



EUROPEAN WOMEN'S
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European Women's Voice

The European Women's Lobby (EWL) is the largest umbrella organisation of women's associations in the European Union (EU), working to promote women's rights and equality between women and men. EWL membership extends to organisations in all 27 EU member states and three of the candidate countries, as well as to 20 European-wide bodies, representing a total of more than 2000 organisations.

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The other half of gender: feminism and men's role in achieving equality



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Editorial:

By Brigitte Triems, EWL President & Cécile Gréboval, EWL Secretary General

In October 2011, the European Women's Lobby (EWL) organised an inaugural seminar on the topic of men and feminism, which provided a forum for reflection on masculinities, anti-feminism, initiatives of feminist men and equality policies involving men. The aim of the seminar was to update ourselves on current thinking and action concerning men's role in the struggle for gender equality, and to consider how we can work together to bring about a society founded upon feminist values.

This second edition of the European Women's Voice brings together the contributions of the speakers at the seminar and of other committed experts. We

would like to thank them warmly for their expertise, availability and efforts.

The seminar could not have taken place without the support of the Institut pour l'Egalité des Femmes et des Hommes (Belgium), Vleba, the liaison agency for Flanders-Europe, and the European Commission. We thank them for their help.

We have tried to make this publication enriching and interesting. For us, the issues raised inform our work for equality between women and men and the promotion of women's rights in Europe. We hope you enjoy the articles within and that they provide stimulus for further discussion!



The EWL's seminar on men and feminism: new paths of reflection for the women's movement

By Pierrette Pape, EWL Policy Officer and Project Coordinator

It was by way of a seminar for researchers and activists that the European Women's Lobby (EWL) decided to approach the question of (pro-) feminist men and their role in the feminist movement, as well as the development of new public equality policies.

On Saturday 22 October, in Brussels, more than 90 people benefited from the expertise and experience of the EWL's guests. Under the title, "The other half of gender: Masculinities and men's roles towards equality", the speakers' contributions raised many pertinent questions of vital importance to the women's movement and its promotion of equality between women and men in Europe. This was a breath of fresh air for EWL members as they were afforded time both to reflect upon and to share their own experiences, returning to their countries with a better understanding of the question of the role of men in achieving equality.

Can men speak for women?

This simple question, the answer to which may seem clear, captures a number of fundamental issues

for feminist groups and activists. In response, Valérie Lootvoet (Director of Université des Femmes in Belgium) highlighted many points which were drawn from research with men and women involved in gender equality activism: even if men can understand masculine domination and do try to defeat it in their daily lives or through activism, can they really be involved in women's movements without reproducing or benefiting from wider patriarchal structures? As an illustration, the example was given of the very positive image afforded to those men who display their feminism, whilst women continue to experience contempt or indifference when they call for equality.

It is important for women and for (pro-) feminist men alike, whether they are researchers or activists, to be aware of this risk and to step back from their work continuously in order to evaluate the strength of men's involvement and the feminist credentials of their projects. A constant back-and-forth must be established between the real lives of women and the women's movement on the one hand, and the public interventions of (pro-) feminist men

on the other, so as to eliminate the risk of a takeover or a hijacking of the fundamental demands of feminism.

The contributions of Mélissa Blais and Francis Dupuis-Déri (both researchers at the University of Quebec in Montreal) highlighted the reactionary arguments developed by certain men and men's groups in response to the advances won by the feminist movement over the past 40 years. These masculinist discourses, promoted by an anti-feminist men's movement, call for a return to the "natural" order between the sexes, and accuse feminists of causing various crises of masculinity experienced by men. Through looking at a supporting study on feminist organisations in Quebec, the participants in the seminar were shown the diversity of anti-feminist attacks and the impact these had on activists. These attacks lead activists to reduce their demands and actions in anticipation of formal complaints, the disruption of events or other forms of verbal, physical or symbolic violence.

The contribution of the researchers from Quebec is crucial as it improves our ability to identify anti-feminist attacks. It also prompts feminist

organisations and activists to develop responses so they can continue their actions and maintain their demands. One of the conclusions from this study on anti-feminist attacks is particularly important for feminist organisations: women-only organisations seem to be more protected against certain strains of anti-feminist violence, as women rub shoulders less directly with anti-feminists. Finally, these contributions provide valuable insight for the critique of the new generation of equality policies which is based on a "win-win" model for men and women.

Is the new generation of equality policies anti-feminist?

This may seem like a blunt question but it is certainly worth asking in light of the examples presented by Pierrette Pape (Policy Officer and Project Coordinator at the EWL) in the introduction to the seminar (see following article).

The presentation by Jouni Varanka (former expert for the Gender Equality Unit of the Finnish Ministry for Social Affairs and Health) on Finnish equality policies seems to confirm the fears highlighted above: new equality policy in Finland seeks to demonstrate to men the benefits they can gain from gender equality measures, therefore it engages with new themes that are believed could interest "masculinists": what about the absenteeism of boys from school? What about violence against men? Whilst this new approach to equality policies serves to bolster support from men, its content poses problems in terms of feminist demands: to move towards greater equality, must we sacrifice the structural analysis of power relations between women and men in order to obtain the agreement of men? What type of equality are we establishing? Can we really talk about a "win-win" process if the concerns of men – who dominate our society – are taken into account in equal measure to the concerns of women who remain globally disadvantaged? Just as the Finnish expert recalled that all policies that implicate men must, nevertheless, be in line with international principles of the promotion of women's rights,

the experiences highlighted by the earlier speakers show that to achieve equality requires transformation of the power imbalance, if we really want to change the structures of our societies by imposing equality.

Tomas Wetterberg (founder of the NGO "Men for Gender Equality" in Sweden) used his own personal experience to explain how men can invest themselves in gender equality, and can even create structures for activism or research to help eradicate masculine domination. Looking at the research on masculinities, he showed that many men refute traditional models of masculinity and wish to construct new relationships with women, whilst developing new models for young men. Following this, Matt McCormack Evans shared his own experience that led him to create the project "Anti Porn Men" in the UK. He used his contribution to the seminar to present his ideas on what the feminist movement would have to gain by including and working with men.

There are many examples of wonderful projects that directly involve men in the deconstruction of current models of masculinities and the construction of an egalitarian society. Many projects run by men have chosen, in particular, to address the question of violence against women, highlighting models of intervention or prevention to young people in order to deconstruct the gendered stereotypes and the social expectations regarding the role of boys and girls.

Exercising caution regarding both the inclusion of (pro-) feminist men and public policy

Reflecting on these contributions, the "take home message" is that we must remain ever vigilant in order to identify "masculinist" demands in both public policy and in the actions of (pro-) feminist men. Whilst it is interesting to see researchers and activists approaching the question of masculinities and the place of men in the women's movement, it remains essential that strong feminist actions are defended; actions which, at the

front and centre, tackle the structural domination with which women are confronted. Collaboration with men can only be productive if it is faithful to this principle.

Further reading:

EWL Position Paper, The role of men and boys in promoting gender equality, 2004

Jouni Varanka, Gender equality needs men, men need gender equality, 2007

Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Men and Gender Equality. Policy in Finland, 2007

Council Conclusions on Men and Gender Equality, EU, 2006

Francis Dupuis-Déri, Les hommes proféministes : compagnons de route ou faux amis, 2008

Francis Dupuis-Déri, Nous sommes tous masculinistes, 2005

Interview with Florence Montreynaud, Les vrais hommes ne paient pas pour ça, on the website Egalité, 2011

The men who believe porn is wrong, Article in The Guardian, 2010

Publications:

Université des Femmes, La fabrique des hommes, Chronique féministe n°106, 2010

Mélissa Blais and Francis Dupuis-Déri Dir., Le mouvement masculiniste au Québec. L'antiféminisme démasqué, Editions du remue-ménage, 2008

Christian Schiess, « Le féminisme émancipera-t-il les hommes ? », in Le féminisme change-t-il nos vies ?, Delphine Gardery Dir., 2011



Men and feminism: the state of equality today



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Anti-feminist attacks, initiatives from feminist men and European policies: an overview of the current challenges

By Pierrette Pape, EWL Policy Officer and Project Coordinator

Did you know that in Switzerland last June around a hundred men took part in the Second International Anti-feminist Congress? Their group is called the "Interest Group Anti-feminism", and one of their aims is to "eliminate feminist ideology from politics and public opinion".¹

And did you know that, in his manifesto, Anders Behring Breivik, the Norwegian who killed more than 80 young Socialist activists last July, wrote explicitly that he wanted both to stop the Islamisation of Norway and to defend the traditional role of men in society?²

Researchers into masculinities have already demonstrated the links between the far right, or conservatism, and misogyny. In Breivik's case, feminists are accused of having weakened Europe and feminised the European male, who, if we are to believe Islamophobic conspiracy theories, is now easy prey for "Muslim colonisation". With our current economic and social crisis, anti-feminist discourses are being given an even greater airing: according to the Swiss activists I mentioned, it's time to get back to traditional gender roles, time for men to recover their status and authority so that they can restore social harmony at last.

In parallel with these quite radical antifeminist attacks we are seeing a development that is more subtle, and more institutional, but has the same

end result. Two examples:

The organisers of the Brussels Festival of Women's Films, which is held every September and pays tribute to women directors, indicated that several official Belgian bodies refused to support the festival because it was "too women-focused" and "not gender-focused enough".

And secondly, in talking about the need to combat stereotypes, the European Commission's equality strategy cites the growing numbers of boys leaving school before getting a qualification, and illiteracy rates among boys. These, it would appear, are the consequences of sexist stereotyping in education: the Commission does not give any examples of discrimination against girls. Of course it is crucial to eradicate stereotypes about men, and a particular type of masculinity – but putting these kinds of examples forward can also lead to counterproductive interpretations unless we set the figures in the overall context of gender inequalities.

We are also seeing some slippage in the definition of gender equality as a concept: instead of discrimination against women in a patriarchal society being highlighted, we now have policies tending to put men's rights in opposition to women's, for example in the field of health. The EWL identified this trend back in 2004 already, in its position paper on the role of men and boys.³

have reached the realm of the EU institutions. In 2006, under the Finnish presidency of the EU, the Council adopted some Conclusions on men and gender equality.⁴ Member States noted that, to improve the status of women and promote equality, more attention needed to be paid to how men were involved in achieving gender equality. The positive impact of gender equality for men, and for the wellbeing of society as a whole, also needed to be demonstrated.

In the European Commission's gender equality strategy, which I have just mentioned, the Commission announced that it was going to study the role of men in achieving equality. Many European and international projects also study men's role: handbooks are appearing on how to work with men and boys to prevent violence against women, training is being provided, and networks like White Ribbon and MenEngage are being set up.⁵

We welcome these kinds of projects but are also careful to ensure that these developments do not promote new equality policies with a subtle anti-feminist tinge.

Along with this, we're seeing the emergence of new initiatives that give men a voice and base their activities on feminist values. For example, Florence Montreynaud, a historian and feminist, is currently working on a project entitled "Real men don't pay

¹ In Axelle, No. 142, October 2011, p.8, <http://www.axellemag.be/fr/>

² In 'Anti-feminism as a political device', Solveig Bergman, NIKK Magazine (Magazine of the Nordic Gender Institute), 2.2011, p.31, http://issuu.com/nikk---nordic-gender-institute/docs/nikk_2-11_webb

The issue of men's involvement in achieving equality seems to

³ Available here: <http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?article109&lang=en>

⁴ http://eu2006.fi/NEWS_AND_DOCUMENTS/CONCLUSIONS/VKO48/EN_GB/1164987131570/_FILES/76348606395122256/DEFAULT/91959.PDF

⁵ <http://www.whiteribbon.ca/>, <http://www.menengage.org/>

for 'it'.⁶ She decided to look at the majority of men who refuse to pay for an act of prostitution, either because they can't, on account of their upbringing or self-esteem, because they don't feel like it, for reasons to do with their concept of sexuality, or because they don't wish to, for philosophical or political reasons. In her view, it is by giving a voice to these men we that can attain equality together.

More and more men are getting involved in feminist movements. Organisations based on gender diversity are being set up, like the Laboratoire pour l'Égalité in France and UK Feminista in Britain.⁷ In response to calls from feminist organisations, men are joining their struggle: many male politicians support women's rights and equality; for example, several male politicians are putting across the message of the Irish anti-prostitution project, Turn Off the Red Light.⁸ Some are even setting up their own feminist organisation: in this issue of European Women's Voice, you will discover two examples, and there are also networks of feminist men in Spain, in France and in Sweden, for example.⁹

This approach leads us to think in more practical terms about how we should involve men and work together with male researchers and activists who have developed projects on equality, based on strong or not-so-strong feminist values.

⁶ <http://www.egalite-infos.fr/2011/07/21/les-vrais-hommes-ne-paient-pas-pour-ca/>

⁷ <http://laboratoiredeegalite.wordpress.com/>, <http://ukfeminista.org.uk/>

⁸ <http://www.turnofftheredlight.ie/>

⁹ In France: <http://petitpaspourlhomme.blogspot.com/> or <http://www.ladominationmasculine.net/petition-des-hommes.html>; in Spain: <http://hombresporlaigualdad.blogspot.com/>; in Sweden: <http://www.mfj.se/>





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Has a man's world become a women's nation?

By Michael Kimmel, SUNY Distinguished Professor, Department of Sociology, SUNY at Stony Brook, USA

An earlier and longer version of this essay was published in *The Shriver Report: A Woman's Nation Changes Everything* (edited by Heather Boushey and Ann O'Leary). Washington: Center for American Progress, 2009.

"This is a man's world," sang James Brown in 1964, with a voice both defiantly assertive and painfully anguished. He starts off proudly, with a litany of men's accomplishments: men made the cars, the trains, the electric lights and the boats that carried the loads and took us out of the dark. Men even made the toys that children play with. But lest he encourage only smug self-satisfaction, Brown changes course at the end of the song. "But it wouldn't be nothing... without a woman or a girl." Without women,

Brown ends, men are "lost in the wilderness... lost in bitterness... lost, lost," his voice trailing off in confusion and despair.

This essay is about that wilderness 45 years later—a wilderness in which some men today are lost, others bitter, and still others searching for new forms of masculinity amid what they believe is the excessive feminization of American society and culture—not because of the absence of women in their lives that Brown noticed but rather, ironically, because of their increased presence. At work and at home, in private and in public, women's increasing equality has been an issue to which men have had to respond.

If women's entry into the labor force stirred up men's ability to anchor their identity as family provider, women's

emergence as primary breadwinner is a seismic shift, shaking some men's identities to their foundations. Coupled with the equally seismic shift in the structure of the workplace, we see a major reason why many contemporary observers see a "crisis" of masculinity—a general confusion and malaise about the meaning of manhood. (...)

How have men responded? While some noisily and bitterly protest, and others continue to fight a rear-guard action to undo women's gains, most American men simply continue to go about their lives, falling somewhere between eager embrace of women's equality and resigned acceptance. And among this majority of American men, some interesting developments are now clear. These men by and large are closer to their wives and children and happier for the effort (as are their

families), and they are healthier both physically and mentally. And yes, they have more sex. (...)

I'll try to map a range of men's responses, but the evidence is clear that most American men are quietly acquiescing to these changes, with sweeping implications for our economy and our nation. (...)

Lost in the bitterness

To some men, women's entry into the public arena is experienced not as "entry" but as "invasion." The men who today oppose women's entry into firehouses and police stations, military combat units, and corporate boardrooms echo those who opposed their entry into the Citadel and Virginia Military Institute, the Augusta Country Club, and the locker room a decade ago—men who themselves echoed those who opposed women's right to vote, join a union, serve on a jury, drive a car, or enter the workforce a century ago.

Demographically, they range from younger working-class guys—firefighters and factory workers who sense greater competition for jobs—to middle-class, middle-aged corporate types who believe that the politics of women's entry (affirmative action, an end to wage discrimination, comparable worth) hurt them. Both groups mourn the loss of the casual locker-room frivolity that marked the all-male workplace, and are afraid of, and angry about, sexual harassment guidelines, which they regard as the Politically Correct police. Most are white, and offer the same dire predictions—loss of camaraderie and casual cohesiveness—that whites feared 40 years ago about integration.

Men who oppose women's equality today often express a defensive resistance. They're interested in preserving certain arenas as all-male havens. Women, we might be told, are not qualified for the positions they seek; they are not strong enough, not tough enough, not [fill in the blank] enough to make the grade. This defensive resistance lies close to the surface; a gentle scratch can elicit a

furious response. "I will have none of the nonsense about oppressed and victimized women; no responsibility for the condition of women... none of the guilt or self-loathing that is traditionally used to keep men functioning in harness," fulminates Richard Haddad, a champion of men's rights.¹ (...)

Not long ago, I appeared on a television talk show opposite three such "angry white males" who felt they had been the victims of workplace discrimination. They were in their late twenties and early thirties. The show's title, no doubt to entice a large potential audience, was "A Black Woman Stole My Job." Each of the men described how they were passed over for jobs or promotions for which they believed themselves qualified.

Then it was my turn to respond. I said I had one question about one word in the title of the show. I asked them about the word "my." Where did they get the idea it was "their" job? Why wasn't the show called "A Black Woman Got a Job" or "A Black Woman Got the Job"? These men felt the job was "theirs" because they felt entitled to it, and when some other person (a black female) got the job, that person was really taking what was "rightfully" theirs.

That sense of entitlement—and entitlement thwarted—is what lies beneath the surface of these men's resistance to women's equality. These men employ what we might call a "wind chill" theory of gender politics: It doesn't matter what the temperature actually is, it matters only how it feels. Gender equality is felt to be a zero-sum game: If women win, men lose. And to hear them tell it, men are losing. (...)

Sometimes, this leads to some dizzying reversals of both conventional wisdom and common sense. Are feminists concerned about domestic violence? Proclaim "gender symmetry," and then argue that women hit men as much as

men hit women. Women concerned about sexual assault? "The way young women dress in the spring constitutes a sexual assault upon every male within eyesight of them," wrote one retired professor. Women seek to protect their right to choose? Attempt to establish a "man's right to choose," and then prevent a woman from aborting "his" child while ignoring any responsibility for the child once born. Or how about women in the workplace campaigning against wage discrimination or sexual harassment? Insist that the wage gap favors women and that sexual harassment is actually an expression of women's sexual power.² (...)

In the eyes of these anti-feminist men's rights groups, it's no longer a man's world. They share this report's perception that America has become a woman's nation. And, in their view, it's time to take it back.

The "masculinists"

To other men, women's increased empowerment only highlights the loss of masculine vigor among American men. Their response was not to attempt to roll back women's gains but rather to return to a nostalgic notion of masculinity, one rooted in ostensibly natural, primal, sacred, or mythic qualities. If women have invaded all the previously all-male institutions, men needed to find, as Virginia Woolf might have put it, "a room of their own"—an all-male space where men can relax with other men, free from the constant policing that accompanies political correctness, and retrieve their inner sense of their own masculinity, in the presence of other men. For these "masculinists," gender politics are a project of reclamation, restoration, and retrieval—not of some lost power over women, but of a lost sense of internal efficacy and sense of power. (...)

For masculinists, power is not about economic or political aggregates or different groups' access to resources. Nor is it to be measured by comparing

¹ Richard Haddad, "Feminism has Little Relevance for Men." In Keith Thompson, ed., *To Be a Man: In Search of the Deep Masculine* (Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher, 1991), p. 100.

² Warren Farrell, *The Myth of Male Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), pp. 298, 301.

wages or representatives on corporate boards or legislative bodies. Rather, power is an interior experience, a sense of dynamic energy. As a result, they tend not to engage with policy initiatives designed to push women back. At their best, they are indifferent to women's collective experience; they may even take inspiration from women's empowerment. They seek instead to combat their sense of emasculation not with impotent rage against feminized institutions, but rather by restoring their sense of power in reclaiming masculine myths.

Other guys find that lost all-male Eden in cyberspace. While cinematic and pornographic fantasies of men's power have long been with us, the proliferation of video and computer games in which avatars wreak havoc on women, gays, and other "others" is still somewhat shocking. For significant numbers of younger men, remote corners of cyberspace are the newest incarnation of the Little Rascals' "He-Man Woman Haters Club," the tree house with the sign that says "No Gurls Allowed."

These types of masculinists tend to rely on archaic notions of the essential, natural, and binary masculine and feminine. As a result, they may become momentarily enamored with anti-feminist policy initiatives,

such as the re-segregation of schools into single-sex classes, ostensibly to promote boys' engagement with education, but often to set back decades of feminist efforts to make classrooms and athletic fields more equal. (These anti-feminists are not to be confused with those popular voices in minority communities — backed by many policy analysts — all of whom are engaged with the crisis facing many minority boys in school, which is both real and serious.) For these mostly white masculinists, their zeal to support fathers' connection with family life and especially with the experience of fatherhood often draws them into "angry dad" campaigns against custody or divorce laws, in which men are said to be the victims of reverse discrimination.

The most interesting arenas of contemporary masculinity, however, are in some of America's churches. (...) In return for men keeping their promises to be faithful husbands, devoted fathers, and general all-around good men, the movement's "bible," "The Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper," suggests that men deal with women this way: "[S]it down with your wife and say 'Honey I've made a terrible mistake. I've given you my role in leading this family and I forced you to take my place. Now I must reclaim that role...' I'm not

suggesting that you ask for your role back. I'm urging you to take it back... There can be no compromise here. If you're going to lead you must lead."³ (...)

To the new masculinists, it may no longer be a man's world, but they'd like, at least, to find small pockets of all-male purity in which they can, again, be men among men.

Fatherhood as politics

After enumerating men's accomplishments in the workplace in his hit song, James Brown shifts his tone to a softer, more yearning, and plaintive tone. "Man thinks about a little baby girl, and a baby boy/ Man makes them happy, cause man makes them toys." Here Brown signals the other defining feature of American manhood: fatherhood. After all, if one's identity is wrapped up in being a family provider, one has to have a family to provide for.

In the 21st century, reconnecting men to family life is politicized terrain, filled with moral urgency, legalistic outrage, and social movements. Some advocates of the "new fatherhood"

³ Tony Evans, "Reclaiming Your Manhood." In Al Janssen ed., *The Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper* (Colorado Springs, CO: Focus on the Family Publishing, 1994), pp. 79–80.



paint with far broader strokes than simply enabling married couples to better balance work and family. David Blankenhorn's *Fatherless America* credited absent fathers with causing myriad social problems, ranging from juvenile delinquency, drug taking, sexual irresponsibility, crime and violence to unemployment. "Boys raised by traditionally masculine fathers generally do not commit crimes," Blankenhorn adds. "Fatherless boys commit crimes."⁴ His work was a catalog of specious correlations masquerading as causal arguments, but it struck a nerve about men's responsibility, or lack thereof.

With divorce so common, one arena in which fatherhood has become highly politicized is during and after divorce. Many of the organizations promoting involved "fatherhood responsibility," especially in communities of color, seek to keep men engaged in family life because it's good for the children, good for women, and good for the

men themselves. For other men, mostly white and middle class, the stroke of the pen finalizing divorce turns hordes of doting daddies into furious fathers who feel aggrieved by a process they believe denies them the access to their children to which they feel entitled. (...)

Fathers' rights groups use a language of equality to exact their revenge against their ex-wives, their ex-wives' lawyers, and the entire legal system, demanding mandatory joint custody and an end to alimony and child support payments. "Society cannot take away a father's right to his children and expect him to cheerfully pay child support," writes one activist. "Society cannot expect a father to make enough money to support two separate households. Society cannot afford to support mothers who choose not to work."⁵ Fathers must have equal rights—the right to custody and the right to financial freedom without burdensome alimony and child support. (...)

But one consequence of current custody arrangements is paternal withdrawal. Whether this is because the father is bereft about losing regular contact with his children, or because once the marital bond is severed he considers himself to have escaped from a conflict-ridden family situation, it appears that many men "see parenting and marriage as part of the same bargain—a package deal," write sociologists Frank Furstenberg and Andrew Cherlin. "It is as if they stop being fathers as soon as the marriage is over."⁶

In one nationally representative sample of 11-to-16-year-old children living with their mothers, almost half had not seen their fathers in the previous 12 months. Indeed, we see a widespread "masculinization of irresponsibility"—the refusal of fathers to provide economically for their children, which has led to the "feminization of poverty," with excruciatingly high poverty among

⁴ David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995).

⁵ Jon Conine, *Fathers' Rights: The Sourcebook for Dealing with the Child Support System* (New York: Walker, 1989), p. 2.

⁶ Frank Furstenberg and Andrew Cherlin, *Divided Families: What Happens to Children When Parents Part* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 38.



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single-mother families.

What predicts continued paternal involvement in their children's lives after a divorce is the quality of the relationship between the ex-spouses prior to the divorce.

This masculinization of irresponsibility is compounded by class and race. Poorer communities desperately need child support programs to enable and assist fathers in staying connected. Well-documented racial disparities in enforcement of child support laws create a perception that some fathers are significantly more irresponsible, creating (or enabling) the very dynamics they are supposed to remedy. Take just one example. In Dane County, Wisconsin, arrest rates for African Americans for nonpayment of child support are about 35 times those of white residents. Nearly one in two of those arrested for this reason were African Americans in a county whose African American population in 2000 was 4 percent of the total county population.⁷

Found, not lost

The anti-feminists may shout loudest, and the new masculinists may be the most mediagenic of men's responses to increased gender equality, but they represent only a small fraction of American men. The largest, if least acknowledged, response to women's equality is the quiet acceptance of gender equality at both the public and private level. In the public sphere, the majority of American men support wage equality, comparable worth, women's candidacies for public office.

On the domestic front, surveys consistently show "substantial and persistent" long-term trends increasing the endorsement of gender equality in families. With only modest attitudinal adjustment, most American men have adapted to the dual-career couple model that now characterizes most marriages. Some are even delighted to have the additional family

income. Most American men subscribe to a general "ethical imperative" and see women's equality as right, just, and fair. They just don't think it has all that much to do with them as men.⁸

But it does. As I will show below, when fatherhood is transformed from a political cause to a personal experience, from an ideological position or an existential state of being to a set of concrete practices, men's lives are dramatically improved. As are their children's. (...)

This change is more pronounced the younger the respondent. Just over a third of "Millennial" employees who were 28 or younger in 2008 support that traditional family model today, while slightly more than half (53 percent) of mature workers (63 and older in 2008) support it—though 90 percent of mature workers subscribed to the conventional model in 1977. And while 70 percent of men in dual-career couples still subscribed to the more conventional model in 1977, only about 37 percent of them subscribe to that today.⁹

While most American men's participation in family life, that is doing housework and child care, tends to be expressed by two two-word phrases—men "help out" and "pitch in"—men's share of housework and especially child care has also increased significantly in the past few decades. Men are both more likely to do more housework, and also more likely to hug their children and tell them that they love them, than in previous decades. It took several decades for the norm to be a dual-career couple; it will take several more decades before the norm is also a "dual-carer" couple.

The average father today spends three hours a day on the weekend with his family, up significantly from estimates in earlier decades. While women still do the majority of routine

housework, "husbands of working wives are spending more time in the family than in the past." In 1924, 10 percent of working-class women said their husbands spent "no time" doing housework; today that percentage is less than 2 percent. Between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s, men's household labor increased from five to seven hours per week, while women's share decreased by about five hours, from 27 hours to 22 hours per week.¹⁰ (...)

Reasonable, since they've defined housework as "her" domain. But when both work full-time outside the home, the wife does 28 hours and the husband does 16.¹¹ This is four times the amount of housework that Japanese men do, but only two-thirds of the housework that Swedish men do.¹² (...)

Housework aside, when it comes to being fathers, men are evidently willing to do more. A poll in *Newsweek* magazine found that 55 percent of fathers say that being a parent is more important to them than it was to their fathers, and 70 percent say they spend more time with their children than their fathers spent with them. What's more, they are actually doing it. According to the 2008 study by the Families and Work Institute, the amount of time fathers spend with their children under the age of 13 on workdays has increased from two hours a day in 1977 to three hours a day in 2008—an increase of 50 percent. Women's rate has remained constant over that 30-year period, at 3.8 hours per workday. Millennial fathers spend 4.3 hours per workday (their wives spend five hours). Men are not merely walking their walk; they almost seem to be jogging it.¹³ (...)

¹⁰ Randall Collins and Scott Coltrane, *Sociology of Marriage and the Family: Gender, Love and Property* (4th edition) (Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall, 1995), p. 378.

¹¹ Lisa Belkin, "When Mom and Dad Share it All," *The New York Times Magazine*, June 15, 2008, p. 47.

¹² Almudena Sevilla-Sanz, "Household Division of Labor and Cross-Country Differences in Household Formation Rates," Working Paper 325 (University of Oxford Department of Economics, May 2007).

¹³ Jerry Adler, "Building a Better Dad," *Newsweek*, June 17, 1996; Tamar Lewin, "Workers of Both Sexes Make Trade-Offs for

⁷ "The Effect of Child Support and Criminal Justice Systems on Low-Income Noncustodial Parents," available at http://www.cffpp.org/publications/effect_child.html#coopreq (last accessed August 2009).

⁸ Arland Thornton and Linda Young-DeMarco, "Four Decades of Trends in Attitudes Toward Family Issues in the United States: The 1960s through the 1990s," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (4) (2001): 1009–1037.

⁹ Ellen Galinsky, Kerstin Aumann and James T. Bond, "Times Are Changing: Gender and Generation at Work and at Home" (New York: Families and Work Institute, 2008), p. 11.

Men's increased participation in child care has its challenges, of course. Men are reporting significantly higher levels of work-family conflict than they did 30 years ago (and their rates now surpass women's). Three of five fathers in dual-earner couples report significant work-family conflict, up from just over a third (35 percent) in 1977.¹⁴

What's more, with men's child care participation increasing so much faster than their housework, a dangerous disequilibrium is developing in which dad is becoming the "fun parent." He takes the kids to the park and plays soccer with them; she stays home. "What a great time we had with dad!" the kids announce as they burst through the kitchen door to a lunch that mom prepared while also folding the laundry and vacuuming the living room. (...)

When men share housework and child care, it turns out, their wives are happier. This is intuitively obvious. Historically, working mothers reported higher levels of self-esteem and lower levels of depression than full-time housewives. Yet they also reported lower levels of marital satisfaction than do their husbands, who are happier than the husbands of traditional housewives. This was because under such arrangements, women's workload increased at home, while the men benefited by having almost the same amount of work done for them at home and having their standard of living buttressed by an additional income.¹⁵ (...)

"Nothing without a woman or a girl"

There's an old adage that the Chinese character for "crisis" is a combination of the characters for "danger" and "opportunity." While some men

see increased gender equality as a dangerous reversal of traditional gender arrangements, most men are going along for a rather apolitical ride, seeing neither danger nor opportunity. They're doing more housework and child care, supporting their wives' career aspirations, and sharing the decision-making about family life and career trajectories, not because of some ideological commitment to feminism, but because of a more commonplace commitment to their families and loved ones.

In a sense, they know the fix is already in. Women are in the labor force—and every other public arena—to stay. So the choice for men is how we will relate to this transformation. Will we be dragged kicking and screaming into the future? Flee to some male-only preserve, circle the masculine wagons, and regroup? Or instead, will the majority of us who are now somewhere between eager embrace and resigned acceptance see instead the opportunity for the "enthusiastic embrace" of gender equality?

Chances are we will—not only because it is inevitable (which it is) and not just because it's right and just and fair (which it is). We will because we also see that men who embrace equality will live happier, healthier lives, lives animated by love and connection with our wives, our partners, our children, and our friends. And so will the children of these and most other men, who grow up with working mothers—and have sisters, friends, and girlfriends who expect to be equal at work and at home.

Men who have renegotiated a more gender-equitable path forward in their lives and their work have reaped significant benefits, yet many men continue to struggle with lost incomes, lost breadwinner status, and downward economic mobility that threatens their ability to see women's progress for what it is. There is a role for government in helping all men understand there is a clear path forward where masculinity and gender equality are complementary, not adversarial:

- Most men are "apolitically accepting" of the new status quo, but there needs to be public space to develop a politically forward-thinking agenda where men and women together can champion the reforms presented throughout this report. Men need to help create this public space, not rely on women to do so. Men need to speak out in the public sphere as fathers and partners, just as women have embraced their role as workers in their homes.

- As a result, both men and women both need the kinds of support that makes it possible to have dual-earner, dual-carer families, but these issues are most often misperceived as "women's issues" in Washington and statehouses around the nation. Men need family-friendly policies, including on-site child care, health care reform, flexible working hours, and parental leave so that they can have the sorts of relationships they say they want to have.

- Policymakers need to support the choices of the majority of men who are pursuing gender equality within their homes. Men today are nearly as likely as women to take time off from work to care for ailing family members, but men remain less likely to take time off to bond with a new child. Policies that redefine what it means to be a good provider and a good citizen should encourage men and women to be both breadwinner and caretaker in their families.

Becoming a woman's nation can be a vast improvement for everyone over remaining a man's world. Gender equality is not a zero-sum game, but rather win-win.

Family, Study Shows," The New York Times, October 29, 1995, p. 25; Galinsky and others, "Times Are Changing," p. 14.

¹⁴ Galinsky and others, "Times Are Changing," p. 18.

¹⁵ Arlie Hochschild, *The Second Shift* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003); Paul Amato and Alan Booth, "Changes in Gender Role Attitudes and Perceived Marital Quality," *American Sociological Review* 60 (1) (1995).

The masks of anti-feminism: “masculinity in crisis”, “masculinism” and “liberal pro-feminism”

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In the West, the conventional wisdom has it that women's freedom and equality have been achieved and that "feminism has gone too far". In reality, however, it is mostly men who head up the most prestigious and powerful institutions (States, armies and police forces, large private companies, media firms, sports teams, churches, mosques and synagogues, and universities, for example, not to mention mafias and various criminal networks). Overall, men still have more money than women, occupy better-paid positions (and thus receive corresponding welfare benefits and retirement pensions), and spend less time and energy than women on household chores and parental tasks and on the psychological and physical care of others. They are less at risk than women of being attacked by someone of the opposite sex, whereas in Quebec between three and five times more women than men are victims of marital homicide.¹ In

addition, men have easy access to the services provided by the sex industry, pornography and prostitution – economic sectors controlled primarily by men who exploit women to satisfy men's desire for pleasure. In short, despite all the mobilising and progress by feminists in the West, women's exploitation and oppression are still live issues.

Even so, this obvious fact is often denied, while the achievements of

Montréal (UQAM). She has published an analysis of the media debates on the massacre at the École polytechnique de Montréal (« J'haïs les féministes ! » : Le 6 décembre 1989 et ses suites, éditions du Remue-ménage, 2009). Francis Dupuis-Déri is a political science professor and head of the Interdisciplinary Research Group on Anti-feminism (Groupe interdisciplinaire de recherche sur l'antiféminisme – GIRAF) at the Institute for Feminist Research and Study (Institut de recherches et d'études féministes – IREF) at UQAM. Together with Mélissa Blais he edited the collective work entitled *Le mouvement masculiniste au Québec : L'antiféminisme démasqué* (éditions du Remue-ménage, 2008). They published on the same subject: "Masculinism and the antifeminist countermovement", *Social Movement Studies*, vol. 11, no. 1, January 2012.

¹ National Public Health Institute, <http://www.inspq.qc.ca/violenceconjugale/statistiques/statshomicide.asp?id=32#prevalence> (accessed on 17 October 2011).

feminism are challenged. In several countries, including Canada, the United States, Britain, Germany, Belgium and France, the challenge comes in the form of a social movement: anti-feminism. In the collective imagination and in public discourse, far from recognising that anti-feminism is not the exclusive preserve of immigrant men, it is often associated with religious forces, especially Islam. Linking anti-feminism with Islam plays straight into the hands of Islamophobia, without necessarily advancing the interests of women.² Catholics and Protestants play their part too, especially when mobilising against the right to abortion. This perception of anti-feminism as being primarily a religious phenomenon exonerates the secular "white" man, as it is the "others" who are problematic, i.e., those activists whose religious motivation is presented as being pre-modern or anti-modern.

And yet, among intellectuals, it is generally secular "white" men who

* This text draws on presentations given at the seminar entitled "The other half of gender – Masculinities and men's role towards equality", organised by the European Women's Lobby in Brussels in October 2011. Mélissa Blais is a lecturer and PhD candidate in sociology at the Université du Québec à

² Christine Delphy, "Antisexisme ou antiracisme ? Un faux dilemme", in C. Delphy, *Classer, dominer : Qui sont les "autres" ?*, Paris, La Fabrique, 2010.

assert that men are the victims of women and feminists. This “men in crisis” discourse is the ideological cornerstone of an insidious form of anti-feminism – masculinism. The “crisis of masculinity” is highly effective in delegitimising feminism (which has gone too far), guilt-tripping women (who take up too much room) and mobilising resources for men, even though they already exert majority control on society’s most influential institutions and on the majority of public and private resources.

Anti-feminism goes on the offensive

Let us take the example of Quebec, depicted a few years ago as “the closest thing to a feminist paradise on earth!” by Florence Montreynaud, the French feminist who edited a 20th-century women’s encyclopaedia (*Le XXe siècle des femmes*). A paradise maybe, but a paradise depicted as hell by men campaigning in organisations for the “rights” of fathers. Surveys carried out in Quebec among representatives of the women’s movement have shown, moreover, that a majority of them regard anti-feminism as a serious problem. In 2007 some thirty women’s groups said they had been the target of anti-feminist activities.³ In 2010,

3 Émilie St-Pierre, “Lorsque des actions masculinistes ciblent des féministes”, Méliissa Blais et Francis Dupuis-Déri (dir.), *Le mouvement masculiniste au Québec : L’antiféminisme démasqué*, Montréal, Remue-ménage, 2008.

partnership with L’R des centres de femmes du Québec (which has over a hundred centres in the province), we ourselves carried out a study which confirmed that women’s organisations are facing a range of different types of attack, including death threats, intimidation over the phone or by email, being publicly discredited in the media or on internet websites, the disruption of feminist events, threats of prosecution, actual prosecution, and administrative harassment – not to mention demonstrations, vigilantes and banners displayed on city buildings.⁴

It is not always possible for those responding to these surveys to identify their adversaries, or to know whether they’re acting independently or are affiliated to a campaigning group. That said, the network of separated and divorced men (joined by those looking for a sympathetic ear, advice and legal services) does seem to be a hotbed of anti-feminist agitators. This affiliation is sometimes explicit, as when members of the Fathers-4-Justice group disguise themselves as superheroes (Batman, Spiderman, etc.) and climb

4 The study was based on interviews with 15 representatives of the Quebec women’s movement. The research was conducted in 2010-11 with financial assistance from the Protocole UQAM/Relais-femmes managed by the Service aux collectivités, of the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM). Odile Boisclair of L’R des centres and Lyne Kurtzman of the Service aux collectivités helped design the project. Marie-Ève Cambell-Binet and Stéphanie Mayer were research assistants.

up city buildings and unfurl banners. In Quebec, one representative of Fathers-4-Justice took a legal action (which he eventually lost) against a feminist journalist from *À Babord !* magazine, while a feminist academic in Quebec was prosecuted by a group of fathers in British Columbia (*Wiebe v. Bouchard*, 2008 BCSC 249), reducing her to silence. A representative of Fathers-4-Justice also lodged an application for an injunction against a government campaign to prevent sexual attacks, on the pretext that it showed men in a bad light (the judge dismissed the case).

As mentioned, Quebec is not the only battleground for anti-feminists. In Great Britain many agitators – some explicitly affiliated to groups of separated and divorced fathers, some not – disrupted a sitting of parliament and sprinkled prime minister Tony Blair with mauve powder. They also unfurled banners, demonstrated in the street and threw eggs at police officers, occupied the roof of the family justice minister’s home and even discussed the possibility of kidnapping the prime minister’s son.⁵

5 BBC, “Police aware of ‘Leo kidnapping plot’”, 18 January 2006 (website: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/4622880.stm); BBC, “Fathers’ group clash with police”, 18 June 2004 (website: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/3818039.stm>); “Second Fathers 4 Justice roof-top protest at Harriet Harman’s house in a month”, Daily Mail, 9 July 2008.



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And the impact on the women's movement?

Our survey in Quebec documented some of the impacts of anti-feminist activities directly targeting the women's movement. Women mobilise time, energy and sometimes money to complain to the police, hire lawyers and take new security measures (changing locks, for example). Several respondents said that they censor themselves; others spoke of resigning from their jobs. All the same, these anti-feminist activities also prompt feminists to react by mobilising politically and collectively, which translates into organising conferences and workshops on the issue, or conducting research in order to understand it better. This led L'R des centres de femmes du Québec to develop the hypothesis that feminists react to anti-feminist threats and activities in a similar way to a woman subjected to domestic violence. Inspired by the research on anti-feminist activities, we decided to test this hypothesis using the theoretical framework of the "cycle of violence".⁶

According to the cycle of violence theory, developed by psychologist Leonore Walker around 1980 and taken up by Quebec's network of shelters for women victims of domestic violence (Regroupement provincial des maisons d'hébergement et de transition pour les femmes victimes de violence conjugale), a violent man in a relationship with a woman will use several different mechanisms to take control of her. The cycle is divided into four phases: the "build-up of tension", "attack", "justification" and "honeymoon period", or remission.⁷ Of course, this is simplifying the reality, but cycle of violence is useful in that it illustrates the overall pattern

and cyclical nature of domestic violence, where the different phases recur repeatedly – sometimes even spiralling, if the violence escalates.⁸ Furthermore, men's taking control has consequences for women who react to the violence by using protective mechanisms, for example, while at the same time being afraid of their husband or ex-husband at different times in the cycle.

The interviews conducted with respondents from the women's movement in Quebec (we are currently launching a similar study in Europe) showed that, like a woman who is a victim of domestic violence, many feminists are afraid of anti-feminists. Anti-feminism is perceived as a real threat which sparks tension and leads feminists to be careful, to keep quiet, to avoid "provoking" anti-feminist attacks, and so on.

The attack phase comes when there is an action directly targeting women in the movement, such as a death threat over the phone, an insulting email, graffiti on the walls outside an organisation's office or the disruption of a feminist event. The woman targeted, and her colleagues and friends, may then feel humiliated, depressed and the victims of injustice – and this in turn will have consequences for their subsequent choice of discourse in public. Some women explain that, in the hope of preventing anti-feminist attacks, they "are careful" about what they say in the media, for example.

The justification phase occurs when attempts are made to persuade women who have been raped that they "provoked" their attacker – in other words, that they are responsible for the violence they are subjected to. In the case of feminists, these times can be when speakers in the media justify attacks – which are sometimes fatal, as with the murder of fourteen women on 6 December 1989 in Montreal's École Polytechnique – and accuse feminists of having made

men feel confused. Boys' difficulties at school are also attributed to the influence of women and feminists (even though, with equal school results, men do better in the labour market than women), as is the higher suicide rate for men than for women (even though this is the same the world over, except in China). While these are real problems, close analysis reveals that complex dynamics are at work here, and that women are not responsible for them. For example, a number of experts agree that access to firearms is one of the reasons for a higher rate of completed suicide for men than for women. It is certainly not feminists who are promoting the masculinised virility associated with firearms. As for the claim that, on separation or divorce, fathers are systematically deprived of custody of their children, in fact judges intervene very little, and more often than not men are glad to see the mother taking on the main share of responsibility for the children, which also means carrying out the vast majority of household chores and parental tasks.⁹

But presenting men as victims of women and feminists arouses empathy, and, consequently, persuades some women (and some feminists) that they themselves are part of the problem. In other words, women (including some feminists) can end up developing empathy for "men in crisis", including even their attackers, and can feel responsible for the attacks targeting the feminist movement. These women are then ready to collaborate with men who say they want to help men, without taking the time to analyse more thoroughly the ins and outs of their discourse on masculinity/masculinities.

A more insidious form

Women's institutions, organisations and groups have always been under pressure to accept men as members,

6 The cycle of violence in domestic abuse is presented by Quebec's shelters for women victims of domestic violence (Regroupement provincial des maisons d'hébergement et de transition pour femmes victimes de violence conjugale) in a paper entitled *La violence conjugale ... C'est quoi au juste ?*, published in Quebec in 2006 in both French and English.

7 Diane Prud'homme and Dominique Bilodeau, "Violence conjugale ou chicane de ménage ?", in Johanne Carboneau (dir.), *Violence conjugale : des spécialistes se prononcent*, Montréal, Remue-ménage, 2005.

8 It should be noted that this "cycle of violence" does not occur in all cases of conjugal homicide: some of them are, in a way, unexpected.

9 For further detail, see Josianne Lavoie, "L'activisme juridique, le divorce et la garde des enfants : backlash sur les gains essentiels du mouvement féministe", in Mélissa Blais et Francis Dupuis-Déri (dir.), *Le mouvement masculiniste : L'antiféminisme démasqué*, Montréal, Remue-ménage, 2008, pp. 195-210.

and to take their sensitivity into account. Some men, moreover, present themselves as being sympathetic to feminism and happy to reflect on the best ways of dealing with violent men, for example. Women's movement representatives and activists whose vision is clouded by empathy (men are suffering too), hope (men can improve), and guilt (has feminism gone too far?) often hesitate to identify as anti-feminism manoeuvres that to us do seem anti-feminist, however, judging by the effects they have.

Feminists have seen for themselves the lobbying men's groups do in parliamentary committees when legislative reforms concerning the family, divorce and custody of children are being drafted. They also see representatives of men's groups asking the government to give more resources to men. They read reports devoted to the status of men, written by male campaigners, psychologists and academics. They find remarks that imply, more or less explicitly, that women and feminists manipulate or control the public authorities to the detriment of men, and that women have far too many resources and privileges. Identifying some effects of the work done by activists for men's "cause", one Belgian respondent explained in the preliminary interview that this was a type of "anti-feminism" that was "less aggressive, but just as devastating and guilt-inducing for women, especially the more fragile of them." She added that this kind of anti-feminism "even upsets women's organisations, as they begin to have doubts, and some of them even adopt an 'egalitarian' discourse, bringing men into everything, as a way to avoid being accused of being anti-men!" Their confidence crumbles when, over and over, they keep hearing denunciations of "radical" feminists, and even "feminazis". This rhetoric also divides the feminist movement and undermines the solidarity between women, driving some feminists to show moderation lest they should appear "extremist". This is a trap, as "moderate" feminism is never valued or even clearly identified in masculinist discourse, suggesting

that in their eyes the contemporary feminist movement, as a whole, is too radical.

The latest discovery: "liberal pro-feminism"

In Quebec, over the past few years the Masculinities & Society research team, which comprises mainly academics specialising in social work,¹⁰ has developed the label of "liberal pro-feminism". This, they assert "[supports] the claims and social advancements associated [with] feminist research and the women's social movement", as explained on the home page of the collective's website. The main distinguishing feature of this "pro-feminism", however, is that it does not mobilise at all for the benefit of women. Liberal pro-feminism in fact focuses solely on men and their issues, including paternity, health, sexuality (including homosexuality), cultural diversity and violence. In a collective work produced by this research team in 2010, not one of the sixteen chapters is devoted to explaining what liberal pro-feminism intends to propose in order to help women emancipate themselves and achieve equality with men. While feminists are mentioned on the first page of Boris Cyrulnik's preface, it is merely in order to criticise them. A few pages further on it is explained that, of the "youth rebellion" in the 1960s, the homosexual movement and feminism, the latter is the one that has done most to cause a "crisis of masculinity".

This pro-feminism truly is "liberal", in the sense that it discusses social relationships between the sexes from an individualist perspective: "gender, as a set of rules and norms defining masculine and feminine identities, has a restrictive effect on individuals, whether men or women", explains a summary paper following a day of reflection on the research team's

¹⁰ This is one of the three teams in the Interdisciplinary Research Center on Family Violence and Violence against Women (CRI-VIFF) at Université Laval and Université de Montréal. The other two are called "Women, violence and vulnerability contexts" and "Children and teenagers, violence and prevention". Several publications by the CRI-VIFF discuss women from a clearly feminist perspective.

"socio-political orientation".¹¹ The team questions the subsidies received by some women's centres,¹² but it does welcome the theoretical and conceptual developments of feminists from "the new generations", especially "reflections on intersectionality", a concept developed by the African-American feminist Kimberlé Crenshaw, who sought a better understanding of the situation of women subjected simultaneously to different systems of oppression, namely, patriarchy, racism and capitalism. This concept, put forward by contemporary feminism, has been hijacked by liberal pro-feminism – not so they can mobilise better in solidarity with feminism and women, but in order to "understand the multiple forms of oppression that can affect men"!¹³

Men remain the one and only genuine concern of this trend, which regards them solely from the point of view of the suffering and oppression of which they are allegedly the victims. These "liberal pro-feminists" therefore assert that "men must cast off the constraints inherent in the masculine role",¹⁴ without proposing anything to help feminists understand the exploitation and oppression of women. Admittedly there are chapters devoted to domestic violence, but they address primarily men's needs, not women's. The authors even take the opportunity to criticise feminist approaches to intervention which suggest that nothing can really change between the sexes without an acknowledgement of responsibility by men who have raped a woman. The approach preferred by the "liberal pro-feminists" instead emphasises an understanding of the attacker as "being himself a victim of the gender socialisation process" and

¹¹ Frédéric Gagné (dir.), Document synthèse des échanges et des discussions — Journée de réflexion du 28 novembre 2008 sur l'orientation sociopolitique de l'équipe, Masculinités et Société, 8 July 2009 (paper published on the group's website), p. 3.

¹² Idem, p. 19, see infra note 5.

¹³ Idem, p. 8 and p. 11.

¹⁴ Jocelyn Lindsay, Gilles Rondeau, Jean-Yves Desgagné, "Bilan et perspectives du mouvement social des hommes au Québec entre 1975 et 2010", Jean-Martin Deslauriers, Gilles Tremblay, Sacha Genest Dufault, Daniel Blanchette, Jean-Yves Desgagné (dir.), Regards sur les hommes et les masculinités : Comprendre et intervenir, Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2010, p. 29.

someone who has been “alienated from some of his human qualities”.¹⁵ This approach favours an attitude “of welcoming and empathically accepting the client”,¹⁶ i.e., the violent man, and “an understanding, supportive attitude between client and therapist”.¹⁷

All this fine talk purporting to be “humanist” and “pro-feminist” only confuses the issue and makes women and feminists feel guilty, while the masculinist discourse hits them hard, and even undermines their mobilising. We need only think of the effects of this kind of discourse on women victims of male violence who, having internalised the masculinist discourse, present at support centres believing that they themselves are responsible for the violence they have been subjected to, and worrying with empathy about the fate of their attacker.¹⁸ Here too the cycle of domestic violence and the cycle of anti-feminist violence overlap. This discourse, which presents itself as “pro-feminist”, really belongs with the public expression of a “crisis of masculinity” discourse, justifying anti-feminism and challenging the legitimacy of feminism and its strategic and tactical choices.

Confronting anti-feminism: a women's movement by and for women

At other times, the feminist movement's reaction to anti-feminism is to counter-attack by mobilising collectively, as with the Table de concertation en condition féminine de Laval (a consultation forum in Quebec), which has produced a paper for a training giving women and feminists advice to help them react better to anti-feminism, notably by

getting them to refute these lies.¹⁹ Sometimes the anti-feminist counter-movement sparks off a counter-counter-mobilisation, as in the case of the Coalition anti-masculiniste in Quebec or Vigilance Anti-Masculiniste Mixte Organisée et Solidaire (VAMOS) in Belgium,²⁰ two movements that protested against the holding of the Paroles d'hommes conference in Montreal (in 2005) and Brussels (in 2008). Here there are some pro-feminist men, who do useful work by confronting anti-feminist men.

As always, however – and even more so at a time like this, when anti-feminism has grown insidious and presents itself as “pro-feminist” – it is important for those men who are aware of their privileges to confine themselves to auxiliary roles and to practise accountability in relation to feminists who will validate their actions. It is also vital that feminists, for their part, should continue to meet in non-mixed groups, where, among women only, they can share their analyses, set their priorities and plan strategies and tactics without being pushed off course by anti-feminists.²¹

15 Pierre Turcotte, “L'aide aux hommes en violence conjugale : Du contrôle social au changement personnel et social”, Jean-Martin Deslauriers, Gilles Tremblay, Sacha Genest Dufault, Daniel Blanchette, Jean-Yves Desgagnés (dir.), *Regards sur les hommes et les masculinités : Comprendre et intervenir*, Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2010, p. 362.

16 Idem, p. 365.

17 Idem, p. 358.

18 As Mélissa Blais witnessed on many occasions during her five years working in a women's shelter in Montreal.

19 Such as the paper entitled “Paroles féministes, controns le ressac ! Réponses au discours anti-féministe”, produced in 2005 by the Table de concertation en condition féminine de Laval (Quebec), accessible on their website.

20 Pierrette Pape, “Contrer le masculinisme : vaMos — une action contre la réaction”, *Chronique féministe*, no. 106, 2010.

21 Francis Dupuis-Déri, “Les hommes proféministes : Compagnons de route ou faux amis ?”, *Recherches féministes*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2008; Mélissa Blais, “Féministes radicales et hommes proféministes : l'alliance piégée”, in Francis Dupuis-Déri (dir.), *Québec en mouvements : Idées et pratiques militantes contemporaines*, Montreal, Lux, 2008, pp. 147-176.

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Susan Faludi, *Backlash: La Guerre froide contre les femmes*, Paris, Côté-femme, 1992.

Josette Trat, Diane Lamoureux, Roland Pfefferkorn (dir.), *L'autonomie des femmes en question : Anti-féminismes et résistances en Amérique et en Europe*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2006.

Christine Bard (dir.), *Un Siècle d'anti-féminisme*, Paris, Fayard, 1999.

Ready tongue, high-and-mighty tone and shirt too tight: on women's (confiscated?) words

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It's a difficult task, to answer a genuinely complex question: "Who can speak for women?" This one has come through the different waves of feminism, an emancipation movement in which access to speaking takes on considerable importance. Feminism is the "social and political movement that concerns half of humanity but which has neither a male nor a female founder, nor reference doctrine, nor authorised representatives, nor party, nor members authenticated by some

card, nor predetermined strategies, nor territory, nor consensual representation [...]", one for which "No one can speak in its name. All the same, each woman can claim to belong to it, however, and testify to it. It is a movement that advances by individual and collective identifications in dialogue. A changing of forms that cannot, however, be summed up as 'the proper form'".¹

This political positioning may have emerged from a particular life experience that belongs, a priori, more to women, as it was from the oppression of women that the movement emerged. Thus it is

¹ Collin, F. & Kaufer, I., *Parcours féministe*, Bruxelles, Labor, 2005, p. 7.

possible to become a feminist through having felt, very early on, a sense of injustice associated with one's sex, experienced as a kind of calamity which can manifest itself again, piercingly, at any time. The sense of injustice and powerlessness many feminists speak of can have physical effects, such as a very real feeling of being shut in, of suffocating. I shall call these effects the "too-tight shirt": this is how the feminine gender can be experienced, with measured gestures, repressed anger, refined language, hair sensibly pulled back, legs crossed, modest, passive sexuality, a greater cultivation of the body than the intelligence (even though physical assets are doomed),² greater trust in

² The demands made on women

other people's judgement than their own, putting other people – their wellbeing and their interests – first. In short, constantly holding back a part or parts of themselves.

There is another reason, a more objective one (which can overlap with the first): some people³ can become feminist on discovering social science writings that recount the inequalities women have been and still are subjected to. History provides details of women's struggles to counteract misogyny in different eras, from antiquity to the twentieth century.⁴ The sociology of social relationships between the sexes, applied in different fields, reveals the discrepancy that exists between men's and women's salaries (between 15 and 18%, all other things being equal) despite the political measures introduced to reduce it, household chores and parental tasks mostly carried out – free of charge – by women,⁵ the different upbringing given to girls and boys, from nursery school to the treatment of adolescent pathologies, acting as “gendered calls to order”,⁶ and so on. Anthropology reveals the “differential valence of the sexes”⁷ that belittles women and the “invariants” of the framework of male domination, pieced together with as much diversity as there are different population groups – even though at the same time women are unravelling their tightly knit condition in their own

situations.

Many women and many feminists often say they have felt deprived of a voice and of recognition of their statements, which are supposed to have less value than those of their brothers, fathers, spouses or sons. Historically they have been deprived of a voice – both a political voice and the chance to express themselves on the subject of their personal rights, the exercise of which was subject to the approval of their father or husband. Nowadays, there is no disputing it: women are no longer objects, they have acquired the status of subjects. No one wonders any longer whether or not women have a soul. But women, who are not without a social or historical memory,⁸ have retained a special relationship with words and expression.

So I shall discuss these words. Who can speak for women? Only themselves? Or others – i.e., men? Who has legitimacy enough to risk it? In short, can only women speak of women and study their condition?⁹ This is an issue that repeatedly divides women and feminists. It arises in the context of a complex debate, in the form of perhaps insoluble questions and problems. To attempt a couple of responses I shall examine feminist literature and discourse, setting out the discussions and arguments of women writers¹⁰ who have thought about the matter in scientific disciplines such as history, anthropology, sociology and philosophy, in continental Europe and in the English-speaking countries. I shall also draw on concrete cases from my own experience in the field, the experience of a committed activist, gained through my experience as a professional feminist. My positioning

is constructivist: women and men are “produced” by an upbringing, a memory, a society. Their gender stamps its mark on their sex more than their sex stamps their gender. Their gendered identities are at once both fixed and moving, and what feminism tries to do is to get them moving more and more. But the fact remains that, in everyday life, these identities are outside the realm of theoretical reflections, still firmly under house arrest, and that this gendered bipolarisation is one of the most difficult “realities” to challenge, even if one argues that the feminine and the masculine are subject to cultural variations: “Even though gender is almost entirely a social and not biological consequence of the workings of society, these are objective consequences. It is possible, of course, for a whole population group to be unaware of a particular gender difference, or even to have a mistaken opinion about it, but that doesn't mean the difference isn't still there [...]”¹¹

Who can speak for women? Women! Because...

In the first place, it is possible to think about this question in terms of social relationships between women and men, the struggle of one class against another – a classic Marxist position. According to this view, even in a society imbued with modernity and the chances it gives an individual to seize freedom, women and men are categories¹² whose interests are

always cover aesthetic assets. Yet these cannot be hoarded: they decrease in value, year after year. An unmarried woman in her forties will be seen as “a spinster”, and her male equivalent as “an eligible bachelor”. Suwa, N., *Un couple parfait*, France-Japon, a co-production between Comme des Cinémas, Bitter Ends & Arte France Cinéma, 2006.

3 From this of view, both men and women can be made aware of gender-related inequalities by discovering feminist works.

4 Duby, G. & Perrot, M., *Histoire des femmes en Occident*, Paris, Plon, 1992.

5 Bihl, A. & Pfefferkorn, R., *Hommes/Femmes. L'introuvable inégalité*, Paris, L'Atelier, 1996.

6 Darmon, M., “Traitement de l'anorexie et clivages de genre”, in Eckert, H. & Faure, S. (coord.), *Les jeunes et l'agencement des sexes*, Paris, La Dispute, 2007.

7 Héritier, F., *Masculin/Féminin II*. Dissoudre la hiérarchie, Paris, Odile Jacob, 2002. The positioning given here is that of the (woman) author. We will return later to other authors, women and men, who express other ideas.

8 Although it should be noted that neither feminism nor the history of this movement features in school education.

9 These are questions that run through feminist movements, and also some academic social-science circles, and that lead on to related queries such as: to be able to speak on behalf of a community, do you have to belong to it? In order to acquire the unique legitimacy to speak about being a mother, do you have to be one yourself? Etc. etc.

10 I shall speak of women writers, as the majority of feminist researchers and writers of feminist literature are women.

11 Goffman, E., *L'arrangement des sexes*, Norwell, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1977; Paris, La Dispute, 2002, p. 47.

12 Anne-Marie Devreux warns of the possibility and the temptation of “naturalising” which arises when sexed “categories” are addressed. This is all the more tempting as women often have their inferiority thrown at them, on account of their “nature”. She invites us to take the category of “women” not in isolation (prompting the question “How can their inferiority be reduced?”) but to approach it from a social angle, in relation to that of men: “[...] if we consider that this category of women is the product of the social gender relationship which puts them in opposition to men, and if we make men the other social category, which is logically necessary if the first one is to exist, then we are led to study not one specific nature but two – in other words, to regard men not as a reference but as a category of sex whose distinctive feature is that they are in the dominant position. So

as diametrically opposed as those of workers and bosses. The relationship between the two categories involves exploitation and the domination of women. As social relationships between the classes overlap with social relations between women and men, a female worker will always be poorer than a male worker, and a middle-class woman always poorer than a middle-class man.¹³ Their sexual exploitation intersects with economic exploitation. This argument rests on the idea that all women share a common identity – all are subjected to the same kinds of oppression – no matter what their social origin.

This position remains logically and politically tenable: a comparison between the respective interests of the different categories (preserving their advantages for one side/demanding democracy for the other) demonstrates its usefulness. A knowledge of History enables us to remember inequalities that were gradually abolished thanks solely to collective political positioning based on identification with the oppressed group.

To delegitimise it, this struggle argument is often presented as being outdated, a jaded remnant left over from leftist dinosaurs or second-wave – or even second-class – feminists. But it remains valid in the practice of feminist campaigning, which, like sociology, cuts across gendered categories with an axe, in a sense shaping ideal feminine and masculine types: this way of proceeding can acquire legitimacy from the way the “men” category discredits the “women” category. The forms of discrimination women suffer are perpetrated against all women, because they are women, or are designated as such, in particular by

the social question then becomes: “How can the social superiority of men be reduced, in order to reduce the social inferiority of women?”, which is a far more disturbing one.” Devreux, A.-M., “Sociologie contemporaine et re-naturalisation du féminin”, in Gardey, D. & Löwy, I. (dir.), *Les sciences et la fabrication du féminin et du masculin*, Paris, Edition des Archives contemporaines, 2000, pp. 128-129. I shall return later to this “essentialisation” of the category of “women”.

13 Not to be confused with the wife of a worker or the wife of a middle-class man.

the numerous commands engraved the most private part of the feminine “habitus”.¹⁴

Many concrete examples, some of which have even been written into the law, show how real is the determination of the “men” category to maintain certain privileges they have, either by indirect discriminatory procedures¹⁵ or by mechanisms that explicitly perpetuate men’s advantages and women’s disadvantages.¹⁶ This institutional male chauvinism can be found in trade unionists as well as those laying down laws, as can be seen by taking part in demonstrations side by side with “workers”. The latter do not perceive women as “real workers” (as a male activist told me when I was handing him a leaflet on part-time work, done mainly by women).

14 I would like to make it clear that these commands can be issued without being spoken. A woman’s role is often taught implicitly, while at the same time this “unspoken discourse” can be invalidated by the displeasure and inability many mothers display in carrying out these tasks which, however, are supposed to be “feminine”. The solution is simple: not to do housework, or to do as little as possible. And, if one is anxious to put some principles of feminist and social commitment into practice in one’s personal life, one may decide not to hire someone else (a woman, obviously) to do it, so as not to reproduce the scenario of social and sexual domination that inevitably affect a cleaning lady. Of course one might think of hiring a male cleaner, but they are as rare as hen’s teeth. And furthermore, that would help extend insecure working conditions to men, feeding into the belief that insecurity for women is a sign – perhaps – that it is on the way for men too.

15 As shown, for example, by the court case won by the Women’s Liaison Committee against UCL, which was giving double the family allowance to selected employees – i.e., men only.

16 In Belgium, for example (and in the majority of European countries that subscribe to gender equality), social legislation entails direct gender-based discrimination in the “actuarial” calculation of the amount of complementary retirement benefits, which is based on life expectancy and is more favourable to men than to women. Feminists argue that this discrimination is unjustified and arbitrary: bosses live longer than workers and Flemish people longer than Walloons, but there is no differential treatment between them. Yet they cannot get law-makers to budge when it comes to abolishing this provision. When they raise these issues – as they did in a number of conferences – they are told that “society isn’t ready for this” (meaning, ready to abolish this provision). Given that these demands have been made for three decades now, this reply may be interpreted as “not ready to give women what they are entitled to”.

In her feminist anthropologies, Nicole-Claude Mathieu puts forward the view that this approach, developed from the social relationship between women and men, based on gendered “categories”, works elsewhere as it does here, the continuum of gendered violence operating internationally, from Marc Lépine¹⁷ to the sexual mutilation carried out in some African countries – a form of coercion designed to teach women their place. “It’s as if there was an international movement for violence against women, whose demographic growth – which you might call demographic violence – isn’t the most minor manifestation of it. This growth doesn’t happen on its own. It’s the result of the determination to keep men in control of women’s sexuality, a determination whose transcultural nature is demonstrated by the collusion between the Vatican and Islam at the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, September 1994).”¹⁸

This male violence manifests itself as soon as women try to increase their autonomy and leave their “shirt” behind. Moreover the emergence of masculinist movements attacking the “feminisation” of society – now grown “matriarchal” – as the cause of a weakening in social structures which, they claim, is harmful to society and to “traditional values – a manifestation of a “backlash”¹⁹ – shows that in the West there continues to be male resistance to the emancipation of women, in the shape of anti-feminist demands.²⁰ The prevailing discourse on bewildered men may be seen as male domination

17 On 6 December 1989 this student murdered 14 women in the École polytechnique de Montréal, after first getting the men out of the classroom. He then committed suicide, leaving behind a letter giving the reason for his crime: hatred of women, who had been emancipated by feminism.

18 Mathieu, N.-C., “Relativisme culturel, excision et violences contre les femmes”, in *Sexe et race. Discours et formes d’exclusion du XIXe au XXe siècle*, t. 9, CERIC-Publications de l’Université Paris 7, 1994, p. 93.

19 Faludi, S., *Backlash*, New York, Crown Publishers, 1991; Paris, Des Femmes, 1993.

20 Bard, C., “Les antiféminismes de la deuxième vague”, in Bard, C. (dir.), *Un siècle d’antiféminisme*, Paris, Fayard, 1999.

"in new clothes",²¹ which make it invisible.

But there are also men who have been won over to women's cause. Some, feeling that to appropriate the label of "feminist" would be to usurp the term and dispossess women of it, describe themselves as pro-feminists. In the English-speaking world, Michael Kimmel,²² Jeff Hearn²³ and Michael Kaufmann,²⁴ among others, challenge traditional gender models that act as a mirror, reflecting on their own masculinity in relation to femininity. But not everyone agrees with including men in the feminist movement. Huguette Dagenais and Anne-Marie Devreux question the "ambiguity" of men's relationship with feminism, highlighting the conviction of some authors quoted that "their presence within feminism is essential for feminism and for the development of feminist theories".²⁵ In addition, while they are admittedly

losing the privileges associated with their masculinity, pro-feminists nevertheless enjoy renewed privileges thanks to their feminism, whereas this discredits women who say they belong to the feminist movement: "There is neither symmetry nor equivalence between the loss of privileges by those who dominate and the oppression of those who are dominated. The speed with which the major English and American scientific publishers flung open their doors to intellectuals from the various 'fields' and political movements centring on masculinity even enables us to hypothesise that, at a professional level, the small minority of pro-feminist men have, proportionally, gained more than they have lost by developing new thinking that goes against the current."²⁶

It would seem, therefore, that these men find it in their interest to concern themselves with these issues. In addition, some women authors also reject the way in which (male) intellectuals treat "feminine" study topics. To go back to Nicole-Claude Mathieu, despite his commitment to egalitarianism she criticises Pierre Bourdieu and his *Domination masculine* for failing to overcome the male tendency to overlook the works and expertise of their female colleagues.²⁷ By doing

this, he reproduces the relationship of domination he is actually studying. What interests men in feminism and the study of gender relations, she says, is, ultimately, themselves. This can be illustrated by the fact that while one rarely sees men in feminist training sessions, there was a plethora of them in a module entitled "Men and Equality" at the Institute for Equality between Women and Men.²⁸

In 1977 Christine Delphy,²⁹ for her part, said that men had no place in this movement. She criticised the conceitedness of some intellectuals who, while understanding that women needed to liberate themselves by themselves, still "knew best" about what was good for them. Women, she said, could not think about their oppression in the presence of their oppressors, because between them was this power struggle which did not go away, in campaigning meetings or within a couple. Delphy maintained that men's inability to experience male oppression made their participation in the struggle absurd, even though "the inability to experience it does not

21 De Singly, F., "Les habits neufs de la domination masculine", *Esprit*, n° 10, novembre 1993.

22 See, among others, Kimmel, M., *The Politics of Manhood*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1995.

23 See, among others, Hearn, J., *The Gender of Oppression: Men, Masculinity and the Critique of Marxism*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1987.

24 The co-founder of the White Ribbon Campaign, an international network of men campaigning against the violence done to women.

25 Dagenais, H. & Devreux, A.-M., "Les hommes, les rapports sociaux de sexe et le féminisme : des avancées sous le signe de l'ambiguïté", *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*, vol.19, n° 2-3-4, 1998, p.14.

26 Dagenais, H. & Devreux, A.-M., *ibid.*, p.14.

27 Mathieu, N.-C., "Bourdieu ou le pouvoir auto-hypnotique de la domination masculine", *Les Temps Modernes*, n° 604, 1999.

28 "Les hommes et le changement : le rôle des hommes dans l'égalité des hommes et des femmes", 9-10 September 2005; "Ensemble vers l'égalité : les hommes, porteurs de changements ?", 7 March 2006; "La violence ? Une affaire d'hommes !", 7 April 2006, Institut de l'Égalité des Femmes et des Hommes. During the module on 7 March, masculinist groups seized the floor from the women experts present.

29 Delphy, C., "Nos amis et nous. Fondements cachés de quelques discours pseudo-féministes" (1977) in *L'ennemi principal*, Paris, Syllepse, 1998.



excuse ignorance". She reiterated this assertion almost 25 years later:

"Thirty-three years on, the feminist movement is still living off the inversion of perspective achieved in its first years thanks to its women-only practice. This has proved necessary because it is not as much in men's interest – either objectively or subjectively – to fight for women's liberation. But above all because oppressed women and men must define their oppression, and thus their liberation, themselves – if not, others will do it for them. And it is impossible to do it in the presence of people who on the one hand belong to the group of oppressors and who on the other do not know – and, except in exceptional circumstances, cannot know – what it is like to be treated like a woman – like a Black woman or man, like a homo, like an Arab or a lesbian – every day of their lives. No degree of empathy can be a substitute for experience. Sympathising with suffering is not the same as suffering."³⁰

In her view, only the "groups" concerned have the authority and legitimacy to speak for themselves. The notion of experience is central.

In the light of these discourses, and the contexts that give rise to them, we can attempt the following response: as male oppression persists, women can only "be liberated by themselves"³¹ and, thus, retain exclusive rights to the publication of their own words. Now let us embark on a different reflection on our present subject.

Who can speak for women? Women? It's not that simple...

We have attempted to reply to this question with the help of gendered "categories". But is it really possible to put together one class/category from a multitude of individuals, assimilating them to one single model? In Europe, for example, can we not take into account the fact that, without a functionalist aim, women and men

now define themselves plurally, their identities piecing themselves together again more flexibly, "inventing themselves"³² in a multitude of possible ways, less "moulded" by gender? And, here as elsewhere, do women constitute a homogeneous category? Do the different kinds of oppression they encounter all stem from the same cause, and do they all produce the same effects? Who are "we, women"? The following (women) authors invite us to move on from an argument based on shared experience towards a reflection on differences and the standard: a reflection that both affects the set known as "women" and at the same time diffracts it.

Maria Puig underlines the relevance of using this "we" as an instance of collectivisation making possible the political positioning and audibility women have lacked – this politicisation deriving from their social experiences "as women",³³ creating a political subjectivity, the subject, "woman", being both position and condition, the condition of – all – women ("a restrictive condition [...] that must be demolished").³⁴

Sandra Harding's feminist epistemology also invites us to think "on the basis of women's lives" and to value the subjectivity of what these players say: women are agents of the production of learning and the holders of knowledge, founded on their experience. The feminist "standpoint" is a break with the kinds

of learning established by those who dominate, on the basis of women's unacknowledged experiences (care, with its affective element), and a reappropriation of the Marxist theories whereby the kinds of learning born from the experience of those who suffer make it possible to create more reliable theories.³⁵ Women thus find themselves at a special observation post from which they can see how male power intersects with capitalist power, questioning androcentric "neutrality" and the relationship with "woman, the Other".³⁶ This position and this experience "as a woman" gives them expertise that helps in the manufacture of new kinds of learning with situated, politically convertible features.

But this "we", "as women", does not preclude "refusing to give a uniform vision of the conditions of women and their different kinds of struggle and resistance".³⁷ Question: as which women? Black feminists, for example, refuse a "sisterhood" between their life experiences and those of white women. "[...] There is no 'woman's' position that is unique – as lesbian and black feminists never tire of reminding us."³⁸ Judith Butler says that: "'Being' a woman certainly does not define a whole being. [...] The conception of a universal patriarchy has been widely criticised in recent years for its inability to give an account of the concrete mechanisms of gender-based oppression in the various cultural

32 Kaufmann, J.-C., *L'Invention de soi. Une théorie de l'identité*, Paris, Armand Colin, 2004.

33 I also refute the assertion that "as a woman" necessarily indicates an essentialist perspective, aligning myself with the previously quoted proposition from Anne-Marie Devreux and that of Ilana Löwy: "Some feminist trends stress that there is a 'way of being women in the world'. This approach has sometimes been linked to essentialism (biological, psychological or psychoanalytical), but there is no reason for us not to associate it with a historical or sociological view – in other words, with the real-life experience of a group – rather than with supposedly component features." Löwy, I., "Universalité de la science et connaissances 'situées'", in Gardey, D. et Löwy, I. (dir.), *L'invention du naturel. Les sciences et la fabrication du féminin et du masculin*, op. cit., p.144.

34 Puig de la Bellacasa, M., "Divergences solidaires : autour des politiques féministes des savoirs situés", *Multitudes*, n° 12, 2003, p. 42.

35 Ilana Löwy, however, questions the relevance of suffering to the knowledge production process, referring to this "standpoint" theory: "[...] How can this potential [of the epistemology of positioning] be achieved in conditions of suffering and deprivation (including deprivation of access to education and culture), conditions which, as a rule, are conducive neither to calm reflection nor to the search for knowledge?" Löwy, I., "Universalité de la science et connaissances 'situées'", in Gardey, D. et Löwy, I. (dir.), *L'invention du naturel. Les sciences et la fabrication du féminin et du masculin*, op. cit., p. 144.

36 Wittrup, I., "Feminist anthropology. Another Form of Cultural Imperialism?", *Folk*, vol. 35, 1993.

37 Puig de la Bellacasa, M., op. cit., p. 42.

38 Puig de la Bellacasa, M., "(Re) construire les savoirs", in Gubin, E., Jacques, C., Rochefort, F., Studer, B., Thébaud, F. & Zancarini-Fournell, M. (dir.), *Le siècle des féminismes*, Paris, L'Atelier, 2004, p. 298.

contexts in which it exists.”³⁹

One woman cannot be “reduced” to another. Michelle Rosaldo calls for the cancellation of a uniform model of femininity: one woman’s social context is not the same as another’s. While she highlights the asymmetry in the enjoyment of privileges, she also warns against the temptation to describe women as a whole as passive victims: from each case of male oppression a capacity for female “assertiveness” can emerge. She stresses that it is impossible to think about the universality of the content and forms of this domination.⁴⁰

This questionable “universality” is also that of one sole form of feminism defending the rights of Woman – woman from the middle-class feminist tradition, white, well-off, heterosexual, Western, etc. The “canon” of feminism thrown into disarray by the contribution of “other voices”, which invite us to take not just gender-based oppression into account but to mix in with it oppression based on race, class and sexuality. Thus one can no longer talk of feminism and woman, but rather feminisms, and women. The feminine “we” cannot be thought of as being uniform: “What chou mean WE, white girl?”⁴¹

Subjectivity and the refusal to universalise adds complexity to the possibility of replying to our original question. The category of “women” is no longer “one” but multiple. As a result, “speaking for” draws us towards an auto-reflexive approach, in order to survey and then disseminate women’s lived experience. While Donna Haraway invites us to think that knowledge is situated, she also recommends taking some precautions. Our vision of the world

is conditioned by our experiences, our social position, etc. The view from “nowhere”, from neutral, becomes the view from “somewhere” – i.e., from “situated”, “localised” players. But we must resist the tendency to reproduce the faults of the dominators, who think they “know better”, as Maria Puig explains: “Is it, though, a privileged point of view, holding greater truth? According to Donna Haraway, ‘the privilege of a partial perspective’⁴² is by definition contingent, and yet it aspires to produce meaning. Situated feminist knowledge aspires to be taken into account but admits its partiality (in both senses) because, recalling the insult to women, it seeks to be watchful, aware of the risk that its own demands might make other positions invisible. Thinking based on the standpoint of a socio-historical group, including when this standpoint is not accessible to us personally, is [...] a ‘technology’ for the production of knowledge.⁴³ Haraway refers in particular to black women in the United States, especially in disadvantaged areas, whose positioning opens up perspectives onto the world that are not necessarily visible to the eyes of a privileged white woman. Constructing an ‘objective’ standpoint would involve using this kind of technology.”⁴⁴

These reflections have not been crystallised by feminist epistemology: they match, fuel and influence the desire for reflexivity that pervades the (social) sciences with regard to the relationship with the Other and the responsibility involved in transcribing it. Recurrent reflection on objectivity/subjectivity/neutrality pervades qualitative research, leading to crises of representation (“Who is the Other? Can we ever hope to speak authentically of the experience of another, of the Other?”),⁴⁵ of

legitimacy and of questioning on the positionality of the writer, in particular – and especially recently – looking at ethics in the social sciences. All of which “requires social science [...] to become a worksite for the crucial conversations on democracy, race, gender, class, people, freedom and community”;⁴⁶ conversations stirring up a set of tensions whose main subject is: “How can we describe and interpret the requirements of other peoples and cultures? Representation and legitimacy problems stem from this commitment.”⁴⁷ The status of the researcher and their bond with the interlocutor are turned upside down as a result. At work deep within this bond – a social relationship in which the protagonists are situated – are the aspects of respect and the responsibility that must be borne by the scientist, who transcribes the reality of the players involved but is thereby also in a position of power.⁴⁸ If the researcher is socially situated, and not unsullied by a history, a lived experience or personal representations with regard to the Other and their world, how can they create the neutrality, the objectivity they must/should have? In what way can they give an account of what the other says, in a dialogue rather than an interpretation, if not by putting forward a text that includes both the informant/researcher/conditions of the relationship between the two main players and of the research? The researcher’s responsibility does indeed come into play, once the discursive practices and structures can themselves entail domination and diminish the capacity of a disadvantaged group to express itself

39 Butler, J., *Gender Trouble*, London and New York, Routledge, 1990; Paris, La Découverte, 2005, pp. 62-63.

40 Rosaldo, M.Z., “The Use and Abuse of Anthropology: Reflections on Feminism and Cross-Cultural Understanding”, *Signs*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1980.

41 Bethel, L., “What Chou Mean WE, White Girl” referred to in hooks, b., “Ain’t I a Woman”, Boston, South End Press, 1981, p. 152. Quoted by Puig de la Bellacasa, M., “Divergences solidaires. Autour des politiques des savoirs situés”, *Multitudes*, n° 12, 2003, p. 41.

42 Haraway, D., “Situated Knowledges. The Privilege of a Partial Perspective”, in Simians, Cyborg and Women, London, Free Association Books, 1991.

43 Haraway, D., *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan_Meets_OncoMouse*, New York, Routledge, 1997.

44 Puig de la Bellacasa, M., “(Re)construire les savoirs”, op. cit., p. 298.

45 Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds), *The Landscape of Qualitative Research. Theories and Issues*. Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 2003, p. 616.

46 Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds), *ibid.*, p. 613.

47 Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds), *ibid.*, p. 616.

48 In 1986 anthropologists Clifford and Marcus proposed addressing these issues in the break with the more “traditional” practice and discipline methods by their collective and publication, both entitled *Writing Culture*, which omitted to take an interest in the works of their female colleagues – a situation whose irony is underlined by R. Behar: the possibility of making the other’s voice heard thus does not apply to women or feminists. In *Women Writing Culture* this latter anthropologist recounts women’s anger at having been ousted from *Writing Culture*, “intended by male academics for male academics”.



and make itself heard.⁴⁹

Shifting the debate without betraying the words of the Other

In the light of the issues raised, is it therefore unthinkable that men should be able to speak on behalf of women – even if they do not undergo this “experience of femininity” – just as women might speak for others, and take on issues concerning them without the slightest inclination to dominate them?

The arguments put forward can be discussed over and over in a never-ending debate. Some (women and men) remain convinced that only women can speak for women. Others fear that giving a voice to one group or another on the basis of experiences that would legitimise some political positions to the exclusion of the others might lead to a resumption of “communitarian” approaches. Furthermore, anthropological and sociological studies have shown that it is possible to understand the Other and disseminate their words without having followed the same path. Can we not think that the Other is everybody else and that, in this case, only individuals can speak for themselves, in their own personal names? Thus there is no ready answer to our original question.

What can I say, from my standpoint as a committed feminist? On the one hand, I’ve seen men speaking about/

for women with respect. And it’s not about excluding men from feminism, either – or we would be reproducing the exclusion some men have imposed and still are imposing on women. I know too that my life is not unfolding in the same way as that of another less privileged European woman, still less an Indian or African woman – I know we are not the same. On the other hand, I have to take into account my professional and personal experience: in undermining the credibility of the simplistic thesis of feminists’ paranoia, before starting this job I hadn’t expected to discover such a determination to maintain the status quo in relationships between the sexes.⁵⁰ Even though, clearly, women’s situation is changing for the better and men aren’t all alike any more than women are. This being so, just as feminists of different persuasions move the model from THE essential Woman to real women, plural, let us move and reformulate the original question: “How can people speak for women (and others) and relate what they say without betraying them?”⁵¹

50 Some examples of what I have found while doing this job: sniggering as soon as women open their mouths, constant references to how charming the speakers are; ancient insults in new disguises: for example, when the familiar “sexually frustrated” taunt to a woman is transformed into the new and currently more acceptable one which goes “you obviously have a problem with men”.

51 Thus one can see men who, in feminist gatherings, speak so much on behalf of women that women can’t get a word in. Also, as women’s socialisation has prepared them less for speaking in public, they can very quickly be caught unawares by those who are accustomed and have the resources to do so, and can find themselves gagged both by men and by the synergies that operate during these kinds of interaction.

In practice, some possible solutions are inherent in the way one acts and the attention one pays to context.

On these points, Léo Thiers-Vidal (a man!) offers men the following approach. He is a feminist who has been looking at how to think about “social relationships based on an oppressive social position”,⁵² decentring himself from the standard⁵³ in a two-stage process: by taking a deep interest in feminist output, which allows a “limited, intellectual transformation of male subjectivity”. Next, going beyond some “modes of investment”⁵⁴ by “men researchers”, by a political commitment allowing them “to have a better grasp of social relationships between women and men”. Thiers-Vidal suggests “going to and fro” between practice and reflection.

“As committed male researchers, we

52 Thiers-Vidal, L., “De la masculinité à l’anti-masculinisme : penser les rapports sociaux de sexe à partir d’une position sociale oppressive”, *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*, vol.21, n°3, 2002.

53 A male standard characterised, according to the author, by egocentricity, having their own situation and how to improve it (thanks to feminism) as their primary interest, identifying their oppressive behaviour very little, if at all, and failure to reflect on their social position.

54 Thiers-Vidal distinguishes four, according to D.J. Kahane: the “poser”, the “insider”, the “humanist” and the “self-flagellator”. This categorisation of attitudes may appear caricatured, but “first and foremost [it] classifies the different degrees of mourning the different individuals have arrived at in terms of the masculinist imagination and world vision” – which the author means in the sense of “the ruling ideology, structuring society in such a way that two social classes are produced: men and women”.

49 Alcoff, L., “The Problem of Speaking for Others”, *Cultural Critique*, No. 20, 1991-92, pp. 26-27.

[...] need to establish with feminists regular interactions that are not controlled by the men's group, in order to verify the theoretical and political relevance of their work. Aware of men's affective, psychological and political egocentricity, it is important to be accountable to those [women] primarily affected in order to avoid the many stumbling blocks already documented, including a fresh exclusion of feminists by male research on social relationships between women and men."⁵⁵

Often, he says, men make an issue of the "straitjacket" they sometimes feel they are victims of, whereas the object of the exercise is to learn to empathise with the situation of women: if men want to take an interest in "women's" matters and speak on their behalf, they must build up expertise with them. There must be accountability in constructing the discourse. The same work can be done once someone in a position of superiority accepts the challenge of taking an interest in the Other, speaking about them and even speaking on their behalf. This means working on one's own representations of oneself/the Other, including for women and feminists,⁵⁶ and challenging the idea that the standard is devoid of features by turning the stigmata around: "white" and "masculine" are markers just as much as "black", "feminine", etc.⁵⁷ These attributes of the Other cannot be thought about in isolation, or simply added on (they are an intrinsic part of a system of social relations that is structurally maintained and politically imposed), but only within a framework of "intersectionality":⁵⁸

55 Thiers-Vidal, L., *ibid.*, p. 83.

56 In the distinctive position of being both object and subject of the research, helping to feed into the reflective process.

57 Sandra Harding suggests this in relation to US Americans of European descent. Harding, S., *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1991, p. 215.

58 Kimberley Crenshaw suggests this term to describe how the intersecting oppression of race and gender must be taken into account in observing the situation of women. Crenshaw, K.W., "Cartographie des marges: intersectionnalité, politique de l'identité et violences contre les femmes de couleur", *Les Cahiers du genre*, n° 39, 2005. The European network NextGENDERation has adopted this intersectionality.

taking into account the different kinds of power struggle these relations impose on reality. This is an approach to be adopted by both male and female researchers and activists (roles that can overlap): for the latter, thinking about the struggle against sexist discrimination is meaningless unless it is combined with the struggle against racism or capitalism,⁵⁹ which spring from the same sources that benefit the standard Individual, for whom and by whom the patriarchal theories and laws used as a prism for viewing the world have been created.

For Sandra Harding, decentring virility or any other parameter of the standard does not mean that men cannot contribute to feminism, or that they cannot generate a shrewd feminist approach based on their own experiences. The same goes for white women. But this reflexive approach "based on such seemingly contradictory social situations as that of 'male feminist' and 'white anti-racist' call for more analysis than has ever been conducted before".⁶⁰ The question "where is the person talking from?" remains wholly valid.

Context also plays its part: in some cases, not mixing,⁶¹ whether in terms of gender or something else, does in fact make it possible to develop collective issues. In others, men may represent valuable allies in their support for women, just as white women can be allies for black women;

59 On this subject, see Lamoureux, D., Pfeifferkorn, R. & Tratt, T. (dir.), *L'autonomie des femmes en question. Antiféminismes et résistances en Amérique et en Europe*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2006.

60 Harding, S., *op. cit.*, p. 14.

61 The women-only policy of some feminist movements, which is sometimes labelled "anti-democratic", is justified in certain situations, such as where a feminist organisation invites the public (including women from working-class neighbourhoods) to an event where being among women only to exchange experiences is like being in a real Room of One's Own, and is symbolic for women whose whole lives continue to be devoted to others, for whom male domination is especially marked (in terms of permission to come and go and performing tasks only they are required to do), and who have no financial assets of their own (sometimes not even a bank account): neither room nor money for themselves – these being the only conditions in which women can fulfil themselves in literary creation (but not just that), as identified by Virginia Woolf.

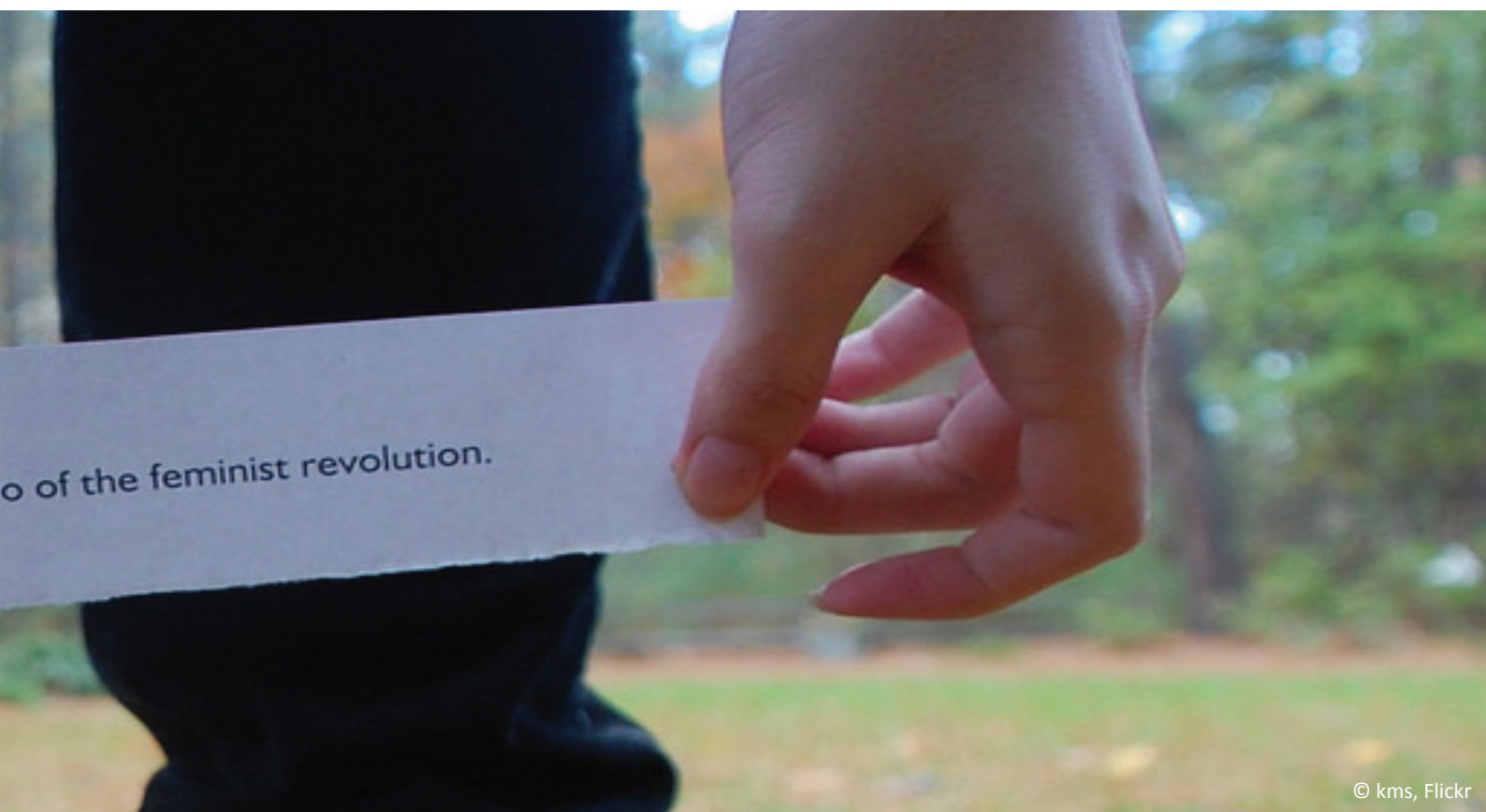
taking their experiences into account and acknowledging the truth of their assertions. Working together can be useful as long as domination comes back into it as little as possible and provided the discourse constructed by the "weaker" ones can be heard. From the point of view of constructing the sociological discourse, one can also imagine that one situation will not be the same as another and that context will play a strong part in the relationship between the (female or male) expert and their informant, which will affect whether or not it is possible to "speak for": some topics are easier to broach with an "identical" person, some are not.

But the dialogic relationship referred to above, which takes the social relations between the main players into account, does make it possible to avoid the good intentions of both paternalist and Lady Bountiful. Once the encounter involves individuals who are differently situated, owing to parameters they cannot abandon, it remains imperative to adopt the greatest humility, empathy, reflexivity and respect; the sincerest form of listening. Sometimes, silence is appropriate when these others, men or women, can express themselves by themselves. Let us not forget: like the transcriber, the orator bears a responsibility. Constant watchfulness over their own subjectivity and acts by the "dominators", in order to understand the other (woman or man) and to speak in their name without betraying them. Constant watchfulness by the "dominated" women and men to see that their rights are upheld and advanced. Yes, men's power comes in a variety of forms, depending on the background of cultures and their respective laws. Yes, women are active players. But not much attention is paid to what they say. And their shirt is too tight. This does not mean they should put on a man's one. Let's say they need to be adjusted, both of them. Until the time comes to unstitch them, if we can imagine such a thing being possible.



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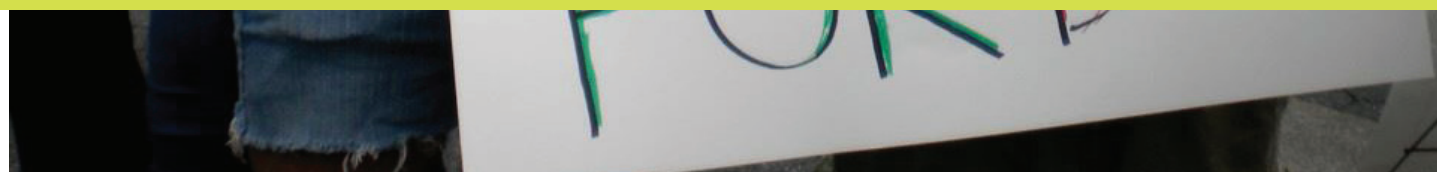
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From public policies to initiatives of feminist men: what involvement of men?



'Gender equality needs men, men need gender equality' – The Finnish policy on men and gender equality*

By Jouni Varanka, Former Expert for the Gender Equality Unit of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Finland

This article is based on my work as a gender equality expert working in the Finnish government from 2001 to 2009. My main area of responsibility during that time was the relationship of men to gender equality. The work resulted in a strategy document "Men and Gender Equality Policy in Finland" in 2007 (from which this article draws heavily),¹ an expert conference during the EU presidency of Finland in 2006² and subsequent Council conclusions on men and gender equality. Later in the period I was involved in furthering some of the more practical suggestions in the mentioned strategy document and drafting the chapter on men and gender equality on the first ever Finnish Report on Gender Equality (published in 2010).³

The Finnish context for governmental gender equality policies and programmes has many similarities to other European countries but also has some distinct differences. The 'big picture' of gender equality policy in Finland is the same as elsewhere: it is mainly about improving the status of women. This is reflected, for instance, in the Equality Act. From a European perspective, Finland is portrayed as part of the Nordic countries which are relatively advanced in gender equality in many areas. For instance the majority of the Cabinet Ministers of our last government were female, a fact that was noted in the media but not made into a big issue. Unique to Finland is the ongoing interest of the Government's gender equality machinery in men and gender equality. Under the Council for Gender Equality, there has since 1988 been a subcommittee on men continuously in operation. This long-lasting interest has served as a necessary 'intellectual infrastructure' or 'undergrowth' that makes it faster and easier to come up with policy initiatives relating to men and gender equality.

Although the theme of men and gender equality is relatively new, internationally agreed guidelines and

conclusions already exist. The most notable include conclusions have come from the UN's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)⁴ and EU's EPSCO council from 2004 and 2006 respectively.⁵ These agreed conclusions are important because they reduce the risk of losing sight of the overall focus of gender equality while focusing on men and gender equality. The big picture is clear: the status of women and women's empowerment is of priority and this must be remembered also when focusing on men and gender equality.

Developments that led to focusing more on men

Gender equality has of course always concerned men as well as women, but the main interest in gender equality policy has been focused on women's situations and actions. For at least twenty years there has been a gradual process that has led to giving more attention to men in gender equality policy in Finland. Three ideas within gender equality policy have had a strong impact on the change. They are:

- 1) Actions and attitudes of men are crucial for improving the status of women.
- 2) Gender mainstreaming requires focusing more attention on men.
- 3) Men's problems and situations also need attention in gender equality policy.

For a long time, gender equality efforts within the UN machinery (and to a somewhat lesser extent in Finland) focused almost solely on women. In the course of the 1980s, the notion gradually emerged that gender equality efforts focusing only on women are perhaps not the most efficient way of improving the status of women. It would be more productive to also discuss men in gender equality policy, particularly in view of how to involve men more in gender equality efforts, how to instigate equitable behaviour among men, and how to encourage men to support improvements in the status of women.

* An extensive version of this article is available here:
http://www.berdingune.euskadi.net/u89-congizon/es/contenidos/informacion/sare2007/es_berdingu/adjuntos/varanka.j_07_engl.pdf
 1 <http://pre20090115.stm.fi/hu1171371965657/passthru.pdf>
 2 Report of the Conference Men and Gender Equality – Towards Progressive Policies, Helsinki on 5–6 October 2006: <http://pre20090115.stm.fi/hu116825554694/passthru.pdf>
 3 http://www.stm.fi/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=2765155&name=DLFE-15811.pdf

4 <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw48/ac-men-auf.pdf>
 5 <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/06/st14/st14845.en06.pdf>

Another component that has led to more attention being paid to men and gender equality is the move towards a 'gender perspective' from a 'women-centred perspective'. This is also linked to gender mainstreaming. The essential concept in gender mainstreaming is the process whereby before decisions are taken, an analysis is made of the likely effects of the policy or programme in question on women and men, respectively. It is important to note that this clause specifies an evaluation of the effects on men, too. This is a verbalised rebuttal of the tacit and often unacknowledged assumption that the word 'gender' only refers to 'women'.

The third reason for considering men within the framework of gender equality is perhaps the most controversial, as it concerns the idea that gender equality policy can and should benefit men as well as women. This benefit can come from at least two directions: reducing problems faced by men and positive effects on men from actions targeted at improving the status of women. This third idea is sometimes interpreted as being linked to a backlash against feminism and women's empowerment. This could be because in some popular media discussion of the benefits gained by women and men are pitted against each other in a zero sum game fashion which posits that if women gain, men lose, and vice versa.



Understand the term 'men and gender equality'

To discuss men and gender equality in Finland it is important to understand how the term 'men and gender equality' is conceptualised. The word

'men' in 'men and gender equality' is best understood as an object of attention, not as a subject of discourse. 'Men and gender equality' is very much about women's problems as well and about men's role in solving (and worsening) these problems. It is about both sides of the coin. For example, (some) men play a crucial role in both causing the demand for trafficking for sexual purposes but also in finding ways to reduce that demand. The issue of prostitution is a very good example. It is almost never considered a problem for men and would thus not be included in work that is only about men's problems. Yet it is a gender equality theme that has very much to do with men. Men make up the vast majority of the demand that is necessary for prostitution to exist. Obviously, prostitution is something that should also be discussed when discussing men and gender equality. Furthermore, the UN and EU declarations as well as other documentation about gender equality shows us that this particular aspect is weighed: empowering women and improving women's situation must be given priority over men's problems, even when talking about men and gender equality policy.

Effects and risks

If gender equality policy focuses more on the relationship between men and gender equality, this will increase men's contribution to the promotion of gender equality and help to pinpoint the benefit of gender equality measures to men and clarify how men's and women's situations and choices in life affect each other. It will also reduce the stereotyped treatment of men in gender equality discussion and help build a positive relationship between men and gender equality policy. An effect will also be that familiar topics in the gender equality debate will be looked from fresh angles and that altogether new areas of interest will emerge.

However, there are three possible risks in focusing more on men in gender equality policy:

- Blurring of the big picture in gender equality (the priority of

improving the status of women);

- Emergence of competition between action to tackle problems of men and action to tackle the problems of women;
- Seeing the relationship between men and gender equality from a narrow and one-sided viewpoint.

The core theme in Finnish gender equality policy has been to improve the labour market standing of women. This weighting is evident in Section 1 of the Equality Act: "The objectives of this Act are to prevent discrimination based on gender, to promote equality between women and men, and thus to improve the status of women, particularly in working life" (Law 609/1986, Section 1). However, it is important to note that most key issues related to men and gender equality are not closely related to working life. Five well-known topics related to the theme of men and gender equality have prompted widespread discussion in Finland and in other Western countries. These are:

- Men's reconciliation of work and family life, and male parenthood;
- Violence against women by men (particularly violence in intimate relationships);
- Men and health;
- Men and divorce;
- Boys and schooling (weighted towards the school system, on the one hand, or towards boys and masculinity on the other, depending on the country)

The fact that many issues especially related to men lie outside the thematic core of gender equality policy raises the question of how gender equality policy should address these issues. The expertise of the personnel in the gender equality machinery is naturally focused on issues related to the thematic core and there is a lack of precedent on ways to tackle certain issues, for example health, from a gender equality perspective. Gender mainstreaming is therefore an important method for addressing issues which concern men and fall outside labour market questions. It is important to note that gender mainstreaming does not refer

exclusively to the women's viewpoint. It also involves studying how a topic affects men, what the status of men with regard to the topic is on average, what kinds of situations men find themselves in with regard to the topic, and how common such situations are.

Expertise is also needed also outside the governmental machinery. One important way of promoting deeper and broader expertise concerning men in Finland is to provide financial support both for studies on men and for gender studies that also deal with men. In addition, we must consider ways of financially subsidising men's organisations that work for gender equality as part of and environment of overall support for non-governmental organisations promoting gender equality.



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A Finnish strategy document

The Finnish Government's 2003 to 2007 work programme for stated that 'gender equality issues will also be assessed from the male viewpoint'. While preparing the 2007 strategy document, four principles from the background work which was carried out in preparation for the Commission on the Status of Women's meeting in 2004 on the Role of Men and Boys were adopted.⁶ These are:

- 1) Gender equality work with men should take into account the general situation between the genders ('general situation' signals the importance of improving the status of women);
- 2) Emphasise the active stake that men and boys have in gender equality,

that is, the gains to men and boys;

- 3) Recognise the well-being of men and boys as a legitimate aim of gender equality measures;

- 4) Recognise the diversity of men's (and women's) situations and circumstances.

Within this Finnish strategy paper a generic overall strategic goal and five important sub-goals are proposed. These are on a general level and not connected to individual issues or statistical indicators. On the most generic level, the key objective is to incorporate men into the heart of gender equality policy. This can be explained with two pairs of ideas. First, men must be incorporated both as active participants and as an object of focus for policy action. Second, this needs to be done with dedicated initiatives as well as mainstreamed into the ordinary gender equality policy. It is crucial to stress the word 'incorporate' here. 'Men' should be a part of the whole, not something apart from it. This concerns setting up official machinery and offices, recruiting and placement of experts and actual policy initiatives.

The goal of incorporating men into gender equality policy can be approached in five different ways:

- 1) Increasing gender equality policy action aimed at and affecting men;
- 2) Ensuring more male participation in the gender equality policy debate;
- 3) Paying attention to men in gender equality policy rhetoric;
- 4) Gaining more profound expertise on men;
- 5) Supporting gender mainstreaming and stressing that mainstreaming must involve men as well as women.

The strategy document also included several practical proposals for action. First and foremost it was recommended that measures that support men's participation in child care should be promoted. Proven methods to encourage this include parental leave quotas for men. A more interesting proposal was that the operating practices of child health clinics and maternity clinics should be developed so that staff are better able to support the participation of

fathers. A study on men as victims of violence was also conducted following the 2007 strategy document. The study used (roughly) the same questionnaire as the internationally disseminated 'Faith, Hope, Battering study', launched in 1997, which focused on women as victims of violence.⁷ It was also recommended that a member of the most prolific men's organisation should join the Council for Gender Equality as an expert advisor (where a women's NGO representative was already present). This recommendation was fulfilled in 2011. The document included other recommendations, but those mentioned above can be seen as the most influential or important.

Altogether perhaps the most lasting effect of the strategy document so far is that it has helped to solidify the topic 'men and gender equality' as one of the key areas to address in gender equality. This effect has been demonstrated, for instance, by the inclusion of this topic as one of the 17 themes addressed in the Government Report on Gender Equality released in 2010. Also noteworthy is that the topic is now routinely referred to as 'men and gender equality' in the Finnish gender equality policy context. Alternative terminology could have been more limited or controversial, such as 'men's viewpoint on gender equality' or even 'men's equality', which were often routinely used by gender equality professionals when I started my work back in 2001.

In a 2005 barometer, also available in English,⁸ over 80 percent of both men and women in Finland agreed with the statement: "Men benefit from increased gender equality too". It is clear that men do benefit from gender equality and women's empowerment. Thus, gender equality and women's empowerment are not only women's issues; they concern everybody. Gender equality policy should strive to make this known.

⁶ <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw48/Thematic1.html>

⁷ http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/gender/vaw/surveys/Finland/FIN_VAW_Publication.pdf
⁸ <http://pre20090115.stm.fi/hu1136799010577/passthru.pdf>

Building alliances with feminist men

By Matt McCormack Evans, Founder of the Anti Porn Men Project, UK



My becoming a feminist happened gradually and was helped along by a combination of the relationships I had with women and by understanding the effects that things like pornography and other sexist media have had on myself and my male peers. Early on my relationships with women made me realise how differently our culture expects women and men to express their sexuality. As a teenager I was enveloped into a mainstream hip-hop, macho culture that celebrated an aggressive masculinity, while my female friends were learning that their sexuality was something to perform for men and that more than almost anything else, our culture valued them for their appearance. Years later I formed a close relationship with a woman who was the recipient of physical, psychological and sexual abuse that took place within her home. These relationships, in addition to the domestic abuses that had taken place within the childhood homes

of both my parents, were strong influences on my interest in feminism.

The final push that saw me enter feminist activism however, came when I saw first-hand in myself and my male peers the influence that pornography had on our attitudes and behaviour towards women. As a result I joined and ended up working for OBJECT,¹ a campaign group that lobbies against the sexual objectification of women and girls in mainstream media.

For me, being a feminist and a man can be both a very simple identity to have, and in other ways a slightly more complicated one. As it is for many people who would describe themselves as feminist, being a feminist for me involves firstly, a recognition that we live in a sexist, patriarchal culture, and also, that this is neither right or inevitable. That's the simple part.

¹ www.object.org.uk

However, as the effects of patriarchy for men are different to how they affect women, there have long been questions about what it means to be a feminist and a man. As a result there are a range of terms which men have used to describe themselves in reference to their beliefs about gender and patriarchy. Terms such as 'anti-sexist', 'gender-egalitarian' and of course 'pro-feminist' are all examples of this.

More than anything else, the issue of whether men are able to call themselves feminists or not is about their inclusion and involvement in the feminist movement. Feminism has and always will be about women's rights, but if we think of feminism as a movement, rather than a club, its members can be bound together as a collective according to the ends and goals that they want to achieve. In this respect men can be, and many are, correctly considered

feminist. Symbolically this says is that feminism is for everybody. Where there are feminist and women's rights movements, they affect everyone, of all genders. As such, it should be a movement that everyone can share in who acts towards an end of violence and oppression against women.

Of course there should be women-only spaces and campaigns. But for the wider movement as a whole, being inclusive of men can bring a few significant benefits. For a start it can bring more members. One of the biggest barriers to the growth of the feminist movement is the image that it is anti-men. An image that the masculinist/"men's rights" movement heavily trades on. This puts off a lot of women -not to mention men- from participating in feminism, and being visibly inclusive of men is an obvious, pro-active, and effective method of dispelling that myth.

There is also a powerful and convincing debating position to be gained from being able to embody or practice some of the key principles and ideals of feminism, namely equality, and that equality works. Lastly, by including men, feminists are not leaving the thinking of men – as a group - behind in terms of their development of feminist thought. If men's thinking is left behind, as it were, by a lack of engagement with feminist thought I don't believe we will ever see an end to patriarchy, or at least it will be a far longer time before we do.

Men are useful, men have things to offer the movement, and how are we going to end violence against women if we don't engage with members of the social group that is committing the violence? Without challenging and changing the mentality and behaviour of men, violence against women will not be eradicated. And it is in directly challenging men that male feminists can be really useful. This is something that we have put into practice in The Anti Porn Men Project.²

Many men experience a conflict between their intellectual values of gender equality and the fact that they

consume a form of media such as pornography that is so contemptuous of women and girls. However, there was little online that addressed this phenomenon and provided a space where men could read articles by other men talking about these issues. It was in response to this lack of easily accessible discussion that The Anti Porn Men Project was created. With the Project we seek to provide an online forum for (mainly) men to speak, discuss, and learn about porn, porn culture and the anti-porn movement. And this is done within a feminist framework.

From the very beginning we have been completely committed to including women in the project. Both symbolically and practically it is an important factor in both ensuring that it is not forgotten that our analysis owes a huge amount to the work of feminist women, and that men interested in feminist analysis are informed and influenced in their thinking by feminist women who are writing and debating online now.

Further to this, offline, we have given workshops at major feminist events and support other feminist groups working on similar issues in a variety of ways. The Anti Porn Men Project also gets many of its followers and contributors through referrals from other feminist groups both in the UK and further afield who work on related issues.

Men can have an important role to play in the struggle for gender equality. And these roles should be played alongside and amidst feminist women. As someone who has both worked and volunteered for different feminist organisations in the UK before setting up The Anti Porn Men Project, I have seen that this approach does work. Separate men-only feminist groups can work well in some cases for consciousness raising among peers or similar endeavours, but I would be fearful of what a large, active, and autonomous men-only movement or brand of feminism could bring.

Other than in those organisations or roles where it is necessary or obviously

beneficial for them to be women-only, I don't see why in a properly organised feminist space, men cannot play many of the roles that female feminists do. An integrated movement brings checks and balances that assure rogue or imposter men don't take over. No one wants to see a feminist movement run by men; feminist men don't want a feminist movement run by men. But once involved, men can be useful to the movement in a number of ways, not least in reaching out to and challenging the sexist attitudes and behaviour of other men.

But the fact is that there are not enough men involved in the movement. There are alliances that can be built but haven't been. So what's stopping the movement in engaging with men? It's not necessarily because men are not interested. Often I think men who are interested in feminism can be unsure of their place, and whether they're allowed to be involved. I know it's something that I felt when first looking into getting involved in activism. There are some really simple things that can be done about this. When advertising an event or meeting that is inclusive of men, including "women and men welcome" somewhere on promotional materials can be really simple and surprisingly effective in attracting men.

But the other and more significant reason why many men don't get involved in the feminist movement is because they think that it's not relevant to them, and in some cases as we have heard today with the "men's rights" movement, men can even consider feminism as not irrelevant, but actually as something directly bad for men.

There is, however, a very direct approach that can make clear why feminism is immediately relevant, but also beneficial to men. The fact is that a huge number of problems which are often cited by the "men's rights" movement stem from problems with the dominant and traditional masculinity in patriarchal culture. Hegemonic or traditional masculinity is based on notions of toughness, strength, and aggression, and at its

² www.antipornmen.org

centre is the idea of domination and control over women, children and other men.

Toughness, strength, aggression and a need to dominate other men get you a situation where: almost all violent crime is perpetrated by men, and most of it is towards other men. Men are more likely than women to be a victim of violence from strangers (78% of victims are men)³ and violence from acquaintances (58 per cent are men)⁴. This leaves a situation in England and Wales where men make up 95% of the prison population of those countries⁵.

There has also been research which suggests that dominant masculinity is anti-school in some ways, as studying often is seen as something which excludes those who do it from spending time playing sport, fighting, breaking-rules and having girlfriends⁶. This creates a macho-man/geek dichotomy which labels macho-men as masculine and feminises academic achievement.

It's therefore not a huge surprise that in the UK boys do worse than girls at exams taken at 16 years old with 1 in 4 girls getting at least one top level grade compared to less than 1 in 5 boys⁷. Men also do worse than women in higher education in the UK where less top degree classifications go to men than to women⁸.

The masculine stereotype also says that men are tough and don't need help. So men visit their doctor 20% less frequently than women⁹ even

though they are more likely to develop cancer and 70%¹⁰ more likely to die from it,¹¹ as well as being more likely to die from both circulatory and respiratory diseases.

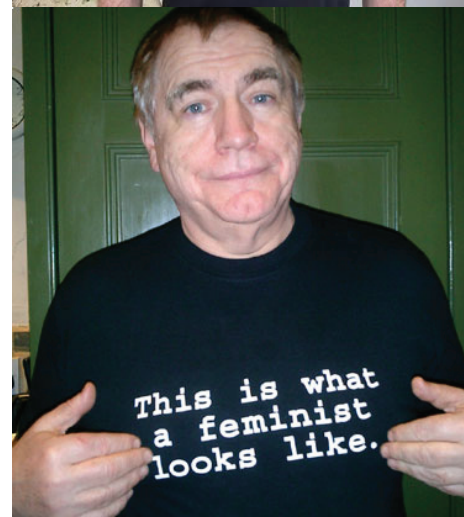
Many of these problems would be improved if traditional and sexist gender roles and stereotypes were rejected. Something feminists and gender equality advocates have been calling for, for a long time. What men who are unhappy about perceived gender inequality against men need is not masculinism or "men's rights" movements, but in fact more feminism!

While this analysis could be used to confront the "men's rights" activist, I think it can be put to possibly better use in demonstrating to potentially feminist men that feminism is relevant to them and is in fact a movement for everybody!

This is a sentiment that is implicit in some of the things that the Anti Porn Men Project is developing now. We are currently designing educational workshops aimed at 16-17 year olds which aim to address the role that mass media in the form of popular music, advertising and pornography plays in the formation of young people's ideas and attitudes about sex, sexuality and gender roles. Sexism and traditional gender roles are pervasive in all of these forms of mass media and young people are a major consumer group for these industries. There aren't the voices out there opposing this sexist education that young people are receiving from advertising, music, and porn, and this is something the Anti Porn Men Project and many other feminist groups in the UK are keen to see change.

So while the nature of patriarchy makes it inherently oppressive of

women and girls, it isn't that great for anyone. Feminism can be a movement for everyone, and that's an attitude that I think will take feminism into the mainstream and onto some huge successes.



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3 UK's Office for National Statistics: <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=1661>

4 ibid

5 NOMS, Prison Population and Accommodation Briefing. 22 May 2009

6 Renold, E. (2001) Learning the 'Hard' Way: Boys, hegemonic masculinity and the negotiation of learner identities in the primary school. British Journal of Sociology of Education. Vol. 22, No. 3.

7 24.4% of girls' entries were awarded at least an A grade compared to 18.7% of boys' entries: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/girls-continue-to-outperform-boys-at-gcse-2060708.html>

8 In 2003, 53% of first class degree classifications went to women while 48% of women got an upper- second-class degree compared to 40% of men: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/3399379.stm>

9 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/>

lifeandstyle/2009/jun/10/men-doctors

10 Men are 40% more likely to die from cancer than women overall but when breast, prostate and other forms of the disease that affect one sex more than the other are taken out of the equation the gap widens, with men 70% more likely to die from it.

11 White et al. (2010) 'Men's Health and the Excess Burden of Cancer in Men' European Urology Supplements (Vol. 9, Issue 3, Pages 467-470)

Freedom from Violence – A gender transformative violence prevention programme for young men in Sweden



Background

Men for Gender Equality (MfGE) (in Swedish: Män för Jämställdhet) is a national Swedish NGO working to promote gender equality and to prevent violence, with a special focus on violence perpetrated by men and on men's violence against women. The foundation of MfGE's activities is an analysis and understanding of gender inequality and gender norms, and specifically of social norms of masculinities that associate men and masculinity with power – over women and over other men. The activities of MfGE aim to change social norms of manhood and to increase the engagement of men and boys in gender equality. By doing so MfGE strives to complement existing gender equality strategies that focus on the empowerment of women and girls.

The activities of MfGE comprise advocacy at the policy level,

networking, community mobilisation, training, as well as developing and implementing specific programs and interventions. The Macho Factory (www.machofabriken.se) is an example of the latter; a film-based group educational program on masculinities, violence and gender equality engaging junior high and high school students, which is a joint program between MfGE and the Swedish national women's shelter organisations Roks and SKR. Another example of an intervention is Killfrågor.se (www.killfragor.se), which can be approximately translated into English as 'BoysQuestions.com'. This is a service-based intervention allowing boys aged from 10 to 18 to chat or email about life issues over the Internet with adult volunteers that have received training on gender equality and social norms of masculinities.

MfGE is moreover a Steering Group

and Executive Committee member of the global NGO alliance MenEngage, and coordinator of the alliance's regional European network. The MenCare-campaign (www.men-care.org) is a recent example of activities being developed within MenEngage.

Currently, MfGE is developing a new universal/primary violence prevention program for youth. The objective is to integrate and test the effectiveness of a so called gender transformative approach in violence prevention, meaning that dominant forms of masculinities are openly and critically reflected upon and challenged as one of the main components of the program. The project, called Freedom from Violence, was initiated in September 2010, and is funded by the The Swedish Inheritance Fund.

During the first year of the project, a thorough inventory of existing knowledge was carried out with

a focus on gender, masculinities and violence prevention. Academic research within the field was reviewed, as well as existing violence prevention programs and other related practices. The inventory encompassed the public sector and civil society, including the private sector. It covered both Sweden and other countries.

With the knowledge and practices inventory as a foundation, the project has developed a first draft of its prevention program, which initially is made up of a group educational program engaging young men. During the Autumn of 2011 and early Spring 2012, a pilot of the draft program will be tested in a secondary school with a number of parallel groups of 14-15 year old boys. In total, approximately 50 boys will participate in the pilot, with 7-8 boys per group meeting eight times over a period of eight weeks, and each session being 90 minutes long. Based on learning from the pilot, the draft program will then be revised and in the next step implemented on a larger scale within so called 'Program Groups'. A study of the effectiveness of the intervention will be applied employing both quantitative and qualitative research methods.

In the third step we will analyse and revise the program once again before further testing. Simultaneously, other preventive measures targeting the societal institution or community as a whole in which the prevention program will be implemented - for example a school - will be introduced, thus employing a so-called multi-level approach. After a final revision of the program, the goal is to develop and implement a national education program to train the facilitators of the violence prevention program. The final aim is to institutionalise the knowledge developed by the project as well as the program itself with a purpose to secure long-term sustainability and widespread dissemination.

Theoretical background

Our theoretical background is based on feminist theory and critical studies of masculinities. One of the most influential theories regarding our

understanding of social norms of masculinities and of the dynamics of the behaviour of boys and men is the concept of hegemonic masculinities. At the centre of our understanding, and crucial for the development of our strategies and practical interventions, are the ideas that 1) masculine identities are constructed in relation to a set of norms and values that are not fixed, 2) that men position themselves regarding to a power hierarchy where some masculinities are more dominant than others depending on the context, 3) that the hierarchy among men and the related power relations are the foundation for the subordination of women and that 4) working against sexism and homophobia have the same foundation (Connell 2005).

Qualitative research about the understanding of gender and violence among youth shows that violence is part of everyday life (Berg 2005, cited in Johansson 2005). Aggression and violent behaviour, especially for boys and young men, can be understood as a normalised part of their everyday lives (Suurpää & Hoikkala, 2005; Burcar, 2005). The sociologist Burcar (2005) emphasises that the young men in her study talked about violence as something normal, like eating or sleeping. A consequence of normalised violence might be that boys have more difficulties in defining abuse and violent behaviour, both homophobic and sexualised forms of abuse, as violence. (Wittshovsky, 2005; Burcar, 2005). All this can have serious consequences for both girls and boys. Apart from the risk of harming others, young men also place themselves at risk of harm.

In literature focusing on adolescent boys, emotional restriction, stoicism, constant effort to maintain a public image of toughness and confidence, heterosexism and social teasing are all identified as important parts of the construction of gender norms for boys and young men (Oransky & Marecek, 2009; Oransky & Fisher, 2009). Boys' acceptance of violence, aggressive conflict solving and negative social behavior are much higher compared to adolescent girls (Garaigordobil, 2009). Traditional forms of gender

socialisation remove and isolate many boys from their inner lives and vital contact with others, increasing the risk of them committing violent acts (Feder, Levant, & Dean, 2007).

A recent report from The Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions about violence preventive work with men (Eriksson & Berg, 2011 - forthcoming) shows that there is no evidence-based violence prevention program in a Nordic context where gender and violence are linked together. In the Scandinavian context, as of 2007, none of the existing violence prevention programs have integrated gender in their interventions (Berg, 2007). This is interesting since gender transformative approaches in interventions engaging men and boys are related to effectiveness in many health related areas, including violence prevention (Barker, 2011; Barker, Ricardo, & Nascimento, 2007; Barker, Ricardo, Nascimento, Olukoya, & Santos, 2010). The existing evidence-based programs in Sweden focus on bullying (eg. Olweus, 2001) but do not include a gender perspective or gender component. These findings are part of the rationale behind Freedom from Violence.

Furthermore, a major theoretical influence in the project is learning theory and behaviour analysis which is widely used in evidence-based prevention work (Ferrer-Wreder, 2004; Ferrer-Wreder & Andershed, 2005). Recommendations for best practices of violence prevention in schools include a theoretical framework of both feminist theory with a critical understanding of men's violence and a clear theory of social change (Flood, 2010). Using learning theory and a functional contextual framework in prevention is a good way of predicting and influencing behaviours and changing cultural practices (Biglan, 2004; 2008). This is further emphasised by the fact that the empirical support for contextual cognitive behavioural interventions is strong (Hayes, Villatte, Levin, & Hildebrandt, 2010). Furthermore, some small studies focusing on stigma related to psychological disorders, race and obesity are promising (Lillis,

2007; Lillis & Hayes, 2007; Luoma, Kohlenberg, Hayes, Bunting, & Rye, 2008; Masuda et al., 2007). Since both feminist theory and learning theory are considered to be contextualistic (Fox, 2006), a theoretical and practical integration might be a promising approach (Kanter, Tsai, & Kohlenberg, 2010). A constructivist gender approach (West & Zimmerman, 1987) combined with behavior analysis would be a development both for the field of prevention and gender (Ruiz, 2003).

Freedom from Violence - Mission impossible?

We, the team of Freedom from Violence, are four colleagues, who have all, in different ways, worked in the field of gender equality issues for more than ten years, at the policy level as well as by carrying out practical interventions. The last years we have all increasingly focused on men's violence and how it can be prevented and brought to an end. We spend a great deal of our time reflecting on which conditions make behavioural change possible, and how we can create conditions, especially for young men (and young women), to see and critically reflect over gender stereotypical norms and values, and how these affect their daily lives. Which conditions can make it possible for young men and women to make the active choice to change their behaviour into a more gender equal practice? Behavioural change is always a choice made by individuals, but at

the same time, such a choice is never made independently of the context.

In our work with young men and women we understand that the key factor for any intervention is that participants feel that it's about them, about their reality, about their daily lives. Any intervention must, in order to be successful, be relevant to its participants. This means fostering inclusion and the possibility for participants to influence the agenda. It is indeed a challenge to create such conditions in a context which in itself often promotes the opposite, i.e. exclusion and hierarchy through gendered power relations.

To tackle gender inequality is to deal with social inequality, unfulfilled democratic intentions and basic human rights that still are neglected. It is to work with deconstructing power and status for the privileged. This is a mission that never goes by without resistance, irrespective of if the objective is to influence decisions and behaviour at the community level or at the individual level.

Therefore our mission as well as our ultimate vision lies in the hands of our own dedication, of our mutual support of each other, of the support from our mentors and partners, and from academics and activists working in collaboration to keep on trying to achieve change by promoting gender equality in practice and counteracting all forms of oppression and violence.

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The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality

EWL Position Paper in view of the 48th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women - March 2004

1. Context - The move from women-centred policies to 'gender equality' strategies, including gender mainstreaming

The increased focus on the role of men in relation to gender equality work reflects the move towards more 'gender' focused strategies, including gender mainstreaming strategies, and away from a focus on sex-based discrimination. 'Gender equality' as a concept identifies from the start that socially constructed gender roles play a crucial role in shaping women's - and men's - access to rights, resources, and opportunities. Abandoning essentialist notions of 'sex' in favour of a socially constructed 'gender' was seen as a step forward in feminist understanding.

Although this move can be seen as progress, there are some important questions that still need to be addressed in relation to 'gender equality' as a strategic concept. One of the problems with gender focused policies for achieving equality between women and men is that it has often meant excluding 'sex' as a concept, and the policy reaction has been to marginalize, or even make redundant women-centred equality policies¹. Although the original intention was not to abandon these policies, but to use a 'dual strategy' of specific measures/programmes and gender mainstreaming, recent shifts in policies show that women-centred policies are less accepted in the

policy process. There is a tendency of policy-makers to decrease funding for women-centred projects and strategies, and transfer funding to male-centred actions – in the name of gender equality. It is important to keep in mind that in many EU countries, the lack of basic services for women and girls is still a reality, and that governments continuously fail to recognise the need for specific services and projects for women. Parallel investments in women and girls must therefore be ensured.

In conclusion, gender as a concept, and gender mainstreaming as a strategy, have proven to have ambivalent results in achieving equality between women and men, and in redressing the unequal power relations between women and men.

¹ Sari Kouvou (2003), "Mainstreaming Gender and Integrating Men in the United Nations Equality Politics"; Faculty of Law, University of Gothenburg

There is a need to reinforce the 'dual strategy', and ensure the safeguarding of women-centred, empowering strategies – including specific bodies and programmes – which remain essential to counteract and address the systemic, structural inequalities between women and men.

2. Integrating men and boys into the work to achieve equality between women and men

The purpose of gender-based strategies – with an equal focus on women and men – is to contribute to a deconstruction of the current unequal power relationship between women and men and to break the cycle of gender-based inequalities. Making the link between our knowledge about the gendered constructions of 'women' and 'men' to real and concrete policies that contribute to achieving equality between women and men is still proving difficult. An increased interest and knowledge about how male identities and masculinities are produced and reproduced in different social, cultural, and political contexts, does not in itself contribute to greater equality between women and men. It has proven difficult to make political progress in solving such structural problems as men's violence against women, even with the help of a better understanding of the construction of masculinity, its relationship to female identities, and how this contributes to and perpetuates gender inequalities.

In analysing male identities and masculinity there is a need to reinforce the political and strategic importance of working towards gender equality. A structural analysis along with actions that aim to redress the unequal power relationship between women and men, and that aim to redefine the relationship between women and men must be placed at the centre of the strategy.

2.1. Different male-centred strategies²

² This categorisation is based on the article "Mainstreaming Gender and Integrating Men in the United Nations Equality Politics" by Sari Kouvo (2003), Faculty of Law, University of Gothenburg

Win-win approach/Partnership approach

This strategy is based on the understanding that women and men should work together to achieve equality – and that men would also gain from increased equality between women and men. However, the approach has sometimes proven to be over-consensual, making it difficult to address issues of power, and to redress inequalities in access to resources, decision-making, and the issue of men's violence against women.

Awareness-raising among men

This approach focuses on men and boys and aims primarily to increase men's understanding of themselves and their gender. This awareness-raising work is important, but often the link to political or strategic questions is too weak, i.e. on how to build upon this increased understanding to implement programmes and policies that would put an end to structural inequalities between women and men.

Focus on the relationship between the genders

This approach largely takes feminist and gender theory as a basis of analysis, and recognises that inequalities between women and men can only be addressed through working with both women and men. In this context, the increased understanding of the processes of gender construction aims primarily at dismantling the unequal relationships between women and men. It is this approach that comes closest to what feminists have argued to be the important components of a 'gender equality' agenda for research and policies.

2.2. Overcoming men's resistance

Men's resistance to change and their resistance towards the feminist project has been studied by several researchers. Although there might be gains for men in a society with equality between women and men in terms of life quality, some researchers³

³ For example Michel Kimmel,

underline that men's support for gender equality is firstly placed on an ethical level – as a moral obligation to take action that will lead to increased equality. Therefore, male-centred approaches must firmly be based on men's responsibility to support equality between women and men, to equally participate in parenting and care-giving, to stop men's violence against women, etc. This ethical-political obligation and commitment apply to governments as well, as governments have the responsibility to create policies that encourage more equal gender relationships, including policies aimed at changing men's behaviour.

Although there is resistance from some men, it is important to acknowledge that men (as women) are not a homogenous group, and that there is a potential to mobilise more men in support of gender equality actions and policies. It also seems that men are more interested in or ready to support some issues rather than others. Research shows that younger men have a higher level of consciousness and support for a culture of gender equality. Policies must build on this positive force and include men and boys in the movement towards gender equality through partnerships and through critical reflection on gender relationships, in order to raise children in a culture of gender equality and to marginalize those men that want to hold onto their privileges and power.

3. Some concrete measures focusing on men and boys aiming at achieving equality between women and men

3.1. Violence against women

The extremely widespread phenomenon of male violence against women is a violation of women's human rights and fundamental freedoms, an obstacle to women's full participation in economic and social life and a direct contradiction to the goal of equality. Violence against women is an expression of "(the) historically unequal power relations between women and men, which researcher on masculinities and male identity.

have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women's full advancement." (Paragraph 118 of the Beijing Platform for Action). Male violence against women impacts on all women as it is part of the reality of women's lives. It encompasses many forms, including but not limited to: domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, prostitution, trafficking, pornography and other sex "industry" related acts. Male violence against women is a continuum of physical, verbal and sexual assaults and acts of sexual violence committed by men against women with the explicit aim of hurting, degrading, intimidating and silencing; taking away their ability to control their life situation and, in extreme situations, killing women.

Male-centred responses to male violence against women

Increasingly, policies that aim to address male violence against women are being dealt with by focusing on conciliatory measures, which obscures the structural dimension of male violence against women. Examples of these policies can be seen in practices such as:

- **Mediation:** There is growing concern that mediation is being promoted, and in many instances is replacing criminal justice sanctions in cases of violence against women, particularly in situations of male domestic violence. This is happening despite research findings that show that disclosure by women in situations of male violence must be handled very carefully as it can lead to further violence and death. Mediation as a means of resolving violence should never be proposed as an option as it presupposes that both women and men are equally responsible for male violence against women.
- **Perpetrator programmes:** Perpetrators programmes for men who are violent to women are now seen as a new way to prevent and eliminate men's violence against women. The term "treatment" is often misleading, as men who are violent to women are not generally mentally ill, they are consciously using their power and physical and psychological violence to control

women. Moreover, the evaluation of these programmes indicates that their impact is limited. Further evaluation is needed, where their positive impact (or not) should be determined on the basis of whether they ensure the safety of women and girls. However, perpetrator programmes should never be designed in a vacuum, but only as one component of an integrated strategy on violence against women with the overall aim of keeping women safe through different systems, i.e. police, judiciary, primary health care services, prevention and education to men and boys about equality and respect of women, and sanctions to perpetrators.



Trafficking in women and girls and prostitution – ending men's right to buy women's bodies

Trafficking in women and prostitution are violations of women's human rights. Prostitution stands in complete opposition to women's social, economic, sexual and political empowerment. One of the most important root causes of prostitution and other forms of sexual exploitation of women and girls is the persistence of patriarchal ideologies - and men's perceived right to buy access to women's bodies. Therefore, changing the behaviour of men and boys is key in order to counteract the sexual exploitation of women. Policy-makers must be prepared to take a stand against the sexual exploitation of women, including prostitution, through challenging also the demand side of the industry, i.e. the (male) buyers of sexual services. This must apply not only within countries, but also to men serving abroad for

example in military or civil capacity, especially in areas of conflict and humanitarian crises.

- **Legislation,** which puts an end to men's right to buy access to women's bodies by criminalizing the buying of sexual services should be adopted. In parallel programmes and funding to promote alternatives for women in prostitution must be established.
- **International and national institutions** have a responsibility to develop rules, which prohibit male sexual exploitation of women when their employees serve in military or civil capacity abroad, especially in peacekeeping and humanitarian aid missions.
- **Sex tourism** must be brought to an end through legislation and through programmes and actions that increase men's awareness about the human rights and dignity of all women.

3.2 Equality between women and men in employment and at home

Inequalities between women and men in the home and in employment are intrinsically linked. Women have historically been assigned to carry the main responsibilities for care and domestic work and still carry most of it today, while men have been working outside the home defined as the "breadwinners" for the family. This distinction has been underpinned not only by gender stereotypes, religious beliefs and traditions and by conservative education, but most importantly by public policies. A culture where both men and women are equally considered as carers and as actors in the paid economy must be encouraged. In order to break with the inequalities in the home and at work, there is a need for proactive public policies in both the area of employment and in the area of family/care.

For an equal sharing of care and domestic responsibilities between women and men

In order to achieve a more equal sharing of care and domestic responsibilities, some key policies

need to be addressed. Men's responsibility for the care and upbringing of their children must be reinforced through public policy.

- Substantial parental leave rights must be accorded on an individual basis also to fathers, as is the case for mothers today. Campaigns and policies giving incentives to fathers to use their parental leave rights should be put in place in countries where substantial legal provisions exist already.

- Policies that reinforce traditional gender roles and division of work should be avoided, for example fixed and low levels of benefits for home carers. Instead, quality, and affordable childcare facilities and care facilities for other dependent people should be developed in order to give men and women a real choice about how to share child rearing and other caring responsibilities.

- In cases of separation between two parents, the time and energy invested in the actual upbringing of children should be applied as criteria to determine custody rights and grant residence time, rather than emphasising biological parenthood. Custody policies that automatically give rights to one parent on the basis of his/her biological parenthood, rather than their proven commitment to actively participate in the upbringing of their children, are counterproductive and do not encourage increased active parenting by fathers.

- The elimination of stereotypes about gender roles in the home, including domestic work should be encouraged in the media, education material, toys etc. Research on the influence of those stereotypes and how to counteract them should be promoted and publicised.

Gender equality on the labour market

Without the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women on the labour market (including the gender pay gap, unequal representation in decision-making, the question of part-time work, pensions etc) gender equality goals will not be achieved. However, the work place and the institutions linked to the workplace (trade unions, etc) continue to

be mainly a men's world. Strong legislation for gender equality is necessary to abolish discrimination of women in the labour market.

- Gender equality plans should be established at the level of the workplace. These should be developed in consultation with male and female workers, in order to contribute to a reflection on the whole structure of gender equality in the work organisation.

- Both workplace policies, as well as public policies, must address the childcare needs of employees (men and women).

- In order to break the gender segregation in the labour market, mechanisms to counteract choices based on gender stereotypes must be integrated into the educational and lifelong learning programmes. Stereotypes, often embedded in social legislation, not taking into account women and men's actual capacities must be abandoned, including those related to physical capacity. Men should be actively encouraged to choose professions and educational programmes currently dominated by women (health sector, education, etc).

- Furthermore, women need to be fully and equally represented at all levels in trade unions and employers associations, in order to enable a more critical reflection on the role and position of women and men in the labour market.

3.3 Breaking gender stereotypes

Breaking gender stereotypes is a long process, which must be supported by more firm public policies in all areas (parental leave arrangements, legislation on women in decision-making, etc). However, in order to mobilise men for gender equality, some particular areas and actors can play an essential role in breaking gender stereotypes.

Sports

Sport is still a male dominated domain, both when it comes to athletes and coaches, but also as spectators and consumers in the sports entertainment industry. On the other hand many children, both boys and girls, are involved in sports at an early

age outside their school activities and many women are interested in and/or involved in sports.

- National and international sports organisations (the International Olympic Committee, various international sports federations, etc) should develop programmes for gender equality, including positive actions, if needed; and ensure that they do not reinforce gender stereotypes. These organisations could and should also play a role in disseminating alternative realistic images of men and women.

- Integrating a critical gender equality reflection in sports associations is an opportunity to reach young boys and girls. Sports clubs and associations with activities for boys and girls should develop their knowledge and skills in detecting and counteracting gender stereotypes, and formulate gender equality action plans for the association.

The media and advertising

The media and advertising can play an important role in promoting alternative images of men and women based on equality. However, in the absence of strong policies and commitments to gender equality, the media can unfortunately also contribute to increased stereotyping and sexism.

- All media should develop a code of conduct and action plans for gender equality, including more women in decision-making in the media. These plans should address how men and women are portrayed, what issues are raised and how, and in which ways the information provided support or not gender equality developments, and the breaking of gender stereotypes. Public service media should be taking a lead in this process.

- Specific training on gender equality issue and the treatment of the image of women and men should be given in journalists' schools and other media related training establishments.

- Sexism in both advertising and the media should be prohibited as racism is prohibited in national legislation in many countries.

3.4 Education systems

Intervention in the education system is a very important tool to raise awareness and influence boys and young men, and eventually to change men's behaviour towards one that supports equality between women and men.

- Ministries of education should develop a gender equality plan, which covers the whole range of issues related to the educational system. The plan should clearly indicate how a gender perspective be integrated into all educational activities and material at all levels, and in the educational organisation (recruitment, staffs' skills development, etc). The plan should demonstrate how the educational system would play its role in socialising boys (and girls) towards behaviours and values based on gender equality.
- Specific courses on gender equality issues, should be developed at all levels in the education system, and integrated into the obligatory curricula. Specific gender equality educational actions and courses, targeting boys and girls respectively as well as together, should be developed. These courses must include equality between men and women in relation to sexual behaviour and practices.
- Pre-school pedagogy based on gender equality should be put in place and apply to all subsidised childcare institutions.
- Specific courses on gender equality as well as the integration of a gender equality perspective in all areas

should be obligatory in all teachers' education programmes. Training for teachers on gender equality as part of their life long learning should also be put in place.

- Institutions of higher education should develop gender equality- and feminist perspectives in all fields, including in research activities.
- Educational institutions at all levels must ensure that girls and women enjoy a non-sexist learning environment. Sexual harassment and all expressions of male power over women, including degrading language and sexist insults, must be prohibited in schools.

3.5 Sexuality, and reproductive rights and health

Gender identities and the relationships between women and men are closely linked to the construction of sexuality and sexual practices, and also of sexualised violence. Many women around the world are denied control over their bodies from a very early age and throughout their whole adult lives. International laws define the human rights for both men and women to be informed about, and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice. The sexual experiences and reproductive life of women are too often determined by men, often denying women the possibility of a satisfying and safe sexual life. Therefore, addressing

issues of the sexual behaviour and the sexual practices of men is relevant to shape more equal relationship between women and men.

Prevention of HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

In order to take effective action to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and STDs, policies targeting men's sexual behaviour and responsibility must be put in place. Good practices developed in this area should be shared and spread between countries, and adequately funded.

- Programmes working towards developing greater responsibility among men in relation to their sexual behaviour, including a commitment to protect the health and choices of their sexual partners should be established at international, national, and local levels.

Reproductive rights and health

Patriarchal ideologies are at the heart of denying women's rights to control their own bodies when it comes to deciding freely if and when to have children.

- Campaigns and laws breaking with patriarchal ideologies must be put in place, to ensure that men fully recognise and respect women's rights to decide if and when to have children, and that women have access to the contraception of their choice, and access to safe and legal abortion.



Changing men's perception on male and female sexuality

The way men and women's sexuality is socially constructed serves to maintain inequalities between women and men. Pornographic production is sometimes the only 'sexual education' of boys, and is totally contradictory to the aim of constructing a male sexuality based on equality and respect for women. Actions that challenge stereotypes of men's (and women's) sexual behaviour are essential, in order to develop a culture where women's and men's sexuality are equally valued, where women and men have equal choice, and where the safety of women and men is guaranteed.

- Sex education programmes should be put in place for boys and girls as an obligatory part of the education curricula – focusing on the social construction of sexual behaviour, and gender identities. These must include a zero tolerance for all forms of male sexual violence, and be based on the principle of equality between women and men in sexual relationships.
- Male perpetrators of sexual violence should be increasingly pursued and convicted for their crimes in order to give clear signals to men that violence against women is always unacceptable behaviour. All professionals involved in the process (police, prosecutors, judges, etc) must be fully aware and trained to fulfil this task.

3.6 Civil society and social movements

In recent years there has been increased attention (and funding) given to men organising together in relation to gender equality issues. Some of these projects have been successful in promoting a greater awareness among men of gender equality issues, while a few have been used as platforms to work against the gender equality agenda

and/or to distort the concept of gender equality. For example, in some cases men's groups have been arguing that they have been 'marginalized' in the movement towards greater equality between women and men, arguing that men are 'discriminated' against in the movement towards gender equality. In reality, very few men have yet seriously been interested in mobilising for equality between women and men, and women's activists have often welcomed the ones that have done so with great enthusiasm.

Support to civil society, and in particular to women's organisations, is vital to create greater awareness in society about issues of equality between women and men. Supporting actions that target and/or involve men and boys in the move towards equality between women and men is an important part of a strategy that must remain multifaceted.

- In order for actions by men or targeting men to build further and develop the legitimate claims for equality as expressed by the women's movement, male initiatives should indicate how they work in partnership with women's organisations and feminist actors. This would also guarantee that we do not support networks that organise as men in order to act as obstacles to a gender equality agenda.
- More space for meetings and partnerships between men interested in supporting the gender equality agenda, and women's associations/ feminist actors, should be made available at all levels.

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