



Graduate School of Development Studies

**Friend or Foe:
The Male Change Agent and Construction of Masculinities in
the Fight against Domestic Violence in Kenya**

A Research Paper presented by:

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(Kenya)

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for obtaining the degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Specialisation:

**Women, Gender and Development
(WGD)**

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The Hague, The Netherlands

November, 2008

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Dedication

This paper is especially dedicated to my one and only sister, Nana:

Happy Birthday SIS!!! I am submitting this paper on your special day as my gift to you...wishing you many more to come!

To the other loves of my life –

To dad:

Words are not sufficient but I hope this displays my eternal gratitude for your love and all round support without which I would not have made it to ISS.

To mom:

For your love and prayers in good and bad days

To Os:

For your words of encouragement

To my nephew and godson, J:

May your 'joie de vivre' never fade and may you grow up to be just as your name, 'Muthomi' declares, 'the one who reads!'

Acknowledgements

I would also like to thank the following key people who made this research possible.

To the men and women in MEGEN who graciously gave their time to speak to me about their experiences. Thanks to Ephraim, Hezron, Kamunyu, Ibrahim, Ruth, Lucy, Thuku, Ngugi, George, Benta, Samson, Bramwel, Julie, Patrick, Jane, Peter, Matere, Pastor Kimani and Patrick. Special thanks goes to Kennedy Otina, Coordinator MEGEN, for facilitating my interviews and providing me with information on MEGEN.

To my supervisor, Dubravka, this paper has come a LONG way but in each step you patiently guided me and encouraged me.

To my second reader, Nahda, who is constantly pushing me to achieve my potential.

To my discussants, Kaira and Rachael, you supported me through trying times with words of encouragement.

To ALL the angels at ISS who made Den Haag more like home.

To my extended family in Europe who provided me with a safe haven when I needed family support. Special thanks to Uncle Harry, Aunty Clara, Uncle Kiogora and Joanina. Thanks also to all my family for prayers, calls and support.

To my friends back home, friendship across continents can be strained but your support made each day worth it. Thanks to Eva, Kobi, Mann and Tabs.

This paper would not have been possible without you!

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List of Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
DVAM	Domestic Violence against Men
FEMNET	African Women’s Development and Communications Network
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GVRC	Gender Violence Recovery Centre
HIV	Human immune-deficiency virus
ISS	Institute of Social Studies
KDHS	Kenya Demographic and Health Survey
MEGEN	Men for Gender Equality Now
Q&A	Question and Answer
RRT	Rapid Response Team
UN	United Nations
USD	United States Dollars
VAW	Violence against Women
WIDE	Women in Development Europe

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Annex 4	Poster samples in English and Kiswahili

Abstract

Men as a gendered category have rarely been considered in development programmes or studies. Through the experiences of MEGEN members, this paper brings into visibility men as gendered subjects. The paper begins by deconstructing the usual binary of male perpetrator, female victim by looking at domestic violence from the perspective of plural masculinities. Through discourses, it highlights the construction of gender norms and consequently the construction of gender hierarchies. Through violence as social practice, the paper delves into engagements of MEGEN members either as witnesses, victims or perpetrators of violence. Moreover, it delineates the transitions of these identities from childhood to present day activism against violence. A running theme in the paper is that the dominant violent masculinity is created and reinforced through institutional and discursive practices of the family, marriage and kinship to subordinate alternative masculinities. However, it also argues for possibilities of alternative voices to be heard through interventions that engage the non-violent, peaceful man. The paper concludes with the assertion that the 'male change agent' is a friend and not a foe and efforts to curb domestic violence should indeed involve him.

Relevance to Development Studies

Gender and development studies have since inception been seen by some as 'women's studies' in design. This means a 'for women, by women' approach was taken to issues that should otherwise be tackled from a relational point of view. By introducing men and masculinities, this paper challenges the women-only approach and explores the construction of masculinities in the fight against domestic violence. Thus, my contribution to development literature is in bringing together studies of changing and multiple masculinities with studies of domestic violence.

Key terms

Gender, Masculinities, Domestic Violence, Violence against Women, Gender Based Violence, MEGEN, Change agent

Preface

I recently attended the annual WIDE conference at The Peace Palace, The Hague. During one Q&A session, I engaged with the speaker, a renowned African feminist on whether she thought the fight against gender inequality could be facilitated by male involvement. Her response: ‘There is no such thing as a male feminist!’ Of course, this sparked heated debates amongst fellow participants with sides drawn in defence of or against the ‘male feminist’. Granted the term ‘feminist’, has been fraught with complications since its conception. However, given the context of that particular session and for the purposes of this research paper, a feminist is an individual (usually woman) concerned with advocating for gender equality while a male feminist is a male change agent working to fight gender inequalities. It is my assertion as will be demonstrated by this paper that the fight against gender inequalities needs to be a concerted effort and not based on ‘women only’ interventions. I could not put it any better than Karkara et al: ‘We need to stop thinking in terms of a struggle of men and boys against women and girls or vice versa and start thinking in terms of a struggle of all men, women and children against inequality and oppression’ (In Esplen 2006: 15). Thus, we do indeed have and need male feminists/change agents among us.

This paper serves as a dedication to all those men who have withstood great odds to help fight against gender inequality.

CHAPTER ONE: OPENING ACT

Domestic violence¹ [used interchangeably with family violence] was neither recognized nor reported in literature in the 1960s. In fact, it was considered a sign of mental illness or relegated to the confines of poor households (Gelles 1980: xix). In the 1970s, it became recognized as an extensive phenomenon which could not be explained solely as a consequence of psychological factors. However, the focus then was on child abuse rather than inter-spousal or elderly abuse which also occurs within the family (Gelles 1980: xix). The rise of the women's movement and support from UN organizations brought issues of Domestic Violence to the fore with international covenants such as CEDAW adopted in 1981 and the Beijing Platform of Action in 1995.

Since then, a number of definitions have been used to capture violence within the home. These vary according to different perspectives with the most prominent being Violence against Women. CEDAW gives a broad definition of VAW as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life'(Pickup et al. 2001).

Feminist scholarship has defined Violence against Women as one of the six structures of patriarchy which control women and consolidate men's political, economic and social domination. The others are the: Household, State, Employment, Sexuality and Culture (Walby in Pickup et al. 2001). VAW is the ultimate weapon available to men wishing to assert their masculinity or to ensure continuing control over resources and decision making at all levels of society. There are different reactions to VAW which are significant in understanding gender relations. These are: a) Resisting Hegemonic Masculinity – where some men challenge the 'real man'² notions of abuser; and b) bargaining with Patriarchy- where some women, usually mothers-in-law, commit acts of violence against other women they consider as a threat to their influence. Thus, one can conclude that VAW is a strategy that men and sometimes women use to assert power and retain control over women in male-dominated social, political and economic contexts (Pickup et al. 2001).

While looking at men resisting violence against women and their experiences working with abused men, I start from the assumption that domestic violence (both against men and women) is an issue of power and control. Moreover, I presume that in different families, communities and societies, women and men have different possibilities to exercise power through violence, or to resist it. This means that my research will challenge the

¹Domestic violence and emotional abuse are behaviours used by one person in a relationship to control the other. Partners may be married or not married; heterosexual...' (Adapted from <http://www.domesticviolence.org/define.html>)

² One who is able to exact respect and command obedience from others while he resists submitting to other's control (Petecet 2000)

usual equation of femininity with victimhood and masculinity with aggression, even when fully aware that gendered power relations overwhelmingly place women at the receiving end of violence.

1.1 Contextual Background

In the Kenyan Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Bill, Domestic violence in relation to individuals is defined as ‘violence against that person by any other person with whom that person is, or has been, in a domestic relationship’ (Bill 2007). This tongue twister of words simply implies that domestic violence is violence committed to a person by another person with whom the former is in a domestic relationship. One then may ask, what is a domestic relationship?

The Bill explains that ‘a person is deemed to be in a domestic relationship with another person if the person is a) a spouse b) a family member c) ordinarily shares a household with the other person or d) has a close personal relationship with the other person’ (Bill 2007). In this definition, domestic violence is not limited to marital unions but could include individuals who share a household or are in a close personal relationship. Different forms of abuse are thereafter singled out as leading to domestic violence. These include: physical abuse; sexual abuse; emotional, verbal and psychological abuse; intimidation; harassment; economic abuse; stalking; forcible entry and abuse derived from customary practice.

Kenyan National Policy on Gender and Development is another official document that discusses domestic violence. It recognizes ‘the need to adopt equity as a goal and its achievement through the removal of any existing disparities between men and women’ (Gender Policy 2000). A specific objective of this Policy is to ‘ensure protection of men and women against all forms of violence’ (Gender Policy 2000). However, violence is discussed as VAW as suggestions include training law enforcement agents to assist *women victims of crime and women victims of violence*. Additionally, creation of safe shelters is suggested for *women who are victims of violence* (Gender Policy 2000). Although commendable that the Policy discusses issues of VAW, its perspective silences aspects of violence perpetrated on men.

In the first ever Kenya national survey to be conducted on Domestic Violence, in 2003 reported in 2004, it was reported that 44% of married, divorced or separated women aged 15-49 had ever been physically or sexually violated by their husbands or partners (Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS)[Kenya] 2004: 243). ‘Results show that only 3 percent of married, divorced, or separated women report initiating violence against their husbands (data not shown). Of the women who have experienced violence from their husband, 5 percent report initiating violence; of the women who have not experienced violence from their husband, less than 1 percent report initiating violence’ (Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS)[Kenya] 2004:248). Given that no data was collected from men, the invisibility might have lead one to deduce that male abuse is an unknown phenomenon in Kenya. Additionally, the exclusion of men did not cater for other forms of violence against men such as intergenerational violence that occurs within families.

To remedy this, the Gender Violence Monitoring Unit under the Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC)³ began compiling experiences and trends of GBV as presented by women, children and men. Although not as inclusive and nationwide as the Kenya Demographic and Health Survey (KDHS), these statistics have been employed in this research as they are the most recent. Between April 2006 and March 2007, a total of 266 adult survivors of domestic violence received treatment with 244 (92%) being female and 22 (8%) being male. The minimal numbers of men can be attributed to two factors. First, it can be assumed that men are less often abused. Secondly, societal norms of masculinity define a man as strong and fearless, incapable of being abused and thus make it difficult for men to report that they were abused.

The Centre further disaggregated data according to residential areas. The findings reported that out of the 299 survivors (which also includes 33 children), 157 (53%) came from slum areas in Nairobi. 83 (28%) of the survivors came from middle class and up market areas while 59 (19%) came from locations outside Nairobi. The figures demonstrate a link between class and acts of violence. Some authors have argued that lower-class men often lack power and authority in their work environments thus construct rigid, aggressive models of masculinity in the home (Gondolf, 1985; Messerschmidt, 1993 in Anderson 1997). However, I find it also plausible that individuals from slum areas had higher incidences of reporting as they could access these services for free as compared to the middle class and upper class who can afford to pay for treatment anywhere else.

The education level of survivors was also recorded with 28 (9%) having college/university level education, 97 (32%) of them having secondary school education, 137 (46%) having attained primary level of education and 37 (13%) of the survivors with nursery or no form of formal education. This could also be analysed in two ways. The first being that the more literate do not engage in domestic violence and if at all they do, it is not reported. One can also link this to the more literate as having less links to ethnic discourses that advance violence. This will further be discussed in subsequent chapters (Statistics adapted from G.V.R.C 2007).

There are few civil society organizations in Kenya that engage with men either as victims of domestic violence, or as agents of change. One of the few that does is, 'The African Women's Development and Communication Network' (FEMNET).

In their Strategic Plan and Programme 2003-2005, FEMNET laid down the principle that gender is about the power relations between females and males and that therefore any changes must involve both (Wainaina 2003:4). The global Campaign on Sixteen Days of Activism against Violence on Women, November 25-December 10, in 2001 was the entry point FEMNET used to undertake its first activity with men. Thereafter, the Men to Men Consultation on Gender Based Violence was held in Nairobi in December

³ The GVRC started in 2001 and is a non-profit, non-partisan charitable trust of the Nairobi Women's Hospital.

2001 which marked the beginning of the Men to Men project, now under the name, Men for Gender Equality Now Network (MEGEN) (FEMNET Strategic Plan and Programme 2003-2005).

1.2 Research Problem, Objectives and Questions

Over the years, the term Domestic Violence [as conflict that occurs within the confines of the home] has been defined in a myriad of ways, at times shifting to involve/include other terms. Brinkerhoff and Lupri correctly write that, '[d]omestic violence is an ambiguous concept, difficult to operationalize for research' (1988: 410). This ambiguity has resulted in terms such as: wife battering, family violence, marital violence and spousal/inter-spousal violence. It is important to note that domestic violence is not only between spouses or partners. It also involves an intergenerational aspect of violence from parents/in-laws to children and the elderly. However, most often this term [domestic violence] refers to the male perpetrator and the female victim.

Sana Loue states, 'How we define a problem may determine how one conceives of its resolution' (2001:1). As mentioned above, most definitions of domestic violence do not take into account instances of men as victims and men as change agents. Additionally, these definitions do not consider the constructions of masculinities and femininities in place that allow domestic violence to occur. For these reasons, I will be employing the term, DVAM while referring to Domestic Violence against Men. It is my assertion that issues of DVAM also need to be addressed so as to avoid essentializing men as perpetrators while also addressing the relationships of power and control within families that allow domestic violence against both men and women to occur. David Hughes rightfully states that, '[d]omestic violence is not a sex issue, it is a social issue, and until both sides of the problem are acknowledged and addressed by those who claim to be concerned about the matter, no cure will be found.'⁴

Therefore, this exploratory research is concerned with examining the theory and practice of domestic violence from a perspective of plural⁵ masculinities. More specifically, this research will challenge the binary opposition of the male perpetrator and female victim by looking into the dynamic nature, and plurality of masculinities in relation to violence. This will be done in a threefold analysis. To begin with, I analyze how discourses construct norms of masculinity and femininity and which of these norms are dominant. Secondly, I analyze social practise in which actors engage with violence in different ways to produce multiple masculinities. Lastly, I look at

⁴ <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/verismo/dv.againstmen.html>

⁵ Used interchangeably in this paper with 'multiple' masculinities. R. Morell, 1998 posits that gender identities of men are socially constructed, changeable and often contradictory thus the existence multiple of plural masculinities.

how the men who ‘betray archaic patriarchy’⁶ view themselves and their role in the fight against violence. Understanding different forms of masculinities is important as they inform our understanding of domestic violence not only as subjected to the binary of male perpetrator, female victim. Moreover, they highlight gender hierarchies that display the right of men to use violence against women, as well as the constructions of manhood that lead to victimization of men and to men’s activism against violence.

Thus, I am not equalizing domestic violence against women and men, nor assuming any kind of reciprocity. Rather, I see this research as a study for better ways of understanding domestic violence.

1.2.1 Research Objectives

By focusing on men as both agents of change and victims of domestic violence, this research seeks to challenge binary thinking about the male perpetrator and female victim and bring theorizing on masculinities to bear on theorizing on domestic violence.

In addition, by analyzing men working as change agents, this research seeks to broaden our understanding of the interventions [practice] against domestic violence that capitalize on alternatives to the hegemonic masculinity of abuser, typical of a patriarchal society. As highlighted by Elizabeth Brezovich this is important as, ‘while most masculinity researchers come from a feminist perspective, masculinities research has yet to lead to concrete strategies or substantial success in transforming masculinities or involving men in preventing GBV’ (2005: 2).

1.2.2 Research Questions

The central question in this research is:

What do the experiences of male change agents tell us about the construction of masculinities in the fight against domestic violence?

As suggested by Lindsay and Miescher and highlighted earlier, construction of masculinities will be studied within the three key fields of discourse, practice and subjective identities. Thus the main question is divided into three questions to guide analysis. These are;

1. What are the discourses that promote specific notions of (violent and non-violent) masculinity? What are the institutional and other contexts in which specific masculinities are promoted? How do these discourses normalize gender hierarchies?

⁶ Derived from an interview accessed from www.changemakers.com of Kennedy Otina, Project Coordinator of the Men for Gender Equality Now (MEGEN) and will be engaged with in later sections.

2. How have the men (and women) working in MEGEN encountered, experienced and engaged with violence as social practice?
3. How do MEGEN members understand their own gendered identities? And how important are age/generation, ethnicity and class in delineating these identities?

1.3 Research Process and Methodology

1.3.1 Ethical and Political Choices and Personal Involvements

The sensitivity of this topic required ethical data collection to ensure that psychological trauma was not inflicted on the interviewees who have at one point or the other in their lives experienced some violence. When I mention this topic I get several reactions. The first is laughter as the topic is considered a ‘joke’ to some. Domestic violence is still considered to be about women, both as victims and as activists. The second reaction is a nod of the head followed by silence. I have interpreted this as someone deep in thought. The notion of men fighting domestic violence is considered a novel idea and an area that requires further research. Lastly, I have received comments on the interesting nature of the topic with remarks about the anxiety to see the final outcome.

On a more personal note, this research reflects the most basic idea of gender equality which is equality between men and women. As advanced by Cornwall and White, ‘Indeed if gender is about men and women, it seems only logical that any attempt at changing such relationships must incorporate not only men but also a much better understanding of why men behave the way they do, and of the ideals of masculinity that shape their behaviour’ (De Neve 2004). Granted, practical life is not the same as theory and often one’s position is taken in lieu of the other. Many a time, I have been engaged in arguments that the Women, Gender and Development programme at ISS and feminists at large deal with power issues only from the perspective of women. I chose Domestic Violence as it is a relational issue and I believe that the only way to curb it would be to address the factors that sustain violence rather than pitting the ‘sexes’ against each other. Moreover, the topic stirred my interest as I find it constantly engaging and an area under-researched especially in Kenya due to generalizations.

I am not married but as someone who has been emotionally abused in a previous relationship, I know that everyone deserves a voice (Even the ones who might appear strong on the outside). As Cornwall says, ‘there has been limited acknowledgement of the powerlessness experienced by some men – in relation to women as well as to other men’ (In Esplen 2006: 2).

The idea of reconciling the sexes might seem idealistic to some but I think this research will make a contribution in lifting the silence of DVAM in patriarchal societies while also enlighten researchers on concrete strategies used by male change agents to curb violence.

1.3.2 Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

My initial idea was to have a paper solely on DVAM in Kenya, its causes and proposed solutions. I was networking with organizations on the ground that said they worked with male victims. However, after two months of telephone conversations and emails, the organizations said that male victims would not be available for interviews but they were more than willing to connect me to female victims. After a period of disorientation, frustration, reflection and consultation, I decided to take a new approach to the research. This meant then studying masculinities as a whole and not limiting it to the aspect of DVAM/abused men. My research then took an enlightening shift to involve male change agents working against domestic violence. As I had developed rapport with an organization working on the same, I took this as my primary organization and began to learn more about its mission and objectives. This organization was MEGEN. MEGEN was also my first choice as media reports from 2003 would call the organization one that was formed to speak on behalf of battered men. It is also conveniently located in Nairobi and has groups in 15 different constituencies thus providing for variety in thoughts and views as relates to domestic violence.

1.3.3 Brief Introduction to MEGEN Today

‘Men for Gender Equality Now’ (MEGEN) is a Kenyan network of men and women gender activists. It was started in 2003 after a regional men-men consultative meeting organized by the African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET). Since its inception, MEGEN has worked with thousands of men and women, helping them to understand the importance of ending Gender Based Violence and realizing that women and men, girls and boys all stand to benefit from gender equality. In mid 2008, MEGEN was officially registered as an independent organization marking a move of independence from FEMNET. Currently, it prides itself for having over 200 active members in 7 districts and 15 constituencies across Kenya. MEGEN’s goal is, ‘The creation of a critical mass of Kenyan females and males who believe in gender equality and are able to influence communities, organizations, and the public to embrace gender equality’ (Adapted from information sheet by Kennedy Otina).

Some of the milestones of MEGEN include:

- Having established a Rapid Response Team⁷ to assist survivors of GBV.
- The Men’s Travelling Conference organized annually during the 16 days of activism against VAW has managed to reach thousands of men, women and youth in remote areas all over Kenya with mes-

⁷ More information on this is provided in consequent chapters.

sages on the importance of involving both men and women in the fight against violence.

- During the post-election crisis early this year, 2008, MEGEN organized community dialogue forums with both survivors of violence and communities perceived as perpetrators in order to understand the root causes of violence.
- Lobbying at grassroots level for the enactment of the Kenyan Sexual Offences Bill in 2006.

1.3.4 Data Collection

During the month of August, I conducted eighteen interviews with 13 men and 5 women working within the MEGEN network to understand the assumptions and processes that lead to activism against domestic violence particularly from men. The members varied in age with the oldest being 67 yrs and the youngest as 23 yrs. Some members began as volunteers in 2001 while others joined as recently as 2007. [More information using pseudonyms of the interviewees is available in annex 3]. I visited 3 active constituencies in the outskirts of Nairobi: These were, Mathare North, Wangige and Limuru. I also talked to MEGEN officials in Nairobi and members of the Rapid Response Team. My interviews were facilitated by the MEGEN coordinator whom I have constantly been engaging with, as he is in constant communication with these constituencies. As part of my interview, I asked the following questions so as to get an idea about personal and societal notions of masculinity, femininity and violence.

- How, when and why they [MEGEN members] became engaged in the fight against VAW?
- How their family members and friends perceive their engagements?
- How they perceive assumptions about femininity, masculinity and violence in the Kenyan society in general?

As mentioned before, I did not have difficulties reaching my interviewees as there was adequate facilitation. A slight problem however occurred with the timings as I had back to back interviews thus not giving me enough time to transcribe one interview before the next was conducted. On average, the interviews lasted one and a half hours for the Nairobi based members. For the others, they would last 40 min to an hour with the longest in Limuru as I changed tactics. On this particular day, my recorder was not working so I could not carry out one-on-one interviews as planned. However, I took this as an opportunity and decided to have an open group discussion over tea on the topic of the day, domestic violence and masculinities.

For background material, I refer to feminist research and studies on gender relations [specifically on masculinities] and violence in Kenya, as well as in other societies in Africa. To provide a contextual background of domestic violence in Kenya, I looked into state legislation such as the Domestic Violence [Family Protection] Bill and the National Gender and Development

Policy to get an official view of domestic violence. In addition, I referred to statistics provided by the Gender Violence Recovery Centre, a civil society organization that engages with both male and female victims of domestic violence to see different trends in reporting.

1.3.5 The Scope and Limitations of the Research

This research was limited to the capital city, Nairobi and its outskirts. This is because it is where FEMNET and MEGEN are based and where I can access internet facilities easily. The temporal limits of this research are from 2001 to current day. This is when matters on DVAM began to be reported in Kenya and the period that marked the formation of MEGEN.

Limitations

My limitations stemmed from the topic at hand which involved revealing the ‘other’ story as concerns victims and practice of domestic violence. Throughout my research, I faced what I term as resistance from organizations that predominantly work with female victims of domestic violence as they clearly hinted that I should be addressing the pertinent issues of women as opposed to men. Efforts to meet with male victims were met with demands of research fees that amount to 2,300 USD or claims that policy adhered to strict confidentiality rules. In addition to these, other limitations were:

- Sensitivity of the topic [regarded as an issue to be sorted within the household]
- Closely linked to this are issues of age and gender. It was difficult for me [a young unmarried lady] to approach men without facilitation. My research strategy was to go via MEGEN’s facilitator who introduced me prior to and upon arrival.
- Obvious bias in research materials towards statistics that show men as perpetrators and not victims. There is some research that discusses abused men but this is usually placed in North American setting and is outdated. I however managed to get two publications which proved invaluable.
- Inability to study all actors involved in the issue, such as the State, and in particular the Police, and families in which domestic violence occurs. I will thus be using men who act as change agents to provide a perspective on them.

1.4 Organization of the Research Paper

This chapter provides the opening act to my research paper. It opens up the problem of essentializing male perpetrator and female victim, and situates this in the context of my home country, Kenya. In addition, this chapter highlights the research process, emphasizing the methods of data collection and limitations encountered throughout this process. This opening act is provided to introduce my research and the reasons for undertaking it. The

following chapter is an exposition that delves into concepts surrounding power, gender and masculinities in relation to violence. Chapter 3 begins my analysis with a section on discourses while Chapter 4 discusses violence as social practice and subjective identities. Chapter 5 provides a closing act with concluding remarks as I revisit the main question and sub-questions.

CHAPTER 2: EXPOSITION

2.1 The Current State of the Field in the Researched Area

As mentioned earlier, the problem of domestic violence is mostly viewed with binary categories of men as perpetrators and women as victims. This has a danger of essentialism and creation of a gender bias leading to entrenched differences among men and women. Of late, feminist practice has tried to involve men in combating domestic violence through understanding masculinities and ‘what makes men do what they do’ as linked to socialization and patriarchal norms. Some studies, such as Steinmetz (in Gelles, 1988), Straus (1980) and Gelles (1988) have acknowledged that DVAM occurs and should be brought to the limelight. However, these studies are mostly based in the global North.

In the global South, Nnaemaka states that a paradox exists in African feminism that sees men as controlling power but rarely discusses issues solely to do with men and masculinities (In Ouzgane and Morrell 3005: 6). He further states that this neglect ‘misses the opportunity of offering counter-portrayals of African men and the opportunity to grapple with the complexities of gender relations in which widespread violence (mostly on men) needs to be understood in gendered terms’(Ouzgane and Morrell 3005: 6).

Some authors building from Nnaemaka’s suggestion have began ‘offering counter-portrayals of African men’ (Ouzgane and Morrell 3005: 6). Bujra suggests looking at men as gendered social beings and investigating the ways in which they assert their masculinity (Baylies and Bujra 1993) . Notable also is the work by Lindsay and Miescher 2003, and Silberschmidt (1991, 2001).

2.1.1 Probing Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence is a compound term of two nouns; domestic and violence. Both terms are highly contested. The term domestic implies a private and intimate setting where a ‘cluster of activities that have to do with everyday biological reproduction- residing together, preparing and eating food, sleeping, having sex, parenting children, caring for the dependent,’ occurs (O’Laughlin 1999: 4). Sylvia Tamale states that ‘[d]omesticity as an ideology is historically and culturally constructed and is closely linked to patriarchy, gender/power relations and the artificial private/public distinction’ (Tamale 2004). This reference to private issues is reminiscent of the feminist private versus public debate. The private would be defined as, ‘the relations and activities of domestic life, often assumed to embody the intimacy valued for self-development’ (Squires 1999: 26). I will use these aspects of domesticity to illustrate (non)/intervention of family members in cases of violence within the family.

Gelles and Straus defined violence as ‘an act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of physically hurting another person’ (Gelles 1980: 875). This definition focuses only on the physical aspect of violence. Presently, there is a very large and rich corpus of work on violence. An inclusive albeit general definition of violence can be derived from Goode who suggests that ‘violence

is an ultimate resource used to derive power within relationships' (In Anderson 1997: 657). Violence as recounted by my respondents was sustained through resources, such as economic resources, which determine whether or not a spouse remains in an abusive relationship.

The two main social science perspectives on domestic violence are the family violence approaches and feminist approaches. The former believes that all family members carry out and are victims of violence. Thus violence can be committed by both husbands and wives, parents towards children and children towards the elderly (Straus 1980 in Bart and Moran 1993: 254). Family violence is therefore a result of wider social norms that condone violence in the structure of the contemporary family. My respondents used this approach more explicitly. On the other hand, feminist approaches place the male-female relations at the centre of the analysis and view inequality between them as a key factor in violence (Dobash and Dobash 2003). This led to terms such as violence against women been synonymously used with domestic violence.

I chose the term 'domestic violence' as, unlike VAW, it analyses violence against both men and women. Additionally, VAW falls into the danger of essentialism or sustaining the binary of female victim and male perpetrator. As highlighted by Nayak and Suchland, 'the focus on [VAW] potentially ignores violence against men' which ultimately results in a 'lack of attention to the codes of masculinity [that] negatively affect men' (2006: 472). I also employ the term domestic violence, due to spatial limits that work within confines of the private. VAW as defined in CEDAW earlier occurs in public or private life. This then brings us to another term, 'gender based violence' which is commonly referred to by my respondents. From the FEMNET manual which informs the work of MEGEN, GBV is defined as 'all forms of violence that happen to women, girls, men and boys because of the unequal power relations between them and the perpetrators of such violence' (Wainaina et al.).

2.1.2 Power

In my sections on discourses and practice, I engage with the concept of power. As advanced by Foucault and as will be demonstrated by my respondents, power is not only possessed but it is also exercised (Sawicki 1991). Not only is it important to demarcate how power is gained but also how this power is maintained or used to bring about change. To be specific, the importance of economic power was highlighted by my respondents. Blumberg claims that 'economic power is the strongest determinant of gender-based privilege in a society because other forms of power are not as closely associated with privilege' (1984 in Cubbins 1991). Economic power was therefore used to either sustain violence within marriage or as an exit option. For the latter, 'opting out...would depend on the woman's fall-back position defined by her ability to survive economically and socially outside the [family]' (Agarwal 1997).

Through my analysis, power was often advanced through ethnic and religious discourses that were produced, maintained and sometimes challenged within the context of the family or within marriage. This corresponds with Foucault's second notion of power as productive when he 'suggests that certain institutional and cultural practices have produced individuals' and that

these individuals do not merely create their own identities as ‘free beings’ (Sawicki 1991: 22).

2.2 Introducing Masculinities and Gender

MacInnes posits that ‘there is no such thing as ‘gender’ or ‘masculinity’ except as an ideology people use to make sense of some of the contradictions of modernity, in particular those caused by the remnants of a previously patriarchal order in nominally egalitarian societies’ (In Cleaver 2002: 7). The subsequent paragraphs disagree with this statement showing the importance of defining and understanding gender and masculinities particularly in African societies.

In his book, ‘Masculinities’, Connell provides a definition of masculinity as ‘simultaneously a place in gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender relations, and the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality and culture’ (2006: 71). This is a build up from his definition of gender as social practise. Connell also stated that masculinities are not homogenous as no single pattern of masculinity is found in a given place at a given time (Connell 2006). Following Scott’s insistence on specific socio-historical context within which femininities and masculinities are produced, and taking Connell’s notion of multiple masculinities, I find it paramount to place my research in, and to build on research previously conducted on masculinities in Africa and in Kenya. At the same time, I acknowledge that ‘there is no typical man in Sub-Saharan Africa and no single African version of manhood’ exists (Barker and Ricardo 2005). Quite to the contrary, my research shows that some of the stereotypes of African masculinities- such as violence against women- are unsustainable when we look at the men from MEGEN. However, my reliance on literature on masculinities in Africa rests on the assumption that these studies bring as much (or more) relevant insights into my research as the studies on masculinities in the USA or Europe.

While looking at the construction of masculinities in Africa and in Kenya, two publications stand out. Firstly, Lindsay and Miescher’s study, in which they insist that ‘Ideally, the best treatments of masculinity would approach gender through [...] three lenses, and indeed, discourse, practice and subjective identity must be conceptualized as connected’ (2003: 8). Silberschmidt’s study concurs and suggests that one should begin by analyzing the role, positions and obligations of men in a historical perspective including traditional norms and values. Secondly, one should analyze present male roles, positions and obligations. Lastly, an analysis of emergence of new norms and identity should be undertaken (Silberschmidt 1991).

These authors and their models of analysis were useful in my research, as I analyze masculinity and violence in discourses, practices and identities of men from MEGEN. A clear link exists between these three key analytical areas. To begin with, my analysis of discourses focuses on institutional and individual ways of normalizing violence and giving it social, symbolic and subjective meanings. Moreover, I analyze how discourses construct norms of masculinity and femininity thus giving us an idea of the dominant perspectives and a

means to deconstruct this. Secondly, I analyze social practise in which actors engage with violence in different ways to produce multiple masculinities. Lastly, I analyze subjective identities that express how the actors view themselves and their role in the fight against violence. While I trace discourses, practices and identities in the narratives of the men from MEGEN, I do not focus on masculinities only. While looking at gender theory in relation to masculinity, it 'proposes that violence is a resource for constructing masculinity, and thus the use of violence will have different meanings for women and men' (Anderson 1997: 36).

Connell states that 'masculinity is inherently relational and does not exist except in contrast with femininity' (2006: 65). He then goes on to say that hegemonic masculinity is always 'constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women' (Connell 1987: 183). I employ his concept of hegemonic masculinity to analyze institutionalised norms of masculinity and how these relate to personal identities. Norms of femininity are also analyzed following what Connell refers to as 'emphasized femininity' (Connell 2006). This form of femininity is marked by compliance with subordination and oriented towards accommodating men's interests and desires (Connell 2006: 188). The similarity between the two is that their 'construction is very public' although their use is 'specifically linked with the private realm of the home and the bedroom' (Connell 1987: 187). When using the concept of 'emphasized femininity' I do not mean to imply that only this form of femininity exists. Femininities just as masculinities are diverse as femininities can also be defined by complex combinations of compliance, resistance and co-operation (Connell 2006).

It is important to note, as highlighted by Connell that, 'Hegemony does not mean total cultural dominance, the obliteration of alternatives. It means ascendancy achieved...[where] other patterns and groups are subordinated rather than eliminated' (Connell 1987: 184). This perspective can be related to the way Scott reflects on gender. 'In grammar, gender is understood to be a way of classifying phenomena' (Scott 1999: 29). These classifications 'suggest a relationship among categories that makes distinctions or separate groupings possible' (1999: 29). In this statement, Scott implicitly supports the possibility of alternative notions of what it means to be man or to be woman. Terms such as man or woman and masculine or feminine even when they appear fixed, 'still contain within them alternative, denied, or suppressed definitions' (Scott 1999). Natalie Davis, 1975 following from the premise by Scott adds, 'Our goal is to discover the range in sex roles and in sexual symbolism in different societies and periods, to find out what meaning they had and how they functioned to maintain the social order or to promote its change' (In Scott 1999).

Building on from my earlier arguments against binary oppositions, especially as relates to domestic violence, Scott's arguments are particularly relevant. She states:

'We need a refusal of the fixed and permanent quality of the binary opposition... and deconstruction of the terms of sexual difference...If we employ Jacques Derrida's definition of deconstruction, this criticism means analyzing in context the way any binary opposition operates, reversing and displacing its hierarchical

construction, rather than accepting it as real or self-evident in the nature of things' (Scott 1999: 41).

Thus, on the one hand, I analyzed domestic violence through discourses, practices and identities that advance the binary of the male perpetrator and female victim, thus supporting dominant gender relations. On the other hand, I also looked for alternative discourses and practices that went beyond dual oppositions, and trace these practices in individual biographies as well as social histories. By analyzing the past in relation to the present, we are able to show a trajectory that might guide us to see whether or not a certain notion of masculinity is held dominant and if not, what alternatives have been raised, both institutionally and individually. To do this, an analysis of the historical context is significant. This is because, 'conscious ideas of masculine or feminine are not fixed, since they vary according to contextual usage' (Scott 1999: 39). Therefore, this requires an 'analysis not only of the relationship between male and female experience in the past but also of the connection between past history and current historical practice' (Scott 1999: 39). This is done through tracing the respondents' views and engagements with violence from their childhood to present day.

CHAPTER 3: DISCOURSES

Discourse in this paper refers to ‘an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena’ (Gasper and Apthorpe 1996: 2) . In this section, I analyse the way in which men talk about violence thus providing us with ideas on how violence is deemed as acceptable in Kenyan society. Consequently, my guiding questions were: How do men talk about violence? How are gender hierarchies discussed? What are the dominant notions of masculinities and femininities? How are they linked to other relations of power, such as ethnicity? Are there any counter discourses and alternative femininities/masculinities, and if so, how are they spoken about?

3.1 Violence within the Family

The family reigns supreme in terms of institutions as, ‘In no other institution are relationships so extended in time, so intensive in contact, so dense in their interweaving of economics, emotion, power and resistance’ (Connell 1987: 121). Additionally, ‘Because families are structured around gender and age, women, men, girls and boys do not experience their families in the same way’ (Thorne and Yalom 1982). It is important to analyze these differences as the family was the first institution spoken about by the respondents.

To begin with, many respondents highlighted violence through the patrilineal system. Connell says that, ‘the patriarchal pattern, with young people subordinated to old and women subordinated to men, reappears in a long series of sociological researches on families in different countries, together with the ideologies of masculine authority that support it’ (1987: 123).

Additionally, due to the patrilineal system, girls do not get to inherit resources such as land. This can be linked to the expectation of the male as the primary provider and property owner. Ikiara says, ‘They [his older sisters] were not allocated for any land as part of inheritance and they became squatters with no title deeds.’ Wangeci adds that ‘inheritance is only for boys’. Because of this, there is high dependence of women on husbands and male relatives for property. Economic resources were and still remain a source of power in families. Access to finances could provide women an ‘exit option’⁸ in case of domestic violence, while at the same time give more authority to the abuser in the family. The case of Otieno’s parents clearly demonstrates this. After continued abuse from Otieno’s father, his mother moved out of the house. He says, ‘I believe her economic power was a means to her exit. She could pay her own rent.’ Judith Squires writes that women’s empowerment does not only include access to resources but capacity to use these resources in one’s favour (Squires 1999).

⁸ B. Agarwal 1997: 2, argues that ‘the ability of a person to challenge norms that go against their self-interest would depend on...their economic situation.’

In addition to financial stability, the lack of education was also considered a factor that led women to remain in abusive relationships. 'At one point, my mother told me that she was beaten and returns home as she was not educated,' says Kanana.

Another issue often raised by the respondents was that extended families rarely intervened into cases of domestic violence. 'Among the Kikuyu, emphasis is laid on marital disputes being solved inside the home, with as little outside interference as possible' (Wanjeri 2006). This was also similar among the Luo. Otieno says, 'According to Luo norms a man is left to build or ruin his marriage. As my father was well off he had the power to curtail resources if opinions were against his own. A powerful man was considered one who had resources and the ability to make and control decisions so no one dared to speak against him.' Going by this, it is evident that seniority is not only restricted to age but is also influenced by marriage and access to resources.

Violence within the family was referred to as a 'private issue to be solved within the confines of the home.' Opiyo says, 'others [neighbours] believed that it was a domestic affair which does not warrant their intervention.' Extended family intervention was present mostly only in extreme cases of violence where provision of basic needs was lacking. 'My father would sometimes claim that his salary was stolen so it became a community issue helping us with food' says Gitonga. Those who did not intervene 'believed that it [domestic violence] was a domestic affair that should be handled internally.' Domesticity was not only advanced by outsiders looking in but also by those who witnessed violence within their own homes. It was not common for discussions of violence to be held between peers outside the confines of the home. As Opiyo recalls, 'I never spoke to my friends about the abuse but I would discuss it with my brother who lived far away.'

The importance of wider social context is also clearly brought out by Kanana. She says, 'In the 60s and 70s, there was no sensitization on domestic violence. Now, even the children can tell their mother when it is enough and are even willing to write statements against their father.'

Physical violence was not the only way to illustrate gender hierarchies within the family. Kibe says, 'It never went physical between my parents. Just one look of my father was enough to show that he was not amused.' When respondents talked about violence within the family, it was evident that certain gender hierarchies are in play and these consequently inform us of the construction of masculinities and femininities. Additionally, we are able to analyze which notions of masculinity or femininity are dominant and if at all counter discourses to this exist. Kibe emphasized that 'violence is acceptable as long as it's not against the men.' With his accounts of rites of passage that involve violence, he mentioned that none of these are committed on boys but only on girls. According to him, 'the boys would not be put through any such ordeal.' Dominant norms of masculinity have been linked by my respondents to man as 'owner', 'provider', 'decision maker', and 'abuser'.

3.2 Violence within Marriage

Marriage is 'one of the most important institutions within which gender ideology is produced and reproduced' (Silberschmidt 1991: 16). When it came to violence within marriage, the most common type as referred to by the respondents was wife beating. As illustrated by Mohammed, 'Men believe that violence is part of tradition. When a man beats his wife, it is normal, not violence. Even some women have accepted it as normal.' The importance of marriage is especially highlighted by Muthomi. He talks of his grandmother insisting that his father remarry after his mother's death. 'This caused him psychological torture as he did not want to remarry.' Otieno's father also did not beat his second wife as much as his first wife as he feared she would abandon him like his first wife did.

Polygamy was also illustrated as violence within marriage, and linked to specific ethnic and tribal traditions, such as those of the Kikuyu and Luo. Ocholla-Ayayo argues that individuals 'became aware of group identity and values that served as guides to their cultural behaviour through stories and riddles' (1976: 58). Many of my respondents told me that they grew up with stories belonging to ethnic myths of origin, justifying male dominance and violence within marriage and the family. For example, within Luo traditions, men with single wives, at a beer party, had their stools arranged in the direction of the door, and men with more wives were situated at the back, opposite the door. During virtue boasting⁹, the men with single wives were asked to talk less because of their 'poverties'. A polygamous man was seen as a model to which all should aspire, thus was the dominant model of masculinity.

Many of these traditions were mentioned when causes of violence were discussed. Women who fail to respect them were often seen within the kin and community as calling the violence upon themselves. Interesting enough was that when men failed to live up to these traditions, this also resulted in violence against women:

'At domestic level, the man doesn't want to provide. He expects his wife to do all her chores while he has contributed nothing. She prepares the children for school, prepares meals and when she gets waged labour, he demands money from her thus creating conflict. When he cannot provide, the sexual satisfaction between the two is reduced. When he cannot satisfy his wife, he blames himself but asserts himself through violence.' (Gitonga)

However, it was clear to my respondents that it was not the traditions per se, but the gender hierarchies that caused violence. Mohammed said: 'The dominant view [in Kenya] is that, when a man beats his wife, it is normal.' These sentiments are also echoed by Isabella who says that a 'wife has no say regarding family affairs hence leading to domestic violence.' Silberschmidt posits that 'the structure of these [gender] relations again shapes cultural notions/identities of men and women and the relations between them. Just as

⁹ O. Ayayo 1976: 45, locally referred to as *Pakruok*, as an occasion where men would share their feelings, thoughts and beliefs

marriage is a political relationship, it is also a mechanism through which productive relationships, rights and obligations are established' (1991: 16), and I would also argue - transformed. Transformation was evident in counter discourses among my respondents. Kihara says that 'wife beating to some seems that it is not violence although it is a crime to me'. This is supported by Kibe who says that, 'violence should not be tolerated at any level. There is no justification for violence.'

However, while some MEGEN men are against violence in marriage and family, they are not at the same time against dominant gender hierarchies. Gitonga says, 'If all roles were played well, there would be harmony in the home.' He assumes complementarities of gender roles and argues for their balance. Okello, in a similar vein, offers solution for balancing: 'I believe in sharing of tasks to ease the woman's burden.' Similar lines of argumentation are pursued through religious discourses. A Pastor of a local church said: 'Many people use religion to justify violence. However God says that man should get a helper, and not a slave. Thus, a wife should not be taken for granted. She should be a member of the man's self/body. He should love her like he loves himself.' What we see here is not an attitude that challenged the dominant gender hierarchies, but rather challenges dominant ideas that link masculinity and violence within these hierarchies. The Pastor offers an alternative masculinity of a non-violent man who loves his wife. Kihara concurs with the Pastor and says, 'the initiator of violence should be made to understand that both men and women were created by God.'

As highlighted in the previous section, the responsibility of controlling, providing for and defending the marriage is traditionally left up to a man. However, I would argue that the external environment also plays a critical role in marriage or couple unions. Religion is one of those. As an ideology, religion has often been linked to beliefs and practices that advance violence against women. In a study conducted by Silberschmidt between 1996-7, she interviewed men who said that 'they were born head of households' and that was a 'God given fact' (2001: 663). As a way to displace the notions of religion as advancing women's subordination, Mohammed explains how Islam¹⁰ is erroneously linked with cultural practices of violence against women. He says, 'Violence is not human. Islam is also against violence which many people confuse with practice.' He says Sharia Law also provides for divorce in cases of abuse. Thus in this case as was the case with Christianity, Islam has been linked both to a cause and a solution to violence.

Another external factor is the role of peers. Otieno says, 'all my friends and peers advocated for infidelity. They would say that fidelity translates to brewing problems.' He mistreated the women in his life in order to live up to this ideal of promiscuous masculinity. The strong influence of peers in construction of masculinity is also brought out in Silberschmidt's study of the ethnic group Kisii. She says, 'boy's peer groups are difficult to enter, and to

¹⁰ I do acknowledge that not one single form of Islam exists and the quoted statement expresses the opinion of my respondent.

establish himself to 'be a man' the boy is often required to dissociate himself ritually or in fact from the home (1991: 16). Zarkov also states that 'maleness and manhood are defined by power. A man cannot be the Man unless he embodies power' (2002 in Anh 2005). Otieno says that his friends tried to dissuade him from moving in with his girlfriend. I therefore agree with Silberschmidt (1991: 16) that masculinity is an 'accomplishment', rather than a given status.

Connell introduces the concept of 'eroded patriarchy' to indicate the failings of such an accomplishment: a situation where a claim to authority by the husband is not successful (1987: 124). I have heard a few examples from my respondents. Otieno spoke of meeting a man who works with the UN in Sudan. As he was out of the country most of the time, he put his properties under his wife's name. When his contract ended, he moved back home but there were plenty of disagreements as his wife was used to living alone and doing things her way. The tenants on his property would also not pay him rent as they always dealt with his wife thus did not know who he was.

3.3 Marriage, Family and Violence against Men

'Eroded patriarchy' was also identified with alliances between women and their children. Physical violence against men is often linked to alcohol abuse and alliances formed between the wife and other family members. From Kanana's narrative it is evident that once men drink, it is easier for them to be overpowered in a fight. Another example was given of a drunken man returning home after one of his drinking sprees and attempting to hit his wife. His efforts were thwarted as his children and wife united against him and he could not fight back.

This leads me to the cases – seldom mentioned but still present – of violence against men within a family and marriage. Santos argues that 'what does not exist is in fact actively produced as non-existent' (2006: 15). This is seconded by Foucault who asserts that, 'in order for something to be established as fact or as true, other equally valid statements have to be discredited and denied' (In Mills 2003: 67). In the same regard, I argue that invisibility of the male victim of violence serves a purpose of upholding dominant notions of powerful masculinity.

Although some men are assaulted physically, the type of violence against men mostly reported by my respondents is non-physical. To begin with, economic/financial violence was usually associated with men who leave their homes in search of work and return to feel like they don't belong. Additionally, retrenchment has been attributed to violence when the man can no longer provide for his family as he used to. Respondents said that when this occurs, a period of 'cold war' ensues where the wife stops communicating with her husband. Men's economic dependence on wives (inverse dependency) has been attributed as the cause of violence against men (and not only women). Ikiara sees class and status as factors that contribute to the silence on domestic violence against men. 'Husbands give in to their wives who support them. These men do not talk too much and when they do, they are talking about their wives.'

Psychological violence is also evident with the example of the man who died soon after retiring because his children no longer looked up to him. While he worked abroad, the mother had told the children that their father had abandoned them. An interesting relationship was demonstrated by two respondents who linked violence against men to revelation of HIV/AIDS status. They said, 'a man with positive status is at a higher risk of being abused by his wife.' I think that the links between an abused man and a man with positive HIV status needs further research. Emily Esplen says, 'the prevalent assumption in many cultures that real men do not get sick...means that men tend not to get tested for HIV' (2006: 3). When the 'real man' is associated with good health and with violent tendencies, the man living with HIV/AIDS is far away from the norm, and apparently closer to being abused.

During the group discussion, I was informed that cases of battered men are not heard but are seen, in the sense that the problem is not discussed, but cases of broken marriages are seen. A website on domestic violence against men says, 'the idea that men could be victims of domestic abuse and violence is so unthinkable to most people that many men will not even attempt to report the situation'¹¹ (Definition of Domestic Violence 2007). Additionally, there are no places for abused men such as shelters where they can seek refuge. Kibe further explains: 'Society sets expectations/challenges that each member should live up to. Domestic violence against men is seen as going against the norm of the man as abuser.' Ikiara brings out an interesting aspect as he says: 'Even when men are abused, they are vocal about subordinating women to hide their own abuse.' This macho attitude reinforces the marginalized perceptions of abused men. Ikiara affirms this fear of perceptions when he says: 'Male preachers are abused, but they do not speak out as they are in fear of losing their congregation.'

3.4 Working against Violence within MEGEN

Working in MEGEN is not always a bed of roses. 'The process of transforming men from old to new masculinity is slow' (Otina 2007: 5). By this, he means that most men are set in their ways and it is difficult to shift from violent/aggressive to non-violent masculinity. Other challenges faced by MEGEN members include: emotional stress from working with cases of abuse. To remedy this, they have experience sharing meetings where they get to support each other during difficult times. Secondly, financial hardships are common as they work as volunteers. MEGEN provides a solution to this in the welfare and fundraising committees that assist in small loans and information on investments. Thirdly, many members reported tension in their marriage when they initially joined MEGEN. This was because of the demanding hours and the distances one would have to travel to ensure an incidence of violence was reported and adequately dealt with. The 'couple's

¹¹ <http://www.oregoncounseling.org/Handouts/DomesticViolenceMen.htm>

night' at MEGEN was a good solution to this as spouses are engaged with what the members are doing and they are able to appreciate it. Lastly, perceptions from family and friends also created some conflict within members. Otieno giving the value of support says, 'Friends act as a cushion when you are facing controversy – they are your fall-back position.' These reactions varied from appreciation to ostracism.

In most cases, initial reactions from male friends of the male members were to admonish the latter. With referrals to traditions such as 'a woman needs beating to behave properly' it was difficult for the immediate circle to understand why these men joined MEGEN. In addition, media articles named male members of MEGEN as battered men. They were perceived to be a group of men fighting against abuse by their wives. Thus, the dominant form of masculinity, advanced by family and friends was of an abuser. When MEGEN members began advancing a non-violent masculinity, there were immediately termed as battered men who are considered subordinate and weak. However, they say that after sensitization and awareness raising, the opinion changed from being termed 'sissies' to 'heroes' willing to stand up against negative traditions.

Male family/friends of female members had different reactions. Kanana used the term, 'more than a woman'. This is what her male friends think of her as she is standing up against violence usually attributed to deeply entrenched norms. In this case, Kanana is praised as she is seen to be fighting on behalf of women and against the dominant ideology.

Most men were initially perceived by their female friends and family members as 'lesser men' when they joined MEGEN. This is similar to the perception by males advanced earlier. The female friends adhere to emphasized femininity as they are willing to support dominant violent norms. As Connell notes, 'women may even find the hegemonic pattern more familiar and manageable' and are not willing to change (1987: 187). Women friends would call the men 'bewitched' or 'mute dogs' as they did not fit the ideal of a 'real man'. I find the reference to 'dog' as a form of abuse very interesting. Kanana's boyfriend would ask her to call him a dog and when she would not do so, he would beat her up. A dog is essentially known as one that barks. It is a fierce animal that is used mostly for security. A dog that cannot bark cannot fulfil its role to raise an alarm. In this line, MEGEN members were seen not as complete/real men because they were not capable of beating a woman.

Female-female reactions to women from MEGEN usually involved admiration. Achieng mentioned that she works with commercial sex workers who applaud her work. Additionally, they have neighbours who sought their advice in reconciliation when minor arguments occurred at home. Other women feel that domestic violence is a woman's issue and should be tackled by women. However, they acknowledge that men most of the time are perpetrators therefore it is beneficial to work with men. When working on gender issues, a gender hierarchy is supposed where women should be in the forefront as they themselves know of their subordination (epistemic privilege). However, this is limiting as most of the subordination is relational and thus requires work by both men and women.

Foucault argues, 'Where there are imbalances of power relations between groups of people..., there will be a production of knowledge' (In Mills 2003: 67). He then adds that, 'knowledge does not simply emerge from scholarly study but is produced and maintained...in societies through the work of a number of different institutions' (In Mills 2003: 79). Through this section which highlights the backbone of my analysis, we are informed how MEGEN men talk about violence and the conditions that lead to violence. Through speech, we are able to delineate key institutions such as: the family; marriage; and kinship and their role in normalizing violence. Moreover, with this analysis, one is able to tease out gender hierarchies that place women in a subordinate position while emphasizing male superiority. What is important to note is that dominant notions of masculinity and femininity although passed down from generation to generation are subject to change. Using the concept of 'eroded patriarchy', I highlighted cases of abused men whose masculinity is contrary to the 'abuser', that is dominant. Furthermore, the men willing to fight against violence in MEGEN are willing to challenge the dominant notion of 'real man' known to be aggressive. These alternative masculinities are yet to receive visibility in development studies and development work.

It is also important to note the role ethnicity and religion play in justifying violence and institutionalizing gender hierarchies. Dominant notions of aggressive masculinity are perpetuated through beliefs that this is what Christianity/Islam expects and this is what is expected to truly belong to a particular ethnic group, such as the Luo or Kikuyu. Scott puts forward that, 'Without meaning, there is no experience; without processes of signification, there is no meaning' (1999: 38). This section on discourses provides us with information on how violence is perceived by the respondents and how it is institutionalized through social and symbolic meanings. The following sections will build from these meanings to show how violence as social practice is significant in creating identities.

CHAPTER 4: PRACTICE AND SUBJECTIVE IDENTITIES

4.1 Violence as Social Practice

My guiding questions here were: How have the men (and women) working in MEGEN encountered and experienced violence in the course of their lives? How have they engaged with it in the past and how do they do it now, in MEGEN? One thing that became clear very quickly was that most of the men and women working in MEGEN had experienced different types of violence in their parental family, as children or adolescents. Some had been directly abused while others had witnessed violence against their mothers, sisters or other relatives. Some of them later became abusers as young adults. Eventually, all of them found a way to engage in combating violence against women in MEGEN.

Another common aspect of the interviews was how marriage, family and kinship as institutions sustain violence. Over and over again, my respondents indicated that the level of involvement of the ‘outsiders’ was limited as violence was seen as a matter to be dealt with ‘inside’ the family.

4.1.1 Dealing with Violence in the Family

Otieno whose father was violent towards his mother, and then remarried, spoke of violence from his step-mother. ‘She would deny us food, clothing and accuse us falsely. I also do not believe that all beatings were justified as discipline.’ When he tried to tell his father about this violence, his father took no action.

Kibe spoke of violence from his father which he remembers to date. ‘I recall a day he beat me up seriously.’ This was because he would attend different schools from the ones picked by his father, as he did not feel that the latter were making him live up to his potential.

Kanana experienced violence from her boyfriend. ‘I suspected that my boyfriend took drugs and he beat me while I was pregnant. He would come home and ask me to call him a dog. When I refused to do so, he would respond by beating me up.’ Her boyfriend would look for reasons to fault her so that he could link the abuse to something wrong that she had done.

Not all forms of violence were physical. After his mother died, Muthomi moved in with his grandmother although his father was still alive. He believes that refusal to go to school was a form of violence. ‘I was in bad terms with my grandmother because I really wanted to continue with my education. I was also not in agreement with her as she caused my father psychological torture by forcing him to remarry after my mother’s demise.’

The above cases display incidences where respondents faced abuse in their formative years. Many of them also told me that they have, at one stage in their life, been violent towards their partners. The cases demonstrate the inter-generational effects of violence. ‘The child learns the proper way to behave by observing those senior to him [or her]’ (Ocholla-Ayayo 1976). This paradox of

protector-abuser has been highlighted by the Family violence theory that states that all members of a family are at one point or the other drawn to violence (Kurz 1993: 254). It also displays the multiple masculinities present in a man at different points of his life. While growing up Otieno took up the protective role of those he held dearest. He did not fight back as his stepmom abused him and his siblings. However, he later changed to become violent towards his girlfriend, replicating the behaviour of his father as the adage goes 'Like father, like son.'

The case of Kanana challenges the idea that violence is intrinsic to men. She and her sister liaised in order to beat up her baby's father. Through her narrative (find in annex) she also implicitly hints at child neglect with accounts of leaving her son behind to be taken care of by her sister, mother or father. She therefore does not fit the stereotypical notion of women as good mothers. Another challenge to the dominant ideas comes from a man who refused to be violent. When Robert got married, he said, 'I had to leave my first wife. She would expect to be beaten as she grew up in a home where her father would always beat them. She would abuse me and say that I was not a real man as her father was.'

In analyzing family dynamics of violence, Kaufman argues that it is important to involve boys and men in the fight against VAW as they experience VAW as witnesses (2001: 11). Most of my respondents had experienced or witnessed violence, and most of them have, at one point or the other acted to stop or counter the violence around them. For some, it was in their own homes with violence between their parents while for others it was in the immediate environment of neighbours and their extended families. Opiyo says, 'my siblings and I used to tell my parents about how fed up we were. I moved out of the house at some point after trying to defend my mom.' In his case, he also took up the role of consoling his younger siblings whenever this violence occurred. This is because his elder brother had moved out of home to live elsewhere. This violence impacted his life as it affected his education from primary to secondary level.

Otieno also speaks of standing up against his father, 'my brothers and I had grown up and could stand up to our father.' Kanana also at age eleven tried to prevent her father from harming her mother with a spear. Isabella, a female MEGEN member says, 'I remember my father would disappear from home after he was paid and come back home penniless. Though young, I would encourage my mom to cope with the violence and when dad came home I would innocently question him as to why he left us and would plead with him never to neglect us again and surely with time he changed.' In these cases, challenging seniority, as well as the role of the patriarch, was called for as children could no longer stand the abuse by the fathers. The importance of age is critical in this analysis. It is only when they reached a certain age did the respondents in some cases feel confident enough to confront the abusers.

Gitonga spoke of intervening when his wife and sister would argue. 'This rivalry was due to claims in property and I had to separate the two of them by getting my sister another place to live.' As mentioned earlier, exogenous factors such as access to resources could also lead to violence.

Akello talks of intervening in cases of violence between her neighbours. 'My neighbour also beats his wife every Sunday for going to church. I have tried talking to his wife but she is afraid of leaving as she is an orphan. Additionally, she is self-employed selling fish which does not provide enough income.' The importance of finances as a means to exit also comes up with this illustration. Due to her insufficient income, her neighbour is heavily dependent on her husband and thus will not leave him.

A success story comes from Maina in his intervention against violence. 'I remember my cousin would beat his wife and he was not paying school fees for his children when primary school was not free. I talked to him and he has changed his behaviour. To date he is a good husband and a good father.' Through Maina's illustration a good husband should be non-violent while a good father should be a provider for his family especially in educating his children.

The two cases mentioned earlier, Otieno and Kanana are similar as they both begin by narratives where the respondents witnessed violence and were the protectors. Then while moving through life, they themselves became abusers. Literature on domestic violence often points to the cases of protector-abused-abuser or protector-victim/survivor-perpetrator. [Terms used in domestic violence discourse.] Kaufman introduces arguments by authors such as Jaffe and Zuckerman that 'witnessing violence can have the same impact as directly experiencing the violence or better, it is a form of direct experience' (See Kaufman 2001: 11). Thus, violence begets violence. At the same time, my respondents show that being an abuser may be a short stage in life, and that experience of violence can be a motivating factor in countering violence.

4.1.2 Dealing with Violence in MEGEN

The Men for Gender Equality Now (MEGEN) as mentioned in Chapter 1, is a Kenyan network of men and women whose primary role is prevention of Gender Based Violence. Kennedy Otina, MEGEN coordinator in an interview by France 24¹², 'the organisation's work is prevention – changing the man next door' (Vanier 2006). Moreover, 'MEGEN argues that not all men are perpetrators of violence; rather many men recognize the problem of GBV and can be effective allies in tackling it, particularly by bringing their peers together to confront negative behaviour and attitudes toward women and collectively redefine masculinity as a construct that does not inhere domination, aggression and violence' (Miruka 2007).

MEGEN members employ different strategies to curb violence. The most important thing is to find 'resolution through dialogue' says Gitonga. And as society around them changes, MEGEN men are also continuously innovative in their approaches.

¹² This is a magazine published in France that was doing a special feature on male involvement in the fight against domestic violence.

Patriarchy is defined as ‘one variable in a complex constellation of causes’ of domestic violence (Anderson 1997: 36). However, MEGEN manipulates patriarchy as a solution to violence, as well. As explained by Kennedy, the ‘men to men’ strategy ‘involves working with gender sensitized men talking to other men while capitalizing on patriarchy as a platform for discussing action against violence’ (Otina 2007). Members use peer-peer dialogue in bars, supermarkets and other public areas so as to talk about the dangers of violence. This idea of going out to meet men is proposed by Esplen when she writes, ‘Rather than creating new avenues within which to engage men, interventions should target the areas where men already congregate’ (2006: 13). Kaufman also supports the ‘men to men’ strategy as he says, ‘men and boys will listen to other men and boys, far more than they will listen to the anger or pleas of women or to a disembodied media voice’ (2001: 11).

MEGEN also conducts events called Dialogues which allow for community participation and responses. The first Dialogue, as highlighted by Miruka, is gender specific in the sense that women form one group while men form another group in a different location. In these groups, the women and men discuss their experiences of GBV. He signals that the common response was that ‘violence is an expression of patriarchy and masculinity and that socialization is responsible for the acceptance of GBV as a norm’ (Miruka 2007: 22). The second Dialogue brings men’s and women’s groups face to face to talk about issues of GBV. This is useful as members openly discuss issues affecting them especially in marriage. Opiyo, one of the MEGEN men I interviewed said, ‘communication with men can also be difficult thus we need to come up with new avenues such as theatre.’ Skits are performed and discussed with the community as a way to introduce violence during community sensitization seminars. When I visited Mathare constituency, I had the privilege to watch one of these skits. The skit performed in Kiswahili takes about 7-10 minutes and is filled with humour. It gives accounts of incidences of violence that occur within the home and of the reactions from immediate family members, neighbours and the wider community.

The Rapid Response Team is another innovative method used by MEGEN. The majority of my respondents form part of this team. This is a group of people who ‘rush to the aid of GBV survivors and connect them with medical, legal and psychosocial service providers as well as temporary shelter’ (Miruka 2007: 23). In order to do this, they develop rapport with: i) Police; ii) Chiefs; iii) Other NGOs and shelters. As highlighted by Robert, ‘In cases of abuse, we accompany the victims to the hospital and to the police station. We have a working relationship with the Police to speed up the bureaucratic process. After RRT knows what took place, we identify potential witnesses and forward these names to the Police. The RRT also conducts in-house trainings and shared experiences so that we can learn from each other due to the unique nature of our jobs. We also network with shelters and legal aid.’ The RRT members are trusted members in the community and they are usually consulted whenever an incidence of violence occurs. By June 2008, the team had handled 200 cases of violence against women, out of which 100 have been concluded in favour of the survivors, 30 have been dismissed for lack of evidence and 70 are still in court (Adapted from information sheet provided by Kennedy Otina).

However, some of my respondents stated that much still has to be done when it comes to the training and responses of the Police.

Within MEGEN, the members also organize 'couple's night'. This is a dinner when all the spouses of the members are invited to find out more about MEGEN. They say this has saved a number of marriages especially those whose wives suspected adultery. Additionally, the Welfare and fundraising committees assist members in keeping some finances as volunteer work can demoralize members. Lastly, other than a Chairperson and coordinator, MEGEN has no established hierarchy. This can work as an advantage and a disadvantage all at once. To begin with, it serves to create some form of equality where each volunteer takes up tasks equally. However, it serves as a disadvantage when it comes to administration. I feel though that this might change when MEGEN becomes fully institutionalized and independent of FEMNET.

It is important that both men and women work in MEGEN together. To begin with, it is useful in the inter-gender dialogues as discussed earlier. Secondly, it works to refute claims that MEGEN is interested in diverting funds for women's issues as is commonly said when men become involved in matters previously considered in the domain of women. Unity of purpose is important as highlighted by Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, former UNIFEM director for Africa. She quotes a Baha'i teaching that 'a bird flies better with two wings' (Miruka 2007: 22). Thirdly, sensitive cases such as those dealt with by MEGEN are handled differently by women and men. Robert says that women sometimes get too emotional and are quick to convict someone who might not be the criminal. He also speaks of men being more willing to understand the 'perpetrators' as opposed to women.

Language is an important element of work and is linked to the innovation mentioned above. As highlighted by Otieno, MEGEN members do not use the 'language of blame that creates division but instead evoke peaceful action through their messages.' Rather than have posters that say 'Beware of Human Dogs', they have posters appealing to the different roles of men such as fathers and husbands' (See annex for posters). This way of thinking is seconded by Kaufman who writes that, 'it is important in the work that we avoid any tendency or any temptation to use language of generalized guilt or generalized blame' (2001: 12). He adds that, '[l]anguage that leaves males feeling blamed for things they have not done, or guilty for the sins of other men, simply will alienate most boys and men' (Kaufman 2001: 12). He provides a solution to the 'language of blame' and calls for a 'language of responsibility'. Not a generalized responsibility for the problem, but responsibility for change' (Kaufman 2001). MEGEN employ his suggestions when they write on their posters: 'One of these [women] is your wife, mother, sister, grandmother, daughter or friend. Men, let's do something to Stop Violence.' While analyzing the language in the posters, it is important to see how dominant notions are manipulated to introduce a new form of masculinity. Betraying archaic patriarchy is done by manipulating dominant notions of the 'real man' to produce change. For example, one poster says, 'Real men don't abuse women.' A real man as we know is one who is known to be violent; but the poster while

trying to advance non-violence is still appealing to the ego of a man so that he is not seen as a lesser man.

This section builds from the discourses section as it moves from speech to practice. The way that the respondents talked about violence has been affected by their experiences of violence as lived or social practice. On the one hand, those who spoke of abuse in their homes, related accounts of being abused and also practising abuse in their own homes. On the other hand, we have those who were protectors in their teens also growing up to maintain this identity in MEGEN. Through practise, we can see it is possible for patriarchy to be challenged depending on the age of the respondents. Additionally, we also see that the gender hierarchies expressed in speech on violence are practised and therefore become part of day to day life, or rather, normalized. The last section on MEGEN introduces innovative strategies that build on the collective identity of a non-violent man.

4.2 Subjective Identities and Violence

From the discourses and practices mentioned above, it is evident that not one fixed identity exists and that men do not behave in the same manner everywhere (De Neve 2004). This section highlights how the MEGEN members view themselves as change agents and how this identity is related to personal experiences.

The main aspect of subjective identities I observed among the men of MEGEN was the change or transition. On the one hand, MEGEN members are advocating for change against the dominant violent masculinity. On the other hand, they have also changed in the course of the years. To analyze these changes, it is important to look at the role of age/generation and ethnicity in mapping out human agency¹³. Flood concurs and says that ‘factors such as class, ethnicity, sexuality, and age shape expressions of manhood and gender’ (Flood 2007: 12).

Notions of masculinity are reflected in individual experience and subjective identities (Lindsay and Miescher 2003). In this research, identities are analyzed through the male change agents at MEGEN and how they spoke of themselves at the time of the interview. As mentioned above, to study identities, it is important to begin by tracing how the respondents view themselves from childhood to date. Lindsay and Miescher further suggest looking at the ‘impact of modernity in changing norms of masculinity’ (2003: 18).

To begin with, most male members associated with a particular form of masculinity that was advanced in the family. One of the most persistent forms of masculinity was constructed through ethnic belonging. However, it is important to note that the different ethnic groups had rather similar definitions of dominant masculinity. As highlighted in previous chapters, dominant notions of masculinity were related to man as: protector which signals bravery

¹³ This term is explained in subsequent pages.

and strength; provider which signals ownership; lover which advances either polygamy or infidelity, and is heteronormative; and authority evidenced in the role as decision maker.

Through life's experiences, some of these notions were lived up to while some were challenged. This made the MEGEN members perceive themselves in various ways which I underline below.

Some presented themselves as Messiahs. I found this as the most interesting aspect of identity. Some of the MEGEN members saw their work as a 'calling' and liken it directly to the Gospel of Jesus. In response to some sceptics Okello says, 'some [his friends and family] appreciate while others think I am doing useless work. In response to the latter I liken my work to teaching from the Bible such as Jesus and Noah saving those who believed. I believe that it is a calling.' Others do not refer to Jesus but use similar language. Otieno says, 'I saw my life in the words of the facilitators and got a 'calling' to ensure that the movement grows to fulfil the objective of ending VAW.' When speaking to me, some used terms such as 'Go forth and Spread the Word' when referring to the work they do. Otieno says, 'the whole idea of awareness against gender violence was at first controversial. For a Luo (an ethnic group), it is not really the message but its appeal to others. So when members of my community heard me on radio and saw articles about my work is when they became interested.'

Others refer to wisdom and experience. Ikiara says, 'As a well respected member of our community, I served as a counsellor where people would come to me to discuss their problems.' His role as a MEGEN member is thus informed by his profession and his relative standing in the community when it comes to solving problems of a domestic nature. Most of the respondents view themselves as ground breakers. This is because they are challenging dominant notions of masculinity while advocating the 'new man' as non-violent and capable of helping out his wife in household chores. The female members were ready to work with MEGEN as they felt that this organization provides an avenue for them to work in partnership with men and women for the sake of ending violence.

Some men see themselves as peace brokers. From their experiences witnessing and subverting violence, most members retained this identity. Akello says, 'I thought by joining MEGEN I would get empowered to speak to my neighbours on how to stop this violence.' Additionally, Opiyo says, 'I wanted to find out more about violence so that I could be able to stop my father from abusing my mother.' Through her own personal experiences, Kanana is now committed to ending violence. She says, 'I joined MEGEN in 2004 because I wanted to assist people suppressed by situations of violence.' Through the experience of his daughter being abused, Robert says, he works with the RRT to 'bring criminals to justice.'

As defined by Emirbayer and Mische, human agency is, 'a temporary embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment)' (1998: 963). Throughout their life cycles which inform the past or habitual aspect,

MEGEN members have at one point or the other possessed multiple identities. As otherwise captured with the protector-abused-abuser transformation, these identities have all culminated to the advancement of the non-violent, mediator who is currently in the present. The future was hinted at by the chair who says, that he envisions a critical mass of men sensitive to gender based violence and that men are sensitized up to the levels of policy making. This is important especially now as MEGEN was officially registered as an independent organization removed under the auspices of FEMNET. Although this current phase of institutionalization is not yet complete, it informs the collective identity that MEGEN supports.

To arrive at this non-violent masculinity, different negotiations have taken place as a result of human agency. Human agency therefore gives the possibility of construction of a new identity and moreover possibilities for negation, resistance and reinterpretation (Scott 1999). As adolescents, these men challenged senior masculinity and advocated for peaceful means within their homes. This challenge can be attributed to wider changes within societies. As highlighted by Kanana, it was unusual in the 1960s and 1970s for people to speak out against domestic violence. However, with the passing of conventions such as CEDAW and the rise of the women's movement, creation of awareness has led to increased reports of domestic violence.

Thus, identities are not only affected by internal relations within the home but by external factors too. Economic transformations led to new models of male aspirations and behaviour (Lindsay and Miescher 2003: 18). Kibe argued against the dominant norms that dictate masculinities. In his opinion, it is some 'kind of force of how a man should live.' These he terms as 'straightjacket expectations' that lead to a crisis in masculinity. He gives the example of retrenchment as a way that emasculates the man.

'This is manifested clearly in the rural area. The boy child is now a lazy person. He is moved from the house at an early age due to traditions. The boys have learned about alcohol and think that being masculine is rape and abusing women. They do not know that being a man doesn't only mean siring children but also taking care of them. They also believe that being a man means earning more yet they are not as educated as their female counterparts. This new masculinity is leading young men into a serious crisis. Young men are in conflict to perform traditional roles while struggling to handle modernity. Consequently, there is a generation of young men that is missing not only due to HIV but also due to suicides.'

This excerpt illustrates the impact of modernization on men of different generations. Lindsay and Miescher support this by saying that 'By the 1990s, in the wake of structural adjustment programs, discourses on masculinity offered models that many of today's young men struggle to emulate. Caught between discursive domains that create variant images of masculinity, from responsible provider to insatiable lover, youths find that becoming a man is fraught with complications. Accused by wives of being "useless"...young men find themselves in a position of diminishing control' (2003: 20).

This is seconded by Silberschmidt who says that 'male identities are suffering because of the clash or lack of fit between the present and traditional norms and values'(1991: 78). An inability to coalesce the present and

traditional norms has led to the 'crisis of masculinity' as advanced by Kibe. He also speaks of the 'runaway man'. The former is mostly affecting the youth while the latter is affecting married men in their mid-life who abandon their families. Although not a focus of this research, I think it deserves mention and perhaps could inform further research.¹⁴

The experience of violence either as a) witness b) victim/survivor c) abuser or d) change agent informs us how MEGEN members engaged with violence as social practice in their formative years. Currently, these members are working with a collective identity which is to fight against gender based violence. However, this collective identity is also superimposed on other identities such as that of the: messiah; ground breaker; and peace broker which all serve to create alternatives to the violent, real man.

¹⁴ Kibe says infidelity is not the only way a man can act out. Some men have been known to marry in rural areas and move to urban areas for the sake of work. In the city, they develop new identities and may begin a different life from the one back in the rural home. This alternate identity may at one point or the other take over.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

I began this research with the premise that masculinity like gender is not fixed thus making it possible to view domestic violence not only as a sex issue but also as a social issue. This opened up other avenues as it became possible to see the forces of power and control within the institutions of marriage and the family that sustain violence.

Through analysis of discourses, it was clear that domestic violence is sustained through a complex interaction not only of gender but also of institutional arrangements of age; financial status; education; and religious and ethnic norms. Notions of manhood and womanhood – and their positioning vis-à-vis domestic violence – were continuously situated within specific ethnic traditions, as well as within the domains of marriage, family and kinship. Thus, discourses of violence were not only gendered, but also highly ethnicized, and directly linked to institutional arrangements. It was also evident that the binary discourses of the male victim, female perpetrator serve to reinforce stereotypes of the dominant, aggressive man and the feeble woman. This was challenged by the male change agents who made visible other types of violence contrary to male-female abuse. As Berns posits, '[t]he construction of a problem is important because it locates not just the cause of a problem but also its solution'(2001: 264). In this paper, discourses on religion were used to introduce alternative non-violent males. 'Eroded patriarchy' also highlighted that it is in fact possible for men to be abused. Looking at discourses through the lenses of plural masculinities enabled me to make visible DVAM. This serves as a political project in the sense that it advocates for closer analysis and better reporting of cases of domestic violence.

Through their narratives, MEGEN members demonstrated that an individual can possess multiple masculinities at different stages in life. The identities in their narratives are linked both to the justificatory discourses of violence that they listen(ed) to around them, and to the practice of violence, that they experienced, used and finally engaged against. The relationship between discourses, practices and identities informs the fight against violence as it forces one to consider a historical perspective and not only concentrate on the present. As illustrated, an analysis of the trajectory of one's past to one's present is enlightening as it provides motivation for violence while at the same time addressing reasons as to why individuals get interested in activism against violence. The labels 'abuser', 'abused', or 'activist' thus cease to be permanent upon a given individual and dependent upon internal relationships of the family and external relationships that explain his/her role in MEGEN.

The male change agents demonstrated that through their work in MEGEN, their individual identities are produced through collective experiences. I have argued that identities are produced not only as a result of internal reflections but also as a result of external pressures – be it family and community relations, the peer pressures, or socio-economic possibilities. I have also acknowledged as demonstrated with the 'missing generation' and the 'runaway man' that more still needs to be done to analyze the influence of changes in society in the construction of masculinities. The nexus of age, ethnicity, class and I would also add one's HIV status, cannot simply be ignored when mapping interventions against domestic violence. This is because

frustrations to achieve societal expectations based on changing trends ultimately leads to violent masculinity.

This leads me to the answer to my main research question: What do the experiences of male change agents tell us about the construction of masculinities in the fight against domestic violence? They tell us that men are not only abusers but can also be abused and can fight against domestic violence. Moreover, they tell us that domestic violence, even in practice, is not simply a women's issue. This could lead to the realization that working with men can be productive in coming up with concrete, innovative strategies previously not tested to curb domestic violence.

Foucault argues that, 'it is power/knowledge which produces facts and the individual scholars are simply the vehicles of the sites where this knowledge is produced' (In Mills 2003: 70). Knowledge on domestic violence has centred on the binary male perpetrator and female victim while making invisible other types of violence that occur within the confines of the home. Thus, I took this research up as a vehicle to guide readers to alternatives that place men as victims but also as activists against violence. De Neve posits that '[t]he construction of masculinities is a political process, embedded in the maintenance of gender, power and patriarchal relationships' (2004: 63). Throughout this research, I have argued that the dominant male perpetrator is not the only masculinity that exists, but it serves to marginalize other masculinities, through gendered and ethnicized discourses, through normalization of violence as practice and through marginalization of non-violent identities.

In conclusion, I do not purport to have given all of the facts as relating to construction of masculinities in the fight against domestic violence. I do hope however, that through the experiences of the male change agents at MEGEN, I have provided evidence that the male change agent is indeed a friend and not a foe. In doing so I wish to reiterate that this paper does not serve to equalize domestic violence against women and men, nor does it assume any kind of reciprocity. Rather, I see this research as a study for better ways of understanding domestic violence, as well as contemporary constructions of plural masculinities.

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ANNEX ONE
Sample Questionnaire

Hello, my name is Yvette Kathurima. I am interested in learning about a) Family violence against men and b) Struggles of men working to end violence against women (VAW). This information will be useful for my research paper as a student at The Institute of Social Studies (The Hague, Netherlands)

Participation in this interview is voluntary and the issues discussed will be treated with extreme confidentiality. I will be recording the discussions to make sure we accurately record your opinions. Names are not necessary.

(Do you have any questions at this point?)

Let us get started! Please feel free to talk openly. You can stop me at any time for clarification and whenever you need a break.

Basic history/ profile

1. What is your year of birth?
2. Where were you born?
3. Where were your parents born?
4. Ethnicity?
 - Mother
 - Father
5. Religious affiliation?
 - Mother
 - Father
6. Education (including year of graduation):
 - primary
 - secondary
 - tertiary
7. Occupation/job:
8. Education of the parents:

- primary
- secondary
- tertiary
- 9. Parents' occupation/job:

Mother:

father:

10. Marital status:

- Single
- In-between co-habitation/ marriage
- Co-habitation – 1st, 2nd,
- Married – 1st marriage; 2nd marriage;
- Divorced – 1st, 2nd
- Other

11. Education of the (current) partner:

- primary
- secondary
- tertiary

12. Occupation/Job of the (current) partner

Now I want us to talk a little bit about violence

1. What are the general attitudes/ opinions in Kenyan society regarding violence?
2. What do you think about this general opinion? (Provide your view on the above)
3. Can you tell me about any incidence of violence in your family that you recall?
4. In this incident, what was your involvement/ reaction?
 - a. an observer (as a child, as an adult)
 - b. mediator
 - c. protector
 - d. initiator
 - e. victim/survivor

5. Who knew about this violence and what was their reaction? (Extended family/ friends)
6. How do your family/friends perceive violence?

Now I want us to talk a little bit about your work fighting violence

1. When did you begin work with(Organization)
2. What made you interested in work with
3. What kind of work do you do at
4. How do you define the following in the course of your work?
 - a) Gender
 - b) Domestic violence
 - c) Gender based violence
 - d) Masculinity/masculinities
 - e) Femininity/femininities
 - f) Victim/ survivor
5. Have these definitions changed/ been revised within the organization?
6. What means of work do you employ to reach men and women in the fight against violence?
7. What do your male friends say about your work?
8. What do your female friends say about your work?
9. What does your immediate family (wife/husband/parents/children) think about your work?

ANNEX 2

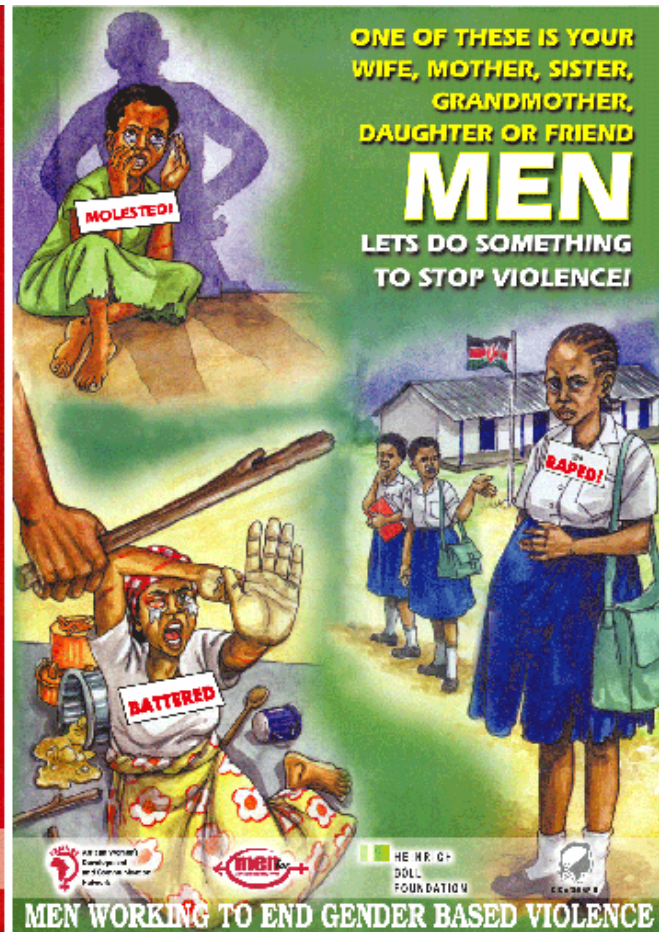
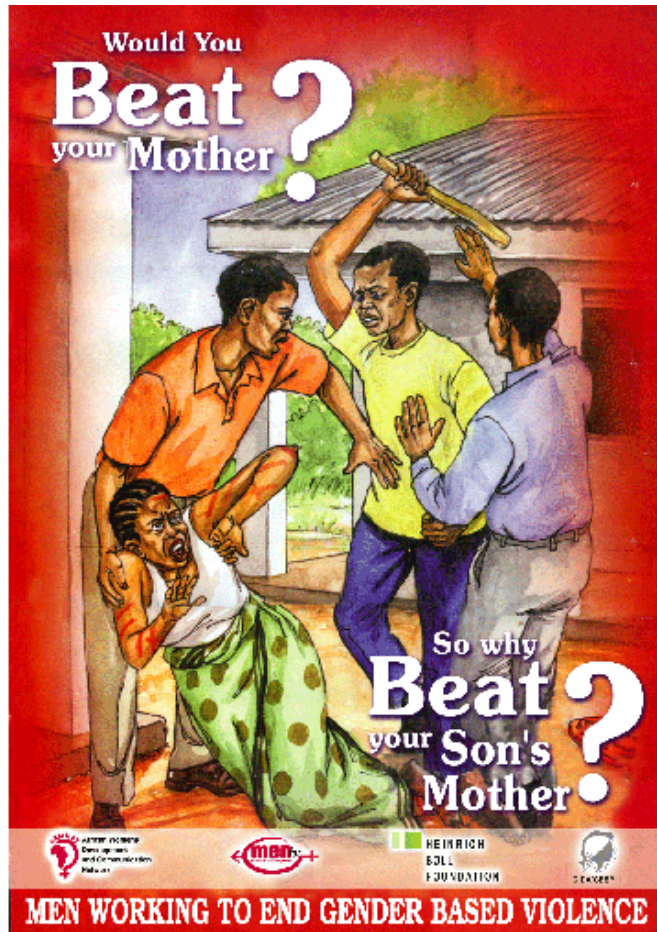
Sample Narratives

Otieno: Violence in the family was of my mother beaten by father. A particular date was 26th Dec 1986(Boxing Day). I remember this date because of the irony of 'boxing' and that it was the 'straw that broke the camel's back' so to speak as my mother left home leading to unofficial separation. I was 12yrs old at the time. I believe her economic power was a means to her exit. She could pay her own rent etc. As children, we remained under the custody of my father as norms dictate that children are their father's property. Girls however are not restricted by the same norms. They have the option to move with their mother as they are not considered permanent residents of the clan. I do not recall the reasons for violence but I remember that my mother never fought back. Fighting back was not common as it would provoke the man leading to more beatings. After my mother left, my father remarried and incidences of violence continued to occur. The violence was not as severe as with my mom as fear of second abandonment curtailed the amount of violence my father used. Additionally, my brothers and I had grown up and could stand up to our father. There was some violence from stepmom- us [stepchildren]. She would deny us food, clothing and accuse as falsely. I also do not believe that all beatings were justified as discipline. These experiences all contributed to my tolerant nature. If we tried reporting our step-mother, there would be no action from my father so we stopped reporting. One of my brothers moved to my mother's as he could not stand the abuse in the home. When my mother died, the family had to come back together again and forgive the past.

After my mother left, my father would 'poison' us against her. This translated into negative attitudes towards women. I believed that women were a bunch of troublemakers. Because of this, I began using violence in my relationships...punching some sense into them. I also became promiscuous and would get in and out of relationships 'just for the fun of it'. I did not have much respect for the women in my life. After 1992, I was convinced that women should not be taken seriously. I broke up a 'serious' relationship for no reason and made sure I was dating another lady who he impregnated. All my friends and peers advocated for infidelity. They would say that fidelity translates to brewing problems. When my girlfriend got pregnant, I gave her one condition: 'A male child can guarantee a position in my heart/home.' At the time, I was unemployed but capable of raising my child and 'wife'. Nine months later, she gave birth to a girl. My initial reaction was rage and I chased her away. However, after visiting my daughter a couple of times she 'stole' my heart and I could not imagine a life without her. Despite warnings from my friends, I moved in with my girlfriend and consider myself married although the marriage is not official. Through my life experience I know that 'Men are really unfair to women.' I believe that marriage is a belief. Dowry and lavish weddings have contributed to negative attitudes towards women.

Kanana: I experienced violence at age 11. My father would get a sword and rush my mother out of the house with a sword and spear. At one point, my mother told me that she was beaten and returns home as she was not educated. As we were 9 children, my mother did not feel that she could support us. She advised me to be financially stable. I did not date much as a young lady but once I did I got pregnant. I suspected that my boyfriend took drugs and he beat me while I was pregnant. Occasionally, he would come home and ask me to call him a dog. When I would refuse to do so, he would respond by beating me up. After I delivered, I got a maid as I got complications after birth. My boyfriend raped the maid while I was in hospital. Upon my return, the maid confessed to being raped. When I confronted my boyfriend he tried to beat up the maid shouting that she was accusing him falsely. The baby at the time was 3 months. I went into depression and started going out to avoid him. Once I came home with my new boyfriend and introduced him as my cousin. We all went out for a drink with my new boyfriend from the army and the father of my child. My child's father got very drunk so we left him. My sister at the time was visiting as she was helping to babysit. After a few hours, my child's father came home upset and ready for a fight as we had left him in the bar. My sister and I beat him up and left him for dead. We returned to my father's house and asked him to go and get the baby the next day. When my father returned to the house, he told the baby's father that if it were not for his religion, he would have beaten him seriously as he could not imagine anyone hurting his daughter. Meanwhile he was forgetting that he used to beat up my mother who was also someone's daughter. As I did not feel capable to take care of an infant, I took him to my mother's. While at my father's house, I confronted him about the incident of the spear where I tried to protect my mother from him. I also mentioned that after that incident I did not feel that I could ever trust men or get married. My father never forgave himself for that until he passed away.

ANNEX 4



Domestic Violence is a crime

CIDA/GESP II

HEINRICH BOLL FOUNDATION

WOMEN African Women's Development and Communication Network

menfor GENDER Equality NOW

This banner features a white background with a red border. The central text 'Domestic Violence is a crime' is in large, bold, black font. Logos for CIDA/GESP II, HEINRICH BOLL FOUNDATION, WOMEN, and menfor are positioned around the text.

Vita vya kinyumbani ni hatia

CIDA/GESP II


HEINRICH BOLL FOUNDATION



WOMEN African Women's Development and Communication Network


menfor GENDER Equality NOW

This banner features a red background with a white border. The central text 'Vita vya kinyumbani ni hatia' is in large, bold, white font. Logos for CIDA/GESP II, HEINRICH BOLL FOUNDATION, WOMEN, and menfor are positioned around the text.

 **Real Men Dont
abuse Women** 

 African Women's
Development
and Communication
Network 

 **Wanaume Asili
Hawadhulumu
Wanawake** 

 African Women's
Development
and Communication
Network 