Intersecting Masculinities: The Role of Hegemonic Masculinity in Gender Based Violence Prevention Work

BY

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Abstract
This research examines the validity and relatability of hegemonic masculinity in a contemporary academic and cultural context. There are an increasing number of initiatives that use workshops that aim to prevent gender-based violence. This research asks in what ways do such prevention programs engage young men in discussions of masculinity in order to tackle gender-based violence and what does this mean for the power relationship of hegemonic masculinity. To answer these questions the research draws on primary research consisting of observing nineteen workshops of a men and masculinities organization, interviews with nine of the facilitators and my own experiences of training to be a gender-based violence prevention workshop facilitator. The study identifies three key themes of deconstructing masculinity, remaking positive masculinity, and the pervasiveness of the structural power of hegemonic masculinity. This study concludes that while this organization takes participants on a journey of deconstructing and remaking masculinity, there is also an observable presence of dominant practices of hegemonic masculinity. This reformulation of hegemonic masculinity must include the positionality of identity and the greater visibility of dissenting masculinities.
A new hegemonic masculinity must therefore incorporate the fluidity and changeability of hegemonic masculinities within a complex web of intersecting masculinities and identities. This idea is in need of more research.

Key words
Gender, Hegemonic Masculinity, Identity, Toxic Masculinity, Power

1. Introduction and problem definition

Building on decades of campaigning and recent research especially from cultural and university settings, there have been a variety of policies and programs attempting to combat sexual assault and Gender Based Violence (GBV). Many of these programs began at or focus on college and university campuses. The United States became a leader in student grassroots movements advocating for prevention programs, with some success. The introduction of Title IX helped encourage a national conversation on sexual assault on campuses and this has led to the growth of initiatives such as NO MORE, It's On Us, and Not Alone (Puch, 2017).

In more recent years, consent and sexual assault discourse has reached universities in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. GBV is slowly becoming a normalised topic of discussion thanks to the high-profile nature of the #metoo campaign as well as activists and survivors who have spent decades advocating for better rights. Similar to the US, many initiatives here have developed out of universities.

One initiative forms part the case study of this thesis. This organisation known as Men and Masculinities[1] (MM) was born out of school and young men programmes in Britain but now gives workshops across the UK and the Netherlands. It started at a prestigious British university when some members of a sports team realised the need to engage their male peers in conversations around sexual assault. This organisation has evolved over the years and now has a wider focus, with the general goal to work "with men and boys towards gender equality, inclusive communities, and healthier relationships". MM specifically caters in facilitating workshops with groups of young men and boys, though has branched out to mixed group workshops, 'town hall' style conversations and lectures as well as allyship workshops. In an effort to combat harmful norms, they engage young men to speak with each

[1] This organisation asked not to be named in this study, so Men and Masculinities is the pseudonym used in this article.

other about toxic masculinity, problematic behaviour, accountability, mental health and self-care.

The other study that is part of this research is my own journey training to be a facilitator for a Netherlands based GBV prevention organisation. Similar to MM, this initiative arose from a sexual violence prevention campaign at a prominent Dutch university and organises workshops against sexual assault. It works with a variety of groups regardless of gender but at times engages with only young men. While both organisations began as grassroots, education based organisations they have now expanded and give workshops to a variety of groups of men in a variety of organisational settings from sports teams to schools and universities. For my own experiences, I went through a series of workshops designed to demonstrate how current facilitators should present their workshops.

Gender based violence is harmful and has long lasting effects disproportionately against women. A recent study in the UK found that 97% of women aged 18-24 said they had experienced sexual harassment with 80% of women of all ages experiencing sexual harassment in public spaces (Topping, 2021). This is the basis on which MM initially designed their male focused workshops. They also go further and base their approach on a sound foundation of masculinity work. In their mission statement, MM states that it does not just want to "engage men and boys" but importantly "rethink masculinities". Throughout this research I will therefore use 'rethinking' or 'remaking' masculinities to mean in some way teaching and discussing the socially constructed nature of masculinity, with the hope of breaking harmful behaviours.

A primary goal of the MM initiative then is combatting the harmful issue of GBV through an approach focused on the idea of masculinity. These workshops help men to redefine how they relate to their masculine identity. The beginning of this masculinity work is based on a theory of masculinity as a socio-cultural construct. This draws on the power

relational concept of constructed masculinity as a popular theory called hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity, the idea that there is a normative, dominant masculinity is key to the approaches that many allyship organisations take (Chakraborty, et al., 2020). MM operates their workshops through a combined teaching and facilitating method. It facilitates discussions and reflections that help men to question their own masculinity. The workshop leaders then 'teach' or begin conversations about different conceptions of masculinity to show how masculinity can be seen as an arbitrary socio-cultural construct. The facilitators do this by designing activities to help men understand that there are certain behaviours and actions that all men position themselves from. The workshops then try to help men question these behaviours as well as try to better understand their own masculine identity. Gender based violence prevention based on hegemonic masculinity asserts that the ways that men dominate over women throughout systems and institutions is a gender order that allows and encourages violence against women (Burrell, 2018). Another goal of this work is to encourage preventative measures to mobilise men to work with other men in society. The workshops aim to create a community of allies who are better positioned to understand and therefore communication with friends, peers, colleagues etc. a better conceptualisation of masculinity.

GBV prevention research

Research into GBV initiatives has typically either tried to evaluate their effectiveness or has been descriptive of the type of people who attend and their motivations (Coulter, 2003; Casey, & Smith, 2010; Chakraborty et al., 2020). One of the bigger studies used latent class analysis on a survey responded to by almost 400 young men who have participated in GBV prevention events (Casey et al, 2017). This work built on earlier models describing men's pathways to GBV prevention, which was also developed by Casey et al. The authors then

developed 15 items from this previous work to use as indicators in their analysis. They found that social justice commitments and exposure to stories or friends and family who had experienced violence were the most common entry pathways for the men interviewed. Two years later in 2019 these researchers surveyed almost 400 young men to assess three main questions in how men experience Gender Based Violence (GBV) prevention events. They asked how men participate, what characteristics those men have and what motivates them to be involved in these events. These questions demonstrate how the authors widened their scope to three central descriptive factors of who is involved in this work rather than simply looking at motivation to be involved in GBV prevention. This work was an extension of the article referenced above (Casey et al., 2019).

Other research looks at the various strategies employed across the world to engage men in GBV prevention. Michael Flood (2011) describes the spectrum of prevention initiatives ranging from individual skills and community education to influencing policy. Interestingly, the author also discusses the effectiveness of these initiatives. There are a number of issues with attempting to describe how effective they may have been, both in defining what characterises effectiveness and having the authority to make such assessments. Flood does however, address these concerns and focuses on analysing the theoretical basis behind the initiatives.

The body of research evaluating effectiveness and motivations of organisations such as MM is valuable because GBV prevention work is often intentionally self-reflective and continuously attempting to improve. In a practical sense this allows these organisations and campaigns to deliver a more effective workshop and to reach a greater number of men but also to better realise their position within this activism. However, while it may be valuable research, it is important also to understand, analyse and indeed problematise, how these GBV programmes are using masculinity to help men better question their own arbitrary identities.

Hegemonic masculinity asserts that there is a form of dominant masculinity that all other masculine identities posit themselves in relation to (Connell, 1987). Hegemonic masculinity is a "pattern of practice" (Messerschmidt, 2018) that creates, perpetuates and enforces men's dominance over women. I will show further in this study that there are more nuances to masculinity studies than this. It will be shown that there are actually multiple hegemonic masculinities that at times interact with and at others stay separate from each other. If this is the case, then an interesting direction of research is how GBV programmes acknowledge the cultural, spatial and temporal factors that influence masculinities and hegemonic masculinities. The scientific relevance of this research lies in the fact that I will explore how different types of masculinity come into play in the GBV workshops. An important point here is that other identifying factors such as race and class will impact the masculinities being presented and discussed at the workshops. My research will also explore how important theoretical understandings of deconstructing masculinity actually are in the making in these workshops.

My research question consequentially asks in what ways do GBV prevention programs engage young men in discussions of masculinity.

To help in my analysis and evaluation of this research question I will also be asking what kinds of masculinities are performed, made and unmade in these workshop discussions, how does this take place and what does this suggest about the power making structures of masculinity as well as the power relationship between multiple masculine identities? The societal relevance of this research lies in the fact that it aims to contribute to our conceptual understanding of GBV prevention programs in a way that it is hoped will contribute to their effectiveness.

2. Theoretical framework

Gender work

Before I explore masculinities it is important to explain how this research defines certain key terms. Masculinity and masculinity studies began in parallel with the beginning of academic discussions about patriarchy and gender. Indeed, it is only possible for modern discussion about masculinity to take place thanks to decades of research and debate into gender and what it means to have, identify with or perform gender. One of the earliest and certainly the most famous work on gender was *The Second Sex* (de Beauvoir, 1949). This seminal piece of work traced women's experience through history to demonstrate how women became considered the 'other' and men the default, allowing for the dominance of the patriarchy. This early distinction from biological categories to show women and feminine identity being constructed as relational to men and masculinity (de Beauvoir, 1949). Demonstrating this difference led her to make the statement that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (Pilcher, 2016). Importantly here, it should be noted that this is the beginning of defining gender through a lens of power relations, something that is central to the introduction of hegemonic masculinity.

Moving forward several decades, another seminal piece of work looks at the production or creation of gender. In *Gender Trouble* (Butler, 1990) sets out that not only gender but also *sex* is culturally constructed because society derives the meaning of sex through the gender frame. More specifically "gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/ cultural means by which 'sexed nature', or 'a natural sex' is produced and established" (Butler, 1990). Gender then follows as an "involuntary performance" in which people are consistently reinforcing their own gender (Butler, 1990). Whilst her claims that gender as performativity allows a certain flexibility within gender, Butler (1990) also says that the best form of resistance against gender norms is drag. This

aspect of gender is demonstrated throughout hegemonic masculinity as it challenges the immutable idea of gender.

MM has evolved since its initial conception based on preventing sexual assault through discussions of harmful norms. As an observer however, I saw many direct comparisons and discussions around toxic masculinity. The idea of toxic masculinity present in this research is directly related to the performativity of gender. As will be shown, hegemonic masculinity refers to the practice of men's dominance. Performativity of the hegemonic masculinity is therefore the perpetuation of toxic masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinities

Masculinity studies were developed in the 1970s in parallel with literature and research on gender and feminism at the time. These studies began by trying to understand male dominance and the patriarchy. In the late 80s and throughout the 90s some seminal pieces of research were put forward by academics such as Raewyn Connell. The theory began as an attempt by academics studying gender to make sense of the idea increasingly gaining traction that masculinities are decidedly plural and that the 'typical man' cannot be conceptualised (Messerschmidt, 2018). At this time masculinity began to be used as a term encompassing projections of male dominance. It was not until Raewyn Connell's work however that academics looked at the relational nature of masculinity.

This was the beginning of work that focused on distinguishing between ranks of masculinity. Connell described these ranks as the different roles that men take within a system of conflicting gender identities and dominance. The plurality of masculinity then was key to Connell's descriptions; she later developed the concept of *hegemonic masculinities*. This centred on the idea that masculinities are made up of different positions of power of men in a gender order (Connell, 1983). Connell's work showed that previous ideas about men's

dominant role in society falls short because they simply focused on the set expectations of that role. Hegemonic masculinity then, is "the pattern of practice i.e., things done… that allowed men's dominance over women to continue" (Connell, 2005, p.832). Hegemonic masculinity posited that there were hierarchies and that all men position themselves based on the normative masculinity. This work then opened up further research to explore how men relate to hegemonic masculinity and what this suggests about their behaviour (Connell, 2005). This conceptual framework therefore is key to my research as it paves the way for further research on multiple masculinities and how they interact. It is also however, important to understand the criticism of hegemonic masculinities that led to this further research.

One criticism of this framework is that masculinity has too often been framed within a heteronormative idea of gender that rests on the male-female dichotomy. By essentialising men and masculinity it fails to incorporate the diverse identities within gender theory (Connell, 2005). The more traditional idea of hegemonic masculinity then, which still carried a flat understanding of a single dominant masculinity, fails to incorporate how masculine identity intersects with other identities. Gender based violence prevention programmes that fail to recognise this distinction have the potential to miss out on these intersecting identities. It would be important, for example, to show how nonbinary people who are male presenting are likely to experience interactions and events different to the cis men who are part of the workshop. Extending this critique, queer men or men of colour will potentially experience gender based violence in different ways as well. For the purposes of this research then, I will use the term *masculinities* as an umbrella term to mean all the different ways that masculinity is presented, intersected and understood by different men.

A second critique holds that there are some problems with the separate study of masculinity. Scholars argue that this further dichotomises men and women into separate spheres (Brod & Kaufman, 1994). The problem of masculinity studies would therefore be

that it fails to take women into account when analysing men and their masculinities. This approach has some implications. Taking this limited conception of masculinity could be shown to be actually reifying power dynamics. This critique would then argue we must "distinguish between "patriarchy," the long-term structure of the subordination of women, and "gender," a specific system of exchange that arose in the context of modern capitalism" (Connell, 2005, 839). One of the answers to this criticism is to take a relational approach to gender (Brod & Kaufman, 1994).

Chris Haywood builds on criticisms of the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Haywood, who has produced seminal work on masculinity, explores the hegemonic and hierarchical masculinities set forward by Connell by building on earlier feminist writings. He critiques the 'crises of men' idea that masculinity is in a decline (Haywood et al., 2018). This is a very important piece of work because it brings together contemporary ideas of masculinity. Importantly, it incorporates forms of power and their intersections such as sexuality, class, ethnicity and generations.

Intersectional masculinities

Máirtín Mac an Ghaill & Chris Haywood (2011) have together produced newer work that tries to take the previous criticisms into account. Their work on class and masculinities in schools brought a multi-dimensional class approach to this area. Their work is important because it has shown how identities and masculinities can shift as socio-economic status and positions shift. By demonstrating this shift of class and gender identity they show how masculinity should be understood as a fluid, relational concept (Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, 2011). Breaking away from the Eurocentric linear hierarchy of masculinities, their work showed that acting out masculinity is relational. Their *East Asian Men: Masculinity, Sexuality and Desire* detailed various men from different backgrounds and analysed how they

understood their masculinity. (Lin, Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2017). The importance of this work comes from showing how different masculinities relate to *different* normative hegemonic masculinities in China, Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong and Korea. For example, one chapter looks at the influence of heteronormative corporate masculinity in Japan. They show how the discourse of the full time, male, white collar employee creates a specific hegemonic masculinity along gender and sexuality lines (Lin, Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2017). The tropes surrounding this employee generally assume that the employee is heterosexual, which means that non-heterosexual employees have to navigate their own identity within this context. This is described as the "the micro-negotiations that are needed to engage with the expectations of corporate heteronormativity" (Lin, Haywood & Mac an Ghaill, 2017, p38). These separate masculinities show the plurality of hegemonic masculinity. Each of these systems of masculinity hierarchies are relationally dependent on the social and cultural context, power positions and personal interactions.

Anoop Nayak showed how racial identity also has a critical affect as masculinities are in transition. Nayak has explored how a changing class in the UK and the changing socioeconomic situation in the north of England intersects with Whiteness and masculinity. The importance of this work is that it shows how masculinity must be understood through various markers of inequality and identity. My own work will therefore also try to understand the various masculinities present in the workshops and the training of the workshop leaders but especially how these inequalities interact. For the purposes of this research, I will use *hegemonic masculinities* to show how there are multiple dominant masculinities and multiple systems of hierarchies that effect how men understand their own masculine identity in different contexts.

Allyship and men as bystanders

While the focus of my work will be the theoretical basis of masculinity I will also be using ideas about GBV prevention and bystander prevention. Bystander intervention is a process in which "individuals in a community can intervene when faced with situations involving interpersonal violence" (McMahon & Dick 2011). This work looks at how best to include men in GBV work. Much of this research focuses on what motivates men to involve themselves in these initiatives (Flood, 2011; Casey et al., 2017; Casey et al., 2019). This research generally found that personal stories and a commitment to social justice were the main motivations for getting involved. These men therefore wanted to be allies because they wanted to see social change and believed what they were fighting against is wrong. Discussions around allyship have also turned to what is being transformed in GBV prevention work. These men still work and operate with a patriarchal, heteronormative system. Criticisms have been levelled at some allyship programmes because they neglect "the structural and institutional inequalities that are fundamental in shaping men's violence against women" (Chakraborty et al., 2020). In my own research then I will be looking at the processes of making and unmaking masculinities and how that relates to the systematic inequalities or how "how masculinity is redefined, instead of critiquing or challenging them" (Chakraborty et al., 2020).

3 Research methods and data

Analytical approach and data collection

This research explores what kinds of masculinities are present and what masculinity discourses are present within meetings and events of programmes that aim to prevent GBV. The research asks what kinds of masculinities are performed, made and unmade in these workshop discussions, how this takes place and what this suggests about the power making structures of masculinity as well as the power relationship between multiple masculine

identities. To answer these questions, my primary method for data collection will be (participant) observation. This research uses approaches based on online ethnography, narrative and thematic analysis and applies these to (participant) observation of workshops, lectures and events in GBV prevention programmes of MM supplemented by interviews with key practitioners involved in workshops and other events, triangulated with programme documents. The data of this study consists of notes from the observation of nineteen workshops, notes from events and lectures, transcripts of nine semi-structured interviews, and personal notes as well as various screenshots and documents collected from workshops.

The current global pandemic presents certain practical challenges. Due to changing restrictions in the Netherlands, including the lockdown, all events that took place during my research time were online. This online space was almost always on the video conferencing app Zoom. Joining any meetings with the purpose of observing them therefore consisted of being part of a small group of people in a video call. The workshops or lectures similarly took place on Zoom. Since all of these events took place online, I took a passive role. This is because, firstly, it was more difficult to be involved in a non-invasive way on zoom calls. More importantly, the workshops are presented based on a circle of trust, in which each participant is safe to share as they need to. I therefore sought to be a fly on the wall in many of these events, so I did not disturb the participation.

I conducted the majority of my research online and therefore used some online ethnography research methods. Ethnography on the internet is now an important research tool even more so since the covid-19 pandemic has reduced face-to-face interactions. Online video calls allow connection between researchers and participants without the issue of location. They also allow researchers to reach a greater number of participants. Online ethnography is not only a tool in and of itself, but also a space for research. Discourse-centred online ethnography looks not only at how the internet is being used and how it blends

with daily life but also the cultural artefacts available online (Androutsopoulos, 2008). The spaces that I observed were therefore temporary online spaces created by the facilitators and composed of all of the participants.

For my own research, I looked for two main ways of interacting with masculinity. The first was how workshop leaders discuss and present themes of masculinity, as well as the participants' responses. The second was how they interacted with certain participants or what types of masculinity were being presented. The research question asks what masculinities are present but the theoretical framework shows that different dominating masculinities can be present at once. The theoretical framework also showed that masculinities interact with other identities. An important part of my online ethnography was to observe whether this was the case in the GBV prevention workshops. The internet is a powerful tool for disseminating information. This kind of ethnography therefore would ask what kind of information is being given, how and why. For my own project then, I add to my triangulation of data by exploring some documents that arise from each workshop, such as activities in which participants write down experiences or understanding of masculinity as well as associated key terms. I have had to be careful not to fall into the trap of researching the "placeless space" (Bryman, 2015, p. 659). This means that I have needed to be aware that I am not studying internet use, but rather taking meaning from information and interactions that happen to be online.

The second method for data collection was semi-structured interviews with key practitioners. By key practitioners I mean any workshop leaders, volunteers, organisers or anyone else who has been involved in developing these workshops. I specifically focused on interviewing these particular people because questions about the design of the workshops and how that relates to rethinking masculinity were most pertinent to my research. Part of the purpose of my study was to determine which types of masculinity were present in these workshops and how they were referred to, used and discussed. As I carried out observations, semi-structured

interviews gave me the opportunity for follow up questions. I had already made notes during my observations about how masculinity is used and discussed. Follow up interviews gave me the chance to ask about my observations, or ask how the key practitioners view their own work. While I had a general "interview guide" (Bryman, 2015, 659) I wanted to give the participants flexibility in responding. I designed my interview guide based on the key takeaways from observing the workshops. I began with more general questions to get a better understanding of their role and history with the organisation. These general questions included: How long have you been involved with Beyond Equality? What was your motivation to get involved and to become a facilitator? How do you see your role as a facilitator? What do you see as the aim of Beyond Equality/the goal of the workshops? I then asked more specific questions about what I observed in the workshops.

One consideration during the interviews was to be careful I did not ask 'leading questions'. This was especially important because I have done a considerable amount of research into masculinity and I therefore did not want to make any inferences about masculinities present or how they see their work. I was already in contact with gatekeepers of the GBV prevention organisations prior to the research I was able to use snowball sampling to engage with participants. This means that the gatekeepers helped introduce me to new participants, who introduced me further and so forth.

Ethical Considerations

There are certain ethical and practical considerations to take into account in this project. Due to the nature of their work, the participants may be dealing with difficult issues or have confidentiality needs about what they can discuss. This confidentiality was extended to the individuals themselves to avoid repercussions, as they were talking about their own workplace and other aspects of their lives. Informed consent was received from all

participants in the interviews as well as those involved in any of the events that I participated in. During the study, I made sure that I was consistently aware that all the events operate in safe spaces in which openness of discussion and freedom to express their feelings were central. I did not therefore do anything to compromise these spaces. In order to stop any potential discomfort or ethical issues, I got informed consent from each participant before I begin taking any notes in any of the online spaces that I joined. This involved informing everyone in the online 'room' of my work, what my notes were going to be used for and that I will automatically anonymise all of the participants in any writing. I asked if they minded that I would be taking notes. This was sometimes assisted by an initial email or discussion from my contacts, the gatekeepers, with their colleagues. I made sure that I obtained consent each time that I was in a different online space.

As GBV prevention workshops often involves difficult issues and topics, I made myself aware of the effect that my research might have on participants. In the interviews or workshops for example, personal stories might be brought up that have had a deep impact on their lives. As I was not expecting to be interacting in my observations (I was taking a passive role) I tried to be aware that my role should not overstep and if I was asked to step out then I would do so. Consent was rescinded only once during one of the workshops and never during the interviews. Notes relating to the words or actions of that particular participant were immediately deleted and I made sure not to reflect on them. Only once was I contacted by someone that I interviewed, who felt that he wanted to add some comments to his previous views. The additional comments were reflected properly in the following results. During the interviews with key practitioners I was cautious of the language that I used to avoid triggering unwanted psychological distress. Each screenshot or document collected was done so with the permission of the leader of each workshop. These are primarily the products of activities undertaken in the workshops and contain no identifying or personal data.

Data analysis

I took field notes throughout my observations of events and meetings. I took a record of informed consent where this was given. I took as detailed notes as possible to give a full view of the events that were taking place. After each session I made notes of what I saw as the most important or interesting interactions, quotes or actions while it was still fresh in my mind. I code these notes by looking at the common elements and ideas of masculinity that were present in all of the interactions and discussions.

The main method of data analysis was thematic analysis. Using thematic analysis helped me understand and demonstrate in what ways and why different forms of masculinity and hegemonic masculinities were present. In order to transcribe these interviews I be used Otter.AI. I coded based on the themes of masculinity that I found to be present within the transcribed interviews. The central idea of thematic analysis is "to construct an index of central themes and subthemes" (Bryman, 2015). I looked for repetitions within my notes and interview transcripts to help me identify these themes. This approach gave me a flexibility which was necessary because I did not go into my research with already identified categories of masculinity. Additionally to identifying key themes I used my experiences of deep analysis within this field in my results and analysis sections. This deep immersion in the field is either referenced directly or by my own observation of the themes within my own experiences. I also triangulated this data with some of the documents obtained from the workshops.

4. Results and discussion of analysis

The thematic analysis used in this research revealed three central themes within the data. These themes are deconstructing masculinity, remaking positive masculinity and the pervasiveness of the structural power of hegemonic masculinity. The following section is

both a representation of the most important findings from my research as well as a discussion with respect to its salience within contemporary and past research.

Deconstructing masculinity

What does masculinity mean to you?

A clear theme present throughout the workshops and the interviews was that of deconstructing masculinity. Most men that I observed in the workshops went through their own journey of masculine exploration in some form.

One of the big questions asked of these groups is the effectiveness, or what do they actually do? A lot of the current literature focuses on this. These questions of effectiveness are less pertinent to my own research, but they are still important because the workshops are often very short and participants usually attend only one workshop. The facilitators clearly want deconstruct masculinity to produce an effect in these men. To some extent they succeed in this goal, each participant goes on a different journey of identity through the workshop. I asked about this journey in the interviews. Firstly, I asked about each facilitator's own relationship with masculinity, what it means to them and if it forms a part of their identity. In order to properly remake a positive masculinity with the men and boys that they work with in each workshop, most of the interviewees by default began explaining their own, positive sense of masculinity. One participant interviewed recounted how he has never been able to identify with other men as a young boy, revealing "I find men difficult, so I never much bothered with them". I see a parallel here in my own personal journey through masculinity. During my training I consistently related each activity to my own experience of masculinity growing up. It is a common thread, including in myself, that facilitators felt themselves coming into conflict with masculinity when they were younger.

One of the facilitator training workshops, a full day exercise, began with one of the facilitators leading the session opening up about his own journey with masculinity and his

identities. This facilitator had clearly described it many times before and told a narrative of his journey growing up with only sisters and a strong mother, changing between multiple universities before finally settling on his current work. In this narrative he also described how mental health issues and race played a part in how he constructed his masculine identity as a young man. This opening up of his personal story created a space in which the participants also began to open up. It should be said firstly that this journey is asymmetrical. In this sense it would be wrong to say that each participant is transformed or they go through drastic changes. I still posit, however that there is value in drawing attention to the viewable change some of these men have.

At this beginning stage even some of the participants, who were clearly used to talking about these issues, told similar narratives about growing up and how they would connect it to masculinity. Interestingly however, some of the participants who were more shy in the beginning opened up later. In a breakout room activity in which the participants had to write down different links that they see between masculinity and health. One discussion they had was about the idea that men should "make it on their own" and that often men will "self-medicate" when they are feeling strong negative emotions. The discussion finally opened up to talking about how they felt that men will often eventually only open up when they reach a "crisis point". At this point in multiple workshops one or more of the participants opened up about their experiences with male friends committing suicide. This became a prominent part of each workshop and shows these examples of discussions between participants show how the participants, without realising it were deconstructing toxic masculinity by what it meant to 'do gender' or perform masculinity. In describing their experiences with masculinity when they were growing up, they were actually describing what Connell (1987) terms 'moments of engagement' or the moment when an individual initiates a project of masculinity or femininity as his or her own.

For some of these men, it is less about their personal connection to masculinity and more a moment of realisation of their gender and the effect of their gender. One participant, who seemed closed off at the beginning of this workshop, reflected on his own actions during one discussion. Speaking of these actions, he said “I think it was an ego thing more than anything else”. Other men found themselves thinking about what consent means in the context of their masculinity and what it meant to be a man in intimate situations. Thinking through his first introduction to consent, he questioned whether “should there be a step before asking consent where you ask if you consent yourself?”. These examples show that for a small group of the men in each workshop there is a deconstructing process of individual masculine identity.

These observed examples show the relationship between masculinities and hegemonic masculinities. This is a relationship that is characterised by power. As previously discussed, hegemonic masculinity relies on the power that some genders or expressions of gender hold over others. Performing masculinity and the decision taken on certain categories of masculinity is surely influenced by the categories that are seen to have more power. This is seen across multiple workshops, during the activity in which participants relate masculinity to health, relationships, sex/sexuality and work and education. Characteristics such as men not crying/having strength, being emotionally unavailable, being able to make the ‘tough decisions’ and doing the technical/STEM work were all mentioned. These characteristics are all also direct opposites of stereotyped assumptions of femininity. In this way the workshops demonstrate what Messerschmidt calls the symbolic pairing between masculinity and “a complementary and inferior quality attached to femininity” (Messerschmidt, 2018, p.122). For example, a common thread of discussion throughout many of the workshops is safe activities for men that are unsafe for women. These activities ranged from interacting with people flirting with them to being able to go for a run without worrying about their safety.

Similarly, participants also discussed the stereotype of the excessive sexuality of men – that they are expected to always want sex. This is in direct opposition with the typical idea of femininity that criticizes women's sexuality.

Internalised feelings of guilt

Do you recognise guilt in your own journey through masculinity?

Guilt was discussed a lot in each workshop. Generally, participants would talk about their internalised feelings of guilt about their actions (or inactions), the struggles that women (and other groups) face from men (and the wider patriarchy) and the guilt of not knowing what to do. All of these feelings can be situated within past literature. Studies on men's motivations of involvement in GBV prevention work often talk about women's testimonies of their experiences being a big motivator (Casey, & Smith, 2010; Casey et al., 2017). It seems therefore that a lot of the men joining in these workshops are doing so because they have heard about the experiences of women in their lives and want to do something about it.

The feeling of powerlessness was also present in some of the workshops that worked with men who weren't necessarily there by choice. They were engaging, but they were asked to be there as part of their sports group or study association. Even these men talked about not knowing how to help and how to have these conversations. Multiple participants of one workshop, all leaders of university sports groups, talked about their experiences trying to 'call out' their parents for problematic language. It seemed many of them were generally dismissed or they lacked the proper language to explain why some behaviours they observed is wrong. Interestingly, only one participant recognised the problem of 'just letting things slide'. This participant is gay himself, so it is interesting that he was the only one to bring it up. In this space there is a conflict of intersecting masculinity where some men come from the position of privilege or being able to be blind to the effects of problematic behaviour.

This exemplifies a common idea of conflicting identities as non-heterosexual men adopt flexible gender roles (Parent & Bradstreet, 2017). This particular participant is therefore confronted with a common practice of hegemonic masculinity – that of being unaware of male privilege. Contemporary literature sees this as well as "non-heterosexual men are typically hypothesized as having lower endorsement of traditional masculinity ideology" (Parent & Bradstreet, 2017). That many of these men, from a variety of geographical and cultural backgrounds demonstrated a similar 'blindness' to problematic behaviour is an example of the multiplicity of hegemonic masculinities (Messerschmidt, 2018). That is, in each setting and context there was a dominant masculinity that put pressure on the participants not to stand out from the norm. In the practice or expression of gender there was an imbalance of power that was irrespective of the class, race, sexuality etc. of the people involved.

Remaking positive masculinity

Suspension of judgement

What does the creation of a safe space at the beginning of each workshop do for the participants?

An important part of initial discussions and throughout seems to be setting up the workshop as a safe space for the participants. The purpose of this seems to be twofold. Firstly it is to acknowledge that everyone has the right to feel safe in that space without fear of being attacked or persecuted. This is important because it sets the tone for the rest of the event that it is a space in which everyone can share and feel comfortable. The second purpose is a little more interesting. The leaders (this happens across each workshop, irrespective of the facilitator) talks about a suspension of judgement. This means that they should all feel free to speak about not only their traumatic or negative experiences but also gives participants the freedom to be wrong. This seems to be really important for their work, because they're

working with men from different backgrounds and levels of involvement or knowledge of the issues that get discussed in the workshops. Not every participant is necessarily joining of their own volition, so the facilitators need to make sure that the point of the workshop is not to criticise everything that is wrong with how the participants live and what they say. In this way, it keeps the participants from being too defensive and closing themselves off to open conversations.

The suspension of judgement and creating a safe space in each workshop shows the power of masculinity to encourage conformity towards the norm. The workshop facilitators must actively and consistently hold a space that allows for difference and deviance. This dynamic is critical to the role of the workshops in deconstructing masculinity. The workshop examples also show the flexibility of gender and that masculinity is always in the making. It is important that they have workshops with only men then because they need to challenge hierarchical masculinity in a space in which it plays out heavily – a group of men.

Does masculinity intersect with other parts of peoples identities in these workshops? If so, in what ways have you seen it happen?

It's interesting that there is a wide spread of age between the men. In the university workshops the participants were generally only young men; in the facilitator workshops however, and other public events or workshops it was a lot more varied. It was interesting to see how different ages engaged differently. The young men were a lot more confident using contemporary 'woke' vocab and having progressive discussions around such things as gender nonconformity. The older men clearly didn't have this same vocabulary, but in some ways that didn't actually matter. For example, they were all engaging in the work and discussions around negative qualities of masculinity. Toxic masculinity is never formally defined in the workshops and discussions don't always term it as that. From my own observation of how the

organisation frames itself and how facilitators introduce workshops it seems that the reason for this is both to encourage more men to join in the conversations as well as frame the workshops as reconstructing positive qualities of masculinity. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) reformulated hegemonic masculinity in an attempt to allow for spatial differences in masculinity at the local, regional and global level. The findings from these workshops and interviews show that this model must also allow for the temporal level. Masculinity must be seen also as a product of not only its time but also the age and generation relationship of men. In fact, new research is shining light on this area of masculinity studies. One study demonstrates a new conceptualisation on white working class masculinity in the North East of England by focussing on a group of young sixth form boys. Their results showed that there has been a steady declined in socialised homophobia among this demographic and that fewer boys are ascribing to a more "orthodox archetype of masculinity" (Blanchard et al., 2017). The fact that this research therefore challenges accepted narratives of working-class masculinity suggests that not age clearly influences relationship with dominant masculinity.

Pervasiveness of the structural power of hegemonic masculinity

Workshop limitations

Do these workshops help the men involved to understand allyship better?

I think it's important to talk a bit about the nature of these workshops and how they have their downfalls or problematic sides. Many of the workshops seem to be two hour events, allowing for only a small number of activities and some discussions. As an outsider, it seems difficult to see how this produces a change in the men, or what effect it might have on making them allies or better at bystander intervention. A counter to this might be that it is not necessarily the point that these workshops create groups of activists each time. For this

organisation, it seems the point is to open the conversation up so that these men can get an introduction to these topics.

A second issue with one of the workshops was one on allyship within the LGBTQ+ community. In this group there were some queer people but most were cis men. It was quite a surface level workshop, giving visibility to intersectionality and showing some statistics about living in the LGBTQ+ community in the UK. A point was made that it isn't enough but this kind of workshop needs to focus on being actively anti-homophobic. As a participant puts it "it's all well and good calling Noel Clarke a prick but what are you going to do about it". This workshop calls into question how much they can actually deconstruct masculinity in such surface level workshops. If these participants aren't uncomfortable and learning about male violence and that allyship is not a label or something that you can give yourself. In this case then, the facilitators and the workshop more widely is perpetuating dominating masculinities. This example demonstrates the conflict in the wider discussion of being a 'good ally' that there is a potential contradiction of the 'no judgement approach' and being an effective ally. Many activists would argue that to be an effective ally you have to be willing to have uncomfortable conversations where you call out problematic behaviour (including language) and you educate your peers rather than relying on marginalised communities to do it for you. The no judgement approach relies instead on allowing space for a diverse conversation, hoping to encourage everyone into the room to be more likely to engage honestly.

Conflicting identity in workshops

Almost every facilitator had an example of conflict within the workshops. This does not mean that participants were close to fighting or arguing but often the facilitators saw a more nuanced understanding of conflict. This might be the power relationship between more senior

members of a sports team with newer members or the effects of events or conversations between boys outside of the workshop that are resurfacing. This conflict refers to a reformulation hegemonic masculinity suggested by Messerschmidt (2018) that explores the "embodiment of hegemony". The new formulation that he promotes is that hegemonic masculinity should be seen in the intersecting identities of the body. This is especially important in groups of men. The gender order and the practice of gender hegemony takes within it the specific racial, class, age or ability, sexuality and religious domination context. It was therefore important to consider these intersecting identities when exploring the interactions of the workshops. When asking *what do you think the goal(s) of your workshops are* the most common answer was (often admittedly simplified) to start a conversation. There is convincing evidence to support the importance of communication and conversation within education (Sharples, 2005). The workshop leaders however did not always seem to recognise how their own positionality and identities affects both how they interact with other men and boys and how it affects the practice of masculinity they discuss. Almost every single facilitator that I interviewed was white or white passing. It is important to reiterate here that this may have been influence by the time limited nature of my research, the limits of snowball sampling and my own positionality of a white, British man. A large number of the interview participants however did not themselves recognise that their positionality as white or white passing may affect their interactions with participants. Reflecting back on the recent work of Messerschmidt (2018) this is evidential of a process of hegemony in which "the circuits of social embodiment constantly involve the institutions on which their privileges rest". In a practical sense, this does not necessarily matter to the effectiveness of these workshops. Across the board they are helping boys and men to deconstruct, rethink and remake masculinity. It is however a demonstration of the power relations of masculinities that is reflected in contemporary research looking at the dominance of white masculinity.

For example, white masculinity takes on different forms when contrasted with other identities such as class. Masculinities are embodied very differently in different spatial and class identities (Nayak, 2003). This relationship was identifiable in some of the activities in the workshops. It seemed that at times it was difficult for facilitators to use the same discussions and conversations when talking about masculinity with groups from different backgrounds. For example, one common activity was asking 'privilege statements' in which participants were asked to show how much they agree or disagree with such statements as "I have called out a friend for an offensive joke even though no one in the room is visible offended by it", "I have been upset with a joke that someone has said in a group but didn't say anything about it" and "I called something gay when I actually meant something bad". The importance of this activity was immediately obvious whilst observing. I could genuinely see how the statements prompted an internal conversation as each participant considered how to respond. This observation was then backed up by the subsequent discussions. The statements prompted conversations such as who has the right to call out problematic or who has the obligation to do so. At the same time however, I also question the design of this activity. By using the same statements for each group it begs the question of who created these statements and their specific background of intersecting identities. As mentioned, my own positionality and scope of research means I am not exploring the *effectiveness* of this work but I would argue that such activities can still demonstrate the practical dominance of hegemonic masculinity.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to understand the contemporary relationships of masculinities and the implications of multiple, reciprocal power networks embodied through masculinity. The MM workshops, facilitators as well as my own journey of my understanding

of masculinity provide a frame through which hegemonic masculinity as a practice can be explored. Butler (1990, p.27) believes that the only effective resistance against the patriarchy is radical gender nonconformity such as drag. My results suggests that in reality it is more nuanced than this because the facilitators themselves are examples of the transformative nature of the journey to reconstruct masculinity. The results also demonstrate one of the central tenants of Butler's (1990) work that proposes the performativity of gender. These two related academic conversations exemplify my first main finding. The deconstruction of masculinity can only take place through meaningful understanding of the performative and malleable nature of masculinity. That is to say, deconstructing masculinity is an ongoing process of realising and being made aware of the impact of one's dominant practices.

The second main finding of this research is demonstrating the relationship between 'toxic masculinity' and 'positive masculinity'. One of the main implications of this finding is the possibility to remake masculinity into a more positive force. This is reflected in the shift of both the goals and branding of MM. The organisation initially focused on engaging men in conversations about sexual assault and GBV. Over time it has transitioned to have wider, more transformative goals looking to deconstruct and remake masculinity. Toxic masculinity is therefore not often mentioned by facilitators. I would however, argue that it is central to their work. It is only by identifying the negative hegemonic practices of masculinity that participants can consider what that means for their own masculine identity.

These findings show that hegemonic masculinity is a useful tool through which to understand contemporary discussions and practices of masculinity among men in the UK. Hegemonic masculinity, in its most recent iteration from Connell (2016) is useful because it shows the reciprocal power relations between masculinity and femininity. These power relations were clear in each of the workshops through the obvious stereotypes as well as nuanced interactions. Connell (2016) admittedly also shows that hegemonic masculinity

needs to be updated within our globalised world. Attempts at deconstructing masculinity must be seen within a context of trying to be aware of positionality as possible and move away from a Eurocentric conception of hegemonic masculinity.

These findings also demonstrate limitations of hegemonic masculinity. This reformulation of hegemonic masculinity must include the positionality of identity and the greater visibility of dissenting masculinities. One's positionality and identities will always conflict with attempts at deconstructing masculinity. Emphasis should therefore be placed along the lines of contemporary queer theory that sees gender and masculinity as much more flexible. A new hegemonic masculinity must therefore incorporate the fluidity and changeability of hegemonic masculinities within a complex web of intersecting masculinities and identities.

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