



**UiT** The Arctic University of Norway

Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education

# Making Masculinities Visible

A gender discourse analysis

Anna Frederica Stumpf

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## Introduction

“Indeed, the women’s movement is one of the greatest success stories of the 20th century, perhaps even of any century. It is the story of a monumental, revolutionary transformation of the lives of more than half the population.

But what about the other half?”

Kimmel, 2001 - Lecture prepared for International Women’s Day Seminar,  
European Parliament

Despite the irrefutable success of the women’s movement, the United Nations posits that violence against women and girls remains “one of the most widespread, persistent and devastating human rights violations in our world today” and, according to its 2019 Spotlight Initiative, this violence cuts across all generations, nationalities, communities and spheres of our societies, irrespective of age, ethnicity, disability or other background (United Nations\* [n.d.]).

Eliminating this violence constitutes a major part of the United Nations’ fifth Sustainable Development Goal, aimed at “achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls” (United Nations\*\*). The Sustainable Development Goals continue the work begun by their predecessor, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to achieve a better and sustainable future for all by 2030. These set of goals boast a more wide-reaching and ambitious agenda: not only have they evolved from aiming to ‘promote gender equality’ to ‘eliminate gender inequality’, they are also “formulated on a strong gender analysis which understands gender inequality to possess economic, political and social aspects which are interconnected” (Esquivel & Sweetman, 2016, p.15).

This thesis focuses on the roles and responsibilities of men and masculinities in eliminating gender-based violence, according to two discourses that fall under the fifth SDG, including the above-mentioned Spotlight Initiative. Here it questions the Spotlight Initiative’s tendency to place the solving, or ending of VAWG, largely in the hands of women, comparing it to the 2014 Partners for Prevention (P4P) project, which focuses more specifically on the relationship between masculinity and violence, as well as men’s violence more generally. Where the former follows the more typical route of focusing on ‘women’s empowerment’

and ‘gender equality’ and fails to address men and masculinities in full, I show how the latter addresses them as both perpetrators and stakeholders.

This thesis applies a feminist poststructuralist lens to the problematisation of men and masculinities in discourses on gendered violence. Recognising that our theories and discourses determine reality, this thesis argues that men’s involvement in gender equality is contingent on their inclusion (discursive and otherwise) in the gender agenda. By comparing P4P and the Spotlight Initiative, it demonstrates the importance of this inclusion being made explicit - arguing that the roles and responsibilities of men and masculinities in eliminating gendered violence and achieving gender equality become a central cornerstone of contemporary gender discourse.

In order to understand the context, I will be introducing concepts from feminist and masculinities scholars, as well as tools of analysis that have influenced this thesis’ analytical approach with their focus on discursive shaping, including Bacchi’s (2012) WPR-method.

This section will give a brief introduction to the impact masculinities studies has had on the women’s movement and the resulting conceptualisation of ‘gender’. After, I provide the outline this thesis will follow more specifically.

### *Raising consciousness*

The women’s movement of the late sixties, seventies and eighties was radical, militant and fiercely political, driven predominantly by activism and necessity (Nascimento & Connell 2017). As highlighted by Kaufman in reference to this time, the difference in how men and women experience gender and feminism was, in fact, clearly visible:

“It felt more familiar than different: women taking enormous chances - in some cases risking Their lives - to fight the tide of violence against women and girls. Men who were just beginning to find their anti-patriarchal voices and to discover ways to work alongside women” (Kaufman, 1999, p.1).

As Tolson (2004) explains, ‘becoming conscious’ in a feminist way for women is a distinctly political struggle (with negative self-images, and *against* the power of men), constructed

from a position of social subordination. For men, on the other hand, it is more “a way of gaining some self-distance *within* the dominant culture (p.69). The incorporation of men into the women’s movement, whether as ‘allies’ or as part of the emergence of the academic field of masculinities studies, then had an irreversible impact on it, depoliticising and changing its focal point from ‘women’ to ‘gender’.

Gender, according to the WHO, simply refers to “the socially constructed characteristics of women and men - such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men” (WHO\*, 2019). In the specific context of academia, the term ‘gender’ has a further meaning, providing a relational notion that defined men and women in terms of one another for the simple reason that many worried that ‘women’s studies’ scholarships focused too narrowly and separately on women (Scott, 1986, p.1054).

Concern for men’s perception of and their relationship to feminism and gender then was at the centre of a major depoliticisation of the field of gender and one that ensured that the women’s movement as it was would no longer exist today. While feminist consciousness is more widespread than ever amongst women *and* men, no equivalent mass movement for gender equality that is as explicit or political as its predecessor exists today. Instead, scholars and activists have encouraged the engagement and mobilisation of men, coupled with a drive to understand masculinity (Flood, 2015; Greig, 2009; Das & Singh, 2014).

In this, they have struggled even more than generations of feminists before them, given ‘ordinary’ men’s general disinterest in gender (whether their own or anybody else’s).

The fact that, “as the dominant sex in patriarchal culture, and historically the dominant practitioners of history, men as a group have not proved especially curious about men as a sex” (Allen, 2002, p.192) has preoccupied the study of masculinities, which brought with it an explicit academic focus on men *as gendered beings*. The universalisation of one male experience, and the implicit equation of ‘men’ with ‘human being’, that equally occupied feminists of the time, was highlighted by masculinities scholars as being detrimental not only to women, but to men also (Wright, 2005, p.243). This underpins Brod’s “A Case for Men’s Studies”:

“While *seemingly* about men, traditional scholarship of generic man as the human norm in

Fact systematically excludes from consideration what is unique to men *qua* men. The overgeneralisation from male to generic human experience not only distorts our understanding of what, if anything, is truly generic to humanity but also precludes the study of masculinity as the *specific male* experiences, rather than a universal paradigm of *human* experience. The most general definition of men's studies is that it is the study of masculinities and male experiences as a specific and varying socio-historical cultural formations. Such studies situate masculinities as objects of study on par with femininities, instead of elevating them to universal norms" (Brod, 2018, p.2).

In this vein, British feminist Jana Hanmer addressed the intersection between feminist interests and the representation of men in an early volume on *Critical Studies of Men and Masculinities*, highlighting the importance of "naming men, *as men*, as *one of two genders*" (Hanmer, 1990, p.38; Lykke, 2010, p.62). As one of two genders, prominent masculinities scholar Michael Kimmel goes on to argue that, in order to achieve gender equality "men must come to see gender equality [as] in their interests - as men" (Kimmel 2001).

This thesis argues that the concern for men's relationship to their own gender has altered the gender discourse, depoliticising it along with the field of gender. And that, despite the constantly reiterated need to involve men, public discourse still predominantly places the onus on women to dismantle and reconstruct the status quo. Gender, then, is still a women's issue'.

To demonstrate this, I will be examining the issue of gender-based violence, specifically in the context of two case studies - two UN based funding programmes aimed at eliminating gendered violence. These two case studies, Partners for Prevention (P4P) and the Spotlight Initiative, will be explained in greater detail below. Their analysis will focus above all on the *explicit* and *implicit* representations of men, masculinities and their roles and responsibilities in the eradication of gendered violence and achievement of gender equality.

I will outline three types of discursive shaping. These are applications of Berns' (2001) 'degendering the problem' and 'gendering the blame', which refer to the way gender is removed discursively from the framing of a problem, before the responsibility to end abuse is then transferred to women in discourse (Berns, 2001, p.296). The third rests on Cornwall and Rivas' (2015) notion that patterns of placating terminology (misused forms of terms such as

‘gender equality’ and ‘women’s empowerment’) are employed to create a ‘fog of consensus’ through their positive and consensus-seeking associations, despite the fact they arguably dull our understanding of what a truly transformative agenda might look like (p.400).

Bacchi’s “What’s the Problem Represented to be?” method, which assists in highlighting the implicit constructions of masculinity in each case’s problematisation, has provided inspiration in demonstrating the impact discursive shaping can have on our understanding of an issue like gendered violence, as well as on the possible solutions we offer more generally.

Finally, I loosely follow Bacchi’s suggestion of applying her tool of analysis to my own problematisation of men and masculinities in the discursive context of gendered violence and the possibility of gender equality, focusing on the feminist poststructuralist approach that underlines this thesis. According to Bacchi, this should ensure that my own positionality and the implicit assumptions my views are based on become apparent. Here, I hold my own work up to the same standards as Jasinski, Connell, Hearn, Messerschmidt, etc., demonstrating the impact our language, terminology, problematisation and attitudes have on ‘solving the problem’ of gendered violence, and of masculinity itself. To this end, the next chapter will explore some of the dominant theories and narratives around gendered violence, as well as the gendering of violence, hinging on the question - is violence masculine? The following chapter will connect this to dominant masculinities theory, which posits masculinities as being multiple, and as functioning in relation to one another, as well as being entirely based on power.

### **Literature review**

This chapter highlights some of the relevant literature to provide a context as to the different ways in which the relationship between violence and gender has typically been theorised and conceptualised. First and foremost, I will clarify the choice made here to use the terms of gendered violence and gender-based violence, demonstrating the impact differences in terminology can have on our understanding of a concept and experience. The following section deals explicitly with the way in which gendered violence has been problematised historically, before I address the way in which the relationship between masculinity and violence has typically been theorised using explanations from socialisation and gendering violence, to violence as a tool in the construction of masculinity.

### Gender-based violence, gendered violence, VAWG, or men's violence?

The biggest difference in choosing between the available terminology lies in the *implied intent*. This is made explicit in the work of Boyle, writing on the interrelationships of gender and violence: “Is our focus on commonalities among victims (violence *against women*); perpetrators (*men's violence*) and meanings (*gendered* or *gender-based violence*; *sexual violence*) or on a theoretical and political approach (*feminist*)?” (Boyle, 2018, p.20).

Boyle argues that, beyond these implicit meanings, there exist consequences that must be taken into account in their use also: VAWG can problematically imply women's vulnerability, rather than men's responsibility and further omits a crucial detail - a movement *against* violence against women. Boyle suggests that this omission implies that “we accept that violence against women is an unchanging reality and our job is to support women in that context” (Boyle, 2018, p.20). Men's violence can be seen to deny the experiences of different survivors and to unfairly accuse men - as in the case of female genital mutilation (FGM), which typically involves female perpetrators, even if they are acting in male interests. The relative neutrality of the terms gender-based violence and gendered violence can be inappropriate if used in the context of violence *against women by men*, as it cloaks the *gendered intent* layered within (Boyle, 2018, p.20).

The decision to use these ‘neutral’ terms, unless directly quoting literature or case studies, comes down to the fact that I take them here to portray “the assertion that violence is in some ways influenced by or influences gender relations”, but little beyond that (Skinner et al., 2013, p.2-3). Furthermore, it assists in highlighting the difference in application in the two case studies. Gender-based violence and gendered violence have further been criticised for cloaking the fact that all violence is in some ways gender-based. However, this assertion is built on the assumption that violence is understood as a masculinity practice, which will be explored towards the end of this chapter (Kelly, 2015, p.118).

### Gender violence - theory and historical development

Gender-based violence - defined as any form of violence directed at an individual based on their biological sex, gender identity, or perceived adherence to socially defined norms of masculinity and femininity - is a key marker of gender *inequality* (ICRW\*). Gender equality, conversely, is generally understood to mean that a person's rights, responsibilities and opportunities should not be dependent on their sex or gender identity. In practical terms, this



means that alongside the elimination of gender-based violence, gender equality requires the promotion of equal economic independence and gender balance in decision making (UNFPA 2005; European Commission 2018).

Nowadays, gender-based violence is recognised as “both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality and is an abuse of the power imbalance between women and men” (ActionAidUK [n.d.])<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, it also represents one of the most notable human rights violations in *all* societies, according to the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE 2019).

On top of this, the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal on gender equality makes the case that it is *not only* a fundamental human right, but also “a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world” (United Nations\*\*[n.d.]). These are all examples of how gendered violence now has a significant profile in public policy and international law, alongside its own major academic field, as demonstrated by the *Violence Against Women: SAGE Journals, Journal of Gender-Based Violence or Violence and Gender*, among others. This makes it easy to forget how little was known about the range and extent of gendered violence as recently as the 1970s (Kelly, 2015, p.115). Before then, the issue of gender-based violence inhabited almost exclusively the realm of women-led activism, with solutions being formulated at this level also, in the form of “by-women-for-women” responses like refuges, rape-crisis helplines and self-defense classes (Kelly, 2015, p.115).

Today, gender-based violence is understood to take on a number of different forms, from sexual harassment, trafficking and intimate-partner violence (which appears to be universal), to FGM, forced and early marriage and honour-based violence (which is more prone to occurring in certain developing nations). Its extent and severity have been largely uncovered, as well as its prevalence beyond the family and intimate relationships, to schools, workplaces, public spaces and institutions, during conflict or dislocation, but also during ‘peace’ (Kelly, 2015, p.114).

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<sup>1</sup> This goes for all forms of gendered violence, even men-on-men violence, which does not involve men. This will become clearer in the section on ‘hegemonic masculinity’ - where the link between masculinity, heteronormativity and violence is further highlighted.

While our knowledge of gender-based violence in its many forms has increased, the theoretical explanations for gendered violence have perhaps changed the most. Earlier configurations categorised theories according to ‘individualist’, ‘familial/systems’, ‘structuralist’ and ‘poststructuralist’ approaches, whereas contemporary explanations consist of a combination of the above approaches, integrating social factors, individual characteristics, structural factors and the effects of discursive shaping to offer a ‘multi-dimensional’ approach to understanding gendered violence. I outline these approaches below, tracing their evolution albeit briefly to our current-day context.

### Approaches to explaining gendered violence

Individualist approaches locate the ‘problem’ of gender-based violence in the individual. Here gendered violence is the result of one of three ‘options’. The first posits that it is a matter of social learning, which means that the individual learns how to behave through both experience of, and exposure to, violence. The second sees gendered violence as a product of personality characteristics and psychopathy, meaning that “individuals who are violent towards women have some sort of personality disorder or mental illness” (Gov. Scotland\* [n.d.]). The last explains gendered violence by biological and physiological means, claiming that “violence against women is related to the process of natural selection” (Gov. Scotland\* [n.d.]) (Jasinski, 2001, p.6-11).

Familial/systems approach, on the other hand, focuses on patterns of interaction between couples and within families basing their problematisation on ‘abusive couples’, ‘family violence’ and ‘dysfunctional relationships’ (Gov. Scotland\* [n.d.]). This fails to adequately address the gendered realities of violence, as is already apparent in their application of gender-neutral terminology, even when it is arguably not appropriate. It also does not take into account the *gendered context* of violence. For example, Miller and Meloy (2006) investigated how mandatory arrest policies in the US in domestic violence cases led to more and more women being arrested. What they found was that a gender-neutral approach failed to distinguish between patterns of abuse and incidents - so the cases of women arrested for violent behaviour that turned out to be a ‘frustration response’ to continuous abuse or even just self-defense.

Structuralist approaches locate the problem of gender-based violence in social, political, cultural and ideological structures that encourage or allow gendered violence, and seek

explanations beyond the individual. Here, the causal factors for gendered violence include poverty, unemployment, isolation, homelessness, loss of (male) social status, and stress (Gov. Scotland\* [n.d.]). This perspective includes theories based on cultural acceptance of violence and subcultures of violence. The former refers to the glorification or normalisation of violence in society (for example, in film or television), which some researchers have argued contributes to all forms of violence, including gender-based violence (Baron & Straus 1987; Jasinski, 2001, p.14). The idea behind subcultures of violence is that certain groups in society are more likely to accept (and partake in) the use of violence in specific situations, typically based on factors linked with socioeconomic status, culture, etc. (Jasinski, 2001, p.15).

Feminist theories and structuralist approaches similarly place male power not only or not primarily in physical power and aggression, but in major institutions, structures and ideologies of capitalism (Jasinski, 2001, p.12). The poststructuralist approach, which comes closest to my own perspective in this thesis, asserts that discourse regarding gendered violence goes beyond merely *reflecting* reality, to actually being instrumental in *constructing* reality (Gov. Scotland\* [n.d.]).

Nowadays, these approaches are more likely to be combined into one ‘multi-dimensional’ approach, which brings together the above explanations for gendered violence in various combinations (Jasinski, 2001, p.15). Integrating social factors, individual characteristics (or characteristics of relationships), structural factors and the effects of discursive shaping, has elevated these explanations of gender-based violence, providing a more comprehensive, truthful and inclusive outlook on why gender-based violence takes place and - *in theory* - how it should be tackled (Jasinski, 2001, p.15).

This thesis focuses specifically on the role given to men and masculinities in discourses on gendered violence, arguing that their *explicit* inclusion is imperative to the elimination of gender-based violence and the achievement of gender equality.

The next section examines more closely theorisations on the relationship between masculinity and violence.

### *Masculinity and violence*

Despite only one of the above theories being characterised explicitly by its preference for gender-neutral terms, this practice is actually more common than perhaps expected.

National statistics on violence are often not gender-aggregated, much like discourses on gender are not always gender-specific. As Breines et al. (2000) write, “We speak of the problems of violence in general terms, about criminality and youth gangs, without specifying that to an overwhelming degree it is boys and men who are represented in the statistics” (p.15).

The fact that men predominate across the spectrum of violence is regularly attributed to explanations on the basis of biological essentialism, that tell us that ‘boys will be boys’ and that violence comes more ‘naturally’ to men, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary (Connell, 2000, p.22). This comes through establishing a binary and hierarchical gender system, which paints women as being somehow more caring, sharing, moderate, flexible and communicative, while men are tough, over-decisive, forceful and aggressive (Breines et al., 2000, p.15).

Most prolifically perhaps, Connell (1995, 2000), dismisses explanations based on biological essentialism and argues that despite the fact that statistically men have higher rates of violence than women across the board, we should not take this to mean that therefore all men are violent. She writes, “almost all soldiers are men, but most men are not soldiers. Though most killers are men, most men never kill or even commit assault. Though an appalling number of men do rape, most men do not” (Connell, 2000, p.22).

The problem with this defense is that it ignores (or even denies) the interconnected and mutually reinforcing nature of different types of violence, as theorised by Norwegian peace scholar Johan Galtung (and many others). While most men may not actively participate in “acts that lead to direct physical harm”, or direct/personal violence, as Galtung (1996) refers to it, there is no doubt that the gender order and with it masculinities play a part in cultivating violence through structural and cultural violence. The former means the systemic, political, and social factors that sustain inequality - equivalent to social injustice (Gibson, 2018, p.4), while the latter applies to ideas derived from religion, political thought, art, science, language and cosmology that justify and legitimise the use of direct and structural violence (Galtung 1996; Salvage et al., 2012, p.23-4).

This means that, (mirroring the ABC triangle of conflict<sup>2</sup>) “violent structures often account for the content or contradiction of a violent conflict (‘root causes’), direct violence for the behaviour, and cultural violence for the attitudes or assumptions” (Salvage et al., 2012, p.24). This characterisation of violence makes Connell’s assertion that most men do not *commit* violent acts as irrelevant as whether women or children do, essentially. Rather than neatly categorise society into perpetrators, victims and bystanders, this theorisation of violence rests responsibility on society *as a whole*.

This understanding of violence is supported by multiple theorisations tying it to masculinity: those that see violence spread through socialisation; those that look to gender violence (or even depict violence as masculine by nature); and those that view violence as a tool in the construction of masculinity. I explain each of these below.

#### *Violence through socialisation*

The idea that violence is instilled in boys and men through a socialisation process differently to that of girls and women is widespread. Katz argued that:

“In spite of significant social change in recent decades, men continue to grow up with, and are socialised into, a deeply misogynistic, male-dominated culture, where violence against women - from the subtle to the homicidal - is disturbingly common.

It is normal. And precisely because the mistreatment of women is such a pervasive characteristic of our patriarchal culture, most men, to a greater or lesser extent, have played a role in its perpetuation” (Katz, 2006, p.9).

European sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (2002) adds a constructivist perspective, arguing that masculinity constitutes a specific type of social game, in which violence plays an important part. According to his conceptualisation, traditional or dominant masculinity is a socially constructed phenomenon based on several foundations - and physical power, aggression and violent behaviours are the most prominent ones (Bourdieu in Wojnicka, 2015, p.1-2).

Violence as a ‘masculine game of competition’ is instilled in men as part of their socialisation; here “manliness must be validated by other men, in its reality as actual or

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<sup>2</sup> A framework of conflict that highlights three key factors in the escalation to violence: attitudes, behaviour and contradiction (or source of conflict) (Galtung 1996).

potential violence, and certified by recognition of membership of the group of ‘real men’” (Bourdieu in Wojnicka, 2015, p.1-2).

Anthony Whitehead (2005) similarly posits that violence can be seen to ‘be inclusive’ in this context, as the willingness to partake with another person signifies that they are a ‘worthy opponent’, affirming each other’s status as men. Alternatively, however, it also has the capacity to exclude - anyone not allowed to participate in the masculine games of competition is automatically assigned the status of ‘non-man’ - devalued, feminised and weak. Whitehead attributes all this to the link between traditional or dominant masculinity and ‘heroism’, also instilled in the socialisation process: “implying that men who face conflict or danger have to transcend their fear in order to prevent themselves from being placed in the highly precarious position of a ‘non-man’” (Whitehead in Wojnicka, 2015, p.2).

Dobash and Dobash (1998) here emphasise the importance of the *threat of violence* above the use of *actual violence*. Heroic masculinity “is often associated with aggressive bodily displays where the objective is not to employ the body in actual violence but to use it as a means of intimidation. Yet the perpetration in violent encounters are equated with masculinity, regardless of the outcome, even the scars and wounds of the ‘loser’ may be useful for display and status conferring among some young males” (p.15).

### *Gendering violence*

Men’s violence is often rationalised and justified in a way that women’s simply is not, whether by wider society or violent men themselves. Dobash and Dobash (1998) as well as Messner (1992) found that young men “often learn to view themselves as capable perpetrators of violence through rough play and contact sports, to exhibit fearlessness in the face of physical confrontations, and to accept the harm and injury associated with violence as ‘natural’” (Anderson & Umberson, 2001, p.363).

This means that beyond simply glorifying or normalising violence (as mentioned earlier), cultural norms also prepare men and women for violence in different ways. Goffman (1977) ties this to the way in which women are encouraged to pair up with men who are larger and stronger than them, while Fagot et al., (1985) and McCaughey (1988) found that women had fewer social opportunities to learn violent techniques. Coupled with a lack of encouragement

for female violence in society and women's size disadvantage in relation to male partners contributed to the idea of a gendered violence (Anderson & Umberson, 2001, p.363). Furthermore, male participants in Anderson and Umberson's study on domestic violence (2001) actually depicted their own violence as "rational, effective, and explosive, whereas women's violence was represented as hysterical, trivial and ineffectual" (p.364).

Several authors suggest that this is how 'batterers' accounts of violence allow them to deny responsibility for violence and to present nonviolent self-identities" (Anderson & Umberson, 2001, p.359). Besides more obvious reasons tied to escaping responsibility, this reaction can also be attributed to a notion of entitlement that some argue makes up a large part of masculinity itself. As part of this entitlement, violence is used to punish female partners "who fail to meet their unspoken physical, sexual, or emotional needs" (Anderson & Umberson, 2001, p.359). Violence is then constructed as a rational response to extreme provocation, a loss of control, or a minor incident that was blown out of proportion (Dobash and Dobash 1998; Ptacek 1990; Anderson & Umberson, 2001, p.362). This is certainly the case in popular constructions of male violence. For example, in Ireland, provocation operates as a partial defence as a partial defence to a murder conviction - the act of adultery is considered a particular provocation (Kelleher, 2016). The case of Brock Turner in the US offers an example of male violence being trivialised. When the teenager raped incapacitated Chanel Miller (known at the time as Emily Doe to protect her identity), he received only six months in county jail. His father called the attack "20 minutes of action" (Guardian staff 2019). Miller, in her new book, outlines how even as the perpetrator of this act, he was glorified and defended; she, on the other hand, received no such courtesies and was instead attacked as a nameless girl at fault (Miller 2019).

Kaufman (1999) links this to a sense of entitlement to privilege, one of his "Seven Ps of Men's Violence". Beyond this sense of entitlement that invites violence in response to a perceived slight ("say a man sexually assaults a woman on a date, it is about his sense of entitlement to his physical pleasure even if that pleasure is one sided")(p.2). Kaufman grapples with the idea that violence is a tool in the construction of masculinity.

He argues that, above all, violence has brought:

"...enormous benefits to particular groups: first and foremost, violence (or at least the threat

of violence), as helped confer on men (as a group) a rich set of privileges and forms of power. If indeed the original forms of social hierarchy and power are those based on sex, then this long ago formed a template for all the structured forms of power and privilege and enjoyed by others as a result of social class or skin colour, age, religion, sexual orientation, or physical abilities. In such a context, violence or its threat becomes a means to ensure the continued reaping of privileges and exercise of power. It is both a result and a means to an end” (Kaufman, 1999, p.1-2).

Here violence is not some unfortunate side effect, but a means by which to actively harness control over something or someone. It is the enforcer of the patriarchal dividend.

The idea that violence is used to construct and maintain masculinity has been addressed in a large number of studies, from Dobash and Dobash (1998); Gondolf & Hanneken (1987); and Hearn (1998). Simply put, violence is a “resource for demonstrating and showing a person is a man” (Anderson & Umberson, 2001, p.395, 374).

The ways in which violence interacts with masculinity - through socialisation, violence itself being gendered, or the instrumentalisation of violence in the construction of masculinity - are however not the central focus in what is arguably modern masculinities studies’ dominant perspective. This next section will explore the power-perspective, based primarily on the work of Connell and her conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity and her confirmation of the existence of multiple masculinities. This is a perspective that highlights some of the differences in discourses offered by the two case studies - P4P and the Spotlight Initiative - and demonstrates their differing relationships to academic masculinities studies.

### **Conceptual framework**

The field of critical masculinities is, today, largely informed by Connell’s theoretical and conceptual work, which spans over twenty years (1987-2000). Connell’s main contributions to the study of masculinity are twofold: constructing a model of masculinities based primarily on the concept of ‘hegemonic masculinity’, and simultaneously confirming the existence of multiple masculinities.

After introducing Connell’s model and a preliminary critique, I will place the power-perspective that underlies Connell’s entire scholarship into the context of discourse.



By highlighting the underlying assumptions of Connell's thesis of masculinities (similarly to how I will highlight elements of P4P and the Spotlight Initiative brought out by the influence of the WPR-method in the following chapter), I hope to demonstrate how her model, while valuable in terms of critical social analysis, is perhaps lacking as a normative framework of social practice. By this I mean, that while it is useful *in theory*, and provides us with an important perspective on the relational factors guiding different masculinities, it doesn't necessarily offer us anything beyond this critique to be done *in practice*. As an alternative, I propose that the power at the centre of this perspective be re-examined, as in Giddens' (1984) case, where he offers a conceptualisation of power as 'transformative capacity' or 'the capacity to achieve outcomes' (p.257).

Central to Connell's approach is an emphasis on power, derived from Marxist writer Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Hegemony, according to Gramsci's writings, refers to a form of power that is exercised through consent rather than coercion. He developed this concept by observing how the bourgeoisie of 1930s Italy attained and sustained power via the relative consent of those they ruled. They did this by appealing to family ties, class consciousness, membership of a party or cultural organisation, rather than through violence. This, Gramsci advocated, could be transferred to most instances in which one person dominates another, eliminating the presumption that violence or force *must* be at play in social relations (Castree et al., 2013).

Where Gramsci's original concept of hegemony was based in a socialist context, Connell applied it to gender, with 'hegemony' denoting the cultural conventions by which one group (men) claims and sustains a leading role and prominent position in a social hierarchy.

Drawing on Gramsci's notion of class hegemony as a social dynamic that creates a polarised relationality between the dominant and the subordinate, Connell introduced hegemonic masculinity as:

"...a 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" (Connell in Lykke, 2010, p.63).

Hegemony provided Connell with the discursive flexibility necessary to define masculinity as “simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of those practices in bodily experience, personality and culture” (Connell, 2005, p.71).

Masculinity, then, is culturally constructed and intrinsically linked to power, with multiple masculinities denoting various power relations. As a gender theory, Connell’s model recognised the existence of multiple, fluctuating and flexible masculinities that varied across time, culture and the individual. Connell then developed four relational ‘categories’ of masculinities: hegemonic masculinity, subordinate masculinity, complicit masculinity and marginalised masculinity (Connell 2005).

Connell’s model of masculinities is one of the main points of reference for students of the subjects since the 1980s and 90s, and its relevance continues today. Its power-based perspective is particularly valuable in understanding gendered violence, both against women, as well as amongst the different masculinities.

Connell acknowledges that relations based on power do imply relations based on violence:

“A structure of inequality on this scale, involving a massive dispossession of social resources is hard to imagine without violence. It is, overwhelmingly, the dominant gender who hold and use the means of violence...”

Two patterns of violence follow from this situation. First, many members of the privileged group use violence to sustain their dominance. Intimidation of women ranges across the spectrum from wolf-whistling in the street, to office harassment, to rape and domestic assault, to murder by a woman’s patriarchal ‘owner’, such as a separated husband...

Second, violence becomes important in gender politics among men. Most episodes of major violence (counting military combat, homicide, and armed assault) are transactions among men” (Connell, 2005, p.84).

Connell’s willingness to accept violence as part of the currency of masculinity here is arguably at odds with other assertions on her part, that posit that the responsibility for this violence (and other unsavoury elements of masculinity) do not lie with complicit masculinity, who she argues should not be seen as a sort of ‘slacker version’ of the hegemon. Instead, both

men and women should be held accountable for violence in society, because of their collective failure to challenge a gender order that perpetuates this violence (Connell, 1995, p.79). While not necessarily wrong, it could be argued that this comes dangerously close to neutralising the *gendered intent* and *construction* of violence, making it open to similar criticisms as those faced by the familial/systems approach discussed earlier.

Criticism of Connell's work has spanned these types of inconsistencies, as well as what some argue is her narrow conception of power, which underlies the entirety of this model of masculinities. In "*Gender and Power*" (1987), her formulation thereof rests on an attempt to locate all masculinities (and femininities) in a single pattern: the global dominance of men over women (p.183; Messerschmidt, 2018, p.48)<sup>3</sup>

Moller (2007) argues that this approach invites readers to "look 'out there' for particularly nefarious instances of masculinist abuses of power" (p.265), inciting a disavowal of power: "Coupled with the well-documented turn to the body as a site of power, masculinity studies informed by Connell's work tends to thematise power in a very specific way, equating 'power' with 'domination' and locating this power in the hands of exemplary men. Hegemonic masculinity, then, is said to exist at sites where power is practised in an overt and excessive fashion. It is not a power possessed by all or even most men, though many may benefit from it (the patriarchal dividend)" (Moller, 2007, p.266).

This, according to Moller, leads male scholars in particular (and men, more generally) to distance themselves from the concept of hegemonic masculinity, or, as Moller puts it: "I have yet to come across any male masculinities scholar who entertains the notion that he might enjoy the privileges of hegemonic masculinity itself" (Moller, 2007, p.275).

This could be put down to the 'invisibility of privilege', in that "the very processes that confer privilege to one group and not to another group are often invisible to those upon whom that privilege is conferred" (Bederman, 2011, p.20). It is consistent with Foucault's poststructural perspective, which posits that in such cases, power is everywhere and yet nowhere (Hewett, 2004, p.9).

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<sup>3</sup> Despite numerous reformulations, this definition still lies at the core of most of Connell's work, reappearing most recently in "*The Good University*" (2019), where she applies the concept of hegemony to the university system.

It can feel counterintuitive to label masculinity and its privileges as ‘invisible’, “since this term is usually reserved for those people whose identities are notably absent from the cultural centre. Masculinity, however, is a peculiarly elusive concept in the sense that white, middle-class, able-bodied, heterosexual manhood appears to be lacking any formative definition that reaches beyond the five general identity features” (Schmidt, 2018, p.52).

In the case of hegemonic masculinity, as Moller hints, the idea is not that men do not recognise themselves in the hegemon (though this may be true in some cases), but rather that they do not *want to*. This leads to an othering of hegemonic masculinity, simultaneously removing the agency of men in the gender order, and is critical to my thesis work.

According to Moller, it has wide-reaching consequences. She writes:

“One effect of failing to recognise the privilege of naming others as bearers of hegemonic masculinity is that it becomes very easy to see practices of hegemonic masculinity elsewhere. My point is that using the term and concept ‘hegemonic masculinity’ has subtle but important effects: not only how men’s practices are understood, but also on the way masculinities studies scholars think about themselves and the work they do” (Moller, 2007, p.275).

Beyond this and other predominantly ‘internal’ issues with Connell’s model, the next few pages will address how the concept of power (and specifically *power-over*) applied here supports a central narrative in Western social theory, whose reach goes far beyond masculinities. In fact, following Michael Karlberg’s (2005) analysis, I will demonstrate how Connell’s power-based approach, despite its success in the field of masculinities, essentially reflects *the* predominant Western-liberal discourse on power, and inadvertently supports social practices that have, again and again, proven inadequate in creating a more peaceful, just, and sustainable order (Karlberg, 2005, p.1).

This highlights not only a major weakness in what is undoubtedly *the* masculinities thesis of our time, but also the effect discourse has on shaping practice - as will be demonstrated using the case studies of P4P and the Spotlight Initiative in the following chapters.

## Power

Power, in this context, is perhaps best understood through the distinction of '*power to*' and '*power over*':

“The expressions *power-to* and *power-over* a shorthand way of making a distinction between two fundamentally different ordinary-language locutions within which the term ‘power’ occurs.

Depending upon which locution one takes as the basis of one’s theory of power, one will arrive at a very different model of the role of power in the social world” (Wartenberg in Karlberg, 2005, p.2-3).

Karlberg argues that most of Western social theory rests on a *power-over* perspective, or what he calls the *power as domination* model. Despite the fact that most physical and natural sciences are based in *power to* models, *power-over* is predominantly used to understand issues of social conflict, control, and coercion and underlies virtually all major traditions of Western social and political theory, from the left and the right, from Machiavelli (1961) to Weber (1986), to Hobbes (1986), to Marx and Engels (1976)(Giddens, 1984, p.256-7; Karlberg, 2005, p.3).

Wartenberg argues that focusing on *power to* rather than *power-over* merely shifts the theorist’s gaze away from the set of phenomena that a theory of social power must comprehend, namely the illegitimate inequality that exist in modern societies” (1990, p.5; Karlberg, 2005, p.4). The focus on inequalities then gives Connell’s model a feminist edge, despite its focus on men and masculinities. In fact, the *power as domination* perspective has served numerous feminist scholars in highlighting the normalisation of aggressive and competitive behaviours in Western societies as a structure of male privilege. Karlberg writes that:

“On the most obvious levels, this has occurred through the direct physical domination of women by men. When competitive power struggles are seen as inevitable expressions of human nature, this places most women at a physical disadvantage to most men” (Karlberg, 2005, p.5).

Beyond physical domination, *power as domination* has also highlighted the most subtle structures of male privilege:

“Throughout the public sphere, in our economy, political institutions, judicial system, educational systems, and so forth, systems of reward tend to privilege conventionally ‘masculine’ adversarial traits over conventionally ‘feminine’ traits such as caring and cooperation” (Karlberg, 2005, p.5).

However, despite the paradigm’s uses in explaining gender inequality, it still rests on a conception of power that is heavily gendered. It is typically women and feminist scholars then, that have questioned it, proclaiming it to be limiting and dismissive of other types of power, and employing these alternative ways of thinking and talking about power.

Mary Parker Follett (1942), for example, articulated the difference between ‘coercive’ and ‘coactive’ power, or *power over* and *power with*. She argued that the understanding of power relations as coercive was problematic and in need of expansion. Other scholars followed her, with Miller arguing that the word power had,

“...acquired certain connotations [...] imply certain modes of behaviour more typical of men than women. But it may be that these modes are not necessary or essential to [its] meaning. Like all concepts and actions of a dominant group, ‘power’ may have been distorted and skewed. It has rested almost solely in the hands of the people who have lived with a constant need to maintain an irrational dominance; and in their hands it has acquired overtones of tyranny” (Miller in Karlberg, 2005, p.6).

In essence, power has been gendered masculine, in the same ways as violence has. Karlberg, acknowledging the impact discourse has on our perception and understanding of a subject, agrees that the traditional (masculine) view of power can be problematic, above all because it obscures “the mutualistic dimensions of power that have played a significant role in human history and that will need to play an even more significant role if we are to learn how to live together peacefully in an increasingly interdependent world” (Karlberg, 2005, p.1).

While conflictual models of power like *power over* and *power as domination* and hegemonic masculinity are necessary for critical social analysis, they may be insufficient as an alternative to normative framework of social practice.

This means that, while Connell's model of masculinities can assist us in critically analysing the unequal distribution of power and resources on the basis of gender *and* masculinities, this model doesn't necessarily provide us with the impetus or answers necessary to turn from theory to practice. It questions whether a *power as domination* perspective can ever be truly transformative.

Giddens (1984) provides us with one alternative conceptualisation of power as 'transformative capacity' or 'the capacity to achieve outcomes'. It shares more similarities with the *power to* perspective and recognises that, while power often accompanies domination, it is "not necessarily linked with conflict...and power is not inherently oppressive" (p.257). According to this view, there is no power in cooperation among equals, even when power is unequally distributed it can still be expressed in forms that are not oppressive - as in the empowering relationship that can exist between a nurturing parent and child" (Karlberg, 2005, p.5).

This perspective is undoubtedly more empowering and positive, though in danger of covering up some of the realities of power, masculinity and violence. What appears to become obvious, the further we go into this topic, is that balance is key. This means balancing the reality of the present with the possibility of the future - providing an honest framework that acknowledges how things are now, without implying a structure so fixed and so permanent, that it cannot be changed by the agents within it. This balance, and the different ways to approach it, are highlighted by the two case studies in this thesis, will be examined more closely in the coming chapter.

## **Methods**

This thesis seeks to apply the concepts and theories explored so far to two case studies - the UN-led projects Partners for Prevention (P4P) and the Spotlight Initiative - both of which are ultimately aimed at eliminating gendered violence in an international context.

The point of this is to highlight the difference including men and masculinities (theoretically and practically, as well as explicitly and implicitly) can make in gender discourse.

First, I will give an explanation of case studies, the different types and functions and why I have chosen a *collective case studies approach*. Thereafter I will introduce the primary influences on this thesis' analytical approach: Bacchi's WPR-method and three discursive

strategies typically used in gender discourse, examples of which appear in P4P and the Spotlight Initiative - ‘degendering the problem’, ‘gendering the blame’ and the ‘fog of consensus’. Before moving onto the analysis chapter, I will give a more in-depth overview of P4P and the Spotlight Initiative themselves and will present the specific documents that have contributed to the analysis of this thesis. This chapter should provide the reader with an understanding as to why these case studies were chosen and how they will be analysed.

Case studies typically involve applying various research methods to one specific case or subject. They constitute an in-depth look at a particular person or situation that often involves using a range of methods. Stake offers a fitting categorisation for this thesis, separating them into *intrinsic*, *instrumental* and *collective*<sup>4</sup> case studies (Stake, 2003).

Most case studies fall under the category of *intrinsic*, meaning their design is aimed at understanding what is important about the case within its own context - the researcher addresses the case’s own issues interpretations, or what’s called its *thick description* rather than the researcher’s own concerns. Researchers here typically encapsulate complex meanings into finite reports, allowing readers enough descriptive narrative to be able to experience and understand the case and to draw their own conclusions (Stake, 2003, p.137). *Instrumental* case studies instead provide insight into an issue to redraw a generalisation (so in this case, on the discursive treatment of men and masculinities). This means the case itself is of secondary interest, it is *instrumentalised* in order to facilitate our understanding of something else (Stake, 2003, p.137).

*Collective* case studies extend the instrumental study of several cases (Stake, 2003, p.138). Supporters of this, or the ‘comparative case study approach’ argue that it makes sense for two reasons: the proven effectiveness of ‘compare and contrast’ and the fact it assists in ‘tracing across’ sites or scales (Bartlett & Varvus 2017). The choice of P4P and the Spotlight Initiative as case studies then plants this thesis firmly in the territory of a collective case study with a comparative case study approach.

The focus here is not entirely on these two cases, but on what they represent and tell us about the concepts and theories that have so far been examined in this thesis. In short, this thesis

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<sup>4</sup> More categorisations of course exist, however Stake provides an understandable and suitable version here.



questions what P4P and the Spotlight Initiative show us in reference to the *implicit* and *explicit* inclusion of men and masculinities in discourses on gendered violence and gender equality. What similarities and what differences do they exhibit - why - and to what effect? Critics have argued that comparative case description, where the concentration lies on the comparison, rather than the individual cases, can mean that the uniqueness and complexities of a case are glossed over (Stake, 2003, p.148-9). Moreover, it is argued that conclusion about differences between any two cases “are less to be trusted than conclusions about one” (Stake, 2003, p.149).

This is a danger. However, value exists in comparing the two. In the context of how the roles and responsibilities of men and masculinities are depicted discursively, this comparison is invaluable not only in highlighting the differences, but uncovering the nuances, the subtle and *implied* choices each programme has made in the portrayal of this issue, and demonstrating why this matters. While a degree of generalisability is usually sought after when using case studies, it is not absolutely necessary. In this case, generalisability would refer more to how discourse generally affects an issue, and this is brought to the forefront by the use of methods mirroring Bacchi’s “What’s the Problem Represented to be?”-method (or WPR).

### WPR

WPR is a tool that draws on Foucauldian-influenced poststructural theory. It intends to “facilitate critical interrogation of public policies” (Bacchi, 2012, p.22). Bacchi’s approach challenges the conventional view that public policies are reactions to problems - instead she argues that it is the ‘representation’ of the ‘problem’ that constructs them in their discourse. “The goal of the WPR approach is to treat these problem representations as problematisations that require critical scrutiny” (Bacchi\* [n.d.]). This thesis benefits from Bacchi’s approach in that it demonstrates an interest in the production of masculinity and men’s responsibility in the context of violence against women.

Throughout this thesis, the importance of *implicit representations of masculinities* has been raised. These will be examined in the context of the two case studies in the second section, which centres on the implicit rather than the explicit representations of men and masculinities therein. The influence of WPR here assists in bringing these implicit portrayals to the forefront - its premise being that what and how one proposes to do something reveals what one actually thinks is problematic and needs to change.

Its application then also balances out the fact that P4P and the Spotlight Initiative are at different points of their trajectory, which P4P having been completed in 2017 and the Spotlight Initiative barely launched. Given the focus on implicit portrayals from literature provided by each programme, this difference should matter less, as the inclusion of men and masculinities discursively is about *intent* rather than resulting *action* at this point of the analysis.

WPR is ordinarily ‘done’ by applying six questions to one’s case study, before also applying it to one’s own problematisation. These questions have guided this thesis’ approach to analysis. Bacchi outlines the following:

- 1) What’s the problem (e.g. of ‘gender inequality’, ‘drug use/abuse’, ‘economic development’, ‘global warming’, ‘childhood obesity’, ‘irregular migration’, etc.) represented to be in a specific policy or policies?
- 2) What deep-seated presuppositions or assumptions (conceptual logics underlie this representation of the ‘problem’ (*problem representation*)?)
- 3) How has this representation of the ‘problem’ come about?
- 4) What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the ‘problem’ be conceptualised differently?
- 5) What effects (discursive, subjectification, lived) are produced by this representation of the ‘problem’?
- 6) How and where has this representation of the ‘problem’ been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted and replaced?

(Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p.20)

Here, these questions guide a comparative critical discourse approach in the analysis. Bacchi has addressed the possibility of using WPR in this way with a comparative analysis and confirms that it is both possible and appropriate. She argues that comparisons of problematisations can highlight “specific combinations of factors and relations that allow something to become a ‘problem’ in one situation and not another” (Bacchi, 2012, p.6).

In this case, it can also help to highlight the alternative terminology applied. Comparing different problematisations of what is ostensibly the same issue or ‘problem’, can also make it even easier to see and acknowledge the implicit depiction at work. Moreover, the influence

of the WPR method here shows how problematisations politicise taken-for-granted ‘truths’ or language that is taken to be definitive (which even extends to concepts like ‘peace’ or ‘violence’).

Beyond WPR, a number of other influential discursive strategies are identified in P4P and the Spotlight Initiative, to varying effect: ‘degendering the problem’, ‘gendering the blame’ and the ‘fog of consensus’. These strategies further demonstrate the intent behind P4P and the Spotlight Initiative’s alternative approaches to addressing men and masculinities on the topic of gendered violence.

‘Degendering the problem’ and ‘gendering the blame’ are concepts taken from Berns (2001) and are typically applied to political discourse on women and violence, though not usually with the explicit focal point of men and masculinities. The ‘fog of consensus’ is taken from Cornwall and Rivas’ (2015) *“From ‘gender equality’ and ‘women’s empowerment’ to global justice: reclaiming a transformative agenda for gender and development”*.

‘Degendering the problem’ is a discursive strategy which removes gender from the framing of the problem. In Berns’ account, she argues that “feminist constructions of domestic violence emphasise the role of gender and power in abusive relationships, including the fact that the majority of victims are women” (Berns, 2001, p.265). When the problem is degendered, it is reframed as ‘human violence’ for example - mirroring the familial/systems approach mentioned earlier - resisting attempts to situate problems within a patriarchal framework. In this view, men and women then are depicted as equally violent. As will be outlined in the analysis section, examples of ‘degendering the problem’ are particularly apparent in the Spotlight Initiative, where the reality of gendered experiences of violence is hidden.

‘Gendering the blame’, on the other hand, refers to the way in which responsibility for abuse or violence is then attributed to women, even in cases where that same violence has previously been gendered: “Thus although violence is degendered, blame is gendered” (Berns, 2001, p.296). She highlights four main strategies for gendering the blame, including:

“1) highlighting women who are abusers; 2) holding female victims responsible for their role in their own victimisation; 3) critiquing the social tolerance for women’s violence but not for men’s violence; and 4) blaming ‘battered-women’ advocates” (Berns, 2001, p.269).

There is hardly any evidence of P4P or the Spotlight Initiative gendering the blame in the way outlined above, making the comparative element of this analysis crucial to highlighting any differences, however, minor, implicit or subtle. In the case of the Spotlight Initiative, its failure to address men's role in the perpetration and perpetuation of gendered violence is here presented as a more nuanced version of gendering the blame. Here, given that the onus is on women to 'solve the problem' of gendered violence, any blame for failing to do so then logically lies with women also.

The *fog of consensus* is derived from Cornwall and Rivas' (2015) article, which follows the logic of the depoliticisation of gender studies mentioned earlier to argue that modern gender discourse employs certain terms which instrumentalise women and the success of the women's movement to create consensus and to placate. They argue that terms like 'gender equality' and 'women's empowerment' in particular have been eviscerated of their former conceptual and political bite, compromising their use as the primary frame through which to demand rights and justice. Instead, these terms now form part of the fog of consensus, which relies on this terminology to pay lip service to gender issues, while simultaneously dulling our understanding of and hunger for what a truly transformative agenda might look like (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015, p.400). Again, the Spotlight Initiative provides most of the examples in this case study. Not only does it obscure men's part in the perpetuation of gendered violence, but this violence is discussed predominantly in terms of progress, empowerment and equality.

Keeping these discursive strategies in mind further enriches the analysis in the next chapter, which focuses on the explicit and implicit representations of men and masculinities in the two case studies. Finally, this section will provide a more in-depth introduction to P4P and the Spotlight Initiative.

### *The case studies*

Partners for Prevention (P4P) and the Spotlight Initiative are two UN-led programmes that have promised to tackle gender-based violence and bring us closer to gender equality in an international context. These two cases demonstrate alternative approaches to a similar 'discourse of prevention' (of gendered violence) and link this to the issue of gender inequality

throughout. Most of all, these cases were chosen based on their different approaches to men and masculinities.

### Partners for Prevention

Partners for Prevention (P4P) is a joint programme that combines the strengths of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UN Women and United Nations Volunteers (UNV)(as well as a wide array of local partners), in a concerted effort to promote evidence- and theory-based approaches to prevention, including those that work with boys and men, alongside girls and women, to transform gender equitable attitudes, practices and social norms” (P4P\*).

The programme ran from 2008-2017 in two phases: the first focusing on research, capacity development, networking and communication for social change; and the second centred on prevention interventions, capacity development of local and regional partners and policy advocacy in six countries (Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea-Bougainville and Viet Nam).

Phase I research resulted in the UN *Multi-Country Study of Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific*, which sought to:

- 1) “Better understand men’s use of different forms of violence against women (specifically, intimate partner violence and non-partner rape) in the Asia-Pacific region;
- 2) Assess men’s own experience of violence as well as their perpetration of violence against other men and how it relates to the perpetuation of violence against women;
- 3) Identify factors associated with men’s perpetuation of different forms of violence against women; and
- 4) Promote evidence-based policies and programmes to prevent violence against women”

(Fulu et al., 2013, p.1).

This study is said to have added “significant value to local, regional and global knowledge, awareness and acknowledgement of the relevance of addressing men, boys and masculinities to violence against women and girls (VAWG) prevention and eradication” (P4P\*\*).

Beyond this, it highlighted not only men's perpetration of different forms of gendered violence, but also identified a series of recommendations for prevention, including "promoting non-violent masculinities oriented towards equality and respect," as well as ending "impunity for men who rape" and more (Fulu et al., 2013, p.98-99).

Also under the remit of Phase I was the capacity development work, which sought to engage civil society, the UN and government practitioners in a prevention strategy that was both evidence- and theory-based. It also supported two sub-regional networks, the South Asian Network to Address Masculinities (SANAM) and the Regional Learning Community (RLC) for Transforming Masculinities to Promote Gender-Justice for East and Southeast Asia. Between them, these networks succeeded in jumpstarting prevention programming on VAWG in the region: producing a curriculum on masculinities and gender justice and fostering a sustainable pool of regional expertise.

The communications team then concentrated on how to diffuse the programme's findings to different audiences, like for example engaging young people via social media campaigns (P4P\*\*).

Generally speaking, Phase I of P4P was well received, its external evaluation signalling that it was of significant value to the UN partner agencies, most of all in highlighting the role and relevance of men and masculinities to the prevention of VAWG. The implementation of Phase II is a direct result of the success of Phase I. It focuses on gender-based violence prevention, transforming harmful masculinities and engaging men and boys, as well as translating Phase I into possible country-specific policies and programmes aimed at sustainability (P4P\*\*\*).

A part of this is the PREVENT framework, which spans seven key action areas that can be coordinated among different actors at different levels, as well as accompanying case studies to illustrate their application.

The seven key areas, which form the acronym, include:

Produce and apply evidence;

Respond to, support and protect those who experience violence;

Empower women and girls;

Value community engagement;

Educate youth and adolescents;

Nurture healthy family relationships; and

Target alcohol and drug abuse  
(P4P PREVENT).

This framework demonstrates the generalisability and applicability of P4Ps findings in different contexts.

Beyond the PREVENT framework, Phase II is best exemplified by individual projects (with Phase I providing the overall project-narrative), such as Reimay, or Reaching Papuan Prosperity - and intervention to prevent VAWG in Indonesia. This project engaged adolescent boys and girls (aged 13 to 15), their parents, religious leaders and other members of the community deemed influential in participatory group sessions. The point of bringing together different parts of the community was to ensure the sustainability of the session's results. Expected results were to provide adolescents with "gender equitable attitudes" and to improve the quality of their relationships with their caregivers (P4P PREVENT).

The relative success of P4P in addressing gendered violence has positioned it as one possible example of how the inclusion of men and masculinities benefits gender discourse. This si acknowledges specifically in the context of P4Ps operation in relevant countries "in the areas of prevention, advocacy, strengthening laws and policies, and data collection", which have been highlighted as possible precursors for similar approaches in the Spotlight Initiative (Spotlight Initiative, 2017, p.4).

This analysis of P4P is based almost exclusively on literature available from its website, including the above-mentioned *United Nations Multi-Country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific*, as well as the accompanying publication on the regional quantitative findings compiled by Fulu et al. (2013), *Why do some men use violence against women and how can we prevent it? Quantitative findings from the UN Multi-country study on men and violence in Asia and the Pacific*. Its report on Masculinity and Gender-based Violence in Bangladesh also provides this analysis with a number of concrete examples to illustrate points made on the basis of the other documents.

### *The Spotlight Initiative*

The Spotlight Initiative launched in 2019 as a joint partnership launched in 2019 as a joint partnership between the European Union and the United Nations. Its aim is to "eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030", in line with the Sustainable

Development Goals, with a particular focus on: domestic and family violence; sexual and gender-based violence and harmful practices; femicide; trafficking in human beings; and sexual and economic exploitation (Spotlight\*).

Operating regional and country-specific programmes in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Pacific, in the world's largest targeted effort to end all forms of VAWG with a seed funding commitment of €500 million from the EU, the Spotlight Initiative is guided by nine general aims and functions:

- To deliver and demonstrate results in priority countries by concentrating resources in support of the SDG5 targets;
- To foster, reinforce, and leverage political commitment for VAWG/harmful practice agendas and galvanise support through a political call to action in selected countries;
- To support the implementation of a comprehensive and coordinated approach to address VAWG/harmful practices, building on existing initiatives (like P4P) and leveraging future support;
- To act as an enabler and proof-of-concept initiative that has impact, and drives action, against VAWG/harmful practices at the country level, including building and supporting key partnerships;
- To build knowledge and thematic expertise on promising and effective interventions and practices, which are backed by thorough monitoring and evaluation;
- To secure substantial, coordinated and sustainable financial resources to address VAWG/harmful practices;
- To tap into the full range of expertise of the United Nations system, as well as partnerships and resources for improved implementation and results;
- To leverage the capacity of civil societies to bring about sustainable and impactful change in selected countries with regards to VAWG/harmful practices;
- To conduct comprehensive and evaluations that lead to the establishment of evidence based on gaps, responses and lessons learned on VAWG/harmful practices

(Spotlight Initiative, 2018)

Similar to P4P, the Spotlight Initiative links gendered violence to gender equality, characterising itself as “an unprecedented global effort to invest in gender equality and women’s empowerment as a precondition and driver for the achievement of the SDGs (Spotlight\*).



The analysis of the Spotlight Initiative is constrained by its limited output so far. Again, its website has provided the largest source of information, as well as the central documents: its 2017-2018 *Annual Report*, its *Annex I. Description of Action* from 2018, and the document explaining its *Terms of Reference 2017-2023*.

## **Analysis**

This chapter presents an analysis of P4P and the Spotlight Initiative determined in part by elements taken from Bacchi's WPR-method and the identification of the discursive strategies discussed above. Included are instances of how each programme constructs and reinforces specific forms of masculinity and femininity, as well as the effects this has on the problems identified and the solutions proposed (Bacchi 2000; Bacchi and Eveline 2010). In focus will be each programme's approach to addressing men and masculinities - first by examining the explicit references to this in the programme literature, and then by discussing their implicit representations throughout the two case studies.

### *Explicit representations of men and masculinities*

One of the most indicative and immediately apparent differences between P4P and the Spotlight Initiative is that the first centres on *men's violence*, while the latter focuses on *women's experiences of violence*, or VAWG. This difference is most easily illustrated in crude terms - or the number of times specific terminology is used in core texts published by each programme.

The Spotlight Initiative's 2017-2018 "Annual Report" (which constitutes one of its most comprehensive documents at the time of writing) mentions the words 'woman' or 'women' 186 times, whereas 'man' or 'men' appear only 14 times. 'Violence against women and girls' comes up 32 times (and the acronym 'VAWG' another 9 times), while 'men's violence' is mentioned *only once* (Spotlight Initiative\* 2018).

In P4P, the emphasis is instead on men's roles and responsibilities in the perpetration and perpetuation of gendered violence. It immediately acknowledges men's violence through explicit document titles such as, "Why do some men use violence against women and how can we prevent it?", as well as in the balance it exhibits in its gendered language. For example, 'men' and 'women' are mentioned almost equally, with the former appearing 86

times and the latter 70 times. ‘Violence against women’ is mentioned 33 times (‘and girls’ adds another 4), where variations on ‘men’s violence’ (including ‘men’s use of violence’, ‘violent masculinit(ies)’, ‘men use violence’ and ‘men and violence’) appear 20 times. P4P arguably applies the terms VAWG, men’s violence, gender-based violence and violence specifically and appropriately, rather than as blanket terms and interchangeably (Fulu et al., 2013).

The logic of *implied intent*, introduced in chapter 2 as an explanation for the impact different terms for gendered violence have on their understood meaning, then would dictate that the Spotlight Initiative is simply focused on the commonalities of the *victims* of gendered violence, while P4P concerns itself primarily with the *perpetrators*. While this may well be the case, P4P demonstrates a balanced representation of both victims and perpetrators, whereas the Spotlight Initiative all but omits men and masculinities (as either victims *or* perpetrators) from its entire agenda.

The few mentions that there are of men and masculinities in the Spotlight Initiative, are limited to positive-sounding but under-conceptualised phrases. These can refer to the phrases mentioned in connection with Cornwall and Rivas ‘fog of consensus’. In this instance, I focus my analysis on the phrases ‘positive masculinity’ and ‘engaging men and boys’ specifically, as they appear in the discourse of P4P and the Spotlight Initiative.

#### *‘Positive masculinity’*

Both P4P and the Spotlight Initiative allude to the need to challenge current constructions of gender, particularly in the case of masculinity. A large part of this falls under the notion of creating or encouraging a ‘positive masculinity’.

According to the “Executive Summary” of the Spotlight Initiative’s “Annual Report”, its interventions will target men and boys (alongside others who have a responsibility to act), enabling their participation by providing models of ‘positive masculinity’ and transforming the harmful social norms that sustain gender-based discrimination and prevent women from realising their human rights (Spotlight\*, 2018, p.10). What this ‘positive masculinity’ should look or feel like, is not brought into the Spotlight Initiative’s discourse, at least not as it appears in the documentation reviewed.

P4P, on the other hand, offers a far more specific idea of the kind of masculinity it hopes to encourage, namely: “non-violent masculinities oriented towards equality and respect” (Fulu et al., 2013, p.110). In its “Summary Report”, written by Fulu et al., quantitative findings concluded that:

“Many factors strongly associated with men’s perpetration of violence against women reflect narratives of masculinity that justify and celebrate male strength, the use of violence, men’s control over women and heterosexual performance. Other factors correlated with men’s violence perpetration relate to the stress of not being able to meet the expectation of being a ‘real man’, including low levels of empathy, economic stress and mental health” (Fulu et al., 2013, p.110).

To address these issues, the report puts forward sustained school-based and peer-to-peer education interventions that promote life skills and support healthy and caring ways ‘to be a man’, or alternatively, programmes that work with male role models and local leaders that promote positive ways ‘to be a man’.

The term ‘positive masculinity’ however, is not entirely unproblematic. Masculinities scholar Michael Kimmel once put the question “What does it mean to be a good man?” to his students, providing us with examples of what ‘positive masculinity’ might look like to the average person. The answers included: caring, putting others needs before yours, honest. When asked what it means to be a *real man* however, the students gave answers more typically associated with hegemonic or even ‘toxic’ masculinity: take charge, be authoritative, take risks, never cry, talk like a man, walk like a man, and ultimately, “it means suppressing any kind of weakness” (Bennett, 2015).

The adoption of positive masculinity then may appear to represent a step forward in freeing men of the shackles of traditional manhood. However, two issues persist. One is that the idea of ‘positive masculinity’ encourages the same kind of binary thinking as its ‘negative’, ‘toxic’ or ‘hegemonic’ counterparts, leading to the probability of exporting negative masculine traits to others, as mentioned above in the section on Connell. Second of all, it could be argued that it, again, encourages a singular (or at best dualistic) image of masculinity similar to the categorisation faced by women à la “mothers, monsters, whores”. And this claim of a

singular, real masculinity has been roundly rejected since the late 1980s, largely thanks to the work of Connell on multiple masculinities (Salter 2019).

Gelfer's 'sustainable masculinity' is a preferable alternative to positive masculinity, because it does not rely on binary characterisations of an entire gender identity. Instead, it implies "a range of behaviours and understandings regarding masculinity that enable everyone to live in accordance with their values in a way that does not negatively impact on others" (Gelfer, 2017). Gelfer adds that while most progressives perhaps believe that this is the masculinity implicit in their critiques, "namely a nurturing and supportive masculinity in which both men and women are treated fairly and with respect," this is not necessarily true (Gelfer 2017). This masculinity is not necessarily 'progressive', just as long as it is not imposed on others. This in turn leads to a sustainable masculinity that "provides both a positive framework for masculinity as well as a genuinely accommodating diversity" (Gelfer 2017).

Neither P4P nor the Spotlight Initiative engage with the problematics of 'positive masculinity'. However, P4Ps report on masculinity and gender-based violence in Bangladesh provides us with just one example of the ways in which it links women's experiences of violence, to men's perpetration of violence, to configurations of masculinity and gendered expectations:

According to the highly regarded 2002 WHO study of violence and health, close to 50 percent of women report ever experiencing physical assault by their intimate partner in Bangladesh, and in a 2005 WHO report on violence against women 53 percent of women in an urban sample and 61.7 percent of women in a rural sample report ever experiencing physical and/or sexual violence (WHO 2002; 2005). This is confirmed by a recent icddr,b survey conducted with men, among whom between 55 percent (urban) and 57 percent (rural) reported ever perpetrating either physical or sexual violence against an intimate partner (icddr,b 2011). Although some other countries report high levels of intimate partner violence, in a selected sample of ten countries Bangladesh had the highest proportion (68 percent) of women that reported 'never telling anyone' about their experience of intimate partner violence, followed by Egypt with 47 percent (Heise, Ellsberg, and Gottemoeller, 1999). Moreover, about 60 percent of men in one survey agreed that women at times deserve to be beaten (Parvin et al, 2012)" (P4P Bangladesh, p.5)

The balancing act of P4P lies in the need to offset this honest acknowledgement of men's violence, and the relationship between masculinity and violence, with the need to not alienate men and boys, whose engagement is still at the forefront of P4Ps formulations. It does so primarily by avoiding conceptions of the relationship between masculinity and violence that appear absolute or essentialist. Thus it asks why *some* men use violence and examines how “masculinities relate to *men's perceptions* and perpetrations of gender-based violence” (P4P\*\*\*\*).

This is in line with Connell's previously mentioned reminder that, while men have higher rates of violence across the board, and while masculinity may play a crucial role in the perpetuation of violence, this should not be taken to mean that therefore men are violent or that masculinity and violence are somehow inseparably entwined. P4P acknowledges that not only in its standardised terminology, but also by explicitly stating that “some men use violence against women and girls, many men do not” (P4P\*\*\*\*). This highlights that P4P sees men not only as perpetrators of gendered violence, but also as stakeholders of gender equality. This is why the topic of engagement is critical to understand from the perspective of both initiatives.

#### *‘Engaging men and boys’*

While both the Spotlight Initiative and P4P refer to ‘engaging men and boys’, what this actually means is largely left up to the interpretation of the reader, especially in the case of the Spotlight Initiative. For example, in the introduction to its planned interventions on six mutually-reinforcing programming pillars, part of its prevention strategy is to promote “gender-equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours through engaging men and boys” (Spotlight reference). No further explanation of what this means or how it will be done is provided.

This approach appears particularly sparse when compared to P4P. Engaging men and boys is, after all, essentially P4Ps *raison d'être*: Despite being a “regional programme for the prevention of violence against women and girls”, acknowledging and recognising men's roles both as perpetrators and stakeholders is central to its approach. It acknowledges the prevalence and impact of *men's violence* throughout its research and projects, whilst being careful not to alienate men. Thus, its numerous publications hold titles like: “*Why do some*

*men use violence and how can we prevent it*"; *"the United Nations Multi-Country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific"*; *"Voices of Male Advocates in Viet Nam"*; *"Male Advocacy Programmes in Da Nang, Viet Nam"*. It refers specifically and explicitly to resources that shape its capacity to involve and engage men and boys. These include CARE (and international NGO committed to ending poverty, which has developed tools for engaging with men and boys to transform masculinities and change social norms); and Men Engage (a global alliance made up of dozens of country networks spread across many regions of the world, hundreds of non-governmental organisations, as well as UN partners). According to the P4P web presence outlining partners, Men Engage members work collectively and individually toward advancing gender justice, human rights and social justice to achieve a world in which all can enjoy healthy, fulfilling and equitable relationships and their full potential. P4P also indicates its alignment with Men Care, a global fatherhood campaign, which promotes men's involvement as equitable, non-violent fathers and caregivers in order to achieve family well-being and gender equality (P4P external links, engaging).

Men and boys' engagement is equated throughout with men's own changing conceptions of themselves *as men* (emphasising their gender identities and agency there over) and consequent gender practices, including the use of violence, sexual practices and other behaviour towards women (P4P\*\*\*\*). Again, P4Ps Bangladesh report offers a valuable example:

"[...] men in Bangladesh often have a sense of entitlement regarding their partner's actions mobility as well as body, upon marriage (icddr,b, 2011; Fahmida and Doneys, 2013). Yet, while all men benefit from patriarchy, some men are also oppressed by these masculine norms and social structures in Bangladesh. For example, marginalised and subordinated masculinities - or those that imply a failure to obey hegemonic forms of masculinities - are repressed in this environment, given men's fear of being labeled as weak or *hijras* (Fahmida and Doneys, 2013). This would also include men whose behaviour does not correspond to hegemonic forms of masculinities, such as sexual minorities (gay men, men who have sex with men, transgendered), non-violent and socially/environmentally conscious men, and others who think in terms of different (non-hegemonic) forms of masculinities. Additionally, even within this social environment not all men in Bangladesh follow hegemonic

forms of masculinities and not all men use violence against their partner” (P4P Bangladesh, p.8).

This passage does many things, from educating on and demonstrating how different types of masculinities can be identified in a more concrete setting, to explaining the link between masculinity, fear and violence, to, perhaps most importantly, illustrating the sheer complexity and multiplicity of masculinities. What this does, is to demonstrate how while all men (and arguably women) are affected by masculinity, that doesn't mean that they have to feel attacked at the very mention of 'men's violence' or 'violent masculinities' - because they do not represent one homogenous or mutually-responsible group.

This in turn mirrors some of the most important progressions made by the academic field of masculinities over recent decades, in order to 'open up' the concept of masculinity (in fact, one of Connell's main aims in teaching us to address 'masculinities' (plural), rather than 'masculinity' (singular) (Connell, 2005).

All of this, in the case of P4P, demonstrates a capacity to engage with academic ideas and conventions on gender and masculinity, an area further explored below.

#### *Academia, masculinities and case studies*

P4Ps approach to violence prevention arguably relies primarily on its academic convictions and credentials. The entire structure of its research is built on a largely academic framework, from its Phase I study, the “UN Multi-Country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific” to the accompanying summary of its quantitative findings, “Why do some men use violence against women and how can we prevent it?”.

The original study, upon which these reports are written, surveyed 10,000 men and 3,000 women in nine sites across six countries. As the report indicates, the survey (and the work) focus on men and masculinity's relationships to violence - not on women's experience of that violence (which it agrees must remain a priority, but also argues only provides half of the picture).

P4Ps study methodology reflects this logic. Beyond quantitative household surveys aimed at broadening our understanding of the scale and scope of violence perpetration and the factors

associated with this type of violence, it also employed qualitative life history interviews. More than 100 men participated in these interviews, some of whom were known to have used violence and others who had not. The overall aim here was to explore how influences and experiences across a lifespan shape dominant and alternative masculinities and how this connects to gendered violence (Fulu et al., 2013, p.36). On top of this, P4P conducted research on gender policy to explore institutional and structural conditions which might enable gender-based violence.

In fact, P4Ps study is said to have been “premised on the well-documented hypothesis that violence against women is a manifestation of unequal gender relations and harmful manifestations of hegemonic masculinity governed by patriarchal beliefs, institutions and systems” (Fulu et al., 2013, p.1).

The Bangladesh report offers further examples of how academic understandings of masculinity are incorporated deftly into what is, after all, a social policy document. Here it is stated that, according to P4P, masculinities is approached as a relational concept embedded in social hierarchies. Masculinities, then, can be defined as “‘ways of living for men’, both identities and patterns of practices, associated with positions of men in various gender systems” (Fulu et al., 2013).

It is acknowledged explicitly that this draws heavily on the works of Connell (1995; 2002; 2005) who argues that “masculinity is not a fixed entity embedded in the body or personality traits of an individual, [but rather involves] configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting” (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p.836; P4P Bangladesh).

The report goes on to explicitly discuss how “hegemonic forms of masculinities reflect dominant characteristics of what it means to be a man in any given society”, arguing that they symbolise a marker for men’s individual behaviours and beliefs, but also shape dominant social norms and values (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p.832; P4P Bangladesh).

Finally, the report again acknowledges that while “all men benefit from these structures of inequality, or patriarchy, [...] not all men benefit equally” (P4P Bangladesh).



P4P here demonstrates a nuanced understanding of Connell's work (discussed in the conceptual framework of this thesis), and provides a reproduction that works with its own agenda and framework for action.

On the other hand, the Spotlight Initiative appears not to have engaged with the academic field of masculinities in the same way (it could even be argued that it fails to take into account a plethora of feminist perspectives in its omission of men and masculinities). Its inability to engage with academic understandings becomes especially apparent in its use (or misuse) of particular concepts, particularly when there is little reference to outside sources to help the reader understand what is actually meant.

Its "Annual Report", for example, quotes the Secretary General António Guterres as saying that, "largely, the problem is a problem of power. A male-dominated world with a male-dominated culture, and this is a power question" (Spotlight Initiative\*, 2018, p.20). Similarly, it identifies "historical and structural power imbalances between men and women" as one of a number of underlying causes in its "Theory for Change" and acknowledges that a lack of power and control is both a cause and effect of gender inequality (Spotlight\*, 2018, p.22).

This is not to say that the Spotlight Initiative states anything that actively disagrees with or refutes contemporary gender discourse or even academic approaches to men and masculinities, but simply that it doesn't make these connections explicit - it doesn't 'connect the dots'. Without the framework of discourse, masculinities and P4P applied here, the Spotlight Initiative appears to consist largely of the buzzwords and platitudes that make up the aforementioned 'fog of consensus'.

The lack of explanation of what 'power' here refers to exactly, is one glaring example of how the Spotlight Initiative arguably glosses over the details. Kimmel reminds us of the effect this can have on our understanding of a concept, and the movement behind it:

"I think that perspective has been left out of our analyses of men's violence - both at the interpersonal, micro level of individual acts of men's violence against women - rape, battery, for example - and the aggregate, social and political analysis of violence expressed at the level of the nation state, the social movement of the military

institution. Violence may be more about getting the power which you feel you're entitled than an expression of the power you already think you have" (Kimmel 2001).

This thesis argues that our understanding of the concepts and language used in these documents is directly linked to our capacity to enact their ideas and aims. The impact of Bacchi's method here shows us that the whole point of problematisations is to capture a two-stage process including "how and why certain things (behaviour, phenomena, processes) become a problem", and constitute the foci for study (Foucault, 1985, p.115; Bacchi\*). Similarly, Shepherd argues that, "facilitating critical reflection on the words and concepts used to write policy enables practitioners to avoid unconsciously reproducing the different forms of oppression and exclusion that their policies seek to overcome" (Shepherd, 2010, p.143).

In terms of the explicit representations of men and masculinities, this thesis argues that the Spotlight Initiative fails to facilitate this critical reflection, first and foremost because of its own inability or unwillingness to explicitly and clearly address them, whereas P4P provides (and has provided the Spotlight Initiative) with an effective alternative approach. The Spotlight Initiative's failures here are only amplified when we turn to the implicit representations of men and masculinities, which form the focus of the next section.

### *Implicit representations of men and masculinities*

While the previous section demonstrated how the Spotlight Initiative, in comparison to P4P, fails to explicitly address men and masculinities, this does not mean that it does not provide the reader with an *implicit* narrative, something that is not unusual for gender discourses. Connell address the same issue in another UN document on gender, pointing out that:

"Men are implicitly present as background throughout these documents. In every statement about women and inequality, there is an implied comparison with men as a privileged group; in the discussions of violence against women, men are implicitly present as the 'perpetrators'; in discussion of gender and HIV/AIDS men were construed as 'the problem'; in discussions of women's exclusion from power and decision-making, men are implicitly present as the power holders" (Connell, 2003, p.11).

Following this logic, the Spotlight Initiative's suggestion that "harmful practices such as FGM [Female Genital Mutilation] and early, forced and child marriages are manifestations of gender inequality and gender-based discrimination against women and girls, and often intersect with different forms of VAWG" implicitly represents men as those perpetrating and benefitting from these acts (Spotlight Initiative, 2017, p.9).

Its reference to "legal and institutional frameworks, strategic and coordinated efforts" could be understood similarly, given the fact that they are areas dominated by men, and still represent points of exclusion for women (Spotlight Initiative, 2017, p.9). Moreover, the Initiative states that "almost half of all female homicide victims are killed by a family member or intimate partner" - leaving implied the fact that these family members and intimate partners are predominantly male (Spotlight Initiative, 2017, p.6).

The Spotlight Initiative's array of implicit representations of men and masculinities also provide the most pertinent examples of the aforementioned discursive strategies - especially 'degendering the problem' and the 'fog of consensus'.

### *Degendering the problem*

The implicit representations of men and masculinities in the Spotlight Initiative provides some of the clearest examples of the discursive strategy aimed at removing gender from the framing of a problem, resisting attempts to situate that problem within a patriarchal framework (Berns, 2001, p.265).

Its aim of obscuring men's violence (Berns, 2001) actively contradicts available data on gendered violence, as well as the dominant masculinities scholarship of recent decades, including Connell's power-based model of masculinities. Berns argues that: "by removing gender from the framing of the problem, this perspective undermines the role of gender and power" (Berns, 2001, p.265).

One way of doing this, is by reframing violence in gender-neutral terms. In Berns' understanding, the problem is reframed as 'human violence', mirroring the familial/systems approach mentioned in chapter two (Berns, 2001, p.265). Berns provides the example of men's everyday violence, including rape and incest, being obscured by a disproportionate focus on the less common 'stranger abuse' and 'sick rapists'. 'Stranger danger' misrepresents

the truth about men's violence against intimates and acquaintances, while human violence provides a similar frame in the context of domestic violence - as a rhetoric tool used to divert attention from men's everyday violence (Berns, 2001, p.265).

The Spotlight Initiative exhibits elements of a similar logic in a quote by the European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven Mimica, featured in its "Annual Report". In it, she said of gendered violence that,

"Too often, these terrible crimes go unnoticed - unseen and unspoken. And the cycles of violence continue to thrive in silence, in the darkest corners of our society. So it's up to each and every one of us - women and men alike - to stand up and speak out! To drive out the darkness and to break the walls of silence. This is exactly what our new Spotlight Initiative aims to do" (Mimica in Spotlight, 2018, p.33).

While not entirely untrue, it could be argued that this statement suggests that gendered violence (also conveniently referred to as 'crime' - another discursive strategy that neutralises its political impact, as well as its gendered character) goes unnoticed and takes place in the darkest corners of our society - denying the 'everyday' and commonplace nature of gendered violence. If anything, the argument here could be made that gendered violence has become so typical, so ordinary, that it is easy to ignore, but not that it is something we do not see or know about.

Another example of the Spotlight Initiative degendering the problem of gendered violence, accompanies its assertion that "femicide is a crime against all humanity". What the Spotlight Initiative, I suppose, is trying to do here, is to attempt to involve both men and women by invoking their shared humanity, making 'gender issues' everybody's issues. The problem comes with the section following this statement, in which men and masculinity are again only mentioned once - again in a veiled reference to gender roles and a 'harmful masculinity' that is again not explained further - men's roles and responsibilities here seem to be based on their part in humanity, not as men (Spotlight Initiative 2019).

The major paradox here lies in the implication throughout the Spotlight Initiative that women, the primary victims of gendered violence, are also expected to take responsibility for (and be equipped to) change the status quo and reconstruct it on the basis of gender equality. Despite

recognising that VAWG is “rooted in structural inequality in power relations between women and men,” it deploys an agenda contingent on the agency of women, independent of men’s involvement beyond ‘engagement’ (Spotlight Initiative, 2017, p.6).

Moreover, gender equality and the eliminating of gendered violence are continuously presented as being part of a promise to make a transformative difference in the lives of women and girls - the effect on men and boys is, again, not addressed explicitly (Spotlight Initiative\* 2018).

This is not uncommon. Even the opening quote to this thesis, Kimmel’s assertion that the women’s movement is “the story of a monumental, revolutionary transformation of the lives of more than half the population”, goes on to ask - “but what about the other half?” (Kimmel 2001). What this implies, alongside the Spotlight Initiative’s references to transforming the lives of women and girls, is that gender equality has, so far, had little effect on men and boys. It is, after all, a ‘women’s issue’.

This lack of oversight and precision on the part of the Spotlight Initiative continued through what this thesis identifies as its tendency to slip into the aforementioned ‘fog of consensus’.

### *The ‘fog of consensus’*

The possibly transformative effects of gender discourse are the subject of Cornwall & Rivas’ (2015) concept of the ‘fog of consensus’, which questions the validity of the use of terms like ‘gender equality’ and ‘women’s empowerment’<sup>5</sup>. This concept questions whether this central mantra of contemporary gender discourse is actually conducive to an effective and transformative agenda. In the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), this is especially relevant to the two case studies. These two cases, as mentioned earlier, fall under the remit of the MDGs successor – the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Despite the discursive association of equality and empowerment with agency, justice, accountability and human rights, Cornwall & Rivas argue that they have been resigned to mere rhetoric:

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<sup>5</sup> Mirrored by the earlier critique of the Spotlight Initiative’s use of the phrases ‘positive masculinity’ and ‘engaging men and boys’.

“Women thus become heroines or victims. Where ‘gender equality’ features in all this remains a moot point. The fog of consensus that makes it possible for ‘gender equality and women’s empowerment’ to be mumbled in on breath contributes to the dulling of our understanding of what a truly transformative agenda might look like. Ultimately, a paradigm transformation is needed to reclaim the gender agenda, and address the underlying structures of constraint that give these inequalities the systemic character and the persistence over time. To get there, we need an analytical and political interrogation of the varied meanings that these terms have acquired over time” (Cornwall & Rivas, 2015, p.400).

This means interrogating instances in which the Spotlight Initiative, for example, says that it will “empower women’s movements and civil society, including the most marginalised women and girls such as women with disabilities, indigenous women, migrant women and youth”, and questioning how it plans to do so without addressing men, also (Spotlight, 2018, p.60).

What the Spotlight Initiative arguably does with these statements, is to subvert and instrumentalise ‘women’s empowerment’, depoliticising the term and robbing it of its power, or as Esquivel puts it, delivering “empowerment without power” (Esquivel, 2016, p.14).

Here, “although genuine empowerment *always* involves changing unequal power relations” the Spotlight Initiative has recognised that donors and investors tend to favour an apolitical use of the term, in which power relations may actually remain wholly or virtually untouched. “When used in this way, the notion of empowerment ‘risks’ becoming a signifier of righteousness - part of the process of mystification of dominant group interests” (Esquivel, 2016, p.14).

The language and terminology, an indicator of the success of the women’s movement, are then being instrumentalised to create consensus around an agenda that, while ambitious, fails to address gender as a whole. While P4P balances its use of these types of terms with straightforward explanations and data on men, masculinities and violence, the Spotlight Initiative so far relies heavily on this type of instrumentalisation alone.

Its narrative is one of hope and encouragement, stating that:

“The Sustainable Development Goals, with firm targets on the elimination of violence against women and girls and harmful practices, will both guide our efforts and rely on our success. The equation is simple: we can only achieve the soaring ambition of the 2030 Agenda by achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls by ending violence against them [...] The momentum is with us. Together we can shine a ‘Spotlight’ on the darkness. Together we can end violence against women” (Spotlight, 2018, p.5).

Even ending violence against women and girls is here instrumentalised as part of the attainment of the 2030 Agenda, rather than as a goal in and of itself. It is yet to be seen just how transformative the Spotlight Initiative will be, and how far it will evolve from this initial output.

Beyond making this (and all) gender issues a ‘women’s issue’ through the omission of men and masculinities, Connell also argues that the tendency for men to only be present as a background category in policy discourse on gender also makes it difficult to raise issues about men’s and boys’ interests. According to Connell, this essentially ensures that any concern for men and boys’ problems is bound to be understood primarily as a backlash posture or as a part of an anti-feminist narrative of men’s rights. This makes it difficult to attract men to partnership in a policy realm, which Connell also sees as crucial to progress on gender equality and eliminating gendered violence (Connell, 2003, p.11).

Connell’s (2014) “Change among the Gatekeepers: Men, Masculinities, and Gender Equality in the Global Arena” suggests that getting men to support gender equality is already a question of ‘strategy’. P4P and the Spotlight Initiative then represent two opposing ‘strategies’ to the problem of gendered violence (and the inclusion of men and masculinities in gender issues and discourse).

## **Discussion**

The analysis presented above suggests that the Spotlight Initiative and P4P are quite different in their attempt to achieve what appears to be the same goal. Yet, their strategies appear opposite. P4P and the Spotlight Initiative provide two different narratives on gendered violence and gender equality, especially where men’s roles and responsibilities in eliminating

gendered violence are concerned. Comparing the two – despite one being complete and the other in its initial states – provides us with the opportunity to contrast the *implied problematisation* that motivates them, with men and masculinities as the focal point. This is possible because of the almost exclusive use of documents presented by each programme on their websites. This ensures that the focus rests on their own professed (and implied) *intentions*, not necessarily the outcomes, making the comparison fairer than it at first appeared to be.

P4P here represents a relatively new problematisation in its focus on men and masculinities and is heavily influenced by academia and the growing influence masculinities studies has had on gender studies and public gender discourses. The Spotlight Initiative follows the more typical approach of focusing on the proposed ‘victims’ of gendered violence – women.

The implications of any findings here go beyond P4P and the Spotlight Initiative, to tell us more about the impact including or excluding men and masculinities (discursively and practically) from gender discourse can have on gender issues and public policy and perception.

This thesis’ interpretation rests on the understanding that P4P offers an honest portrayal and analysis of the relationship between men, masculinities and violence, as well as the effect this can have on women. This results in a framework that arguably bestows both agency and responsibility on men to change the status quo alongside women – for everybody’s benefit.

P4P here presents us with a clear narrative on how the relationship between masculinity and violence affects people of all genders, all the while careful not to depict it as essentialist or biological or ‘natural’. Its own recommendations as well as the PREVENT framework after all hinge on the malleable nature of masculinity, gender, and the propensity to use violence. The Spotlight Initiative, on the other hand, refuses to engage with this part of ‘the problem’, keeping it from making a coherent contribution on the causes of gendered violence. Furthermore, it almost appears to suggest that the consequences of gendered violence only negatively affect women, with men constituting an afterthought - an entity that simply needs to ‘engage’.



Through their choice of language and terminology, it becomes clear that P4P focuses on extending the concept of gender to men, whereas the Spotlight Initiative fails to strike the balance necessary to offer an inclusive and relevant agenda to either gender and beyond. So while both case studies follow a multidimensional approach, demonstrating how far this type of discourse has come in recent decades, they can be easily distinguished by the Spotlight Initiative's reliance on implicit and problematic representations of men and masculinities and a language more concerned with creating a 'fog of consensus' than providing an honest picture of the status quo. P4P is explicit on what the problem is, and how to address it.

The Initiative continues to perpetuate the antiquated notion that 'gender' means 'women', making its agenda more exclusive, despite its own assertions that men play a crucial part in any future fight for gender equality. This is particularly at odds with P4P's contemporary and transformative agenda, which demonstrates a knowledge and understanding of the difficulties incorporating men and masculinities can present.

The two case studies then highlight a number of inconsistencies pervasive in modern gender discourse, which fails to incorporate transdisciplinary approaches, including those from the study of men and masculinities. By highlighting the explicit and implicit representations of men and masculinities in two policy approaches that ostensibly share the same goal - eliminating gendered violence and achieving gender equality - this thesis calls for the inclusion of men and masculinities in the 'sphere' of gender, but also the impact academia can and should have on social policy formulation and configuration.

There exists an unwillingness to accept the usefulness academia can present to policymakers, illustrated by Shepherd's experience when she tried to explain her doctoral research, an analysis of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, at a conference in the hope of finding out how she could make it more relevant to practitioners (Shepherd 2019). She was told that engagement was unlikely anyway, as she wasn't doing 'that kind of research'. She argues that this "was premised on the assumption that theoretically driven work - work that engages with French philosophers rather than statistical analysis software - is of little use to policy makers and stakeholders" (Shepherd, 2010, p.143-4).

As well as demonstrating the importance of including men and masculinities in contemporary gender discourse, this thesis then aims to illustrate the positive effect academic research can have on social policy - in this instance by highlighting the successes of the theoretically-driven P4P with the more traditionally policy-based Spotlight Initiative.

One of the biggest concerns or issues that appears when we attempt to 'bring men in' to the gender sphere, rests on questions of agency vs structure. This thesis' feminist poststructuralist perspective then fundamentally steers how it posits this issue should be tackled.

This perspective to gender rejects the possibility of defining woman as such at all, in line with the idea that both feminist and misogynist attempts to do so are politically reactionary and ontologically mistaken: "[...] we are in fundamental ways duplicating misogynist strategies when we try to define women, characterise women, speak for women, even though allowing for a range of differences within the gender" (Alcoff, 1988, p.407). Instead it argues, in line with Alcoff's view of poststructuralism, that "the politics of gender or sexual difference must be replaced with a plurality of difference where gender loses its position of significance" (1988, p.407).

The dilemma presented by such a perspective, as opposed to cultural feminism for example, which does not challenge "the defining of women but only that definition by men" (Alcoff, 1988, p.407), is that the very self-definition of feminists today is grounded in a concept that it is argued must be deconstructed and de-essentialised in all of its aspects, according to Alcoff (1988, p.406). Adding men, Alcoff argues, only amplifies this dilemma. The following quote, while extensive, clearly demonstrates this perspective and is critical to the core of my work:

"Man has said that woman can be defined, delineated, captured, understood, explained, and diagnosed - to a level of determination never accorded to man himself, who is conceived as a rational animal with free will. Where men's behaviour is undetermined, free to construct its own future along the course of its rational choice, women's nature has overdetermined her behaviour, the limits of her intellectual endeavours, and the inevitabilities of her emotional journey through life. Whether she is construed as essentially immoral and irrational (à la Schopenhaur) or essentially kind and benevolent (à la Kant), she is always construed as an essential *something* inevitably accessible to direct intuited apprehension by males. Despite the variety of

ways in which man has construed her essential characteristics, she is always the Object, a conglomeration of attributes to be predicted and controlled along with other phenomena. The place of the free-willed subject who can transcend nature's mandates is reserved exclusively for men" (Alcoff, 1988, p.406).

The problem with this type of critique, is first that it seems more concerned with gender differences - 'man has done this', 'woman has been subjected to that' - and safeguarding feminism and the concept of 'woman', than it is with gender equality.

This concern and focus on gender differences, it could be argued, is what drives policy makers to degender the problem in the first place, for fear of alienating men by being honest about the role in the oppression of women and other men throughout history. Second, it appears to posit men's traits and/or intentions as the cause of women's oppression, rather than the gender order itself - a gender order that determines the roles of both the *powerless* and the *powerful*:

"This way of thinking diverts attention from theorising the social relations that place women in a disadvantageous position in every sphere of life and channels it towards men as the cause of women's oppression. But men do not have a privileged position in history such that, independent of social determination, they have the foresight and power consciously to shape the social organisation in their favour. Men, like women, are social beings whose characteristics reflects the social formation within which they emerge as social agents" (Gimenez, 2005, p.14).

Once we accept this, it becomes easier to accept that violence is not an inherently masculine trait - allowing us to talk honestly about men's violence without being scared of alienating men. The rejection of binary characterisations is central to this.

Derrida saw 'woman' as always defined as a subjugated difference within a binary opposition: man/woman, culture/nature, positive/negative, analytical/intuitive and argued that, "to assert an essential difference as cultural feminists do is to reinvoké this oppositional structure" (Alcoff, 1988, p.416-7). The only way to escape and to ultimately subvert this structure, is to "assert total difference, to be that which cannot be pinned down or subjugated within a dichotomous hierarchy" (Alcoff, 1988, p.417).

So, where Foucault rejected these constructions of oppositional subjects - whether the 'proletariat,' 'the oppressed,' or simply 'woman' - as mirror images that merely recreate and sustain the discourse of power (Alcoff, 1988, p.417-8), this thesis argues that the same must apply to their opposites - whether 'aristocracy,' 'the oppressor' or 'man'.

## **Conclusion**

P4P and the Spotlight Initiative represent just two of the programmes aimed at achieving the fifth SDG, highlighting the variety of perspectives and approaches each one seeks to encompass. Both P4P and the Spotlight Initiative are exemplary of a gender discourse that has come very far since the days when gendered violence was an issue consigned to the realm of women-led activism and was explained using individualist, familial/systems, structuralist or poststructuralist approaches alone. The fact that gender equality is the fifth SDG, and is now recognised as a "necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world" is a victory in itself (United Nations\*\* [n.d.]; Fulu et al., 2013, p.iii).

However, these two programmes, and the UNSDGs more broadly, also demonstrate the difficulties we still experience in expressing our approach to and understanding of gender, whether our own or somebody else's. Most of these difficulties appear to centre on the struggle to define (and agree on) what 'gender' actually is, and most importantly, *who*.

The Spotlight Initiative has yet to substantialise its aims into a practical and applicable agenda. What is apparent from professed functions, as well as the documentation on its website, is that the Spotlight Initiative is focused on women's experience of violence as well as women's capacity to eliminate it. It appears to offer a far more top-down approach than the community- and education-based P4P, positing laws, policies and institutions as its first port of call in addressing gender-based violence (Spotlight\*).

Its reliance on implicit representations of men and masculinity (and almost total lack of explicit references to them) damages its credibility and capacity to address gender equality as a universal issue. In fact, its narrative doesn't present it as such at all, but instead relegates it back to the idea that 'gender' is a 'women's issue'.

However, this thesis acknowledges Gelfer's (2017) wisdom, which argues that too many of us (specifically well-meaning progressives and academic types) believe that "highlighting a problem is the same thing as providing a solution" and telling us that it is not (Gelfer 2017). P4P here provides us with a blueprint from improvement, demonstrating how it is possible to include men and masculinities in gender discourse today.

But what about tomorrow? The central question to this thesis, is perhaps: who is responsible for gender equality?

By making gender visible in both its implicit and explicit representations throughout the two case studies, this thesis demonstrates how the answer to this question in the Spotlight Initiative is: women. P4P, however, extends the concept of gender to men, 'bringing them in', despite their arguably negative depiction.

This is done primarily by balancing the negative with the positive, but also (more crucially) by moving away from binary notions altogether. A binary approach to gender has long posited women as those primarily suffering the consequences of gender inequality, but also presented them as the primary beneficiaries of moves towards gender equality. Arguably, a binary approach will always offer an absurdly simplistic and false representation of an issue, whether that is something as immediately complex as gender or not. Stoltenberg argues that even the category of 'sex' usually understood to be based in science or biology (and thus truth), as opposed to the socially constructed gender, cannot be considered in binary terms:

"...we are born into a physiological continuum, on which there is no discrete and definite point that you can call 'male' and no discrete and definite point that you can call 'female'. If you look at all the variables in nature that are said to determine human 'sex,' you can't possibly find one that will unequivocally split the species into two. Each of the so-called criteria of sexedness is itself a continuum - including chromosomal variables, genital and gonadal variations, reproductive capacities, endocrinological proportions, and any other criterion you can think of. Any or all of these different variables may vary independently of one another" (Stoltenberg, 1989, p.35).

While this perspective is considered to be radical and result in a similar dilemma as the one identified earlier in connection with applying a feminist poststructuralist perspective to gender, it isn't necessarily so. A growing part of gender studies focused on the possibility of a world 'beyond gender', and outside of the social sciences you'll also encounter things like 'epigenetics', which could offer an explanation of gendered violence based on changes in organisms caused by modification of gene expression rather than alteration of the genetic code itself.

This is to say, just as we have moved past the explanations explored in the first half of this thesis for explaining gender and gendered behaviour, so there are avenues to explore that take us far beyond our current 'dilemmas', whether this starts with the abolition of gender or not.

For the best and most honest results, however, one thing is necessary. We must go beyond P4Ps suggestion of merely *complementing* research on women with research on men (whether concerning gendered violence or anything else). Gender must become the inclusive and effective term it was envisaged as. And just as the gender lens must arguably become a non-negotiable element of any research or policy, so too men must be brought into and must include themselves in gender.

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