibilities of men in feminist projects of gender transformation can function to construct oneself as a feminist; to be included by excluding oneself.[114]

This strategy suggests that men who undertake gender equality work risk being construed as ideal men in ways that perpetuate masculinity but at the same time struggle to be those perfect men, in the sense of rejecting privileges and questioning stereotypes both publicly and privately. Egeberg Holmgren describes men's radical feminist and radical constructionist positionings as a "no man's land" in that men, when taking those positions, are categorised as what they are trying to challenge: "good men".[115] What strategy could men use to engage in work against men's violence without being construed as ideal men and reproducing gender patterns? How can they obtain support from the women's movement while at the same time bringing more men on board? There seems to be little space for doing all those things at the same time which, for some informants, creates frustration.

Accountability to Women

Taking a step back and being aware not to dominate is coupled with acknowledgements of the work that has been done by the women's movement and the leadership of women in the work against men's gender-based violence. Some informants also claim that the work with men and boys must be grounded in promoting women's rights and demonstrate how it improves the situation of women and girls. While men are the primary targets, women should be the beneficiaries. Several informants phrase this as men in gender-based violence prevention and organisations that work with men and

[113]"Passing" is a sociological concept used by L. Egeberg Holmgren and J. Hearn to understand how men are recognised and accepted as "(pro)feminists" in the feminist social context. See further L. Egeberg Holmgren & J. Hearn, 'Framing 'Men in Feminism': Theoretical Locations, Local Contexts and Practical Passings in Men's Gender-Conscious Positionings on Gender Equality and Feminism'. *Journal of Gender Studies*, vol. 18, no. 4, December 2009, pp. 407-408.

[114]Ibid., p. 410.

[115]L. Egeberg Holmgren, p. 103.

boys being accountable to women. Partnerships with women's organisations, strategic dialogues and being given constant feedback on programmes and campaigns are mentioned as strategies for aligning the work with the goals of the greater women's movement. To communicate the right messages and to really promote gender equality, the work of men and with men must be informed by the day-to-day struggles of women. Several of the informants make comparisons with the role of whites in the struggle against apartheid:

> [W]hite people fought against the apartheid regime and learnt and participated. But white people were always reminded that this is not your, your struggle, you know. Yes, you may lead, yes you may participate, but please remember this is not your struggle. And I think that's just how it is even with this work. Yes, we may participate as men, yes we may lead as men, but this is not our struggle, this is women's struggle.

The understanding seems to be that men, as beneficiaries of the gender order and the main perpetrators of violence, must accept the leadership of women if they want to change that situation. Otherwise, the same gendered power structures that cause gender-based violence might be reproduced.

The notion of accountability, however, is complicated by what seems to be an increasing interest, not least from donors, in the work with men and boys. Some informants describe taking part in joint fundraising with women's organisations and making cases for women's organisations in donor forums. Several informants also explain how they are not working in a “men's organisation” or in a “men's sector” but rather in a setting where at least half of the management and staff are women and where work with men and boys is one of several components to promote gender equality. At the same time, men's work against gender-based violence is framed as part of the women's movement *and* as a separate sphere that is accountable to the women's movement but yet has to support women's organisations. The dilemma that arises when men's work against men's violence is seen as separate from, and given more attention than, gender equality work in general, is again one of reproducing men's power. The strategy to counter this seems to be greater realignment between the work with men and boys and the traditional women's movement. As expressed by one informant:

> And what is our role then, when we realise that the spotlight has shifted from what we want to support? Because, the reason we exist is to strengthen and give support to what women have been doing for so many years. And our role I suppose then is to, is to go closer to the women's movement. [...]And if the spotlights follows us it's ok because then it will shine both on us and the women's movements.

Discussion

The idea of men's accountability to women seems to be based on an understanding of women's epistemic privilege in the form of first-hand experiences of gender oppression. But I also interpret it as an ideologically informed position, visible not least in the comparisons with the struggle against

Apartheid. This position implies that men should be led by women not only because women know best but because a struggle against an oppressing power should be led by those who are oppressed by it. As discussed in the previous section, however, it seems hard for men to engage in any practices without being given disproportionate attention in ways that can perpetuate gender inequality. The risk that men reproduce men's power and privilege whether they want to or not is concretely materialised in the shifting of donor attention and resources to the work with men and boys.

5. Conclusions

In this thesis, I have mapped out the reactions that men who work to prevent men's gender-based violence face in their professional as well as private lives and the strategies that they adopt in the face of these responses. Starting in these empirical results, based on interviews with men in gender-based violence prevention, I have tried to understand how men's involvement in gender equality or feminist work fits within or reshapes the boundaries of the gendered political order. In this concluding section, I will summarise the results and further develop the analysis to critically interpret how men's work against men's violence might challenge and reproduce the hegemony of men.

Reactions: Men, Not Men, Better Men

Analysing the responses that informants describe, I see them as placing men in one (or several) of three positions: *1) Not real men.* The first set of responses are those of questioning and ridicule from other men, who call them “sissies”, “ladies” or accuse them of siding with women against men. *2) Ideal men*. From women, on the other hand, responses are mostly embracive and informants describe being perceived as safe and heterosexually desirable. The informants also describe how men will listen more to them than to women. I understand these responses to construe the informants as ideal men. *3) Men after all*. From the women's movement and female feminists, however, a number of the informants have been met with scepticism relating to their motives and interests as well as criticism regarding what is perceived of as a shift in resources and attention from women's organisations to gender equality work by and for men and boys. The feminist scepticism suggests that they *are* men and therefore not credible as subjects of gender equality struggles; man and feminist is constructed as an oxymoron.

Needless to say, the reactions to men's work against men's gender-based violence are more complex and varied than what this outline suggests but I will try in the following to draw a few conclusions from the responses described. On the one hand, men in the feminist field are constructed as non-men and as traitors. This brings into stark focus how men's work against men's violence challenges masculinity and the normalisation of violence that it encapsulates. It also seems to defy homosociality between men and threaten the privilege that men have to view themselves as a gender-neutral category. “Real women” and “real men” are expected to remain loyal to men under the pretence of gender neutrality; a gender neutrality that implies that men are citizens, that homosociality is politics and that

heteronormativity is democracy. When men break that contract, they are punished by being construed as “not real men”.

On the other hand, the responses suggest that men in gender-based violence prevention are construed as “good men”. This can be understood as reinstating the idea of harmony between women and men; a harmony disturbed by other (bad) men. In other words, the positive responses seem to create a new, non-violent but nevertheless heterosexual and dominating form of masculinity. Welcoming reactions continue to rely on gender binarity and hierarchical differentiation of masculinity from femininity, thereby risking reproducing the hegemony of men. Challenging the hegemony of men, on the other hand, causes resistance in ways that suggests that it would deter other men from involving themselves in the struggle against men's violence.

Men's counter-hegemonic practices could be interpreted as challenging essentialist and deterministic notions of experience, namely the perception that men cannot produce knowledge of and insights into the situation of women.[116] The material also suggests that it is easier for men to get through to both women and men on the topic of gender equality, and the informants can be seen as using their position and an insider's knowledge of masculinity to transform gender relations. However, the counter-hegemonic potential seems to be overshadowed by the fact that men, even when engaging with issues of gender oppression, are constructed as subjects of objective knowledge. While women in the field are seen as raging and “anti-men”, men are seen as more balanced, given disproportionate attention and are thereby re-instated as the naturalised political subjects. Even when speaking alongside women, then, the gendered context mutes women and makes men's accounts of women's experiences more valid than women's own. This raises the question of whether men can teach men to listen to and acknowledge women and how this can be done without concomitantly reproducing homosociality. It also brings into question how women's positions, autonomy and subjectivity can be strengthened if women prefer men to speak for them.

While being a man in the two first positions is constructed as something positive or desirable, the sceptical responses from parts of the women's movement place the informants in a position of being *men after all*, in other words, as bearers of the gender order despite their efforts to challenge it. This resistance presents some of the informants with a dilemma of being questioned by those whose mission they are trying to support.

Strategies: Reclaiming or Abandoning Men

In terms of the informants’ own strategies, I see them as to different degrees rejecting, contesting and confirming these reactions and the positions that are made available to them. These are the strategies

[116] S. Harding, p. 172.

that I have described and discussed: *1) Recreating and Reclaiming Men,* to broaden the notion of what a man is, create new, non-violent masculinities and reject allegations that it is unmanly to promote women's rights. *2) Abandoning Men*. This strategy, quite marginal in the material, is instead to focus on men in their capacities of for example community activists and to try to create identifications that go beyond gender. *3) Emphasising the "Costs of Masculinity"*, and make men see the benefits for themselves of living more equally with women. *4) Addressing Men as Agents of Change* and reaching out to them with positive messages of how they can stop violence. *5) Using Masculinity to Challenge Masculinity* is how I interpret how the informants make use of and reinterpret normative cultural, traditional and legal concepts to persuade others of the rights of women and LGBTI people. *6) Passivity and Renunciation* can describe how the informants stress the importance of them and other men to not take advantage of the position as "ideal men", to consistently reject privileges that are conferred upon them and to be aware not to take over women's struggles. A need for monitoring of and social support systems for men in feminism is also stressed, as gendered socialisation is described as causing men to unwillingly perpetuate gender inequality. *7) Accountability to Women* in struggles for gender equality is highlighted and a strategy to live up to that is building partnerships with women's organisations.

When analysing these strategies, a political project emerges where men are to create change, challenge men's power and promote the rights of women and LGBTI people *as men*, with only a few exceptions deemphasising a male identity as a source of struggles for equality. As I interpret the strategies described, men are to be made aware of their stake in gender equality, their losses under the pressures of masculinity and be taught to respect and appreciate women and LGBTI people. The idea that gender equality can be reached through increased knowledge, however, depoliticises gender and removes power from the analysis. It also leads to the conclusion, formulated by some of the informants, that what is needed are more spaces for men to discuss these issues. This seems somewhat paradoxical and counterproductive as one could also claim that most spaces, including the political sphere, are men's spaces. It would appear, however, that men do not use those spaces to talk about gender equality.

Masculinity: Worth Reforming?

Making political claims on the basis of identity and re-claiming despised identities has throughout history been ways in which oppressed people have organised against domination; identities can enable people to become political subjects.[117] What happens, however, when such methods are undertaken by people at the advantaged end of the social hierarchy? As argued by Connell, the risk of reproducing homosociality is substantial if the focus of men's challenges to masculinity are around their shared

[117]B. Pease, 2000, p.110.

interests as men, since the grounds for mobilisation is a struggle *against* those interests.[118] This can be contrasted with solidarity and identity affirming practices in gay liberation movements, within or between racialised groups or between women, where the interests shared are those of resisting institutional oppression and structural subordination. Pease, however, argues that Connell's notion of "exit politics" – that men devoted to gender equality should attempt to abandon masculinity – is unrealistic as a political strategy and that men's identities should instead be destabilised. Pease argues for promoting a new form of masculine subjectivity where solidarity with women and gay men is encouraged.[119]

Interpreting the reactions to and strategies of men in this project, my conclusion is that efforts to promote equality within the framework of a new masculinity, as suggested by Pease, is an effective and pragmatic strategy to bring men on board the project. However, it seems to remain limited in its potential to challenge the hegemony of men. This is due to factors that lie within as well as outside the control of the informants; a combination of strategies that in themselves reinforce men's power and privileges and of a context that tends to undo the radical potential of men's counter-hegemonic practices. Instead, I believe that viewing gender as power rather than identity serves as a better point of departure for emancipatory projects, especially for men. Time and energy could be better used directed at seeking new forms of alliance-building and identification, rather than trying to reform or update identities that build on the subordination of others. A compelling comparison, also made by one of the informants, is that of a specific white anti-racist struggle and attempts to create "new, good whites". If gender, like race, is seen as power rather than biology, then the elimination of power structures will lead to the elimination of the gender categories themselves. While I acknowledge that one can not just seize being a man any more than whites can simply seize being whites – power structures do not allow such fluidity or crumble at the conscious, radical identity formations of a few individuals – I believe that viewing gender as power and as something to be dissolved rather than reified must be the goal of any movement with emancipatory ambitions.

Drawing upon the distinction made in the theoretical framework[120] between the hegemony of men and hegemonic masculinity to explain my suggestions might be helpful. I believe that men who want to end men's violence need to acknowledge the hegemony of men; men's institutional powers and how they confer upon men certain privileges, as well as the way socialisation may work to block individual men from seeing those privileges. However, the notions of "hegemonic masculinity" and "multiple masculinities" can be helpful to identify new and other points of solidarity and unity beyond the social category of men or a male identity. A focus only on multiple masculinities might result in a project of

[118]R. W. Connell, 2005, p. 236.

[119]B. Pease, 2000, p. 109-110.

[120]See *Theoretical Framework*, p. 7.

developing new, “better” masculinities while a fixation on the hegemony of men and the inevitability of men's reproduction of privileges might result in what Kahane calls “self-indulgent immobilization”[121]. A combination of the two, however, holds the potential for men committed to stopping men's violence of becoming aware of the contradictions that their position as disloyal bearers of the gender order entails while at the same time recognising that gender is neither biology nor destiny.

This, of course, sounds hopelessly abstract and un-realistic. So what would or does such a conviction mean for men in gender-based violence prevention? It means that the focus of the work to end men's violence is not on how men can become better men, but on how men can identify beyond the category of men and develop a frustration of their own with how the gender order structures the world. After all, as little as a woman is just a woman, a man is just a man. A focus on men's accountability to women and LGBTI people, as I see it, creates alliances built on recognition of difference in a way that risks producing that difference as natural. It also creates a distance between men on the one hand and women and LGBTI people on the other hand. Because of heterosexual men's position in the gender hierarchy, their speaking for the rights of others risks constructing the rights of those “others” as something to be settled among heterosexual, cisgendered men. When a heterosexual man says that homosexuals are “also human”, it settles heterosexuality as the norm and excludes the speaker from homosexuality; it places him at a safe distance from that subordinated identity.

A greater integration of work with and by women, men, heterosexual, cisgendered and LGBTI people could remedy some of the problems related to speaking for other groups. Greater realignment, as raised by several informants, could also contribute to countering the problem that when a privileged group speaks about power and oppression, it is taken to be more true or relevant than when the oppressed group themselves speak. Broader social movements and community-based forms of organising addressing racial, sexual, gender and class oppression might create other axes of identification that better promote emancipation than a more narrow men's feminism as that promoted in much theory on men and feminism[122] or the notion of men's accountability to women and LGBTI

[121] D. J. Kahane, p. 229.

[122] See for example H. Brod,'To Be a Man or Not to Be a Man – That is the Feminist Question', in T. Digby (Ed.), *Men Doing Feminism*, Routledge, New York, 1998, pp. 208-210. Brod argues that men have a right and obligation to develop their own brand of feminist politics and for the need of a profeminist men's standpoint. See also Pease, 2000, p. 136, arguing that “the formation of male subjectivities that challenge patriarchal masculinities constitutes the first step in the development of profeminist activism among men” and for profeminist men to support feminist women and gay men. Compare also Kimmel, 1998, p. 68, who describes mens' missions in feminism to be “its cheerleaders, its allies, its footsoldiers, and we must be so in front of other men”. The problem with these constructions of the role of men in feminism, as I see it, is that they seem to suggest that there is a specific form of male feminism and that men do think or should think alike around feminist issues; something that is certainly not true for feminist women. It is likely that for example black, white, liberal, radical, queer or heterosexual men have different feminist ideas that might be better developed within different feminist struggles (with women) rather than reduced into a male feminism or profeminist stance.

people stressed in the current material. While (heterosexual) men's complete identification with women and LGBTI people might cause blindness in the face of one's own privilege, it should be possible to merge organisations of, by and for women, men and LGBTI people. Such a move would probably entail challenges in the sense of negotiating and contesting reproduction of power relations within the organisations as such, but is that contestation not an important step towards emancipation?

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Appendix: Interview Guide

Formalities

The structure of the interview: Will take up to an hour. I have prepared questions but am also open to the informants reflections that might go outside the scope of those prepared questions. To not breech the time set for the interview I will let you know if we are getting too far from the topic and will have to refocus.

The interview will be recorded and transcribed. The material will be analysed and presented in a master's thesis. Quotes may be used and presented to illustrate the analysis. I will use aliases for the informants, however full anonymity is hard to guarantee as this is a rather small field and the sample consists of around 10 people. This means that someone who is very familiar with the context of gender-based violence prevention in South Africa might be able to identify specific informants in the study. The focus of the study, however, is not on individuals but on social and political patterns and contexts.

You can stop the interview at any time. You only answer those questions that you want to answer. You can withdraw from the study at a later stage should you change your mind about your participation.

If you want, I can send you the transcription of the interview when it is done.

Any questions before we start?

Introduction

- Tell me briefly about yourself and how you are involved in gender-based violence prevention or response.
- How did you get involved in gender-based violence prevention? Since how many years? Professionally or as an activist?

Responses

- To start with, I am interested in how people react or respond when you tell them what you work with. Can you tell me about one such reaction that you remember?
- Is this a common reaction?
- What are some more, common responses (positive/negative)? (How about with friends, family, from women, men, within the same field, in professional contexts?)
- What about the organisation/department that you work for. Are there certain issues or aspects of your work that create negative attention? Positive attention?
- Tell me about a time when your work has been negatively received.
- Tell me about a time when your work has been well received.
- If you compare your experiences with the experiences of female colleagues, are there any differences?
- Are there differences between how men and women respond to your work?

Strategies

- Have the reactions that you have told me about made you change the way you work or the way you talk about your work? How?

- Do you have different strategies to talk about your work or conduct your work in different contexts? How about within the same field of work? Tell me about a few of those strategies.
- Are there certain responses that you actively seek or try to create? How?
- Are there others that you try to avoid? How?
- Are there any other challenges that you have to overcome in order to do your work the way you want?
- Is there anything in your work that you consider a dilemma (specifically as a man in gender-based violence prevention)?

Debriefing

- Is there anything that you would like to add?
- How was this, any reflections or comments?

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