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Engaging men and boys in the prevention of men's violence against women in England

Stephen Robert Burrell

Abstract

Efforts to engage men and boys in the prevention of men's violence against women are facing a crucial moment in England as they attract increasing societal interest. Yet there is a dearth of scholarship on this work in the English context. This study has therefore sought to build our knowledge of how practice, theory, and research on engaging men can be taken forward. Founded upon pro-feminist standpoint epistemology, it has investigated the contemporary landscape of work with men to prevent violence against women in England by conducting fourteen expert-informant interviews with key activists. In addition, it has explored how young men themselves understand and use prevention campaigns, by carrying out eight focus groups on intimate partner violence with forty-five members of men's university sports teams. These discussions underlined that more engagement with young people around gender and violence is urgently needed.

The research has highlighted the contradictory nature of work with men, based as it is upon encouraging them to dismantle their own patriarchal power and privilege. It suggests that one way in which an equilibrium can be found to address these tensions is through an emphasis on men's complicity, to cultivate critical consciousness among men about their role in both perpetuating and potentially preventing violence against women. However, the focus groups illustrated that men can often respond defensively to preventative messages, by disassociating themselves from the problem for example. To help overcome these barriers, the research proposes a triadic approach to engaging men. This would involve simultaneously attending to individual men's diverse experiences and practices, the social construction of masculine norms, and the reproduction of patriarchal structural inequalities. The study concludes that if work with men can find pro-feminist balances within its contradictions in such ways, then it has significant potential to contribute towards ending violence against women.

Engaging men and boys in the prevention of men's violence against women in England

Stephen Robert Burrell

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Sociology

Durham University

2019

Supervisors: Professor Nicole Westmarland and Dr. Sui Ting Kong

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Declaration

I confirm that no part of the material presented in this thesis has been previously submitted by me or any other person for a degree in this or any other university. In all cases, where it is relevant, material from the work of others has been acknowledged.

Statement of copyright

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published without the author's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

Acknowledgements

Academic work often seems to be framed as a somewhat individualistic endeavour, perhaps especially for PhD students. However, it seems to me that the opposite is true, and that everything that is achieved in research is based upon people working together. With that in mind there are a number of people I would like to thank, because without them this thesis simply wouldn't exist in the first place, and they have all had more of an impact than they will ever know.

First of all, I am indebted to all those who gave up their time to take part in this research and share their views with me, and whose voices provide the basis for this thesis - especially to the sports team captains, who made the focus groups happen!

I am so grateful to my supervisor, Nicole Westmarland, without whom this research project would never have been possible, and whose unending support, advice, and ideas right from when I was first thinking of doing a PhD until the present day have made all the difference in encouraging and motivating me to complete this thesis, and to attempt to pursue a vocation in academia. It still feels a bit strange that I have the privilege to work with someone who is such a personal, professional, scholarly, and political inspiration to me - so thank you! I am also very thankful to the other fantastic and kind academics that I have been lucky enough to have supervise me during my PhD: Sui Ting Kong, Ivan Hill, and Mark Cresswell.

Furthermore, special thanks go to my viva examiners, Catherine Donovan and Melanie McCarry. I am so appreciative for all the time you dedicated to my thesis, for being such thoughtful and supportive examiners, and for all the hugely helpful, insightful, and stimulating feedback and guidance you have given me, which I am continuing to reflect on and learn from!

Doing a doctorate may not always be easy, but it has always been a pleasure and a privilege for me to spend several years studying the subject I am most passionate about. This is not least because of the wonderful communities I have been so fortunate to be a part of during that time - in particular, the Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse (CRiVA). A special thank you therefore goes to: Hannah Bows, Kate Butterby, Andrea Darling, Alishya Dhir, Simon Hackett, Kirsten Hall, Kelly Henderson, Clarissa Humphreys, Alison Jobe, Hannah King, Kelly Johnson, Clare McGlynn, Josie Phillips, Kathryn Royal, Kelly Stockdale, Fiona Vera-Gray, and Ros Walling-Wefelmeyer. I am so privileged to be able to work in the

presence of such an amazing group of colleagues doing difficult but world-changing research, brought together by Nicole Westmarland, and where I have not only found bottomless pools of professional support, but also lifelong friends and kindred spirits. The same also goes for the postgraduate research community in the Department of Sociology, especially my awesome office buddies, who I am truly going to miss working alongside now this PhD is over! In particular, I will never forget the great university strike of 2018, and the ties of solidarity that were built among us as a result!

I am hugely grateful to the Economic and Social Research Council for funding this research, and to everyone in the Department of Sociology for giving me the opportunity to do a PhD in this special department, which has become my home away from home. This applies in particular to its amazing professional support staff, and most of all to Fiona Jackson; through her endless support and kindness, she has played a significant role in enabling what must be a stupendous number of social scientists-in-training to complete their PhDs, including myself!

I would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate one of the many pearls of wisdom expressed by my mum: “no one ever forgets a good teacher”. I have been lucky enough to have some incredible teachers who have played a massive role in encouraging and enabling me to get to where I am today (and to never want to leave education!). This includes Liisa Häikiö at the University of Tampere; Jane Andrews, Pam Lowe, Gargi Bhattacharyya, Chris Bolsmann, and Steve Garner from when I was at Aston University; and Ms. Alford, Dr. Carter, and Mr. Deakin from when I first started studying Sociology at Banbury School. In addition, I would like to thank Michael Flood and all of the incredible people in the School of Justice at Queensland University of Technology, for hosting me on the wondrous institutional visit to Australia that I had the privilege of undertaking from June-September 2017.

Finally, but most importantly of all, I would like to thank my family: Anne, Bob, David, Alicia, and Isabella Burrell. Your inspiration has made me who I am, and it is impossible to put into words my gratitude for your unceasing love, support, patience, kindness, and belief - suffice to say that I would never have been able to do this PhD without it!

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Isabella, who inspires visions of a better future.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research focus and key concepts

This thesis discusses the findings of a doctoral research project in sociology which sought to investigate efforts to engage men and boys in the prevention of men's violence against women in England. The project had three core aims: to build a picture of the contemporary landscape of this work and the major issues facing it in England; to advance our knowledge about how campaigns to prevent violence against women are understood and used by young men; and to provide insights into how practice, theory, and research can be developed in the future to further such efforts. This chapter will provide an introduction to the project, and discuss why it makes an original contribution to an important and developing area of scholarship. It will begin by introducing the three core concepts that the study focuses upon, and how they were defined: men's violence against women, prevention, and engaging men and boys.

1.1.1 Men's violence against women

The concept of men's violence against women is somewhat self-explanatory, in that it refers to the use of violence, harassment, and abuse by men (and boys) towards women (and girls). This clarity is one of the term's significant advantages, with the gendered dynamics of interpersonal violence made explicit - something which, as will be discussed throughout this thesis, is crucial for its prevention - though it is on occasion also criticised for being too broad or simplistic as a result. The term 'gender-based violence' is also often used to describe violence against women, as can be seen in the definition provided in Article 3a of the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence:

> *"'Violence against women' is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary*

> *deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."* (Council of Europe, 2011: 3)

However, whilst the term 'gender-based violence' does place an emphasis on gender dynamics, it could still unnecessarily conceal who is doing and receiving the acts of abuse, and risks being even more broad or vague, in that most violence in society could to some degree be seen as 'gender-based'. This thesis therefore uses the term men's violence against women to refer to the gendered use of violence and abuse by men towards women, because they are women.

There are certain forms of interpersonal abuse perpetrated by men against women which are particularly pervasive. The most routine and normalised of these is men's intimate intrusions or sexual harassment towards women within the public sphere, which can range from the streets, to the workplace, to online (Kelly, 2011; Westmarland, 2015; Vera-Gray, 2016). Other highly prevalent forms include intimate partner violence (also known as domestic abuse), rape and sexual violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, forced marriage, 'honour'-based violence, female genital mutilation, child sexual abuse and exploitation (World Health Organisation, 2013). Both intimate, 'private' settings, such as the family and relationships, and the public sphere are thus major contemporary sites for different forms of men's violence against women in England and across the world (Walby, 1990; Westmarland, 2015).

The term which is perhaps most commonly used, by the United Kingdom (UK) Government (2016) for example, to describe these violations is 'violence against women and girls'. It should be seen as a significant feminist achievement that there is now an acceptance among many policymakers, in England and internationally, that there are forms of abuse which are commonly being perpetrated against women, because they are women (Flood, 2015). However, in addition to naming the victim-survivors of phenomena such as partner violence, it is equally important to name the perpetrators of them. In order to understand and address the causes of these crimes, it is crucial to recognise who it is that is doing that violence, and why. Otherwise we risk reproducing what Berns (2001) describes as 'degendering the problem and gendering the blame', in which, by minimising or hiding men's role in the perpetration of abuse, responsibility for it is instead placed on women.

In the vast majority of cases, the agents of different forms of violence towards women and girls are men. This requires us to ask, what is it about our gender relations, and about being a

man in our society, that makes so many men choose to use violence against women - and why is it far less common for women to use violence? Feminist social science, which has developed the vast majority of theory and research around men's violence against women, has shown how the answers to these questions lie in the *social construction* of men and women, masculinities and femininities, in the context of gender unequal, or patriarchal, societies. It is these feminist approaches which provide the theoretical underpinnings for this thesis.

1.1.2 Prevention

Feminist scholars have illustrated that this social context, in which men dominate over women across the institutions and structures of society, is central to different forms of men's violence against women (Walby, 1990). This 'gender order' (Connell, 2005) can be seen as the primary social factor in underpinning and generating that violence. In turn, different forms of men's violence serve to reproduce and propagate these patriarchal power relations, both over individual women, and collectively, across society as a whole. This mutually reinforcing relationship with gender inequality helps to explain why it is that specific forms of men's violence against women continue to be so pervasive, across different societies around the globe. Violence against women is not only being perpetrated by a few pathological men, but is embedded in the very core of the structures of society.

In this environment, prevention work is of significant importance. First of all, attempting to stop men from ever perpetrating violence towards women in the first place has the potential to diminish the long-term suffering, harm, and trauma that it incurs to victim-survivors, up to and including death. Second, it has the potential to contribute towards weakening the unequal power relations that are expressed and furthered by that harm; both through the work itself, and as a consequence of it. Preventing men's violence means making it possible for women to become more free, and could thus play an important role in bringing about a more gender just world (Harne and Radford, 2008).

By 'prevention', this thesis refers to both formal and informal efforts to stop different forms of men's violence against women from ever being enacted in the first place. This is different from interventions directed at perpetrators or for victim-survivors of abuse - though prevention work will inevitably, unknowingly come into contact with both perpetrators and

victim-survivors too. It also diverges from so-called 'risk reduction' campaigns, which aim to change the behaviours of potential victims, because such approaches do not seek to stop violence and abuse from actually being put into practice (Gidycz et al., 2015). Instead, they often simply imply that it will be directed towards a different person, and so do little to address the social problem of violence itself - as well as replicating harmful myths and stereotypes which blame the victim.

Prevention work is built upon the notion that violence and abuse is not inevitable; that it can be reduced, even eradicated. This in turn requires an acknowledgement that men's violence against women is rooted in social relations and inequalities, rather than in human biology or individual pathology - and that by changing society, we can prevent violence. Its basis in creating social change means that prevention can be seen as being political, as it means altering the existing social order. The prevention of men's violence against women therefore requires a degree of political commitment to feminist theorisations of the problem as resting within society as a whole rather than among a small number of individual, unchangeable men. Political antipathy towards feminism may thus help to explain why prevention work remains relatively underdeveloped in England, compared to criminal justice responses for example - and why violence against women continues to be under-prioritised by the state.

It is important to mention here that this research focuses primarily on the context of England rather than the UK as a whole. Policy and practice in relation to violence against women prevention varies significantly across the constituent countries of the UK. Rather than attempting to generalise across these then, this thesis places its attention specifically on engaging men in England. Whilst some of its findings may apply to the UK as a whole, this is certainly not always the case, given the different policy approaches and cultural differences across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

1.1.3 Engaging men and boys

This research focuses on one specific aspect of the prevention of violence against women; that of engaging men and boys. This means specifically reaching out to men and boys across the general population, and encouraging them to become invested in ending violence and abuse (Flood, 2011). Perhaps the most well-known example of such work is the global movement of White Ribbon campaigns, which is based around men speaking out and taking

action against men's violence towards women. White Ribbon was founded in Toronto 1991, after the murder of 14 female students at the University of Montreal by a fellow student, Marc Lépine, on 6th December 1989. Since then it has grown considerably, and there are now White Ribbon campaigns in dozens of countries across the world.

This thesis will often use the terms 'engaging men' or 'work with men' as shorthand when referring to efforts of this kind. Campaigns and programmes to engage men adopt a range of different approaches, but two key features include: bringing about changes in the attitudes and behaviours of men and boys to prevent them from ever choosing to use violence and abuse towards women themselves, such as by tackling sexist and misogynistic assumptions; and mobilising men and boys to become involved in helping to tackle such practices among *other* men, and across society.

Preventative efforts have the potential to positively engage with whole communities, not only with men and boys. However, there are important reasons why targeting them specifically as part of prevention work is valuable. The gendered dynamics of interpersonal violence mean that men are much more likely to be involved in perpetrating and facilitating such acts than women, and they are also less likely to have an existing investment in tackling it, given the smaller numbers of male victim-survivors of abuse. Furthermore, if men's violence against women is rooted in the social construction of masculinities and men's structural dominance, then it is crucial for prevention work to address these issues, which engaging with men and boys specifically provides the scope to do (Flood, 2011). However, as will be discussed in this thesis, whilst work with men can be seen as being a crucially important part of ending violence against women, both its development and delivery are far from straightforward, and are imbued with complications and challenges (Pease, 2008).

1.2 Rationales for the study

There are a number of motivations for conducting this research project, both academic and personal, which I will now discuss further.

1.2.1 Academic rationales

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in engaging men and boys to prevent violence and abuse in England and across the globe, including from policymakers (Flood, 2017). This has followed in the wake of decades of campaigning from women's movements in different countries against violence towards women, which has led to significant advancements in awareness and action to tackle an issue which has historically been ignored by wider society. Many feminists have long been calling on men to join them in speaking out, and there is a long history of small numbers of men taking action in support of struggles for women's rights, including campaigns to end violence against women (Ashe, 2007). However, to date, most men across the world remain largely silent about men's violence.

The influence of the '#MeToo' and '#TimesUp' social movements since they rose to public prominence in 2017 - midway through the completion of this research project - has helped to spark a renewed spotlight on men's harassment, violence, and abuse towards women. The reverberations of this have helped to place further attention on the role that men can and should play in addressing such violations. For instance, a group of high profile men in the US film industry have subsequently initiated a campaign together with anti-violence activists entitled '#AskMoreofHim', calling on their peers to join them in speaking out about the kinds of sexism and abuse highlighted by #MeToo. Whilst engaging men and boys to prevent violence against women is currently a relatively small-scale endeavour in most contexts, developments such as this suggest that it may be on the cusp of becoming more mainstream and widespread (Flood, 2017).

Coinciding with this, there has been growing research into such efforts in recent decades (Flood, 2015), both as part of broader developments in scholarship on the prevention of violence against women, and as one element of the expansion of studies on men and masculinities. However, given the scale of men's violence against women, and the potential significance and complexity of engaging men and boys in its prevention, there remains an urgent need for much more research in the area, especially as interest in its implementation grows. This is particularly true for England, where there has been very little research to date about the extant field of engaging men in the country, even though British researchers have played an important role in the development of critical studies on men and masculinities. This gap in knowledge provided the inspiration for this research project and is where it seeks to make an original contribution to the academic literature; by investigating the English

landscape of work with men and boys to prevent violence against women, and exploring how such efforts might be able to have a meaningful impact upon young men in England and beyond.

To do this, I wanted to hear about the views and experiences of some of those who could be considered 'experts' in the field of engaging men and preventing violence against women. As a result, I carried out interviews with fourteen activists, practitioners, and researchers who had been identified as playing an influential role in the development of these efforts in the English context. Secondly, I was keen to learn more about what young men (who are most often the targets for this work) themselves have to say about violence prevention campaigns, and to simultaneously use this as an opportunity to gain insights into young men's perceptions of violence against women. For this purpose, I conducted eight focus groups with men aged 18-25 in sports teams at a 'Russell Group' university in England (these define themselves as "leading UK universities which are committed to maintaining the very best research" Russell Group, 2018: 3), and discussed different examples of prevention campaigns with them.

1.2.2 Personal motivations

There were also a number of personal motivations for undertaking this research project. Since I first started studying Sociology during my A-levels at the age of 16, I became interested in feminist theory and activism, and ever since then feminist ideas have continued to have a significant impact upon me. This was true of several different social theories and movements for social justice I encountered around this time, but it was particularly true of feminism.

This was most likely aided by the fact that I grew up in a highly supportive, 'feminist' family environment - and one which brought with it a number of social advantages, in terms of being white and middle class, in the south of England. It was also a family setting in which there were few expectations about conforming to particular norms of masculinity - though I do not seek to suggest that I have been impervious to the influence of such norms from elsewhere in society. Meanwhile, over time, as I became increasingly engrossed in learning about feminist perspectives of the world, I also grew interested in what I might be able to do, as a man, to help contribute to the creation of feminist social change. This felt especially important given the relative dearth of men currently taking action of this kind in England. In addition, I held a

particular passion about the issue of men's violence against women, having been profoundly affected as I learnt about its devastating harms upon so many people's lives - and felt a firm agreement with feminist arguments emphasising its centrality to the maintenance of patriarchy.

As a result, the more I engaged with feminist ideas, the clearer it appeared to me that I should do whatever I could to help contribute to efforts to bring men's violence against women to an end. Meanwhile, given the life-changing, inspirational effect that sociology had on me, I had long felt that research and academia was the environment in which I wanted to be. This doctoral research therefore represents an attempt to bring together these two different aspirations, and the culmination of my personal educational journey with feminism to date.

As a man, it seemed clear that I had a particular responsibility to do what I could to encourage other *men* to take action against violence towards women, and to help build our understanding of how this can be done meaningfully and effectively. However, I had learnt from feminist critiques that there can also be problems which can accompany such actions by men, given men's position within patriarchy more broadly; such as the potential for men to replicate practices of domination within a struggle which women have been leading for decades. I have therefore aimed not to approach this research topic with 'rose-tinted glasses'. Whilst wishing to support the prevention of violence against women through research, I have also sought to apply a critical lens to efforts to engage men and boys, which is surely crucial if we are to better understand how this work can be developed in impactful ways.

Feminist approaches to research methodology have taught us that it is equally important for scholars to apply a critical lens to ourselves and our own research practice, and this is especially true for men studying men and masculinities (Flood, 2013; Hearn, 2013). I have therefore aimed to adopt an approach based upon pro-feminist standpoint epistemology throughout the research process (Pease, 2013). Central to this is the adoption of reflexivity with regards to my own personal and political commitments, and their potential impact upon the research (McCarry, 2007). This meant critically reflecting on the potential influence of not only my explicit beliefs and values, but also on the wider bearings that my social positionality may have had, potentially unconsciously, on different aspects of the project. For example, whilst I have sought to maintain a critical perspective towards engaging men throughout the study, it is possible that, as a result of my socialisation into masculinity and privileged social location as a man, there might still be problematic factors which I failed to

scrutinise, such as within the comments of male research participants. By reflexively placing the spotlight back on my own research practice, I hoped to build an awareness of where my perspectives, and by extension, the study itself, might have been limited as a result of my privileged social positioning.

It should also be noted at this point that this thesis uses Mackay's (2015) definition of feminism, as the social movement for women's liberation from male dominance. As a result, I apply the term '*pro*-feminist' to efforts by men to support that movement, which includes the approach that I have sought to adopt in this research. Such terminology is keenly contested (Brod, 1998; Crowe, 2013), however the use of the prefix 'pro-' arises from the sense that it would be inappropriate for men to proclaim ourselves to be 'feminist', based on the understanding that only women can truly liberate themselves from the system of male oppression - men cannot somehow achieve this on women's behalf. However, I do believe that it is important for men to do whatever we can to *support* that struggle and to dismantle the structures of patriarchy as allies and auxiliaries, so embrace notions of pro-feminism as a result.

It is also important to point out that whilst I generally refer to men as 'they' in this thesis, as I am also a man, I could equally refer to men as 'we'. I have chosen to use the pronoun 'they', because 'we' would risk implying an assumption that the reader is also a man. However, in doing so, I in no way wish to infer that I am separate from the men I talk about in this thesis either specifically or generally, or that the ideas it discusses are any less relevant to my own experiences and practices. I am privileged by patriarchy in the same ways as other men, and have been socially conditioned into the same constructions of masculinity. Indeed, its relevance to my own life is precisely why the critical study of men and masculinities interests me so much. However, this is also why a continuously reflexive approach is so vital.

1.3 Overview of the thesis

This thesis will now consider what can be learnt from the existing academic literature relating to engaging men and boys in the prevention of violence against women. Chapter 2 lays out the theoretical underpinnings of the research project, by discussing feminist and pro-feminist elucidations of violence against women, patriarchy, and men and masculinities. Chapter 3 then explores in more detail the prevention of men's violence against women, including

theories of prevention itself, before examining scholarship around the practice of engaging men and boys, as well as some of the issues that lie within such work. Next, Chapter 4 considers the methodology of the research project, including the epistemological assumptions which it is built upon, together with an exposition of how the expert-informant interviews, focus groups, and thematic analyses were conducted.

The following two chapters then explore the findings of the study, using a number of quotations from the research participants to illustrate the different themes that were generated through the analysis of the data. Chapter 5 therefore presents the main findings from the expert-informant interviews, and Chapter 6 explicates the findings from the focus groups. Chapter 7 brings together the different facets of the analysis and discusses what they mean in relation to the existing academic literature. It contemplates the implications of the research findings for the future of work with men and boys to prevent violence against women in relation to practice and scholarship, and how these different aspects of the field can be developed in the future. The chapter then concludes the thesis with a summation of its main arguments. In the appendices, all of the key documents which were used during the research process can be found, including the topic guides, information sheets, and consent forms which were adopted within the interviews and focus groups.

Chapter 2: Theories of men, masculinities, and men's violence against women

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the theoretical foundations of the study, which are based around feminist theorisations of men's violence against women and (pro-)feminist, critical studies on men and masculinities. It begins by unpicking the concept of men's violence against women, together with intimate partner violence more specifically, and explores how these phenomena can be understood as being underpinned by patriarchal social relations. The chapter will then consider some of the most relevant theories of men and masculinities for understanding violence and abuse, paying particular attention to Connell's conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity, and Hearn's alternative theorisation of the hegemony of men. It explores what these ideas tell us about men's violence against women, and the key role that homosociality - which refers to social interactions and bonds between people of the same sex (Flood, 2007) - plays in facilitating men's violence. Finally, it examines the potential for men and masculinities to be transformed, as part of a shift towards ending violence against women and dismantling patriarchy.

2.2 Understanding the phenomenon of men's violence against women

This research project has been shaped in particular by feminist and pro-feminist conceptions of men's violence against women and its prevention. However, there is no one feminist approach to violence and abuse - or indeed to any other issue. Feminist schools of thought are numerous and diverse, and are frequently divided into groupings which can include black feminism, eco-feminism, lesbian feminism, liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, postcolonial feminism, postmodern feminism, post-structuralist feminism, radical feminism, separatist feminism, socialist feminism, womanism, and others (Lorber, 2012). Different feminist approaches are also often categorised in terms of historical 'waves', with the second wave of feminism in particular associated with an increased emphasis and theorisation of men's violence against women between the 1960s and 1980s (Evans and Chamberlain, 2015).

In reality, distinctions between different feminists and feminist approaches are often much more nuanced, context-dependent, and difficult to categorise (McCarry, 2007). However, distinctions do nevertheless exist, and so these terms can still sometimes be of use in broadly distinguishing between different frameworks of theory and praxis. For example, it is important to note that it is those typically categorised as radical feminists who have played a particularly crucial role in making sense of and challenging men's violence against women (Robinson, 2003). As a result, this research project has primarily been inspired by theorists and theories rooted in radical feminism, as these often offer the most far-reaching, comprehensive, and robust accounts of the phenomenon, and how it might be stopped (Mackay, 2015).

Mackay (2015) argues that there are four main distinguishing features of radical feminism. She notes that these are far from the only attributes of this diverse school of thought, but are the key points that separate it from other feminist approaches: First, a belief in the existence of a patriarchal system and making efforts to end it. Second, the promotion of women-only space and the prioritisation of women-only political organising. Third, the conception of men's violence against women as being central to women's oppression. Fourth, the inclusion of the institutions of pornography and prostitution as part of its understanding and analysis of men's violence against women. Mackay points out that radical feminism typically views women and men as representing two distinct *political* groups, which some describe as 'sex classes' akin to Marxist theorisations of socially constructed economic classes.

Second wave feminism, which is particularly closely intertwined with radical feminist schools of thought, played a hugely important role in theorising how gender is socially constructed. In other words, it brought into question the dominant notion - which continues to pervade powerfully today - that certain behaviours, traits and characteristics are 'naturally' associated with women or with men and thus are inevitably 'feminine' or 'masculine'. As well as illustrating how ideas of femininity and masculinity are socially formed - not least because they vary according to time and place - radical feminist thinkers such as Millett (1971) also made clear that this gender ideology constructs and legitimises a hierarchy between women and men, because femininity and masculinity are defined in relation to one another, and the masculine is consistently conceived as superior to and dominant over the feminine. Indeed, that is the very purpose of the social construction of gender in the first place - to justify patriarchal social relations.

In recent decades, some queer and feminist theorists have taken these ideas further, to suggest that the sex binary (i.e. female/male) as well as the gender binary (i.e. feminine/masculine) is socially constructed, and that the two reinforce one another. They have demonstrated that 'women/female' and 'men/male' can also be understood as being social categories, in that they are created and perceived through social meanings (similarly, sex classes could also be seen as being social categories). Yet unlike gender, these categories are based at least partly upon material, embodied, biological features (e.g. differences in reproductive systems) which do impact significantly on people's lives, and which are a central focus of women's oppression (e.g. the imposition of control over female bodies) and men's dominance (e.g. the weaponisation of male bodies to enact patriarchal power).

On the one hand then, it is important to blur the socially-imposed boundaries between the sex classes (not least because they are often not as clear-cut as we tend to think). For instance, by undermining the idea that women and men are in some way naturally 'opposite' to one another, and resisting the essentialisation of differences between women and men within patriarchy which imply that it has some source in biology, in order to move towards a world in which both gender and sex cease to matter as forms of social division. Indeed, Hearn (2014) contends that a key task for pro-feminist men should be seeking to abolish the social category of men, as a significant social category of power. However, it is also important to recognise that within the current social system, these sex classes do exist as political categories which carry considerable consequences - not least that they are based around material sex differences which are at the centre of patriarchal inequality and oppression (Mackay, 2015).

Men's violence against women continues to be highly pervasive throughout England, and across the globe (World Health Organisation, 2013). Statistics on different forms of violence and abuse carry limitations due to the methodological difficulties in collecting accurate data, in particular because of the substantial barriers for victim-survivors to report abuse (Harne and Radford, 2008). Anonymised surveys are therefore likely to provide the closest insights into their extent. In England, the largest of these is the Crime Survey for England and Wales, which is conducted by the Office for National Statistics. This has estimated that 1.3 million women experienced partner abuse, one of the main forms of violence against women, between March 2015-March 2016 and that 4.3 million (approximately one in four) women have experienced partner abuse at some point since the age of 16 (Office for National

Statistics, 2017a). On average, two women a week are killed by their partners or ex-partners in England and Wales (Office for National Statistics, 2017b).

Meanwhile, in the 2013 Crime Survey for England and Wales, it was estimated that 404,000 women were victims of a sexual offence in the previous year, whilst 85,000 women were victims of rape or sexual assault by penetration (Office for National Statistics, 2013). It is thus estimated that one in five women aged between 16 and 59 in England and Wales have experienced some form of sexual violence since the age of 16 (Office for National Statistics, 2013). Globally, the World Health Organisation (2013) estimates that, at some point in their lives, 35 per cent of women across the world will have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner, or sexual violence from a non-partner.

These figures give some indication of the extent to which men's violence against women permeates throughout England and societies across the globe. Far from being exceptional, it is a commonplace, everyday, normalised phenomenon, and this is especially true of men's harassment and intrusions towards women (Stanko, 1985; Vera-Gray, 2016). Liz Kelly (1988; 2011) devised the concept of the continuum of sexual violence to make sense of how the different forms of intrusion, coercion, abuse, and assault experienced by women could be understood as sharing a fundamental common character, and how these experiences are connected to one another. Kelly's conceptualisation showed how both the everyday and extreme acts of violence that men enact towards women can be seen as being intertwined, and *"'typical' and 'aberrant' male behaviour shade into one another"* (1988: 75). Men's violence towards women should not therefore necessarily be seen as being either deviant or episodic, but as to some extent being normative and functional - and as an everyday context for the lives of women and girls. These violences, and the threat of them, serve to control and constrain women's freedom, opportunities, and 'space for action', and facilitate men's entitlement and privileges (Kelly, 1988). Furthermore, wider patriarchal conditions and cultures play a central role in making the behaviours that make up the continuum of sexual violence possible, normative, and desirable in the first place, multiplying its harms, and condoning and excusing it. A wide range of practices which do not themselves necessarily constitute abuse, therefore feed into the continuum of sexual violence and its legitimisation, by reproducing contexts in which it is permissible (Kelly, 1988).

The pervasiveness of women's experiences of violence and abuse suggests that a sizable number of men are involved in committing such acts - and even more in the facilitation,

encouragement, and endorsement of them. Phenomena such as partner abuse cannot therefore be viewed as 'isolated incidents' being perpetrated only by a small number of pathological or deviant individuals, but by men across all social groups, who may be seen as being as 'normal', 'ordinary', or as 'good' as any other (Hearn, 1998). The prevalence of men's violence against women requires it to be understood as a *social* problem rather than only one of specific individuals. However, there is an ongoing reluctance for it to be recognised and responded to as such by patriarchal social institutions, despite the advancements achieved by women's movements.

This makes it clear that whilst changing the behaviours of perpetrators of violence against women who are caught and convicted is important, it will not be enough to tackle the problem alone - especially given the significant failings of criminal justice systems to hold men to account for such crimes. Men's violence against women requires profound *social* transformations, across all levels of society, in order to be seriously diminished. This highlights the level of commitment needed to tackle the problem; however, it also illuminates the possibility of change. If violence and abuse rests upon socially constructed conditions and cultures, then societies also have the power to stop it - and it cannot be seen as being inevitable, inherent, or eternal. The key to prevention therefore lies in understanding these socially constructed factors and addressing them through the creation of social change.

Much research has focused upon identifying specific 'risk factors' or typologies with regards to the perpetration of men's violence against women (Johnson, 2006; Jewkes et al., 2015a; Gadd and Corr, 2017). However, the fundamental social pattern that connects together the vast majority of cases of intimate, interpersonal violence is one of gender, in which men perpetrate violence towards women. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude, as feminists have long articulated, that the primary social factor that must be addressed in order to prevent violence against women is that of gender, and the social systems that it is built upon. Indeed, even when attempting to identify 'risk factors' in perpetration, a key issue may be the extent of one's attachment to the norms and hierarchies of gender (Murnen et al., 2002).

2.2.1 Why 'men's violence against women'?

This thesis is focusing on the phenomenon of men's violence against women in part to be specific - because it is attending precisely to interpersonal forms of violence and abuse that

men enact towards women. Many of these crimes, such as intimate partner violence and sexual violence, can also be perpetrated by women, or against men, and can be perpetrated by or against LGBT people. However, in the vast majority of cases, they are perpetrated by men against women (Walby and Allen, 2004; World Health Organisation, 2013). These forms of violence are therefore often described as being 'gendered' or 'gender-based' to make explicit their roots within gender relations, with women being victimised *because* they are women.

This illustrates why it is so important to focus on men's use of violence towards women as a specific issue, because of the central role it plays in maintaining gendered inequalities in which men possess the majority of power in society, and women's freedoms are significantly constrained. This does not mean that cases of violence and abuse with different gender dynamics (such as men's violence towards other men) should be dismissed, or treated less seriously. However, these different dynamics require their own specialist study and analysis, which is beyond the remit of this research project. Furthermore, in cases where women perpetrate violence and abuse for example, they typically do not carry the same mutually-reinforcing relationship with unequal societal structures and power relations. At the same time, feminist theory still has central relevance to understanding other forms of violence, and feminism has played a hugely influential role in improving societal responses for all victims and survivors of abuse. For example, many of the perpetrators of sexual violence towards men and boys are also men, and so feminist theorisations of masculinity still have significant relevance in such cases - as well as regarding the barriers that male victim-survivors of abuse face in coming forward.

It is also important to underscore that this thesis is focused on prevention, and prevention requires us to investigate and address the *root causes* of the problem in question. We cannot do that if we are not specific about what the problem we want to tackle is - for example, by refusing to acknowledge that the vast majority of violence is perpetrated by men. Furthermore, feminist theory and research has consistently demonstrated over a number of decades that interpersonal violence is asymmetrical in relation to gender *because* it is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality. In other words, phenomena such as intimate partner violence are simultaneously produced by patriarchal social relations, and serve to reproduce those power inequities both among individuals and across society (Westmarland, 2015).

It is therefore crucial for prevention work to take into account the foundational role of gender in violence and abuse. If there are gendered dynamics and inequalities at the very core of interpersonal violence, then preventative efforts are going to have a limited impact on the problem without addressing them. In turn, as well as illustrating why it is so important to focus on men's violence against women as a specific social problem, the role of gender emphasises the importance of preventing violence and abuse in order to tackle gender inequality. This also means that dismantling patriarchal structures across society and within specific settings must form a key component of violence prevention work. In this way, preventing men's violence against women can be both a cause and a consequence of creating a more gender just world.

This thesis focuses on the prevention of men's violences against women as a whole rather than one specific form of it, first of all because this is the approach adopted by many organisations working with men and boys in this area, in order to tackle the shared roots of different types of abuse. Furthermore, as Kelly (1988) articulates, it is vital to recognise the ways in which different forms of men's violence interconnect, and mutually reinforce one another. The continuum of sexual violence demonstrates that, as well as being linked in terms of their causes and outcomes, men's violences against women cannot always be easily separated and compartmentalised from one another. Whilst it can sometimes be important to make such distinctions, in terms of the different types of support that are required for example, at other times the separation of different forms of abuse into fragmented silos can obfuscate the reality of women's experiences of men's violence. For example, partner violence and sexual violence are often treated as distinct social issues, despite the fact that a significant proportion of sexual violence is perpetrated in the context of partner abuse. This can make it harder for practitioners to recognise and address overlapping forms of abusive behaviour.

Some parts of this thesis do focus in particular on intimate partner violence, where it is necessary to discuss an example of a specific form men's violence against women. For instance, the focus groups conducted as part of this project mainly centred on partner abuse. This was with the rationale that it might be easier to recruit young men to take part in a discussion on this topic specifically, which they might have had more cultural awareness and understanding of. However, this focus is not intended to imply that partner abuse is a more important problem than any other form of violence against women - and partner abuse itself

often cannot easily be delineated from other forms of abuse, from stalking to 'honour'-based violence.

When seeking to be more specific, it is important to be as clear as possible about what is being discussed. For this reason, this thesis uses the term 'intimate partner violence', rather than 'domestic violence'. The exertion of power, coercion, and control by one intimate partner over another is a unique phenomenon, with differing dynamics from other forms of abuse which can be enacted in a domestic or familial setting. However, Westmarland (2015) notes that the term 'domestic violence and abuse' is being used increasingly broadly in policy and practice and extended to describe violence by and towards other family members for example, rather than only intimate partners. This can be observed within the UK Government's current definition of domestic violence itself (Home Office, 2012: 19) (though it should be noted that this definition is likely to change imminently, as part of the new Domestic Abuse Bill currently being constructed by government):

> *"Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: Psychological; Physical; Sexual; Financial; Emotional.*
>
> *Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.*
>
> *Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim."*

General concepts such as men's violence against women, and more specific terms such as intimate partner violence, can both be necessary and useful, depending on exactly what it is that we seek to describe. However, it is important that they are applied in ways which provide clarity, rather than blurring the dynamics of abuse that are at play, particularly in the context of prevention.

2.2.2 Situating violence and abuse within patriarchy

In order to make sense of men's violence against women then, it is important to recognise its situatedness within unequal, oppressive, patriarchal gender orders across the globe. Walby (1989: 214) defines patriarchy as *"a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women"*. The concept has been criticised for being overly monolithic or deterministic, and for failing to capture the diversity of women and men's experiences and practices across society. However, others such as Hunnicutt (2009), Pease (2010), and Hearn (2015a) have shown that it remains a highly valuable model to encapsulate the systemic dominance of men and subordination of women across the institutions of society, whilst recognising that patriarchy takes diverse, nuanced, and shifting forms in different social contexts. For this reason, it is more accurate to speak of patriarchies, operating in different settings, regions, and cultures (Hunnicutt, 2009; Pease, 2010; Hearn, 2015a). Connell's (2009) distinction between gender orders (the overall gender arrangement of a society), gender regimes (gender arrangements within social institutions such as the family and the workplace), and gender relations (gender arrangements between individuals) provides a particularly useful framework for understanding the different, interconnected yet diverse levels and dynamics of patriarchal systems (Kelly, 2011).

We can understand violence and abuse as constituting a social structure of its own within such systems (Hearn, 1998). Walby (1990) argues that men's violence forms one of the six partially interdependent social structures that are central to the constitution of patriarchy, together with patriarchal relations in paid employment; the state; sexuality; cultural institutions; and the mode of production. Together with these other structures, men's violence plays a fundamental role in upholding the individual and collective relations of patriarchy, which privilege men and constrain the freedom of women (Walby, 1990). For example, men's use of violence against women and children simultaneously maintains male power and control within heterosexual relationships, the family, and in society as a whole.

Walby (1990) contends that there has been a transition from 'private' to 'public' patriarchy in the UK in recent decades, with the main sites of women's oppression moving from the private sphere (e.g. the household) to the public sphere (e.g. employment and the state). This does not mean that the private sphere has ceased to be an arena for women's oppression (such as through the ongoing pervasiveness of partner abuse). However, the increasing significance of 'public' forms of men's violence towards women, such as street harassment and online

abuse, and the influence of pornography on many aspects of popular culture in England, suggest that Walby's arguments may have some relevance to contemporary manifestations of men's violence. She indicates that whilst women may no longer be excluded from the public sphere, this also means that their subordination and exploitation now permeates throughout society, and not only in the private realm.

For Walby (1989: 220-221) social structures can be understood as being *"institutionalised features of society which stretch across time and space, which involve the dual aspects of reflexive human action and of their continuity over and above the individuals involved in any one instant"*. She argues that the different structures of patriarchy are closely interconnected and often mutually reinforcing. This means that an analysis of violence against women must take into account not only why some men choose to use violence, but why it is that the patriarchal state fails to tackle it, for example (Walby, 1990). Walby argues that whilst men's violence against women is a form of violence which is decentralised, it is nevertheless condoned by the state through its inaction. She contends that conceptualising patriarchy as a system of social structures enables us to reject notions of biological determinism, and to move beyond the idea that each individual man is always in a position of dominance, and all women are always in a position of subordination. As such, Walby emphasises the need to recognise the complex ways in which other systems of power and inequality, such as capitalism and racism, interact and intersect with patriarchy in different terrains (Crenshaw, 1991; Walby, 1990). This has much relevance to men's violence, where factors such as social class, ethnicity, disability, and age can have major impacts on women's experiences of abuse, and the resources that men can deploy in their use of violence.

2.3 (Pro-)Feminist theorisations of men and masculinities

Preventing violence against women thus necessitates understanding why it is that men choose to enact abuse, and come to believe that it is acceptable and desirable to do so. Because men's violence against women is a gendered social phenomenon, this requires scrutinising the gendered position of men in society. Many feminists have long argued that, if men's violence against women is a cause and consequence of a patriarchal gender order, then we need to look at what it means to be a man, in terms of the construction of masculinity, in that social context. Yet, as noted by Hearn and Pringle (2006), gender has traditionally been equated solely with women, in contrast to the 'genderless' (or 'gender-neutral') male norm,

with men's invisible 'ungenderedness' naturalised. They point out that, within academia, androcentrism has meant that men have simultaneously been everywhere and nowhere within social research - men's perspectives and practices are taken to be the default, yet at the same time rarely explicitly placed in the spotlight, and scrutinised through a gendered lens. Hearn and Pringle therefore argue that 'naming men as men' and investigating the relationships between men, masculinities, and public policy for example, remains vital within social science, particularly in relation to men's violence against women.

Similarly, Messerschmidt (2004) argues that scrutinising the social construction of masculinities is a vital task for criminology. He notes that it is necessary to 'look upwards' and study the powerful within any structure of power, and to analyse both the ways in which the privileged act to reproduce their power, and what interest they may have in changing. Yet despite the fact that the vast majority of crimes are perpetrated by men, the role of men and masculinities in crime has often been minimised or hidden within mainstream criminology. Messerschmidt therefore argues that we must do much more to analyse the making of masculinities, in order to understand the making of crime by men.

Masculinity can be understood as the assemblage of socially constituted meanings attached to the social category of men. It is not something which is innate or eternal; it is socially and culturally manufactured and historically shifting, and Kimmel[1] (2001) argues that recognising this gives men agency, the ability to act, and the capacity to change. These conceptions, which originated from feminist theories of gender, have been taken up among others by men who support feminism and seek to adopt and develop an 'anti-sexist' or 'pro-feminist' approach. Within academia, some such men have sought to critically reflect upon their own position in society, and the actions and experiences of men more broadly in relation to women, gender, and patriarchy. They, together with feminist women, have contributed to a research agenda referred to as critical studies on men and masculinities (CSMM) (Hearn, 1998), and it is this approach which this research project has sought to root itself in.

[1] It is important to note here that shortly before the completion of this thesis, the prominent men and masculinities scholar Michael Kimmel has been accused of perpetrating sexual harassment against women (see Flood, 2018). After some reflection, I have decided to leave the citations of his work in this document, but this should be taken into account when considering references to his writing - not least in underlining that any man can enact violence against women, and that pro-feminist men's work should by no means be assumed to be free from patriarchal inequities and abuses.

2.3.1 Making sense of hegemonic masculinity

Perhaps the most influential theory of men and masculinities is that of hegemonic masculinity, which has been developed primarily by Connell (2005). The central tenet of this theory is that there is not one but a plurality of masculinities constructed in society, and these are hierarchically ordered around the form which is hegemonic - which varies according to time and place. The primary function of hegemonic masculinity is to provide legitimacy for patriarchy; to idealise a certain form of manhood in such a way that makes men's societal domination over women seem natural, inevitable, and desirable (Connell, 2005). For Connell, patriarchy is maintained first and foremost through the successful claim to authority - which is achieved through factors including cultural consent, institutionalisation, discursive centrality, and the marginalisation or delegitimisation of alternatives - rather than through direct violence. However, she emphasises that this authority is frequently underpinned and supported by violence.

Connell (2005) suggests that the very need for the terms 'feminine' and 'masculine' illustrates that there are considerable differences within the social categories of both women and men in relation to gender. Normative definitions acknowledge these differences, and present a standard, with femininity and masculinity inferring what women and men ought to be. However, instead of approaching masculinity as an object or norm, Connell argues that we should look to the processes and relationships through which the gendered lives of men and women are actually carried out. Masculinity can therefore be considered at once a location within gender relations, the practices through which men and women engage that location in gender, and the effects that these practices have on embodied experience, personality and culture. Connell suggests that femininity and masculinity are gender projects; they are processes in which practice is configured through time, and it is through these processes that the starting points of femininity and masculinity in structures of gender are transformed. As a configuration of practice, any one version of masculinity is at the same time placed in several different structures of relationship, and these might follow different historical trajectories. Consequently, they are always prone to internal contradictions and historical disruptions.

Rather than simply being an identity or a set of role expectations then, hegemonic masculinity is based on things that are done - it is a pattern of practice (Connell, 2005; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity embodies, and is embodied in,

the way of being a man that is currently most valued in any given context. Whilst the hegemonic may not be 'normal' in terms of the numbers of men able to enact it, it is normative in requiring all men to position themselves in relation to it. Furthermore, power differentials exist between men depending on the extent to which they successfully conform to hegemonic masculinity, with gay, bisexual, and transgender men being particularly marginalised for example. Hegemonic masculinity therefore also legitimates the subordination of some men within the gender order. Inequalities based around sexuality, class, ethnicity, and age for instance all intersect with the category of 'men', which means that the gains and costs of patriarchal power are also shared out unequally.

Similarly, Connell (2005) devised the concept of 'emphasised femininity' to describe the ways in which, through the expectations of gender, women are required to comply with patriarchy, and submit to men's needs and desires. Different constructions of femininity are therefore also hierarchically ordered on this basis, depending on the extent to which they adhere to the standards of emphasised femininity. However, whilst most men are unable to meet the normative codes of hegemonic masculinity, all still gain from the subjugation of women, through what Connell calls the patriarchal dividend. Many men therefore construct masculinities which are complicit with the project of hegemony and accrue privilege, without necessarily being the 'frontline troops of patriarchy' (Connell, 2005: 79).

For Connell (2005), hegemonic masculinities, like gender relations more broadly, are historical and came into being in specific circumstances - and are therefore also subject to historical change. She describes how patriarchy represents a historical process rather than a self-reproducing system, which means that male domination is always open to challenge, and requires significant amounts of effort to maintain. Hegemonic masculinity is also not self-reproducing, and the maintenance of a particular pattern of hegemony requires both the policing of men and the exclusion or discrediting of women. Struggles over hegemony are therefore distinct possibilities, where older forms of masculinity may be displaced by new ones. As a result, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) believe that the potential exists for a more humane and less oppressive way of being a man to become hegemonic, as part of a process of moving towards the abolition of gender hierarchies. A transitional move in this direction could thus include the establishment of a 'positive' version of hegemonic masculinity which is open to equality with women, and the authors argue that this should be a core strategy of struggles for reform.

2.3.2 Key aspects of masculinity in relation to violence and abuse

A number of theorists have argued that relations *between* men are central to the construction of masculinity. Kimmel (2001) has discussed how men constantly scrutinise and police one another's practices and seek each other's approval in their attempts to conform to gendered expectations, for instance through boasting about their masculine accomplishments. For Kimmel, masculinity is primarily a homosocial enactment, in that men must prove their manhood first and foremost in the eyes of other men. This is both a consequence of the subordination of women, and one of its major foundations, with women often relegated by men to being used as a kind of currency with which to elevate their positioning amongst one another (Flood, 2008).

Another fundamental tenet of masculinity is control. A common socially-enforced expectation of men is to at all times possess and be able to demonstrate control, not only over themselves and their own lives, but also over their surrounding environment, and the people around them; in particular, women and children. Because power and control are at the core of how we define masculinity, to lack control is to lack power, which equates to a failure to meet the normative standards of manhood (Kaufman, 1999, 1987). Stark (2007, 2009) argues that the association between masculinity and being in control is even more important than the capacity socialised in men to use force. As a result, he contends that coercive control in the context of intimate partner violence is viewed by its perpetrators as a rational and instrumental enactment of masculinity itself.

For Stark (2007), the immediate objectives of men's micromanagement of women's everyday lives through coercive control are not as important as the larger role it plays in solidifying a woman's generic obedience to male authority. The ways in which she 'does' femininity that meet with the violent man's stereotype of her gender role, allows him to 'do' masculinity as he imagines it should be done. In order to confirm their own masculine identity by negative example, men may regulate aspects of the women's behaviour such as housework and appearance. This enables these men to differentiate themselves from women, by constructing the women in their lives as the sexual difference which they both crave and fear - with their identities being reflexively tied into the ritual performances that they command.

Stark (2007) argues that coercive control is a gender strategy which contains three dimensions: a 'gender ideology', based around a set of values and beliefs about what it means to be a man and woman in contemporary society; a 'gender technology', in terms of the set of resources, tools, techniques and tactics which are used to implement this ideology; and an 'action plan', through which this technology is applied in certain relationships, in accordance with the gender ideology. Stark contends that the need to preserve their sense of control is confused by many men with the domination of women, and they constantly seek evidence that the combination of control, manhood, and dominance is operational, even if the same benefits can be acquired more easily in other ways. There is an emotional dimension of masculinity at play here, with literal signs of female deference or dependence being valued less than controlling women upon whom men also depend upon for feelings of worth in relation to their broader sense of control. The non-reciprocal nature of male authority is at the heart of the gendered identities of these men, and obedience and submission themselves are not as important as the belief that these were consequences of their command.

Stark (2007) points out that whilst men's rational basis for coercive control lies in the concrete advantages they accumulate through it, at the same time these instrumental dimensions are frequently subordinated to irrational control tactics based around arbitrary and impossible demands, which illustrate an oft-repeated pattern of 'control for its own sake'. He argues that this reflects the wider social reality where rationalisations for the allocation of resources and authority based on presumed gender differences can no longer seriously be made, so some men who are determined to differentiate themselves through such stereotypes insert them into their personal lives by directly diminishing and restricting women's freedoms. Men in contemporary societies who desire a world in which male domination over women in personal life makes sense must therefore create it for themselves. Stark contends that whilst the construction of coercive control is complex, beneath its surface lies the association of masculinity with humanity, and the assumption that 'the universal masculine' is the legitimate standard for what is ‘rational, reasonable, and right’ in relationships whilst the feminine represents that which is irrational, emotional, and immoral. Men who adopt perspectives of this kind believe that they are entitled to constantly examine what their partners think and feel, how they behave, and how they use their personal time and resources. As long as disobedience carries with it grave risks of punishment or deprivation, Stark argues that the transparent hypocrisies here actually add to their power within coercive control.

The dynamics of coercive control point to another major paradoxical component of masculinity: its fragility. Kaufman (1987, 1999) suggests that because masculinity does not actually exist as it is represented - as a biological reality - it is troublingly fragile for men. Despite the aggrandisement of maleness and masculinity within patriarchal societies, most boys and men feel constantly unsure and insecure about their masculine credentials. The hegemonic expectations of masculinity which are internalised are impossible to fully satisfy, and the insecurities which stem from that failure can be highly unsettling for men. Violence can become a compensatory mechanism within this context; a way of (re)asserting one's masculine credentials both to oneself and to others. Kaufman contends that the fragility of masculinity is therefore fundamental to men's violence in its various forms. Similarly, Gadd (2003) has argued that men's perceived powerlessness, and the insecurities within their masculine identities, appear to often play an underlying role in their abuse of women.

2.4 Making the connections between men, masculinities, and violence

An important task is therefore to build our understanding of how the social construction of gender helps to enable different forms of men's violence (Anderson and Umberson, 2001). Gendered norms denote upon men a prerogative in the use of violence and coercion, which is seen as a legitimate course of masculine action in specific settings. The use of violence by men and boys is often permitted, normalised and glorified throughout society from an early age (Kaufman, 1987). Men's violence is not always seen as desirable, but it is presented as sometimes being necessary, and can be celebrated as brave and heroic; for example in the military, in sport, and in media and the arts. It can sometimes be expected or demanded, and if men fail to use violence in such contexts, they may be perceived as failing to meet codes of masculinity. In some circumstances, the state itself explicitly endorses and enacts violence, and it is primarily men who are given the legitimacy to carry this violence out, through institutions such as the police and the military.

It should therefore be unsurprising that men's use of violence in other environments, such as within relationships, can be constructed as being legitimate too. Training in the psychological, cultural, and physical preparedness and practice of violence, as well as in associated characteristics such as physical strength, psychic 'toughness', and insensitivity to the pain of others, are key aspects of socialisation in masculinity for boys. Indeed, boys are arguably trained from a young age to be primed to use their bodies as weapons, and for the

exertion of physical dominance over others, for example through the institution of sport (Messner, 1990). Meanwhile, the practice of force by women and girls typically goes against expectations of femininity, and is thus often constructed as illegitimate, undesirable, and deviant.

Kaufman (1987) has argued that violence against women is closely linked to other forms of men's violence - namely violence towards other men, and violence towards oneself - which together constitute what he describes as the triad of men's violence. Each corner reinforces one another, and Kaufman contends that men's violence against women cannot effectively be challenged without simultaneously confronting the other two elements of the triad. This is because all three share their roots within the gender norms through which men are socialised into seeing the world, and required to conform to. These norms promote the idea among men that violence is an acceptable response to the problems they experience. For instance, whilst the expression of most emotions is constructed as being emasculating, anger is one emotion deemed acceptable for men to articulate, from which aggression and violence are normalised responses.

Given that it does not coalesce with codes of masculinity to share one's emotional difficulties, or communicate with or seek support from others, many men may struggle to deal with such difficulties in healthy ways. Finding methods to cope with and express the problems that they experience which are considered to be appropriately masculine can therefore lead to destructive consequences both for men themselves, and for the people around them. This can become even more toxic in interaction with norms of femininity, in which women are often expected to take on the responsibility of emotional gate-keeping for men, and for the family and/or relationship as a whole.

The patriarchal sense of entitlement that men are typically socialised to embrace, for example in relation to heterosexual sex and women's bodies, can also make it more likely for other people to become 'collateral damage', or external focuses of expressions of insecurity, pain, and anger. These insecurities themselves often fester around men's perceived inadequacies in relation to the impossible standards of masculinity. Gender norms therefore provide a central source of tension and pressure in men's lives, and in turn offer largely unhealthy and destructive avenues for dealing with the difficulties they experience. However, it is not only men themselves who suffer the consequences of this toxic cocktail of social expectations, but also the women, children and men in their lives. This demonstrates how the triad of men's

violences feed off one another, together with the patriarchal contexts in which they flourish (Kaufman, 1987). Furthermore, if a man feels able and legitimated to use violence in one context in an attempt to (re)assert their masculine power, it is likely that they may feel more able to do so in another. This illustrates that gender relations can be understood as being at play within *all* instances of violence and abuse, not only in men's violence against women. For example, masculinity is not necessarily the only social dynamic at play, but it is likely to have a significant influence upon most violence by men, which is most violence in society. Violence as a whole can therefore be seen as being gendered, and it is important to analyse the gendered dynamics rooted within all forms of violence, in order to be able to stop them.

2.4.1 Violence as structured action

Messerschmidt (2004; 2013) has argued that crimes such as violence and abuse can be understood as being structured action, in which social structures such as those of gender, race, class, and sexuality are constructed and reinforced through everyday actions and interactions, including crime. Whilst criminologists have for a long time debated the primacy of either social structures or individual agency in shaping the enactment of crime, for Messerschmidt, the two are inseparable, because *"structure is realized only through embodied social action, and social action requires structure as its condition"* (Messerschmidt, 2013: 27). At the same time, the structures of gender, race, class, sexuality, and the intersections between them, are not equally salient or relevant in every social setting where crime is realised.

Messerschmidt (2013) therefore suggests that men's position within the structures of society shape the crimes that are available as resources in their accomplishment of masculinity, and that different crimes are chosen by men in different social settings as means for doing and distinguishing from different masculinities. He contends that masculinities and crime can best be understood by examining the meaning that men and boys attach to their social actions, and the ways in which these actions are based around conscious choices and specific social structures in particular settings. Structured action theory thus helps us to understand why some men choose to enact violence in the pursuit of hegemonic masculinity, and how that behaviour is in turn shaped by men's social settings and their positions within wider power structures. In criminology, much crime is understood as being an expression of powerlessness, but Messerschmidt reminds us that, regarding the making of masculinities

through crime, and certainly in the context of men's violence against women, we are also looking at ways in which those with gendered power act to reproduce it.

However, there have also been critiques of the notion that violence against women is simply perceived by men to be an acceptable way in which masculinity can be accomplished, for instance by Gadd (2002). Gadd takes issue with approaches to masculinity such as that of structured action theory, arguing that they are too simplistic in their understanding of the complex and contradictory ways in which men achieve and express manhood. He argues that they ignore the question of how masculinity is accomplished by men who do *not* use violence against women. Responses from other men to those who perpetrate violence against their partners for example are commonly mixed and ambiguous, often comprising a confused combination of responses such as outrage, avoidance, encouragement, and misogyny. For Gadd, there are two important issues here which need to be investigated further: the ways in which men's violence against their female partners can both be condoned and condemned within contradictory societal discourses, and the psychodynamics of men which can facilitate their use of violence even if it may be socially reviled. He notes that similar psychic processes may also be at work in men who use power and control, violence and abuse against others in a range of other ways, even if they enact masculinity in different forms.

Gadd (2002) therefore advocates a deeper use of psychoanalytic, interpretive readings of men's violences, in combination with structuralist, feminist perspectives, in order to more fully grasp the complex relationship between men, masculinities, and violence. In particular, he emphasises the pattern of both idealisation and denigration that is commonplace in many heterosexual men's relationships with women, which can help to explain why some who claim they want to change, may continue to engage in abusive behaviour. Gadd contends that not enough critical attention is given to the question of what it means to change, particularly with regards to men who have lengthy histories of violence towards their partners. To do so requires engaging with the experiences of men in terms of both social and psychic processes - which can often pull in different directions - and unpicking the issue of subjectivity in terms of individual biographies and 'criminal careers'.

However, whilst men's use of violence against women is shaped by complex and contradictory motivations, and receives a similarly contradictory response from wider society, fundamentally it can be seen as means through which men attempt to enact and attain masculinity - including as part of regulating relations between men. For Hearn (2004, 2012),

intimate partner violence can be understood through these homosocial relations, with violence providing a currency through which men are defined and constituted, and women often being the objects of that currency. Hearn and Whitehead (2006) write that masculinity is often based around notions of heroism and courage which transcend fears of personal vulnerability. They argue that masculine group identity is commonly founded upon a hero/villain/non-man triad, with men constructing themselves as heroic by viewing other men as villainous. However, the hero/villain groups can also be united in their dehumanisation of those men who fail to conform to shared expectations of masculinity, even though any individual man can only meet these standards episodically. All men are therefore to some extent also the non-man; attempting to hide their inability to continuously put heroic or villainous masculinities into practice.

Because women are excluded from this construction of masculinity, they also have the capacity to reflect men's failure to meet these impossible standards back at them, and Hearn and Whitehead (2006) contend that men's violence towards their female partners can be seen as attempting to neutralise this capacity. As a result, they suggest that the major motivational factor in men's partner abuse may go unnoticed, or may even be reinforced, if we fail to grasp how it can be a way for men to protect their ideal masculine self. If prevention programmes therefore articulate notions that partner violence is not only wrong, but also 'unmanly', they may unintentionally increase a perpetrator's perception of threat to this masculine self, which Hearn and Whitehead claim can actually enhance the risk of violence being repeated.

2.5 Relations between men and the reproduction of violence towards women

A number of theorists therefore emphasise the significance of men's relations with other men in the reproduction of violence against women. For example, men's peer groups play an important role in creating what Kelly (2007) calls 'conducive contexts' for violence and abuse to take place. DeKeseredy, Schwartz, and Alvi (2000) write that attachments between male peers, and the resources that these attachments provide, play a fundamental part in sanctioning and encouraging men's violence against women. This is carried out, for instance, through the routine dehumanisation and subordination of women through sexism, objectification, and misogyny within everyday interactions among men, or through the denial, trivialising, excusing, celebrating and encouraging of harassment, violence, and abuse

towards women. This illustrates how men more broadly contribute to the enabling of violence against women, through the maintenance and reproduction of cultures in which that violence is legitimised (Katz, 2006).

Flood (2008) found in research with heterosexual young men in Australia that the social bonds between the participants significantly shaped their sexual relations. He argues that the young men's sociosexual relations with women were organised and given meaning by homosociality in at least four key ways: First, through the policing of homosocial bonds, with the prioritising of friendships between men over both social and sexual relations with women - and platonic friendships with women being both rare and deemed dangerously feminising. Second, sexual activity with women provided a key path to masculine status among the young men, with other men representing an imagined, and sometimes real, audience for these activities. Third, the enactment of male bonding through the medium of heterosexual sex itself, with the young men discussing how they took part in a range of collective heterosexual sexual practices together, which they understood through the lens of homosociality. In these activities, women's bodies served as material sites for the young men's homosociality, showing how men can bond through collective involvement in coercive and abusive forms of sexual practice or sexualised interactions towards women. Fourth, the young men articulated narratives of their sexual practices to male audiences through storytelling cultures shaped by homosocial masculinity, with boastful stories of sexual exploits appearing to represent an important form of homosocial interaction among the young men.

Flood (2008) therefore argues that whilst the role of homosociality in men's lives varies over the life course, the ways in which it orders their heterosexual interactions are vital to understanding men's wider involvement in and negotiation of sexual and gender relations. He acknowledges that bonding between men may often be expressed in harmless practices of companionship; however it also plays a vital part in perpetuating gender inequalities, and the dominance of particular forms of masculinity. He describes how, among the young men he spoke to, homosociality was constitutive of practices around sexually coercing women, and the surveillance and policing of men's social and sexual relations. For Flood, exposing the codes that control relations between men is therefore a crucial part of challenging the oppression of women. Indeed, he contends that relations, networks, and bonds between men play a significant role in enabling them to sustain political and economic hierarchies for example, and the subjugation of women across society.

Sport is a sphere in which men's homosocial bonding practices, and the construction of hegemonic forms of masculinity, play a particularly central role (Flood and Dyson, 2007). Furthermore, masculine violence and aggression are key features within considerable contemporary sport. Messner (1990) has examined these meanings at two different levels: in terms of the ideological connotations of sports violence as a mediated spectacle, and the meanings constructed by men in sport themselves, as well as how these two levels of meaning interconnect in the reproduction of the gender order. He argues that contemporary mainstream sport broadly supports male dominance, not only through the marginalisation and exclusion of women, but through associating men and maleness with skills which are socially valued, and with the sanctioned use of aggression, force and violence. Within the sports context, men are overwhelmingly both the perpetrators and victims of violence, and violence in sport is a practice which is central to the construction of hegemonic masculinity. Through interviews with former male athletes, Messner contends that men use their bodies as weapons in the sports context in order to achieve certain goals, and as with men's use of violence more generally throughout society, this can be seen as learned behaviour. Violence becomes a normative practice in a context where the presence of violent athlete role models combines with rewards from coaches, peers, and the community for a willingness to use it.

Messner (1990) argues that insecure masculine identities can at least temporarily be anchored through the acquisition of a level of status as aggressive athletes. Sport also offers men the opportunity to develop a degree of intimacy with one another without having to deal with the kinds of attachments they are conditioned to be fearful of. Yet the violence involved in much sport means that there are also likely to be high personal and interpersonal costs for those who participate. Messner points out that structural disadvantages mean that this is most likely to be the case for poor and minoritised men, for whom sport may offer one of the only legitimate contexts where a sense of masculine identity can be accomplished.

Messner (1990) contends that the spectacle of violence in sport also helps to legitimise the reproduction of male domination, as well as clarifying and emphasising distinctions between different constructions of masculinity. Violent sports which are based upon the most extreme possibilities of men's bodies are conceived as being separate from women; they provide an arena in which the notion of men's superiority to women is supposed to remain clear, whilst women's position is pushed to the side-lines, where they are frequently sexualised and objectified. For Messner, as the practical importance of physical strength in both work and warfare has declined, representations of the muscular male body as strong, virile, and

powerful in contexts such as sport have become all the more ideologically and symbolically important. He argues that the role of the body in the maintenance of the gender order is crucial because it is so closely tied together with our understanding of the 'natural', despite the fact that within sport, athletes' bodies are often anything but ‘natural’. In this way, whilst the body is commonly equated with nature, it is still an object of *social* practice. According to Messner, embodying hegemonic masculinity involves imbuing men’s bodies with force and skill, suppressing similarities with and naturalising male dominance over women. This is clearly linked to how violence is socially distributed; a process which sport plays a crucial organising role in.

Another major factor shaping relations between men is homophobia, which Kimmel (2001) argues is a core organising principle for how we culturally define masculinity. He states that, in this respect, homophobia is more than an irrational fear of gay men, or of being perceived as gay. It is the fear of being unmasked and emasculated by other men; of being revealed to the world as not being a ‘real man’, because this status can never be adequately attained. What's more, men are terrified of letting other men observe that fear, and it brings about a sense of shame, because when it is recognised, it proves to men that they are not as manly as they pretend to be. These insecurities combine to create silences among men, and it is this silence which maintains the belief that their peers approve of sexism and misogyny, whilst breaking the silence and speaking out leaves men vulnerable to being ‘unmasked’.

Kimmel (2001) writes that the potential for men to be unmasked lies everywhere, and even those things that seem most insignificant carry the danger of setting in motion what they fear most. Everything that men do is influenced by their effort to maintain a masculine front, with every mannerism and movement filled with a coded gender language. The fear of being perceived as gay, as not being a ‘real man’, means that all of the traditional rules of masculinity are often exaggerated by men, and this includes sexual predation towards women, with homophobia and sexism being closely intertwined. Both women and gay men become the 'other' against which heterosexual men project their identities, and through oppressing others, men attempt to prove their own masculinity. Kimmel argues that masculinity is ultimately made up of efforts to defend against being *emasculated*. It becomes a defence against the perceived threat of humiliation in the eyes of other men, and this is enacted in what men say, do, and think, which Kimmel says would often incur a sense of shame were they to step back and reflect on such practices. There is thus a fundamental paradox in men's lives, where they have all the power, and yet do not feel powerful. For

Kimmel, there is also a discontinuity here between the social and the psychological, within the standpoints of men who were brought up to believe that they are entitled to power, but do not feel it. In their analysis of their own situation, many men come to the conclusion that they need more power, rather than supporting the efforts of feminists to address the fundamental relations of power itself.

It is also important to point out here that dominant ideas of masculinity are typically highly heteronormative - men (and women) are assumed to be heterosexual, and to be otherwise is to deviate from the gendered norm (Connell, 2009). Indeed, emphasised heterosexual behaviour (such as overtly sexually pursuing women) is often a key component of hegemonic masculinity, whilst gay and bisexual men frequently continue to be marginalised and dominated over as a result of these same norms and power dynamics. When we talk about masculinity then, we are often in fact referring to heterosexual masculinity. Gay and bisexual men may thus receive aspects of male privilege, and help to reproduce patriarchal oppression, whilst at the same being subordinated and subjugated by those same gender relations. Furthermore, men's violence against women can principally be understood as enforcing heterosexual male dominance, in the individual and collective hegemonic interests of heterosexual men in particular - and indeed it is sometimes utilised as a way of enforcing heteronormativity itself.

2.6 The hegemony of men as a development on critiques of hegemonic masculinity

There have been some criticisms made by feminist scholars about aspects of scholarship on men and masculinities. For example, McCarry (2007) has argued that there is a tendency for men to be portrayed as the real victims of masculinity, with the oppression of women minimised, concealed, or pushed to the margins. She contends that notions of masculinity are often reified and disembodied from men, so that it is this abstract concept which becomes problematised, rather than the practices of men themselves. She points out that if an abstract conception of masculinity is constructed as being the problem, and men are not directly held accountable for their actions, then this will inhibit effective intervention strategies, because it is the practices of men which need to be challenged. For McCarry, the priority for studies on men and masculinities should therefore be to critically analyse men and their material practices, as well theorising the construction of masculinities.

Similar criticisms have been made by Hearn (2004; 2012) in relation to hegemonic masculinity. For Hearn, the theory unintentionally shifts the focus away from men and onto masculinities, potentially diffusing critiques of men's practices directly, and absolving men and masculinities which are non-hegemonic of responsibility. He argues that the concept of hegemony has been used in a limited way by Connell, in its application to the formation of 'masculinities' rather than to actual gender groupings such as the social category of 'men', even though men are more hegemonic than any one form of masculinity. In addition, Hearn notes that the three masculinities which are most commonly referred to by Connell are described as contrasting with one another, yet all three could be interpreted as being conducive to men's violence against women: hegemonic masculinity legitimates patriarchy; complicit masculinity condones men's violence; and subordinated masculinity seeks to compensate for its relative lack of power. Hearn therefore questions the extent to which hegemonic masculinity can help us to understand violence against women, and has developed a theory of the 'hegemony of men' as a way of scrutinising men's practices more directly.

Rather than identifying particular forms of masculinity, the model Hearn (2012) proposes is based around examining what sets the agenda for different ways of being a man in relation to women, children, and other men. He describes how 'men' can be taken to mean both a social category formed by the gender system, and the dominant collective and individual agents of social practices; on the one hand being open to interpretation and contestation, and on the other being a highly established and powerful abstraction, which significantly affects social distributions and arrangements. Hearn (2012) argues that critically probing the hegemony of men should take into account the following components:

Table 1: Hearn's proposed agenda for investigating the hegemony of men

a)	The hegemonic acceptance of the category of men itself, through social processes where it is taken for granted that some people are classified as 'men'.
b)	The system of distinctions and categorisations between different forms of men's practices towards women, children, and other men (this aspect can be understood as being closest to the concept of masculinities).
c)	Questioning which men, and which men's practices within different social institutions have the most power in determining the agendas of those systems of differentiations (instead of a particular hegemonic form of masculinity).

d)	Identifying which forms of men's practices are most widespread and repeated. For instance, if those which are seen as being 'complicit' take a more central position in the construction of men and the various ways of being men in relation to women, children, and other men, might it in fact be the complicit which is most hegemonic?
e)	Describing and analysing the various everyday, 'normal', and taken-for-granted practices of men towards women, children and other men, and their different, contradictory meanings (rather than the ideal which is most culturally valued, or the forms of men's practices which are most exaggerated or most conforming).
f)	With consent being fundamental to the maintenance of hegemony, questioning the place that women's consent may have in relation to the hegemony of men, and how women may differentially support particular practices of men, and help to subordinate other practices or ways of being men.
g)	Analysing the ways in which these different components interrelate with one another.

In Hearn's (2012) approach, hegemony is a noun applied to the category of 'men' and men's practices, rather than a hypothetical and difficult to define adjective to masculinity; masculinity is part of rather than central to the analysis; and its relation to men and to women is named and problematised, rather than assumed. Whilst recognising the value and influence of the concept of (hegemonic) masculinities and retaining its use where appropriate, in my approach to this research I have sought to take on board the critiques made by McCarry and the model proposed by Hearn.

2.7 Men's interests and motivations in becoming agents of change

A core focus of efforts to engage men and boys in the prevention of violence against women therefore lies in educating them about the harmful consequences of constructions of gender and encouraging them to liberate themselves and their peers from these constraints. However, given that this hierarchy of gender norms fundamentally exists in order to maintain a patriarchal system from which men gain power and privilege over women, to what extent do men actually have the potential to change? Pease (2002) has explored the question of men's interests in the context of patriarchy, and whether or not men may have too much to lose to become reliable allies to feminists in efforts to end violence against women. He describes three main ways of understanding men's capacity to embrace feminist principles. These are

based around their: material self-interests, in terms of the benefits men accrue from patriarchy; enlightened self-interests, in terms of the ways in which men can benefit from the dismantling of patriarchy; and men's responsibility to take a stand against patriarchal inequalities, by making an ethical and political choice to defy the system that privileges them.

Whilst belonging to particular social groups may mean that people are socially conditioned to think and act in particular ways, Pease (2002) argues that it does not have to predetermine the nature of their interests. For him, people do not have 'objective' interests as a consequence of their location in society; they formulate their interests within the context of the discourses available to them. Interests are not simply transmitted between men's social location and their behaviour. The notion of objective interests therefore provides an obstacle to identifying the potential sources of change among men, and how men can depart from externally-applied criteria of what their interests should be.

Pease (2002) contends that, if men may often construct interests in relation to their own material well-being, they may also construct ideal interests based around support for more abstract principles. They have an interest in maintaining the status quo because their personal identities, values, and ideas of themselves have been constructed within the options that are socially available to them, but material benefits are not the only source of our interests, and the patriarchal interests of men are rooted in needs and wants which are not given, but produced. When men express dissatisfactions with their own lives, there are a number of different discourses available which can help to make sense of these dissatisfactions, in ways that are compatible with patriarchal constructions of men's interests. Pease therefore argues that for pro-feminists, expressing notions of men's non-patriarchal interests is a key political task. This requires a theoretical articulation of men's interests which looks beyond the options available within prevailing patriarchal discourses.

Pease (2002) puts forward two ways in which men's interests can be reconstructed, as part of the reconstitution of their social and personal identities: first, through the encouragement of social empathy in men, by developing their awareness of the consequences of their structural power and privilege; and second, through reconceptualising the pain that men experience, based around a different understanding of their needs. He argues that a vital part of changing one's sense of self-interest is a process of becoming unsettled. This requires strategies such as demonstrating how people take part in their own socialisation, which can in turn expand their potential to intervene in and change the world. For Pease, by making conscious the ways in

which men have hitherto interpreted the world unconsciously, resistance can be cultivated against what is seen to be normal, and ways of subverting their own socialisation can be opened up. Learning from accounts of oppression creates possibilities for those in positions of dominance to recognise both their privilege and their pain, and build alliances with those who are oppressed.

Pease (2002) contends that becoming actively involved in challenging patriarchy helps men to recreate themselves as subjects in their ethical activity, and thus reconstitute their own interests. When this takes place, there is not a conflict between ethics and self-interest; instead, our sense of what constitutes our own interests changes. In such a situation, we can move away from an idea of ethics as repressively holding us back from doing what we want to do, and towards a reconstitution of our self-interest as ethical beings. For Pease, this alternative explanation for how men can be encouraged to support feminism can enable us to transcend the unhelpful conception of self-interests and social justice as a dichotomy.

The points that Pease (2002) makes demonstrate the complexities when thinking about men's interests and their potential to change in relation to preventing violence against women within patriarchy. Edwards (2006) has also engaged with these debates and has put forward a model for 'aspiring ally identity development' based upon the different underlying motivations which influence those who are invested in becoming allies for social justice. He argues that there are three main statuses in ally identity development, in which the consciousness and understanding of allies grows in complexity and sophistication. At the same time, these developmental statuses do not necessarily manifest in linear or chronological ways, and may overlap with one another in a fluid manner.

The first such status according to Edwards (2006) is that of being an aspiring ally for self-interest, which is based primarily upon selfish motivations, by taking action specifically for the people we know and care about. This can involve working *over* members of the group we seek to support. The second status is that of being an aspiring ally for altruism, where the motivation is to take action for 'them'; the 'other'. This involves working *for* members of the target group. The final status is that of being a genuine ally for social justice, which is motivated by what Edwards describes as a combined selfishness, where we take action for 'us'. This means working *with* members of the target group. Edwards contends that one example of where these different statuses can be observed is in what allies choose to focus their work on. For aspiring allies for self-interest this might be perpetrators; for aspiring allies

for altruism it may be members of the dominant group; and for allies for social justice it may be 'my people', in which the ally does not separate themselves from other actors. Similarly, the concept of privilege might be invisible to aspiring allies for self-interest, who may fundamentally want to maintain the status quo; for aspiring allies for altruism, they may feel guilty about their privilege, and try to distance themselves from it; and for allies for social justice, they might see the illumination of their privilege as liberating, and may deliberately seek to use their unearned privilege against itself.

The model proposed by Edwards (2006) provides a useful way of visualising the different statuses that men's motivations to support efforts to end violence against women can take, and how these may change as their consciousness of women's experiences grows. Furthermore, the arguments made by Pease (2002) can add additional depth to Edwards's arguments, in which not only men's motivations for social justice, but the way in which they perceive and define their own interests, can be reformulated as they develop their understanding of being an effective ally. These issues illustrate how supporting social justice itself is not enough on its own for members of the dominant group, and can lead to ineffective work if they do not reflect upon their motivations in the process. Without critically examining their own approach, individuals who may genuinely aspire to be allies can still cause harm and perpetuate the oppression which they seek to change, despite their best intentions.

2.8 Summary

This chapter has outlined some of the key feminist and pro-feminist theories of men's violence against women that this project is built upon. It has discussed the importance of recognising how different forms of violence against women form a continuum, and how these are entwined with other forms of men's violence. Addressing the shared roots of these different manifestations of men's violence is crucial to effective prevention work, which means focusing on the role of violence as a core structure of patriarchy, and how it is generated and enabled through the social construction of men and masculinities. Connell's (2005) conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity has made a vital contribution to our understanding of these gender relations, adding further complexities to theories of patriarchy by illustrating that there is not one form of masculinity but many, with some being more powerful than others, and that which is hegemonic legitimising male domination.

However, there are problems with theorisations of masculinity, too. McCarry (2007) has demonstrated that placing our attention primarily on masculinities can take the critical spotlight away from men, who are ultimately the ones that uphold and benefit from patriarchal power. Hearn (2012) has therefore advocated a conceptualisation of the hegemony of *men*, which provides a clearer and more comprehensive account of men's violence against women, and men's practices within patriarchy more broadly. I agree with the critiques made by McCarry and Hearn, and whilst recognising that notions of masculinities can provide a useful conceptual tool, have sought to place my focus firmly and explicitly on men's practices and the hegemony of men within this research.

Regarding such practices, a number of theorists have suggested that men's homosocial relations with one another play a significant part in reproducing violence against women, for example in the context of sport, where women can become a currency through which men prove their masculine credentials to one another. This demonstrates the need for prevention work to encourage men to resist these cultures and norms, and speak out rather than staying silent about sexism and misogyny within them. Pease (2002) and Edwards (2006) among others have demonstrated how men do have the potential to play an important preventative role in this way, if they can reflect on their own motivations and move towards becoming an ally for gender justice, whilst reconstructing their sense of self-interest as ethical beings. Now, the thesis will investigate more deeply what can be learnt from the academic literature about the prevention of men's violence against women, and how men and boys can be engaged effectively as part of such efforts.

Chapter 3: Research on engaging men and boys and preventing violence against women

3.1 Introduction

Having discussed feminist theorisations of men's violence against women, this thesis will now examine in more depth some of the existing scholarship on its prevention, including efforts to engage men and boys. First of all, this chapter will introduce the current context for this field in England, and in particular, some of the recent developments and obstacles at the policy level. Next, it considers different approaches that are used in attempting to engage with men and boys and prevent men's violence against women, as well as some of the theories and models which have been proposed in order to understand how such work can have the most impact. The chapter then discusses in more detail the rationales for engaging men and boys, before exploring what can be learnt from existing research about what appears to work within such efforts. Finally, it outlines some of the critiques that have been made by feminist scholars about tensions and problems which can arise when involving men in the prevention of violence against women.

3.2 The policy terrain for violence against women prevention in England

In recent years, attention from policymakers appears to have been increasing, both within England and internationally, towards the notion of engaging men and boys to prevent violence and abuse (Flood, 2017). For example, encouraging men and boys to become agents of change has been emphasised within international initiatives such as the United Nations Beijing Platform for Action on Gender Equality. Flood (2017) has described this trend as forming part of a 'turn to men' in gender politics, in which growing political and popular interest is being expressed with regards to men's role in relation to feminism and gender equality. In the UK, the Conservative Government's 'Ending Violence against Women and Girls: Strategy 2016-2020' document recently committed to backing such efforts, stating:

> *"Starting from the premise that men can be a powerful force in challenging negative behaviours, we will engage men and boys in challenging VAWG [violence against women and girls] by working with organisations to support widespread awareness*

about VAWG and how men can be involved as an integral part of approaches to prevention." (HM Government, 2016: 17)

Similarly, the Women and Equalities Commons Select Committee's 2015-16 inquiry into sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools highlighted the importance of supporting boys and young men to challenge such practices:

> *"Too often, SRE [Sex and Relationships Education] ignores the position of boys and young men. It must be broadened to challenge harmful notions of masculinity and reflect boys' experiences. It should also support boys to challenge and reduce sexual harassment and sexual violence." (Women and Equalities Committee, 2016: 41)*

A White Ribbon All Party Parliamentary Group was also established in 2016, with the support of several UK Members of Parliament: *"to engage parliamentarians (particularly male parliamentarians) in raising awareness and challenging male violence against women and girls in all forms"* (House of Commons Register Of All-Party Parliamentary Groups, www.parliament.uk, 2017).

These developments form part of a wider emphasis on prevention within recent policy documents in the UK on tackling violence against women. For example, the four 'Ps' which have constituted the main pillars of the Coalition (Conservative and Liberal Democrat) and Conservative Governments' approaches since 2010 have been Preventing violence and abuse, Provision of services, Partnership working, and Pursuing perpetrators (HM Government, 2010; HM Government, 2016). The previous Labour Government also highlighted the need for prevention, committing to a somewhat comprehensive and far-reaching preventative strategy in their 2009 policy document 'Together we can end violence against women and girls: A strategy', shortly before they lost power (Gadd, 2012). As part of this approach, the document also stressed the importance of engaging men:

> *"Men have a crucial role to play in challenging VAWG. Most men and teenage boys are not violent towards their partners and would condemn those who are. Our prevention strategy will emphasise the part all men can and should play in taking a stand against violence." (HM Government, 2009: 6)*

In addition to strongly worded policy statements, the UK government has also initiated some of its own prevention campaigns around tackling violence against women in recent years. These have included the 'This is Abuse' campaign, which was created in 2010 by the Labour

Government and ran until 2014; and the 'Disrespect NoBody' campaign, which was launched in 2016 by the Conservative Government. However, aside from these primarily media-based awareness raising campaigns, there has been little in the way of substantive investment in prevention efforts on the ground (Gadd, 2012). Meanwhile, the neoliberal austerity project pursued by successive governments since 2010, which has included severe cuts to public services, the welfare state, and local government, has had a devastating effect on violence against women services (Ishkanian, 2014; Bowstead, 2015; Sanders-McDonagh, Neville, and Nolas, 2016). For example, Towers and Walby (2012) found that 31% of local authority funding for the sector was cut between 2010/11 to 2011/12 alone, and the number of specialist domestic violence refuge services in England declined from 187 to 155 between 2010 and 2014 (Women's Aid, 2014). These are often the same organisations leading on prevention work. It would therefore appear that whilst the UK government has been 'talking the talk' with regards to the prevention of violence against women, it has not been 'walking the walk', and serious, ambitious political commitments to prevention remain lacking. For instance, in 2015 new legislation was introduced criminalising controlling and coercive behaviours within relationships, but there was little in the way of prevention campaigns to accompany this. This arguably represents one among many missed opportunities to build public understandings and change attitudes about different forms of violence against women in recent years.

A broader issue here is the concealment of men and masculinities within social policy discourses around violence against women, with the perpetrators of abuse frequently left almost entirely hidden from the conversation (McKie and Hearn, 2004; Hearn and McKie, 2008; Hearn and McKie, 2010). This is discursively enacted in particular through the construction of men's violence against women as a problem of women; as a problem without perpetrators; as a problem without context; as a 'gender-neutral' problem; as an 'agentless' problem; and as a problem of the Others (Burrell, 2016). With men's practices rendered largely invisible within policy discourses on tackling violence against women, responsibility is instead implicitly placed upon women to stop men's violence. This suggests that, despite appearing to recognise the gendered nature of violence against women at a superficial level, fundamentally the UK government is often discursively degendering interpersonal violence, by refusing to address who is perpetrating it. This reflects an ongoing societal reluctance to hold men to account or address the role of men and masculinities in relation to violence and abuse (Hautanen, 2005).

This invisibility contributes to a wider failure to 'name men as men' within policymaking. Social policy is constantly shaping and being shaped by gendered power relations, despite often being conceived as a 'gender-neutral' process (Hearn and Pringle, 2006; Hearn, 2010). For example, assumptions about gender are frequently imbued within the development of policies, yet these assumptions are rarely recognised or made explicit (Hearn and McKie, 2008). Even when policymaking does address gender relations, the focus is typically centred on what Hearn and McKie (2008) call the 'policy users', rather than the 'problem creators', preserving the association of issues of gender solely with women. Whilst it is vital to focus on victim-survivors of abuse and ensuring that they receive support and justice, *preventing* violence against women also requires us to place attention on the men who perpetrate it and the social contexts and structures that enable it.

3.3 Different approaches to preventing men's violence

The core aim of work to prevent men's violence against women is to stop it from happening before it is ever perpetrated in the first place, by bringing about changes in individual and collective attitudes, norms, and behaviours, together with wider transformations in social institutions and structures. From a public health perspective, it is sometimes referred to as 'primary' prevention, to distinguish from attempts to stop abuse whilst it is ongoing (secondary prevention, e.g. providing resources for people to seek support), or to minimise its harms and stop it from happening again (tertiary prevention, e.g. programmes for perpetrators or for victim-survivors) (Harne and Radford, 2008; Storer et al., 2016). However, as will be discussed in the next section, the use of epidemiological language of this kind in relation to violence and abuse has been critiqued by some (pro-)feminist scholars, and so this thesis simply uses the term prevention (though it does focus specifically on what are sometimes called primary prevention efforts).

Efforts to prevent men's violence against women therefore focus on the general population, rather than specifically targeting those who are already known to have perpetrated abuse. They are often directed at young people, given the emphasis on stopping abuse before it starts, and the potential to address sexist and misogynistic attitudes before they become entrenched. Young people are likely to still be forming their ideas about gender, sexuality, and relationships, and in the process of constructing their gendered identities, with a range of social forces having an influence upon different aspects of their sense of self (McCarry,

2010). This means that educational settings such as schools, colleges, and universities, potentially offer particularly advantageous settings in which prevention programmes can be implemented. However, this does not mean that only young people should be the targets of prevention work, and men and boys of all ages can be engaged with in a wide range of different environments, such as in their communities, their workplaces, or organisations and groups that they are involved in.

Work to prevent men's violence against women can therefore take a wide range of different forms. This can include 'social marketing' or publicity campaigns, through formats such as posters and leaflets, via traditional media such as television advertisements, or online, using websites and social media. It often involves face-to-face work, such as education and training programmes, which themselves can vary significantly, for example in terms of content, theoretical framework, methods, and length (ranging from a one-off, one hour session to an intensive, ongoing course for example). Or it could take the form of community-mobilising campaigns, protest and activism, or efforts to change policy and legislation.

Prevention could therefore include any work which contributes to the reduction and cessation of men's violence against women - and can encompass a much broader range of actions beyond formal prevention projects themselves. Dines and Cribb (1993) state that rather than asking what the *domain* of prevention is, our fundamental question should be 'is this being done in a way that promotes prevention?' This can be asked of any instance of our day-to-day practices, not only those which are explicitly motivated to stop violence and abuse. In this way, there are no boundaries to preventing men's violence against women, because any situation, event, or interaction has the potential to have a preventative impact (Dines and Cribb, 1993; Naidoo and Wills, 2000). For instance, everyday, grassroots feminist activism and protest against patriarchal oppression can be considered a vital aspect of preventative efforts.

Flood (2011) has developed a framework based upon the 'spectrum of prevention' (Cohen and Chehimi, 2010) to assess the different societal levels at which efforts to engage men and boys in the prevention of violence against women can be put into practice. There are six interrelating and complementary levels to the spectrum, and for prevention efforts to achieve long-lasting change, it is argued that they must be enacted at all six levels of the 'social ecology' (Cohen and Chehimi, 2010; Flood, 2011). At the first level of the spectrum (Cohen and Chehimi, 2010) is the most localised form of prevention: strengthening individual

knowledge and skills. At the second level is promoting community education, including through face-to-face programmes, communication and social marketing campaigns, and local educational strategies. At the third level is educating providers and other professionals, who can spread skills and knowledge and model positive norms. The fourth level involves engaging, mobilising, and building the capacity of communities, by bringing together individuals and groups to respond effectively to violence against women, and encouraging them to take ownership of the issue, for example through events, networks, and campaigns. At the fifth level is transforming organisational settings, cultures and norms, for example through implementing policies and procedures to change organisational practices. At the sixth level is influencing local, regional, and national policy and legislation, through the creation of laws and policies which support healthy community norms and a society free from violence and abuse. Flood (2011) concludes that in order to bring about meaningful change, it is vital to move beyond scattered and small scale interventions, no matter how impactful they may be, and towards efforts which are coordinated, systematic, and large-scale.

A crucial factor is how prevention work interacts with gender. Geeta Rao Gupta (2000) has devised an influential continuum to assess the approaches of different health interventions in this regard, ranging from least to most desirable: they can be gender-unequal, by perpetuating gender inequalities; gender-blind, by ignoring the norms and conditions of gender; gender-sensitive, by enacting awareness of gender inequalities but not addressing them; gender-specific, by taking into account women's and men's specific needs; gender-transformative, by working to create more equitable gender relations; and gender-empowering, by empowering women, or freeing women and men from the impact of destructive gender norms. Gupta's typology has been adopted for example by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and ProMundo (2010), a key US-based organisation working with men to promote gender equality in several different countries.

Gender-transformative or empowering programmes are therefore considered to be best practice for public health interventions (UNFPA and Promundo, 2010), and it is helpful to consider how Gupta's typology applies to different examples of engaging men. Given its focus on working with men and boys, it likely that such efforts will adopt at least a gender-sensitive or specific approach. However, it is important to contemplate the effectiveness and diversity of frameworks that different organisations adopt in relation to gender, and whether they seek to transform or empower for example - or if they may sometimes fail to recognise or address the impacts of gender and patriarchy, even whilst working specifically with men.

With this in mind, when considering how to differentiate between forms of violence prevention work it may also be useful to consider how it goes about relating to men and boys. First of all, this means clarifying whether or not men and boys are actually the deliberate targets of the work in the first place. It is by no means necessary for all violence prevention efforts to focus specifically on men (rather than the population as a whole, for example). However, if they are doing so, making that decision consciously and explicitly is likely to be important, in order to be able to address issues to do with the social construction of masculinities, for instance. One example of a method of relating to men (and potentially the whole community) is that of 'bystander intervention', which has been a particularly influential approach on university campuses in the US, and increasingly in England too (Fenton and Mott, 2017). This is based around training 'bystanders' to take on an active role in speaking out and taking action when they encounter attitudes and practices which could feed into, or directly contribute to violence, abuse, and harassment (McMahon and Banyard, 2012). Meanwhile, campaigns might also relate to men as if they are potential perpetrators of violence for example; or as potential allies acting in solidarity with women; or as students to be educated; or as mutual victims of patriarchy. There are thus a range of different ways in which programmes can relate to the men and boys they are engaging with, which can be shaped by different aims and objectives, with some likely to be more effective and relevant than others in different contexts.

3.4 Theorising prevention through the lens of public health

The field of public health has been particularly important in the development of theories of prevention, and some have argued that violence and abuse should be tackled by moving towards a public health approach, rather than one resting largely on criminal justice, after-the-fact responses for example (Keithley and Robinson, 2000). For Prothrow-Stith and Davis (2010), only a comprehensive, multifaceted strategy can be effective in tackling the complexity of violence, with criminal justice-responses representing only one aspect of that overarching strategy. Yet they also note that public health is rarely seen as a partner in preventing violence by those outside of the field, whilst many within the public health community do not see themselves as part of its solution. However, they argue that if prevention is considered through the lens of public health, it is possible to see the potential for reducing violence and increasing the health and resilience of communities more generally.

Public health theorists have pointed out that the methods which are chosen to try and promote health are not politically neutral; for example in terms of ideological conceptions of the causes of health problems, and whether responsibility for change is placed upon individuals or on wider society (Naidoo and Wills, 2000; Fertman et al., 2010). This is an important issue in relation to the prevention of violence against women, and political assumptions can clearly be observed within different preventative approaches as to where the onus for change is placed. For example, many campaigns have been criticised for reproducing victim-blaming narratives by focusing primarily on women's practices, rather than on those responsible for perpetrating the violence.

Some of the most influential approaches to health promotion include: the medical model, the behavioural change model, the educational model, and the social change model (Naidoo and Wills, 2000). Medical model-oriented interventions are typically top-down and expert-led, and have traditionally dominated within health promotion, meaning that prevention is frequently interpreted only as the prevention of disease, through focusing particularly on groups who are deemed 'high-risk' (Naidoo and Wills, 2000). One way of distinguishing between health promotion programmes is therefore the extent to which a 'top down' or 'bottom up' approach is adopted, and who determines the issues that the programme seeks to address (Laverack, 2004).

One of the goals of radical and social change-oriented approaches to health promotion is to empower marginalised and oppressed communities, based on the recognition that health is closely interconnected with social inequalities. Some of these approaches connect prevention to struggles for social justice and equality, and seek to redistribute power in order to promote good health (Naidoo and Wills, 2000). This is not least because many health problems are related to social conditions which are largely outside the control of those immediately affected. Focusing only on changing personal behaviour therefore inappropriately narrows the possible solutions which are available, because individual choices are always made within the context of a broader social environment. Prevention work has the potential to address both ends of this spectrum (Dorfman, Wallack and Woodruff, 2005).

Tones and Green (2004) describe the empowerment model of health promotion as one based around an interaction between education and ‘healthy’ public policy, with environmental factors that promote good health enabled through the implementation of policy. For them, education's empowering potential is central to the construction of healthy public policy, as

well as building individuals' capacity for health-related actions. In this regard, Naidoo and Wills (2000) argue that the phrase 'making the healthy choice the easier choice', coined by Milio (1981), encapsulates this approach to health promotion. This points to how practitioners can offer information and advice about adopting a healthier lifestyle, but for these kinds of changes to be realisable, the contextual factors which lead to 'unhealthy' behaviours need to be addressed (Naidoo and Wills, 2000). Laverack (2004) describes community empowerment as taking place across a five point continuum of personal action, including: small mutual groups; community organisations; partnerships; social action; and political action, with each point representing both an outcome in itself, and a progression onto the next level.

Some of these issues become more complex in the context of engaging men, as the dominant group within patriarchy, to subvert their own power and privilege as part of efforts to prevent violence against women. In the words of Casey et al. (2013: 229), *"engaging men involves mobilizing a socially privileged group to work toward dismantling a problem largely perpetuated from within its own ranks".* Fundamentally however, as with other forms of prevention, ending men's violence against women is about the redistribution of power. Many campaigns also seek to empower men to have the confidence to speak out about sexism and abuse, to question and challenge one another, and to bring about change in their own practices, those of their peers, and in society as a whole. Such work could therefore be seen as attempting to encourage men to re-evaluate their standpoints and their interests, and actively use their power as a force for positive, preventative social change. However, public health models also demonstrate that, whilst changing the practices of individual men is vital, for sustainable impact to be achieved, this must be connected to wider environmental and structural transformations.

3.4.1 Applying the social ecological model to violence against women

The social ecological approach to health promotion, which forms the basis for the spectrum of prevention discussed in section 3.3, has become a particularly influential theoretical framework within the field of preventing men's violence against women (Flood, 2011; Casey et al., 2013). This approach is built upon Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model, which theorised how nested levels of the human environment have reciprocally influential impacts on both human behaviour and social problems (Casey et al., 2013). It is based on the

recognition that there are multiple, complex, interacting levels of influence on how people choose to behave, and that the practices of individuals both shape, and are shaped by, the environment around them (Fertman et al., 2010). The approach helps to locate intervention points within these different levels of influence. The model was first applied to the analysis of violence against women by Heise (1998), who conceptualised it as a multifaceted phenomenon rooted in the interplay between individual, relationship, community, institutional, and societal factors.

Ottoson and Green (2005) argue that successful community-based health interventions demonstrate that these activities have to be coordinated and mutually supportive across the different levels and spheres of influence, ranging from individuals, to peers, to institutions, to entire communities. Cohen and Chehimi (2010) contend that efforts at the broadest levels of the spectrum of prevention, in terms of changing organisational practices and policies, provide the tipping point for changing social norms. This is because they transform the environment of the community as a whole, and alter what is considered to be acceptable and desirable behaviour. This encourages people to actively contemplate their own practices, and provides relevant awareness and a supportive environment for helping to promote change. New social norms then emerge when enough individuals have made the choice to transform their current behaviour (Cohen and Chehimi, 2010).

The social ecological approach has been adopted by a number of bodies and organisations working in the fields of preventing violence against women and engaging men and boys (for example, see: UNFPA and Promundo, 2010; Our Watch et al., 2015). However, there have also been some critiques about its utilisation, for example by Pease (2011; 2014; 2015a; 2015b), who has articulated some of the limitations of applying public health models to men's violence against women. Pease (2015b) points out that these approaches, from which the language of 'primary' prevention originates, risk conceptualising violence against women as an epidemiological or medical problem, as if it were a disease. This is also a danger when using language which describes violence and abuse as an 'epidemic', for example. Such constructions of men's violence against women risk implying that it is in some way an inevitable, uncontrollable, or natural phenomenon, rather than a pattern of practices and choices made by human beings. There are considerable differences between diseases and men's use of violence towards women - and treating them in the same way can diminish men's agency and responsibility for the perpetration of violence, as if it were an unstoppable and unavoidable problem.

Pease (2014) also notes that the ecological approach suggests that there are multiple causal factors at different levels of society which all play a part in explaining men's violence against women. This relegates patriarchal inequalities to only one among many factors underpinning violence against women, rather than what Pease (2015b: 79) describes as its 'central organising framework'. What's more, explanations drawn from these different levels can actually sometimes contradict one another. For example, whilst psychological explanations at the individual level and feminist approaches at the structural level may make sense on their own, they may conflict with each other if we attempt to bring them together into a coherent, holistic account of the problem. Pease (2015b) refers to the criticism made by Stanger (2011), that the 'ecosystem' concept employed by ecological theorists - which originates from the principles of biological ecology - is not sufficiently complex to be applied to social, political, and economic contexts.

For Pease (2014), it is not a coincidence that the ecological model is increasingly taking on primacy in work to prevent men's violence against women. He notes that it coincides with the growing professionalisation of prevention work, where there is a risk of it being co-opted to fit into neoliberal and managerialist policy agendas which are contributing to the depoliticisation of efforts to end violence against women. Of course, violence and abuse *is* a public health problem. But if we limit our focus to this lens only, then do we fail to see how it is also a political, economic, and societal problem? By seeking to change specific parts of the social ecology, do we lose our focus on transforming the social system as a whole? Within public health, the social ecological approach is diametrically opposed to medical models of disease prevention. Yet by applying it to men's violence against women, we may risk reproducing a medicalised and depoliticised conception of the phenomenon.

The social ecological model has arguably been useful in relation to the prevention of violence against women because it does advocate for holistic social change, in a way which is relatively accessible and politically palatable for policymakers to embrace. Yet Pease (2014) points out that despite the aim to take into account all levels of the 'social ecology', these approaches to prevention often end up focusing primarily on individual attitudes and behaviours, with less attention placed on changing the structural levels of patriarchy. Another important criticism that Pease (2015b) makes is that whilst public health distinctions between 'primary', 'secondary', and 'tertiary' prevention may be relevant in relation to disease, they may be overly simplistic and obfuscating of reality when applied to men's violence against women. For example, a workshop in a university is likely to include a mixture of young men;

some of whom may have already perpetrated some form of violence towards women, whilst many others will have engaged in sexist and misogynistic behaviours. It is therefore unlikely that even young men can be divided so neatly into categories of 'primary', 'secondary', or 'tertiary' preventative interventions within patriarchy.

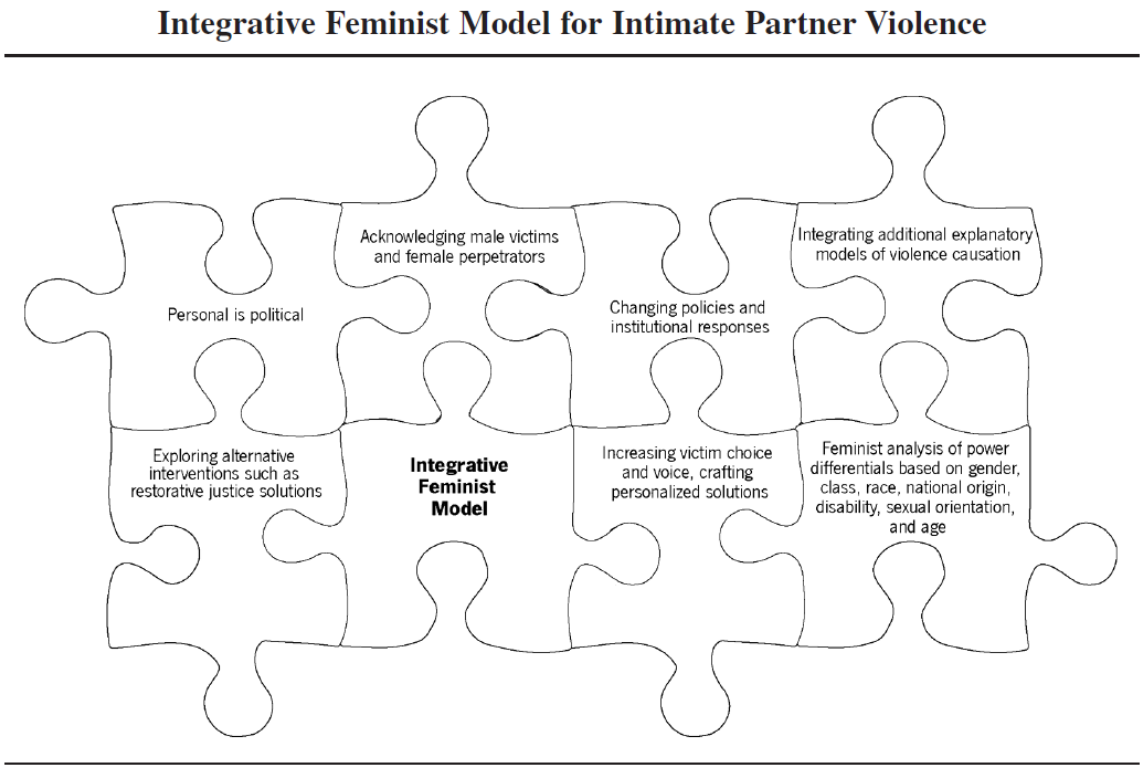
There is also a risk that such distinctions can diminish the role of women's movements in the prevention of men's violence against women. Pease (2015b) argues that by placing primacy upon 'primary' prevention, and associating women's organisations with 'secondary' and 'tertiary' prevention, there may be an implication that this work is in some way less important, in dealing 'only' with the consequences of men's violence, rather than trying to stop it from happening in the first place. Such a construction obscures the ways in which 'secondary' and 'tertiary' efforts contribute in multiple ways to 'primary' prevention, and cannot always easily be separated out from one another. Furthermore, it conceals how women's organisations have for many decades led the way in developing prevention efforts, whilst at the same time supporting the victim-survivors of men's violence. Pease (2015a) contends that the notion that work with men addresses the problem 'upstream', whilst women's organisations deal with the consequences 'downstream' (described by Messner, Greenberg, and Peretz, 2015) is similarly problematic, and suggests a hierarchy between 'men's' and 'women's' anti-violence work. Meanwhile, Storer et al. (2016) found in interviews with representatives from different organisations engaging men across the globe that rigid distinctions between 'primary' and other levels of prevention do not fully encapsulate the reality of these efforts. They argue that more expansive understandings of prevention are needed, which recognise that there is significant overlap between different levels of intervention, in order to more accurately reflect the unique and contextualised approaches that different organisations adopt.

As a result of the criticisms made by Pease and others, I decided against basing this project around the social ecological model, and have sought to avoid using some of the epidemiology-influenced frameworks and language surrounding public health approaches when discussing men's violence against women. Whilst recognising the potential uses of a public health lens and the insights that it can provide, there is a risk that feminist analyses can become absorbed within such approaches, when they should be front and centre of efforts to understand and tackle men's violence. Pease (2014) advocates the integrative feminist model (IFM) developed by McPhail et al. (2007) as one such approach to conceptualising violence against women and its prevention. McPhail et al. (2007: 834) argue that *"rather than being*

one component of an ecological model, the feminist perspective can be the glue holding together these puzzle pieces, multiple theories, and interventions". The IFM therefore represents a synthesis of academic debates, research findings, victim-survivors' voices, and critiques of existing theories. Multiple theoretical perspectives and models of causation can thus be incorporated where relevant, whilst feminist accounts (such as a continued emphasis on the political nature of personal relations) remain at the centre of its explanation of men's violence against women.

McPhail et al. (2007) argue that such an approach would also allow for more comprehensive understandings of the totality of violence and abuse, including those forms experienced by men or LGBT people. This would also enable new assessments and intervention practices to be introduced within feminist work to tackle men's violence against women, whilst nurturing the coexistence of both professionalism and activism in such practice. McPhail et al. note that the IFM supports an increase in choices and an amplification of the voices of victim-survivors, in which personalised solutions can be developed and where the criminal justice system is not seen as the only option available. The IFM also therefore advocates further changes in policy and institutional responses to violence against women, including recognising where such responses have failed to date, for example by investing in developing alternative models and programmes to the criminal justice system where appropriate.

Figure 1 The Integrative Feminist Model for Intimate Partner Violence



McPhail et al. (2007) describe the IFM's structure as forming that of a puzzle (see Figure 1), in which interlocking theoretical pieces fit together in order for a more complete picture of the problem to become clear. However, it is important to note that not *all* theoretical frameworks can fit into this puzzle, and that a gendered, feminist approach to violence against women forms its central piece, whilst other parts provide further detail and context to help make sense of the range of forms of violence and abuse. Whilst different aspects of the IFM can be debated, it demonstrates that it is possible to take into account the societal complexities of violence and abuse and its prevention, and retain an analysis which holds feminist theory at its core. Such an approach would be based around creating systemic change across the different levels of society, but potentially in a more far-reaching, nuanced, and elemental way than the ecological model allows, and without necessarily leaving itself vulnerable to the same internal contradictions.

3.5 Why engage men and boys to prevent violence against women?

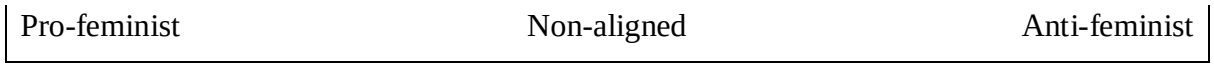
This chapter will now turn to efforts to specifically engage men and boys, and how these can fit into a feminist model of understanding and preventing men's violence against women.

Flood (2011) has argued that there is a powerful feminist rationale for involving men in the prevention of violence towards women: men are predominantly responsible for the problem in the first place; violence against women is built upon social constructions of masculinity and by male dominance across the structures of society; and men have the potential to play an important positive role in helping to end it. Indeed, they can be seen as having an ethical responsibility to do so (Pease, 2002).

Violence prevention work with men and boys is intimately connected with the promotion of gender equality, and programmes therefore sometimes focus more broadly on this, with men's violence against women forming one component of such efforts. Meanwhile, campaigns against men's violence specifically may see the promotion of gender equality as a key consequence of their work. In this respect, there are also other forms of pro-feminist engagement with men and boys, based around, for example, promoting men's role in the care of children, and the sexual and reproductive health of men and their partners. In addition, there are a wide range of efforts to engage men and boys around gender issues which are not necessarily based upon a pro-feminist framework. These might focus on, for example, men's mental and/or physical health, male suicide, or male victims of abuse. Some of this work may be relatively neutral towards feminism, within the LGBT community for example, whilst other groups may implicitly or explicitly adopt an anti-feminist or misogynistic stance, such as 'men's rights' activists (Mann, 2008).

There is thus a diverse range of work being undertaken by and with men and boys in relation to gender, in England and across the world. Such activities can be placed on a continuum, in terms of that which is pro-feminist, that which is relatively 'non-aligned', and that which is anti-feminist, as depicted by Figure 2. The majority of work to engage men and boys in the prevention of violence against women explicitly places itself in the pro-feminist camp, although differences can be still observed in approaches here. However, given the existence of organisations and individual activists who adopt anti-feminist and misogynistic positions, for example around 'father's rights', it is perhaps all the more important that those groups who do seek to adopt a pro-feminist approach do so vocally.

Figure 2: The gender politics of work with men



By addressing the social roots of men's violence against women, work with men and boys enables us to move beyond discourses which implicitly blame victim-survivors for their own abuse, by placing the onus on them to change their practices in some way to avert men's violence. For example, Thapar-Björkert and Morgan (2010) discuss how institutional discourses often nurture a culture of resignation around intimate partner violence among practitioners, which normalises abuse and depicts victim-survivors as deserving of their fate. Engaging men and boys provides a counter to such ideas, by implementing the idea that men's violence against women is not inevitable, and that social change which can end it is possible. Rather than focusing on the behaviour of victim-survivors, it helps to shift attention and responsibility onto those who actually perpetrate violence, those who possess the majority of power and privilege within patriarchal societies, and the social structures which enable violence against women to be reproduced.

This does not mean that responses to men's violence against women should not be centred upon victim-survivors, and their voices and experiences. However, focusing only on the practices of victim-survivors cannot be conceived as being *preventative*. Only the perpetrators of violence are responsible for that behaviour, and changing the practices of women would not stop the violence from being enacted - it may simply mean that a different woman is targeted instead. A serious commitment to ending men's violence thus requires placing a critical preventative spotlight on men. This does not mean that all prevention work should only be with men and boys, as the whole of society must play a part in helping to tackle violence against women. Raising awareness across the community can also help women to recognise abuse for example, and enable them to seek support, or to support others in their lives. There can also be positive interventions specifically with women and girls which do not carry victim-blaming assumptions, such as feminist self-defence (Vera-Gray, 2018). However, the problem of violence against women primarily lies with men, and thus the responsibility for ending it also primarily rests with them. Engaging men and boys can therefore be seen as one crucial component of a broader strategy to end men's violence against women and achieve gender justice.

3.6 What works in engaging men and boys?

As organised efforts to engage men and boys in the prevention of violence against women are still in relatively early stages of development, there is a need for much more research to be

done about what works and what doesn't in different contexts. However, research has shown that well-designed work with men and boys can bring about positive changes in relation to preventing violence against women (Ricardo et al., 2011; Dworkin et al., 2013; Flood, 2015). One particularly central finding appears to be that effective programmes are those which are more sustained and in-depth, rather than being brief or one-off (Hester and Westmarland, 2005; Ricardo et al., 2011; Jewkes et al., 2015a). This is perhaps unsurprising, given the need to tackle highly entrenched, widely-reinforced assumptions, norms, and behaviours that are deeply embedded within resilient patriarchal structures. For the same reasons, multifaceted approaches which utilise a range of mediums and methods (such as simultaneously advocating for structural changes, mobilising community action, delivering face-to-face educative workshops, and running a social marketing campaign within the same institution) are likely to have a greater and longer-lasting impact on communities (Jewkes et al., 2015a). Yet it can also be highly challenging to implement in-depth and multi-faceted programmes because they are much more resource-intensive. For example, in Ricardo, Eads, and Barker's (2011) systematic global review of evaluated interventions, most of the studies they identified focused on targeted rather than system-wide activities, perhaps because these are much more likely to be adopted in the first place by institutions.

One issue about which the academic literature is more equivocal regards the most effective composition of groups taking part in programmes to prevent violence against women (Casey et al., 2013). These discussions are in particular based around the question of whether prevention work can have more of an impact if delivered with single-sex or mixed-sex groups. Studies suggest that there are strengths and weaknesses to both approaches, and Ricardo, Eads, and Barker (2011) contend that it depends on the goals and the context of the work itself. For example, mixed-sex groups can provide a space in which healthy and respectful relations between women and men can be modelled, as well as providing an opportunity for women's voices and experiences to be heard by men (Ricardo et al., 2011). On the other hand, single-sex groups can focus more specifically on the uniquely gendered experiences, assumptions, and positions of women and men, who are likely to be starting from quite different levels of awareness and understanding about violence against women (Ricardo et al., 2011). Fox, Hale, and Gadd's (2014) research into partner violence prevention education also suggests that there is a risk that boys can easily become disengaged within gender-based interventions, but perhaps especially in mixed-sex settings. Furthermore, single-sex groups may allow for more frank and honest discussions, which could provide

greater room for reflection and change than may be possible within mixed-sex groups. Indeed, mixed-sex groups in particular could at times become a difficult environment for some participants, such as women and girls who have been subjected to men's violence.

This debate is particularly relevant for engaging men and boys, as much of this work is carried out in single-sex groups in order to specifically address issues around the social construction of masculinities, and men's role in both the perpetration and prevention of violence and abuse (although many of the issues discussed in this thesis are equally relevant to engaging men and boys within mixed-sex groups). Within wider mixed-sex contexts, this raises the question of what women and girls should be doing at the same time. It is not always easily practicable to split girls and boys up at school for example, and there is a danger that concurrent prevention programming specifically for women and girls could slip into victim-blaming narratives of 'risk reduction'. This is not inevitable; there are a range of different interventions which could be helpful in a single-sex context for women and girls, from general education and awareness-raising about violence and abuse, to feminist self-defence for example. However, it does demonstrate that there are potentially tensions involved in carrying out both mixed and single-sex group work.

Ricardo, Eads, and Barker (2011) make clear that in single-sex groups with men and boys, it is vital that women's voices are still heard in some way, whether through female facilitators or other means, such as videos or vignettes about women's experiences. Indeed, Marchese (2008) has made a powerful critique of the exclusion of women from men's anti-rape groups in the US, physically and/or representationally, when women's perspectives are (frequently) absent from programme development, content, and delivery. She argues that this can seriously impinge upon the accountability of such groups to women, and that the importance of feminism for understanding sexual violence can often be minimised in such contexts. Marchese argues that in much of the literature utilised by men's anti-rape groups, men's perspectives are centred and elevated, whilst women's experiences of sexual violence are marginalised, creating what she calls a 'masculinist' representation of rape. Similar to Murphy (2009), Marchese is critical of claims which suggest that it is men who will single-handedly solve the problem of violence against women.

This raises a further question about who is best placed to facilitate work with men and boys. There are arguments for both mixed-sex and single-sex facilitation, similar to those discussed above about the composition of groups more generally; it should not be assumed that even

within an all-male group of participants, all-male facilitation is necessary (Ricardo et al., 2011). In addition, facilitators can be trained experts from external organisations focusing on violence against women for example (such as a Rape Crisis or domestic violence service); or they may be internal to the organisation, such as teaching staff; or peers to the participants, such as fellow students. Ricardo, Eads and Barker (2011) point out that there are strengths and weaknesses to each of these approaches which should be taken into account, and that some will be better suited to specific contexts than others. Either way, it is vital that facilitators have sufficient knowledge and understanding of violence against women and the issues of gender surrounding it, to be able to talk confidently and sensitively with participants (Fox et al., 2014).

However, there are advantages to having 'non-expert' facilitators, such as teachers or peers, who are likely to know the participants better and have a closer relationship with them, and who participants may feel more comfortable and relaxed with. Internal facilitators are also likely to be able to make programme content more relevant to participants, and may be able to provide more in the way of ongoing support than those from external organisations, for whom the intervention may inevitably be more ephemeral (Fox et al., 2014). That said, some degree of distance can actually make it easier to talk about potentially difficult or embarrassing subjects such as sex and relationships, and there is no guarantee that internal members of teaching staff for example will not themselves hold sexist views.

3.6.1 What do we seek to change when engaging men?

Pease and Flood (2008) have also brought into question the emphasis upon attitudes within work to prevent violence against women. They argue that the perceived importance of attitudinal change has not been interrogated enough, and that there are limitations to the ways in which the concept can help us to understand and tackle violence and abuse. For Pease and Flood, we have to recognise the contexts in which attitudes are situated. Interventions must therefore address not only the attitudes which explicitly endorse violence against women, but also the familial, organisational, community, and societal norms related to gender and sexuality which help to normalise and legitimise men's violence against women more broadly. Gender roles must therefore be a key focus for prevention campaigns, because attitudes about violence against women are closely related to these beliefs, and in particular, men's adherence to sexist and patriarchal views about women.

Pease and Flood (2008) therefore highlight the importance of putting forward an alternative set of norms and values within prevention work, based around non-violence, gender equality, and social justice. In addition, for efforts to end violence against women to have a lasting impact, interventions must attend not only to attitudinal and cultural change, but also to transformations in structural relations and social practices. Complicating matters further, Flood (2015) notes that even if efforts to change attitudes are successful, it should not be assumed that this will necessarily lead to changes in behaviour; the relationship between the two is complex, and not necessarily unidirectional. Meanwhile, Salter (2016) asserts that changes to both attitudes and norms have been prioritised within much work to prevent violence against women, at the expense of the transformation of structural gender inequalities. He therefore advocates a 'two-dimensional' approach to prevention, which places the same scrutiny on economics and politics as on culture, which recognises the ways in which these factors are interconnected, and intervenes in both the structural *and* the normative conditions of men's violence.

The point made by Pease and Flood (2008) about transforming social norms around gender roles connects to Gupta's (2000) assessment of 'gender-transformative' programmes being those which are most likely to have an impact in health interventions. The research evidence appears to support this conclusion (Jewkes et al., 2015a; Casey et al., 2018). This means that in work with men and boys, whilst raising awareness and changing perceptions around violence against women itself is vital, the most significant element to address may be the norms of masculinity that men are expected to conform to. Casey et al. (2018) have categorised engaging men activities into three interconnecting domains: 1) initial outreach and recruitment with unengaged men and boys; 2) attitude and behaviour change interventions; and 3) ongoing participation in social action. They argue that there is a need for greater conceptualisation and evaluation of how a gender-transformative approach can inform and be applied to work with men and boys, especially in the first and third domains which have received less scholarly attention.

Many violence prevention campaigns do not adopt an approach based around gender transformation - perhaps especially when initiated by organisations and institutions which are not as closely connected to feminist theory and activism. Indeed, scholars such as Salter (2016) have critiqued the way in which some campaigns employ normative ideas of masculinity in attempting to convince men to speak out about violence against women. Salter argues that these norms reflect the prevailing conditions of gender inequality, and serve to

naturalise and rationalise rather than challenge it, by further entrenching patriarchal ideologies. Their use risks feeding into benevolent sexism in the form of paternalism and chivalry for example, and thus replicating the ideological underpinnings of women's subordination. Salter argues that tropes such as that of 'real men don't hit women', which some campaigns make use of, accept both the inevitability of men's violence and conflicts between men based on masculine status, and aim to instead mobilise these things for the protection of women. For Salter, such limited aspirations for change in men capitulate to the current conditions of gender inequality, and *"generate a regressive kind of self-congratulatory spectacle of masculinity"* (2016: 476).

Murphy (2009) has made similar criticisms of the 'My Strength is Not for Hurting' campaign from the organisation Men Can Stop Rape in the US. He argues that, because they are so entangled with gender inequality and men's violence against women, we should abandon the supposed virtues of masculinity such as 'strength' altogether, rather than attempting to resignify (and thus reinforce) them. For Murphy, if we are serious about ending violence against women, campaigns need to encourage men to move beyond not only the ideal of 'strength', but beyond 'men' as a gendered social category altogether.

Flood (2015) writes that some campaigns may deliberately use stereotypical notions of masculinity as a pragmatic way of appealing to men, whilst simultaneously attempting to redefine masculinity as non-violent. They may choose to use examples of 'real' men who successfully conform to and embody dominant codes of masculinity, as 'bell cows' to represent campaign messages as spokespeople for example (Murphy, 2010). However, for Flood, programmes should ultimately work to encourage men to disinvest from gendered identities and demarcations. He contends that work with men and boys should thus not only question the dominant cultural meanings attached to manhood, but challenge the binaries and hierarchies of gender itself. Campaigns should thus affirm and promote men who do not fit into normative codes of masculinity, and accentuate the diverse nature of gender and sexuality within men's actual lives and experiences.

Flood discusses the example of the 'Walk a Mile in Her Shoes' marches, studied by Bridges (2010), to explore this issue further. Such marches are intended as a way for men to express their opposition to violence against women, by walking for a mile wearing stereotypically feminine shoes such as high heels in 'drag', to represent the enactment of empathetic allyship with the experiences of women. However, Bridges found that those who took part in the

marches commonly played with gender boundaries in ways which were clearly demarcated as being inauthentic and temporary, and which thus *reinforced* rather than challenged hegemonic gender norms. In the process, feminism was gendered and associated with femininity, and as being separate from the male participants, who used behaviours such as subtle homophobic gestures to renounce potential challenges to their sense of heterosexual masculinity (Bridges, 2010). This demonstrates how, if work to engage men and boys does not reflect carefully on how it constructs gender in its own messages, it can inadvertently reproduce normative ideas about masculinity even when superficially appearing to challenge them.

3.6.2 Men's pathways into anti-violence activism

There has also been some research into how and why some men become involved in efforts to end violence against women in the first place. For example, Casey and Smith (2010) have found that initial sensitising exposures to the issue of violence and the experiences of survivors, combined with the internal attachment of meaning to these experiences, and tangible opportunities to become involved, were key to the pathways of men that they interviewed. For those men that took part in Casey and Smith's study, who had recently become involved in efforts to end violence against women, their pathway was a process which unfolded over time, and featured a number of different influences - it was never shaped by a single factor, but through a combination of experiences and reflections. It was typically based upon the issue of violence against women becoming personally relevant to their own lives in some way, or through making an empathetic connection of some kind with the emotional impacts of abuse. Casey and Smith discuss the importance of existing personal connections and social networks for the men they spoke to in facilitating their initiation into violence prevention work. Important links were also made by the men between their activism and a sense of community, either in terms of perceived support from their existing community, or as a way to build a sense of community for themselves.

In another study, based on a survey of men who had attended events focusing on the prevention of violence against women, Casey et al. (2017) found that the most frequently reported explanations by the men for becoming involved were: concern for related social justice issues; exposure through their work to the issue of violence; hearing an emotionally-impacting story about abuse; or listening to a disclosure of abuse from someone in their lives.

Casey et al. developed four profiles to classify men's motivations for initiating their participation in violence prevention. These were based around having a: low personal connection (for example, by becoming involved through other social justice issues, or through their employment); empathetic connection (for instance, by hearing disclosures of abuse from people in their lives, or learning about violence against women through presentations or on the internet); violence exposed connection (through personally experiencing, witnessing, or using violence); or high personal *and* empathetic connection (by having personal experiences of violence *and* seeking out learning opportunities and the stories of others). Interestingly, there did not appear to be significant differences in the duration of movement participation for the men who fell into each of these different categories.

However, in relation to the question of why men become involved in efforts to prevent violence against women, Peretz (2017) has cautioned that failing to adopt an intersectional approach can lead to existing knowledge being inaccurately universalised to all of men's experiences. His research on men's pathways into gender equality campaigns demonstrates that these may be less homogenous than the existing literature suggests, especially for men who themselves experience forms of oppression. For example, Peretz found that within a gay/queer men's gender justice group, their pathways typically began earlier, were not as reliant on the influence of women in their lives, and did not create a shift in their gendered worldviews, because their own intersecting identities and experiences meant that they already had more of a connection to gender justice than most men. This meant that these men lacked a traditional 'pathway' narrative. Peretz therefore contends that men's pathways into pro-feminist activism are shaped not only by their identities as men, but also by their other intersecting identities and positions, which may blend privilege with marginalisation, or multiply different forms of privilege.

3.7 Tensions in involving men and boys in efforts to end violence against women

As work with men and boys to prevent men's violence against women grows, there are not only debates about the most impactful ways in which that work can be carried out. There are also dilemmas about the meaning of such work, and potential tensions and problems with regards to its relationship with feminism. Flood (2011) has summarised the potential dangers of involving men and boys in the prevention of violence against women as follows: the

dilution of feminist agendas; the diminishing of resources for victim-survivors; and the marginalisation of women's voices and leadership. For these reasons, he underlines the importance of this work being guided by a feminist agenda, and being carried out in partnership with women and women's organisations, to whom it should be accountable.

Similarly, Pease (2008) has outlined a number of tensions which can accompany men's participation in the movement to end violence against women. First, the danger of reducing funding for women's services; even if pro-feminist men emphasise that prevention work should not take resources away from women, the lack of funding available means that focusing on men may at least indirectly contribute to this. Second, that men's involvement weakens the feminist orientation of work to prevent violence against women, by degendering men's use of violence for example, or minimising broader commitments to tackling patriarchy. Third, that men's involvement can have a silencing effect on women; for example, the commonplace argument that men should speak out because their views are granted more authority, and that men are more likely to listen to other men, may also risk reproducing these same inequalities by reaffirming an emphasis on men's voices. Fourth, that men 'take over' campaigns to end violence against women, or co-opt them for their own purposes.

Fifth, that work with men by men can lead to collusive behaviour, in which they may fail to challenge one another's sexist and violence-supporting practices. Sixth, that men who speak out receive greater attention and praise for doing so than women, with what Messner, Greenberg, and Peretz (2015) describe as the 'pedestal effect'. Male privilege can still have a significant impact on gender relations within the violence prevention field, and can mean that men receive credit and recognition out of proportion with their actual efforts for example. Bridges (2010) points out that this fits with what Hochschild (1989) calls the 'economy of gratitude', in which men often receive more appreciation for engaging in tasks which are relatively basic and routine, and receive little recognition when undertaken by women. This gratitude in turn perpetuates the idea that preventing abuse is primarily 'women's work' and responsibility, whilst men deserve praise simply for 'helping out' (Bridges, 2010). Finally, Pease (2008) describes how men involved in preventing violence against women may fail to earn women's trust in them, and in the notion that men do have the capacity to change, by failing to address the patriarchal socialisation embedded within their own practices for example.

In her research on efforts to prevent violence against women within the Australian local government sector, Castelino (2014) writes about some of the ways in which the inclusion of men within this work can lead to the silencing of women's voices. First, she argues that it can add to women's work, in terms of the extra effort women in the field have to make when working with men, for example out of a concern for men's potential defensiveness, or in managing the interpersonal space between themselves and male practitioners, or through placating men's need for appreciation of their efforts. Second, through men constructing themselves primarily as 'good men' rather than as pro-feminist men, and requiring emotional reassurance about their status in this regard from the women they work with. Third, through the need to continually qualify assertions directed at men with the acknowledgement that not all men are perpetrators, for example within social marketing campaigns. This again takes the focus away from the effects of violence upon women, and places it instead upon men's needs, and the effects that prevention work may have on them. Finally, through the devaluing of women's expertise within the anti-violence sector, in which partnership working with men is often based upon the assumption that everyone's knowledge and skills in the area are the same, with the existing expertise of the women's sector demoted in the process.

Meanwhile, Kahane (1998) has provided an important critique of men's practices in relation to their take up of feminist ideas. He has proposed four 'ideal types' of problematic male feminist knowledge which stop short of being transformative, and describes these as follows: the poseur, who has a superficial knowledge of feminism, and views it largely instrumentally to serve his non-feminist projects, doing little to turn feminist critiques onto himself; the insider, who has an ethical or political commitment to feminism, and may be well intentioned, but does little to address his own sexist tendencies; the humanist, who has more awareness of how patriarchy has benefitted him, but mainly focuses on the ways in which it constrains men; and the self-flagellator, who has an in-depth knowledge and internalisation of feminism, but focuses excessively on self-scrutiny and his own anguish and guilt in relation to the harms of patriarchy, to a degree that is unsustainable as an ethical or political identity. In order to move towards a more transformative feminist consciousness, Kahane argues that it is vital for pro-feminist men to play both a constructive and sceptical role in supporting one another to develop this - not least so that it is not left solely to women to have to do the work of critiquing and holding to account men's actions in this area.

Wright (2009) has carried out research with men working within the domestic violence sector in the UK. She found that most of the men she spoke to reported having women in their lives

- for example family members or partners - who had actively encouraged an awareness of gender inequality in them. She argues that this can be conceived as a form of everyday activism within a framework of resistance on the part of these women, in building more equal gender relations on an individual basis. Meanwhile, Wright noted that whilst all of the men who participated in her research were proactively committed to their work, there were also some problematic elements of their practice.

First, Wright (2009) contends that the potential for recognition and prominence is significantly higher for men than it is for women within the domestic violence field. She found that the small numbers of men from which male representatives can be drawn in the sector has opened up a space which facilitates the occupying of key positions by men, and this can enable personal gain, the production of knowledge seen as 'expert', and involvement in vital decision-making. This does not mean that men will *necessarily* 'take over' or exploit these positions, yet Wright did note many instances where men's talk was valued over women's talk in such contexts for example. Second, whilst most of the men were focusing on changing men's practices, many of them were only comfortable with doing this to a certain extent, and expressed hostility towards forms of feminism that they deemed to be too 'radical' or 'extreme'. For example, in their group-work programmes, some of the men risked feeding into opposition towards feminism among participants by masking, hiding, or subsuming feminist ideas.

Third, Wright (2009) found that several of the men were in the process of developing men-only groups with questionable political commitments and practices. Some of these groups, which gravitated towards mythopoetic movements for example, emphasised countering the costs of patriarchy for men, and rebuilding homosocial relationships, whilst lacking a corresponding political recognition of the privileged position of men in the gender order. Finally, Wright described how some of the men's practices could be interpreted as resembling 'gender tourism' or 'forced entry', in which feminist theory was in some ways appropriated by the men, and used for their own gains without moving beyond exploitative gendered relationships in their own lives. Wright observed this in some of the rationales for the men-only groups that were given, as for example being based upon the feminist conception of women's consciousness-raising, despite the origins of these groups being rooted in the idea of women sharing their experiences of male oppression.

3.7.1 Addressing intersectional inequalities between men

Another issue within work with men and boys to prevent violence against women is the extent to which it attends to the intersectional differences *between* men. For example, Ricardo, Eads, and Barker (2011) argue that there is an urgent need to expand the cultural reach of programmes in this area, suggesting that the focus of engaging men and boys has largely been limited to schools and universities to date. Furthermore, research in this area appears to have predominantly investigated Anglophone contexts such as the US, Canada, and Australia, despite there being a variety of innovative prevention programmes being developed across the world, perhaps especially in the Global South.

The assumed 'default' then, both in terms of men involved in delivering violence prevention and participants in such work, often appears to be white, middle class, heterosexual men from Western countries. Flood (2015) contends that men can sometimes be treated as a homogenous group within prevention work, with little attention paid to the social and structural differences between them. In this respect, whilst Flood does note that work with men is becoming more mindful of such assumptions, it still has much to learn from feminist activism in terms of adopting an intersectional, postcolonial approach, in order to address the complexities of men's lives and practices. Efforts to engage men therefore need to be broadened to reflect the diversities of different communities, and conducted in ways which take into account differences in experience based on age, class, 'race'/ethnicity, sexuality, and disability. When thinking about how to take violence prevention forward, Flood suggests that we must move away from a 'one size fits all' approach, and consider how it can be made relevant to the different settings and communities of men to whom it needs to be directed. At the same time, it is important to ensure that the most privileged groups of men do not slip away from the critical focus, and that responsibility is not placed solely on those men who possess the least structural power from which to create change.

Research by Casey et al. (2013) indicates that this remains a major issue for the engaging men field. The male activists they interviewed across the globe recognised that barriers, based upon poverty or racism for example, can mean that some men are themselves already vulnerable to different forms of (in some cases state-sanctioned) violence, and can provide obstacles to them becoming, and remaining, involved in such work. Issues such as poverty, racism, migration, illiteracy, and food insecurity can thus reduce the visibility or prioritisation of violence against women in the eyes of men in some settings. Casey et al. contend that if it

is not designed in a carefully considered and contextualised way, intersecting social issues can make efforts to engage men in preventing violence against women appear irrelevant or inappropriate in particular environments, as well as potentially being difficult to sustain, for example due to poverty-related barriers for participants. On the other hand, Casey et al. note that an intersectional approach can potentially use men's experiences of oppression and marginalisation as a point of opportunity and connection for tackling gender inequality.

Casey et al. (2013) advocate that prevention strategies should be shared across different countries and regions, but in ways that ensure careful assessment of fit to local context and culture, and that models for engaging men are tailored to the specific settings in which they are implemented. This could mean, for example, collaboratively tackling structural factors which contribute to a range of different health and equality issues for both women and men. Similarly, Carlson et al. (2015) emphasise the importance of utilising 'nuanced messages' and 'relevant messengers' as part of violence prevention strategies which are responsive to the specific cultural, economic, and contextual concerns of local communities.

3.8 Summary

This chapter has examined what existing theory and research can tell us about the prevention of men's violence against women, and engaging men and boys as part of such efforts. Whilst this work is attracting increasing interest in England, I would argue that there remains a lack of ambition from policymakers about the development of prevention efforts on the ground, as well as a reluctance to confront men's responsibility for violence against women. This recognition is vital for the advancement of preventative work, as research suggests that the adoption of gender-transformative approaches leads to the most effective anti-violence interventions. Much of the existing theory and research in this area has been influenced by public health approaches, particularly the social ecological model, and these have helped to demonstrate that tackling men's violence against women is not only a criminal justice issue, but also one of public health, which must be addressed across the different levels of society. However, I would agree with criticisms that public health approaches risk demoting feminist theories of the problem as being rooted within patriarchy, when it is these explanations which should remain at the heart of - not only one factor within - our attempts to make sense of men's violence against women and how to prevent it.

The chapter then discussed some of the different issues involved in engaging men and boys in violence prevention, with there being a number of different debates about how such work can be done most effectively - raising the question of what it actually seeks to achieve or change in the first place. For example, powerful criticisms have been made that too much focus has been placed on changing individual attitudes, and not enough on transforming the structures of gender inequality, or on deconstructing social norms of masculinity. There are also important contentions around how work with men and boys can be conducted in ways most congruent with the feminist principles which it is built upon, especially given that involving men in the movement to end violence against women does risk attenuating the feminist politics of that movement in the process. Another key challenge for engaging men relates to its application of the vital feminist theory of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991), with assumptions often being made about the supposed homogeneity of men, and failures to address the diversity of men's experiences in relation to different systems of power and inequality. Many of these issues were explored further within the expert-informant interviews and focus groups conducted as part of this study, and the next chapter will discuss how the research methodology was put into practice.

Chapter 4: Research methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses upon how the research project has been carried out. It begins by exploring the ontological, epistemological, and theoretical assumptions that have underpinned the study. Throughout the project, I have strived to follow a pro-feminist standpoint epistemology (Pease, 2013), centring in particular upon McCarry's (2007) notion of reflexivity in relation to one's own personal and political commitments. The chapter therefore considers some of the complexities and contradictions involved in attempting to carry out a pro-feminist research project as a man, with men. It discusses the research methods used in the two different strands of the study, including how they were put into practice, the sampling of participants, the ethical issues involved, reflections on the research process, and how the data was analysed.

The first strand of the project utilised qualitative, semi-structured interviews with 'expert-informants' who have played a key role in influencing efforts to engage men and boys and prevent men's violence against women in the contemporary English context. The second strand involved qualitative focus groups with young men in sports teams at a 'Russell Group' English university, based around discussing examples of videos taken from different violence prevention campaigns, focusing in particular upon intimate partner violence. Both parts of the study received prior approval from the Durham University Department of Sociology Ethics Committee. These methods were adopted in order to find answers to the following research questions:

Table 2: Research questions

1. What is the contemporary landscape of efforts to engage men and boys in the prevention of men's violence against women in England?
2. How are violence prevention campaigns understood and used by young men?
3. How can practice, theory, and research around engaging men and boys in the prevention of men's violence against women be developed in the future in England?

This chapter will now explore the ontological and epistemological assumptions that these research questions were built upon.

4.2 Pro-feminist standpoint epistemology

This project has sought to adopt a pro-feminist methodological approach across all stages of the research process. This has shaped everything from the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the project, to the research questions it posed, to the research methods used. Feminist research has for decades shone a light on the ways in which mainstream social science, across different methodological approaches, can often be seen as 'malestream' research (Doucet and Mauthner, 2006; Olesen, 2017). This is in the sense that social research has traditionally been dominated by men, conducted from a masculine standpoint, and with a focus predominantly on men, without this being made explicit (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2003). The experiences and standpoints of women meanwhile, together with female scholars themselves, have frequently been excluded from the academy. There have been significant transformations in recent decades, led by women in academia and feminist research. However, it remains the case that female academics, women's standpoints, and research on women often continue to be marginalised within contemporary social science (DeVault, 2017). For example, feminist research is regularly still seen as being a 'niche' field of study, rather than something which should have an impact upon approaches across social science.

Skinner, Hester and Malos (2005) make clear that in the same way that there is no single unified feminist theory, there is no one shared feminist methodology, and there are a range of ontological and epistemological stances adopted within feminist research. However, they do note some oft-recurring methodological characteristics and principles within research by feminists, and especially feminist research on violence and abuse. These include: First, an (explicit or implicit) focus upon gender and gender inequality, and a grounding within women's experience of the world. Second, a rejection of conventional academic distinctions between researcher and 'researched', and attempting to minimise the power imbalances between the two. Third, a prioritisation of enabling marginalised voices and experiences to be heard and valued - especially those of women. Fourth, an emphasis on political, activist, and emancipatory research, and bridging the gap between research and practice. Fifth, the centrality of reflexivity to conducting research. Sixth, stressing the emotional and physical

wellbeing of both the researcher and participants as part of the research process. And finally, a critical approach to the selection of research tools, which often leads to favouring the use of multiple methods (potentially both qualitative and quantitative), based on how effectively they reflect the experiences of women and children rather than obscuring them in relation to the topic in question.

The influence of feminist theories of gender led to the development of critical studies on men and masculinities (CSMM). Rather than treating men's standpoints and experiences as the norm, neutral, or default from which claims are generalised to the population as a whole, CSMM recognises that men are just as 'gendered', just as much part of gender relations as women are, and explicitly concentrates on men's positions and systemic dominance within those relations. Today, men and masculinities has expanded significantly as a field of study. There are now a range of different theoretical and epistemological perspectives influencing scholarship in this area, and it can no longer be assumed that it is always rooted within feminist approaches. For example, O'Neill (2015) has recently argued that the 'critical' component of studies on men and masculinities is becoming less and less discernible. Meanwhile, many feminist scholars have maintained an understandable degree of scepticism towards the pro-feminist credentials of research on men and masculinities (Robinson, 2003; Flood, 2015).

However, a number of scholars across the globe do continue to engage in feminist-influenced CSMM, and research on men's violence against women and engaging men and boys in building gender equality is a key aspect of that. I would therefore distinguish scholarship which seeks to adopt a *critical* approach to men and masculinities, from research on men and masculinities more broadly. This research has sought to align itself with these critical traditions, and with feminist principles of social research as a tool for social change (Flood, 2013). I recognise that, as a man, it is not only impossible for me to stand 'outside' of the gender order I am studying, but I am also in a privileged social location within it. Research on these social relations cannot therefore be 'neutral' - it will always be based upon a particular standpoint within them, even if it aims to minimise the influence of researcher subjectivities. Rather than attempting to deny or conceal such a standpoint then, feminist scholarship has highlighted the importance of being honest, open, and transparent about our social positions, and to exercise reflexivity about the ways in which they shape the research process. In addition, researchers do not hold such positions only with regards to gender, but all systems of social relations, such as those based around class, 'race', and sexuality - which

is why it is so vital to adopt an intersectional approach to the practice of reflexivity (Crenshaw, 1991; Locke, 2015; Peretz, 2016).

Whilst CSMM generally does seek to maintain its links to feminist scholarship, by focusing its attention on men and boys it requires some of the fundamental principles within much feminist research to be approached in a different, sometimes inverted way. This is one of the contradictions intrinsic to CSMM; that it seeks to apply feminist-influenced methods to the study of the dominant group within patriarchy (Meadows, 2007). For instance, feminist principles relating to the empowerment of research participants, and enabling their voices to be heard, may not apply in the same way if participants already experience forms of patriarchal privilege (Flood, 2013). This can create a dilemma for CSMM researchers, between the aim of critically probing the reproduction of dominance among those being researched, whilst at the same time valuing participants' contribution to the research, and avoiding simply exploiting them. It may therefore be necessary to strike a balance between enacting many of the principles frequently applied by feminist researchers (such as minimising power imbalances between researcher and participants, valuing participants' voices and experiences, and prioritising their wellbeing), whilst at the same time scrutinising participants' actions through a critical lens, avoiding collusion in sexist behaviour, and considering how their practices and experiences interact with broader power relations.

One common principle within feminist research that CSMM cannot typically achieve is that of enabling the voices of women to be heard. Whilst it can seek to elevate women's experiences and feminist perspectives as part of its research agenda, the experiences, perspectives, and practices of men remain, by definition, its central focus. Is there a risk then that this field can actually contribute to the very inequalities that feminism seeks to address? For example, even research which looks critically at men and masculinities still places further attention on the voices and experiences of those who have already been the focus of most social research to date (Hearn, 2013). This could feed into the aforementioned danger that, as research on men and masculinities has become more established as a distinct field of study, it has in turn become more isolated from feminism.

This could also mean that patriarchal inequities within academia at large, such as male scholars predominantly citing other men, and academic publications and conferences being dominated by men, are being replicated within the CSMM field, but justified on the basis that men are the focus of study (Robinson, 2003; McCarry, 2007). There is also a risk that men

and masculinities scholarship could take attention and resources away from research by and with women, for example in relation to research funding, publications, and within women's and gender studies programmes. It is notable that there appears to have been far more scholarly work around the concept of masculinity than that of femininity, for instance. Does this mean that, by placing our spotlight on men in attempting to understand and critique male domination, we in turn reproduce the marginalisation of women within social science? These dangers are surely not inevitable if CSMM practices strong, supportive connections with feminism; however, they must be reflected upon and addressed if they are to be avoided.

4.2.1 The epistemology of doing critical research on men and masculinities

Even if we were to ontologically accept that there is such a thing as an objective social reality which exists 'out there', feminist standpoint epistemology suggests that our capacity to perceive that reality is shaped and limited by our social location (Harding, 2012). For example, positivist claims that social research can objectively measure 'social facts' fail to recognise the ways in which that research will inevitably be influenced and constrained by the assumptions, ideologies, and discourses held by the researcher, in relation to wider society and their position within it. Whether we recognise them as such or not, the arguments made by social scientists reflect certain interpretations of the world, which will be significantly influenced by the power relations within that social reality. This is why reflecting upon and being open about the role of our own standpoint in shaping our research is so important. Indeed, feminist standpoint theory has articulated that the positions we occupy can actually be of value when conducting research (Meadows, 2007). Harding (2012) has illustrated that the experiences of women within patriarchy can provide particularly illuminating insights, with women's marginalised, 'outsider' standpoints having the potential to be highly revealing about gendered systems of power and how they operate, in ways that men might be oblivious to.

Standpoint theory highlights the potential limitations of CSMM when it is being carried out by men - and whether or not it is even possible to conduct feminist research by or with men (Harding, 1998). Even when informed by feminist research approaches, and carefully attempting to apply reflexivity in one's methodologies, men's standpoints in relation to gender inevitably offer a limited perspective as a result of the power and privilege that they possess (Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2003). Men's embeddedness within the structures of

patriarchy and in the maintenance of sexism and misogyny means that they are likely to find it particularly difficult to analyse and deconstruct the workings of that system. For example, men are unlikely to be able to fully comprehend the oppressive impacts of men's violence, either upon women who have experienced it, or upon women in society more broadly. Furthermore, even experienced pro-feminist researchers may unthinkingly resort to habitualised defensive responses when their own positions and privileges are brought into question.

However, this does not have to mean that critical research by men on the consequences of patriarchy and the construction of men and masculinities within it is impossible, or without utility. Indeed, pro-feminist men can work to make use of the experiences brought by their male standpoints to shed light on how men go about maintaining patriarchy in various ways, and to explore how men can change both themselves and the systems of male domination (Harding, 1998; Haywood and Mac an Ghaill, 2003; Meadows, 2007). In other words, they can investigate how men might be able to help to bring patriarchy down 'from the inside'. Nonetheless, limitations remain attached to men's standpoints in terms of the insights they can provide on the workings of a patriarchal system that privileges them, underscoring the importance of reflexivity with regards to how research and analyses by men might be influenced and constrained in different ways as a result (Martin, 2001).

Reflexivity means looking at *oneself* as a researcher during the research process, and reflecting on the role that the researcher plays in shaping that process (Skinner et al., 2003). Feminist scholars have shown that it is especially important to consider the role of power relations and inequalities in this respect, in terms of the social location of the researcher, and the potential known and unknown impacts this could have on their research. This is particularly pertinent to CSMM, given that it typically places its focus upon those with the majority of gendered power, and when conducted by men, is being carried out by researchers who are also privileged by and invested in that system of power. For men involved in CSMM research, its highly personal and political nature adds further exigency to engaging in reflexive practice, as our own lives are closely interwoven with who and what we are studying. Furthermore, feminist scholars such as Robinson (2003), McCarry (2007), and Macleod (2007) have pointed out that there has often been inadequate attention to these issues within the men and masculinities field, despite its proclaimed links to feminism. McCarry has therefore emphasised the need for male CSMM researchers to put reflexivity

into practice with regards to their personal and political commitments if they are serious about rooting their work within feminist principles.

Pease (2013) has proposed a pro-feminist standpoint epistemology for men involved in CSMM, based around a focus upon power, privilege, and positionality - including in relation to oneself. For Pease, the key principles for such an approach should include listening to feminist concerns, engaging in dialogue with women, developing gender reflexivity, and ensuring accountability to women's interests. This is akin to the anti-patriarchal standpoint and praxis that Hearn (2013: 33) describes as being key to men developing a critical relation to men, which in turn should be built upon *"profeminist, anti-patriarchal actions, activities, research and organizing and positive relations with feminist theory/practice"*. Indeed, some have argued that in order to take on a genuinely anti-patriarchal epistemological standpoint, men must adopt a 'traitorous' gender identity in relation to masculinity (Kimmel, 1998; Meadows, 2007).

During this research I have sought to adopt a pro-feminist, anti-patriarchal epistemological standpoint of the kind described by Pease (2013) and Hearn (2013), and I saw the approach to reflexivity advocated by McCarry (2007) as being particularly crucial to this. As a result, from the outset of the study, I aimed to critically reflect continuously on the relationship between myself, my personal and political commitments, and my research practice. This has meant recognising that I am denoted with unearned social power and privilege in a number of different ways - not only as a man, but as one who is white, British, heterosexual, middle class, and able-bodied. Such a position is one that has traditionally been constructed as the default within social science, and is thus a perspective which can be constrained and unseeing, through social conditioning which has enabled me to live much of my day-to-day life without recognising the surrounding structures of inequality from which I derive dividends. It also creates the potential for different biases and prejudices to be manifested in research, based upon unthinkingly protecting the privileges that I possess.

For these reasons, one tangible step that was taken to maintain a critical eye towards my own positionality was to keep a reflexive journal during the process of conducting the focus groups with men's university sports teams. This was in order to make a note of my reflections after each focus group, which I expected to find the most challenging part of the project in terms of maintaining a critical, pro-feminist approach. In hindsight, I would like to have kept this journal throughout the entirety of the project, as I found recording my thoughts and

concerns to be highly useful, with it also contributing to the analysis of the focus groups for example. In this respect, it was naïve of me to assume that there would be comparatively fewer reflexive issues which would arise whilst conducting the expert-informant interviews. At the same time, reflexivity is not necessarily something which can always easily be verbalised and written down; if it is to genuinely have an impact on the research, then it should become a routine, continuous component of one's deliberations, analysis, and practice, to the point that it might become almost instinctive and habitualised. Nonetheless, keeping a note of my reflections encouraged me to put aside time to consciously engage in critical reflection, and ensures that such practices can be transparently and accountably demonstrated.

This project has made use of qualitative research methods, based around the goal of inductively exploring experiences, understandings, and meanings within work with men and boys to prevent violence against women - both for those involved in developing this work, and for young men who would form part of its target audience. This was designed based upon the social constructionist epistemological paradigm, that if there are objective facts, then social researchers can only perceive them through their own socially constructed ideas and meanings, and those of their research participants (Beasley, 2005; Munday, 2014). According to this approach, the focus for social scientists should be on interpreting those meanings, which feminists and other critical schools of thought have shown to be significantly influenced by structural power relations, and which in-depth qualitative methods of research and analyses are best placed to investigate (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015).

This is one reason why there has been a degree of historical association between feminist approaches and qualitative methods, as well as because qualitative research arguably provides greater scope for participants to tell their own stories and have their voices heard (Olesen, 2017). However, more recently quantitative methods have also been increasingly utilised by feminist researchers, and Skinner, Hester, and Malos (2005) argue that no one method is necessarily 'feminist' or not, with feminist research being defined by the ways in which methods are used, rather than the use of any specific methods. Nevertheless, in this case it was felt that qualitative methods would be able to provide the most valuable insights into the research questions that I was raising. The methods used to provide answers to each of these questions are listed in Table 3.

Table 3: Answering the research questions

Research question	Method
1. What is the contemporary landscape of efforts to engage men and boys in the prevention of men's violence against women in England?	Fourteen semi-structured expert-informant interviews with key actors in the field, thematically analysed.
2. How are violence prevention campaigns understood and used by young men?	Eight focus group interviews with men's sports teams at a 'Russell Group' English university, thematically analysed.
3. How can practice, theory, and research around engaging men and boys in the prevention of men's violence against women be developed in the future in England?	Combined analysis of expert-informant interviews and focus groups.

This chapter will now discuss how these research methods were put into practice.

4.3 Expert-informant interviews

The first strand of the research aimed to map out the current landscape in England for work with men and boys to prevent men's violence against women. Whilst there is a growing body of research about this work internationally, there have been few relevant studies conducted in England to date, perhaps reflecting a relative lack of development of violence prevention efforts compared to some countries. This project therefore sought to investigate the contemporary context and recent history of policy and practice in this area, with a particular focus on the period from 1997, when the New Labour Government led by Tony Blair was elected, to the present day. Work to tackle violence against women has been taking place long before this, however the goal was to focus the research on the most recent and relevant developments in the field. Furthermore, this was a period which saw an increased focus on violence against women at the policy level, with the Labour Government arguably placing more attention on gender equality than previous administrations (Gadd, 2012). In order to investigate this terrain, expert-informant interviews (Bogner et al., 2009), sometimes referred

to as ‘elite interviews’ (Skinner, 2005), were conducted with fourteen individuals who were identified as playing an important and influential role in the development of work in England to prevent men’s violence against women, particularly in relation to engaging men and boys. The participants were identified either as representatives of key organisations, or through their impact as individual activists, practitioners, and/or researchers.

The data sought from these interviews was primarily descriptive and informational, to learn from the knowledge, viewpoints and experiences of the experts being interviewed. I did not therefore aim to probe the participants in more critical depth through my interview questions or data analysis, for example about possible problems or contradictions within their own practices and work. Whilst such an approach would produce interesting and important insights about issues within work with men to prevent violence against women, that was not the purpose of these interviews, which were designed principally to generate knowledge about the contemporary terrain of these efforts in England more broadly. This is why I decided not to keep a reflexive journal for this part of the fieldwork, although in hindsight, a more critical approach to the interviews and the participants may have yielded additional important insights into their work. That said, some reflections from the interviews are noted in section 4.3.5.

Semi-structured, one-to-one interviews provided the opportunity to explore in-depth the unique activities, experiences, and perspectives of each of the participants (Kvale, 2007). Semi-structured interviews offer freedom for participants to express their views, tell their stories, and explore their thoughts in their own words, with relatively few constraints placed on them by the researcher (DeVault and Gross, 2012). This is particularly useful for expert-informant interviews, where the participant’s own knowledge and understanding is especially important (Bogner et al., 2009). By contrast, a quantitative method such as a survey would not have enabled the same level of richness or flexibility with which to explore these expert views, and the nuances of this complex and sometimes contested work (Byrne, 2004). In addition, interacting with the participants during the interviews was beneficial in helping to establish relationships of trust with them, where they may have felt more able to honestly reflect on their work (Braun and Clarke, 2013). As a result, in some cases the participants have continued to provide information and feedback for the project subsequent to their interview, for example.

4.3.1 Interview method

The fourteen expert-informant interviews were conducted between May 2016 and March 2017, at various locations in the UK, or online through a Skype call. For those which were conducted in person, the interviewee was met at the office of their organisation or at another location which was convenient for them, such as a quiet area in a local café. Face-to-face interviews were preferred, to enable a more personal and discursive interaction, with the advantages of body language and facial expressions to facilitate the discussion (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015), as well as the additional observations that could be made by visiting their working environment. However, this was not always possible due to the geographical spread of the interviewees across England and beyond.

On six occasions online Skype interviews were therefore necessary, with four carried out through video calls, and in two cases where this was not an option due to internet connectivity issues, through voice calls. All of the interviews were conducted in a relatively informal and friendly manner, to help the participants feel more relaxed and enable a more open and candid discussion (Kvale, 2007). I endeavoured to intervene as little as possible during the interview, to minimise my influence on its direction, and to encourage the participant to speak freely. However, prompts, observations, and brief reassurances were made where appropriate in an attempt to demonstrate that I understood and empathised with the participant's comments, and that I valued what was being expressed. This typically gave the interviews more of a conversational tone, which might have also been influenced by the expert status of the participants enabling them to feel more relaxed about being interviewed (Bogner et al., 2009).

The interviews typically lasted approximately one hour, with the shortest duration being 40 minutes and the longest being 85 minutes. The interview format involved the participants being asked eight main questions, combined with some additional prompts and follow-up questions where appropriate. These questions were based upon a topic guide, though this was adapted - with some questions added, removed, or phrased differently - as each interview progressed, to ensure that they were as relevant as possible to each participant, and to delve deeper into specific issues that were raised. Over the course of the study, minor revisions were also made to the wording and structure of the topic guide based on what had been found to be effective in previous interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

The interview topic guide was divided into three sections (see Appendix I). The first part revolved around finding out more about the interviewees' personal and organisational activities and experiences, both in terms of their current and previous involvement in violence prevention work, and what led them to become involved in the first place. The second part focused on the interviewees' wider knowledge and awareness of work with men and boys, including other individuals, organisations, and networks they had come into contact with, key moments in the recent history of the field, and major influences upon their work. The third part of the topic guide included questions about participants' more general perspectives on the field, including what they felt is most urgently needed to take it forward in England, problems within different approaches, aspects of the work they find most difficult, and why they believe working with men to prevent violence against women to be important. The aim was to gain insights from the interviewees about what they perceived to be some of the key issues, opportunities, and dilemmas in policy and practice, and what could be learnt from the present context to help inform the development of work with men and boys in the future.

Each interview was digitally recorded using a digital Dictaphone for the face-to-face interviews, and the software 'MP3 Skype Recorder' for the online interviews. In the following months the recording of each interview was then transcribed in full into Microsoft Word. This was a time consuming process, but it enabled a level of familiarity with the data to be established, which in turn assisted with the analysis. As much as possible, all clear verbal expressions from each interview were transcribed, including filler words such as 'you know', 'like', and 'um', to help ensure that each transcription fully and accurately captured how the interviewees articulated themselves. However, descriptions of non-verbal expressions such as physical gestures were generally not included, as this level of detail was not deemed necessary for a thematic analysis of the interviews.

4.3.2 Interview sampling

A purposive, selective sampling approach was adopted in order to determine the most relevant individuals and organisations to ask to take part in the study. Because the field of work with men and boys to prevent violence against women is relatively small in England, this made the sampling process somewhat straightforward. Potential participants were identified primarily based on the researcher and research supervisors' knowledge of which individuals and organisations had played an influential role in developing or shaping policy,

practice, and/or research broadly relating to three main factors: a) the prevention of men's violence against women, b) engaging men and boys, and c) the English context. An element of snowball sampling was also incorporated, in that if other individuals or organisations were recommended by an interviewee, then they too would be contacted if they had not been already. However, mostly this was not necessary, and the interviews appeared to confirm that the sample represented most of those who had had the biggest impact on the engaging men field in England.

Efforts were made to speak to a mixture of different individuals playing a leading role in organisations or as individuals connected to this work, including activists, practitioners, and researchers. In the vast majority of cases, those who were asked to take part were happy to do so, and it was possible to speak to almost all of the key figures that had been identified. In some cases the individuals were already known to the researcher or the research supervisors, which assisted the process of making contact. Where attempts to recruit participants were not successful, it was predominantly with policymakers. Some Members of Parliament were identified as being important political figures in advocating for work with men and boys, but efforts to recruit them to take part were unsuccessful, which meant that policymakers were not represented in the sample as had originally been planned. This is likely to have simply been because they were too busy, but it could also offer an anecdotal reflection of how engaging men is still at a somewhat underdeveloped stage at the policy level in England.

Nine of the interviewees were based in England. An additional five participants who lived elsewhere but had nonetheless been identified as being involved in work which had had an important influence on the English context, were also interviewed. This included two interviewees based in Scotland, one in the Republic of Ireland, one in Sweden, and one in Australia. Nine of the interviewees held leading positions within organisations working in the field, four were primarily academics doing research and activism in the area, and one was an independent activist. All of the participants were experienced advocates for the prevention of violence against women.

Thirteen of the interviewees were men, and one was a woman. This was a deliberate choice, because I was particularly interested in hearing about the experiences and practices of men involved in the field, given the focus of the study on work both by and with men to prevent violence against women. However, it became increasingly clear to me over the course of the project that women are playing a major, leading role in the development of efforts to engage

men. An important avenue for future research would therefore be to explore the experiences and views of these women further, as well as the perspectives of feminist anti-violence activists more broadly on work with men and boys.

The sample was also not very representative of English population more broadly, with all of the participants being from a white ethnic background (with 86% being of British nationality), and most being middle aged and from a middle class background. This may suggest that this field of work is lacking in diversity, and could point to ways in which different forms of privilege make it easier for certain men to speak out against violence towards women. However, it may also indicate a failure on my part to recruit a sample which is more reflective of the English population, for example by not thinking beyond the types of work which fit my own frames of reference as a white man from a middle class background. It is possible that other influential actors or organisations were not contacted simply because myself and the interviewees were not aware of them - perhaps because they adopt a different approach to working with men and boys for example, of if they are based in a specific local area, and do not have a significant internet presence. Future research could therefore do more to investigate the experience of intersectional differences and inequalities among advocates within the engaging men field (Peretz, 2017), making a conscious effort to recruit a diverse sample of participants by thinking broadly about the different forms that violence prevention work can take.

4.3.3 Interview ethics

Because this strand of the research involved speaking to individuals who are already experts in the field of men's violence against women, some of the ethical issues typically involved in doing research on violence and abuse did not apply to the same extent; for example in terms of the potential to cause harm and distress. However, there were still important ethical issues to consider. One of the most significant was that of anonymity and confidentiality, given the unique roles occupied in the field by many of the interviewees, which could potentially make it easy to identify them even from anonymised comments. This could be particularly problematic for participants if it involved critical remarks about other organisations for example, or details about their personal lives, such as their motivations for becoming involved in violence prevention work.

Efforts were therefore made to ensure that all information which could identify participants, the organisation(s) they belonged to, and any other individuals they worked with, was kept confidential. All interviewees were given pseudonyms, and any quotations from the interviews which have been included in this thesis have been fully anonymised. I have also had to minimise the amount of information provided about the participants for the same reasons. The audio recordings of the interviews were securely stored on a password-protected computer on the Durham University server, and were deleted within 12 months of the completion of the interview. However, for the aforementioned reasons, the interviewees were also informed that their anonymity could not be entirely guaranteed, and that as such, a practice of 'limited anonymity' was applied. This was in order to encourage them to feel that they could still be honest and candid in their responses, whilst taking into account that there was still a possibility that they could be identified from the things they said. Interestingly, most of the interviewees did not appear to be particularly concerned about confidentiality, and many were willing for everything they said to be publicly published and attributable to them, perhaps because they were used to commenting about their work in the 'public eye'. However, this may also indicate a weakness of expert-informant interviews; that the participants may have never had any intention of sharing any details about their work that they wouldn't in a more public forum.

A number of other steps were taken to ensure that an ethical approach was followed throughout the interview process. All participants were asked to give their informed consent to being interviewed by signing a consent form beforehand (see Appendix II), after being given a detailed information sheet about the study (see Appendix III). At this time, each interviewee was also informed that they were not under any obligation or pressure to take part or to answer any specific questions, and that they were free to take a break whenever they wished to. They were also notified that they could end the interview or withdraw from the study at any time, including up until the point that the writing up process was completed if they subsequently changed their mind about participating in the research - although this did not occur with any of the interviewees.

At the end of each interview, the participants were debriefed and encouraged to contact the researcher if they wished to discuss any aspect of the project further, and informed that they would be kept updated about its progress and any publications arising from it. This was an important point, because one of the goals of the research was to avoid exploiting the participants for their knowledge, and to instead contribute to the ongoing development of

work to prevent men's violence against women by sharing the research findings with them. Once the transcription of each interview was completed, participants were also sent a digital copy to check and keep for their records if they wished to. The interviewees were asked to inform the researcher if they had any issues with the transcription, and in a few cases, they did contact me to point out small mistakes or to request that specific comments be anonymised.

4.3.4 Interview data analysis

Once the audio recordings of the expert-informant interviews had been transcribed, the transcriptions were then analysed using the inductive thematic analysis method (Braun and Clarke, 2013), through the computer software NVivo. Thematic analysis provides a method for finding qualitative patterns of meaning in relation to a research question across a piece of data. It is likely to be the most commonly used form of qualitative data analysis, but has long been relatively underdeveloped, and often continues to go undiscussed and unacknowledged as a specific method (Braun and Clarke, 2006). At the same time however, it can be flexibly utilised across a range of different ontological, epistemological, and theoretical approaches, and provided an illuminating way to systematically establish meaningful themes within the data that was collected for this project.

Inductive thematic analysis is developed from the bottom up, in the sense that the analysis is driven by what is found within the data itself, rather than by an existing theory (Braun and Clarke, 2013). At the same time, it must be recognised that my standpoint, existing knowledge, and epistemology will have inevitably still had some influence upon the analysis, and the themes that I found relevant within the data. However, I did not approach the analysis seeking to develop themes which were applicable to a particular theory, or which fitted into specific concepts or frameworks. For the expert-informant interviews the thematic analysis was generally applied descriptively (Braun and Clarke, 2013), in order to build up an account of the participants' perspectives on efforts to engage men and boys in the prevention of violence against women in England. I was primarily seeking to investigate and describe their knowledge, experiences, and views, rather than more deeply or critically probing or interpreting their practices.

The thematic analysis was implemented through a six-step procedure based upon the approach devised by Braun and Clarke (2006). The first phase of the analysis involved familiarising myself with the interview data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In this respect, the analysis actually began during the transcription process. This illustrates a major advantage of transcribing the interviews myself, as it meant I was able to work closely with the data and develop a conversance with it in the process. This also meant that I was already able to start identifying potential patterns and points of interest whilst transcribing. I then sought to further immerse myself in the data by actively reading and re-reading each interview transcript, and starting to search for recurring meanings and patterns within them, making a note of relevant issues as I did so.

Having familiarised myself with the interview data and developed some preliminary ideas about interesting features within them, I then began the second stage of the analysis, which involved assembling initial codes from the transcriptions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This meant systematically highlighting sections of the data which appeared to be particularly interesting or relevant in some way, and summarising the interpreted meaning of those extracts in an essentialised form through a code (which were made into 'nodes' in NVivo). I attempted to ensure that the data was coded as broadly as possible here, so that anything of potential significance to my research questions was recorded, and not only those features which fitted with my own prior assumptions and interests. Some of the data was also coded more than once, if sections of the data had multiple potentially interesting or relevant meanings. Then, when different sections of data appeared to fit into the same code, they were combined together into one. When this process was completed, I had collated numerous codes based upon extracts from each interview.

The third stage involved broadening the analysis, to search for themes among the codes that had been developed (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This meant analysing the various codes and attempting to identify patterns from them across the different interviews, in which the codes could be interpreted as fitting together within the same overarching theme (and thus becoming 'child nodes' in NVivo, with the themes created as primary nodes). In this respect, I found it useful to list the codes that had been originally identified, and highlighting these in different colours where I felt they shared relationships with other codes, in order to map out the patterns shared across the interviews. This process involved spending some time testing out different themes as I sought to establish what appeared to be the most relevant patterns running through the data. This meant that some initial themes ended up being removed,

whilst others became subsumed into other, broader themes. Eventually, I had developed fifteen candidate themes (listed in Table 4), made up of a collection of different codes.

The fourth stage of the analysis involved reviewing and refining the themes that had been developed (Braun and Clarke, 2006). A closer examination of the candidate themes demonstrated that in some cases there was not enough data to justify their existence, or that the data was too broad and varied within a theme (and that a new theme should be established on this basis), or that some of the themes overlapped too closely with one another. In this respect, Patton (2015) has discussed the importance of both internal homogeneity (does the data within the theme fit together in a meaningful and coherent way?), and external heterogeneity (are there clear and recognisable distinctions between different themes?). Here I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) two-level process of theme refinement.

First, this meant examining if the coded data extracts within each theme fitted with one another sufficiently to form a coherent pattern, and if they didn't, evaluating whether the problem was with the theme itself, or if some of the extracts worked better within a different theme (or were simply not as relevant as first thought). Second, I scrutinised the extent to which individual themes, and the 'thematic map' as a whole, validly and accurately captured the range of meanings present within and across the interviews (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This involved re-reading the interview transcripts in order to assess the efficacy of the themes that had been developed, and coding into themes any relevant data which had previously gone unidentified. At this stage, I decided to discard some candidate themes, and combine others to ensure that each of the remaining themes were both internally coherent and externally distinct and valid, leaving a thematic map made up of nine key themes. These are listed in Table 4, with the numbers indicating which candidate themes had been amalgamated into them.

Table 4: Identification of themes from interview data

Candidate themes	Final key themes
1. Descriptions of practice a. Sub-themes based around specific organisations and activities. 2. Descriptions of the policy context	1. The policy context (2, 14) 2. The practice context (1, 14) 3. The personal is political (3, 4, 10) 4. Disassociation (5, 10) 5. Moving beyond shame (16)

a. Sub-themes based around specific areas of the policy context. 3. Pathways into pro-feminist activism 4. The personal is political 5. Disassociation 6. Dismantling patriarchy at every level, and in every area, of society 7. How to engage men 8. Contentions 9. Building the field 10. Complicity 11. Rationales 12. Differences within (pro-)feminism 13. Collaboration 14. Online activities 15. Evaluation 16. Overcoming shame	6. Collaboration (13) 7. Engaging (7, 11) 8. Holistic social change (6, 11) 9. Different approaches (3, 8, 12) 10. Building (3, 9, 11, 14, 15)

The fifth stage of the analysis involved what Braun and Clarke (2006) call the defining and naming of each theme. This meant interpreting the meanings at the heart of the themes, individually and as a collective whole, in relation to both the data and the research questions. I assessed how the different extracts of data within each theme fitted together and flowed from one another in an internally and externally consistent way, and what kind of 'story' the themes told in combination with one another. This was in order to develop a coherent account of why the themes individually and collectively provided relevant and interesting insights for my research questions. The sixth stage of analysis then involved reporting the narratives told by these themes, using the most instructive extracts from the data, and relating the analysis back to the research questions and academic literature. This write-up forms the basis for Chapter 6.

4.3.5 Interview reflections

One of the main motivations for this project was a desire to support the prevention of men's violence against women in England, by helping to critically inform efforts to engage men and boys. This positioned me as an 'insider'; someone who sympathised with the broad aims of the work of the research participants, and who considered myself as being to some extent a 'member' of the same movement to end violence against women (Asselin, 2003; Dasgupta, 2013). This may have helped to facilitate the interviewees' participation in the project, and may have enabled them to be more candid when talking to me. However, there was also the potential for this 'insider' status to constrain my capacity to ask challenging questions; especially when speaking with experts who in many cases were older and more experienced than me. Indeed, the 'expert' status of the interviewees may to some extent have inverted the traditional dynamic of the researcher possessing some degree of power over participants (Byrne, 2004; Bogner et al., 2009).

The support that was received from each of the participants, and their willingness to help with the research project, demonstrated to me a sense of community and solidarity within the violence prevention field in England. However, this also raises questions about my position in relation to the participants and their work. I went into the interviews seeking to adopt a critical lens towards their activities, contemplating potential criticisms about participants' work, whilst at the same time feeling a strong sense of solidarity with it. Many of the interviewees were individuals whom I already had a significant amount of respect and appreciation for, and in some cases felt intimidated about interviewing, given their influence upon a field which I myself feel part of.

I therefore endeavoured to make sure that I was not blindly or naively supportive of what was expressed within the interviews, and felt a duty as a researcher to adopt a critical approach towards everything that I heard. Indeed, given the considerable debates and disagreements within feminism and pro-feminism, supporting the basic principles of participants' work did not guarantee that I would agree with their comments within the interviews anyway. I thus strove to position myself in a relatively neutral way with regards to controversial or contested issues raised within the interviews, in an attempt to avoid impacting on what participants felt able to say.

Flood (2015) describes simultaneously being a 'cheerleader' for engaging men and boys, and taking on a critical position in relation to the potential problems and risks within it. This is a

similar standpoint to the one I felt most comfortable with, which could be described as being a 'critical friend' (Costa and Kallick, 1993). However, this is not always an easy position to adopt - especially in a face-to-face interview with someone actively involved in doing that work. Furthermore, at times I questioned the extent to which I - as a researcher looking on, rather than an active contributor - even had the right to critique the work that interviewees were doing to create change on the ground. On occasion, I felt some degree of confusion, even scepticism, between myself and the interviewees about my role in relation to their work - was I really part of this activist movement, or more of an observer, watching from the sidelines? At times, I questioned whether being a researcher inevitably places one in an 'outsider' position to some extent in relation to what is being researched - and whether this is a bad thing or not.

Another factor which I took into account during the interviews was the potential of being over-awed by men involved in violence prevention work, given the tendency for pro-feminist men to receive high levels of plaudits even for small levels of effort (Messner, Greenberg, and Peretz, 2015), which could have obstructed my ability to view their comments critically. Furthermore, one of the risks presented by men's involvement in preventing violence against women is that even with the best of intentions, they can easily and inadvertently collude in problematic behaviours from other men (Wright, 2009). This danger applies equally to conducting research with men. This provided additional motivation for me to approach the interviews with a critical lens - indeed, this is a lens which should arguably *always* be adopted with regards to work by men to prevent violence against women, including one's own. The interviewees frequently demonstrated the adoption of reflexive approaches to their work, and articulated an awareness of potential issues which could arise, and criticisms which could be made, about their own practice. Nonetheless, I sometimes struggled with the question of whether or not I was successfully navigating a balance between my gratitude to these 'expert' figures for taking part in my research, together with my sense of solidarity with their efforts, whilst seeking to approach them and their work cautiously and sceptically, as a 'critical friend' (Costa and Kallick, 1993).

4.4 Focus groups

The second strand of the research aimed to explore how young men actually understand and use the messages they receive from campaigns to prevent men's violence against women, and

in particular, intimate partner violence. To do this, eight qualitative focus groups were conducted with men's sports teams at a 'Russell Group' university in England. A number of videos were shown from different examples of violence prevention campaigns, and these were used to facilitate discussions with the young men about partner abuse, violence against women, and prevention.

To date, there is relatively little qualitative research on how young men make sense of, and respond to, messages around preventing violence against women. This project therefore sought to shed more light on these understandings, in order to help build our knowledge of how to engage effectively with young men about issues of violence and abuse. I decided to carry out focus groups to do this, because of the crucial importance of group interactions among men and boys in the construction and enforcement of masculinities. As was discussed in Chapter 2, relations between men, and the expectations and policing of peers, are core to the maintenance of masculine gender norms (Hearn and Whitehead, 2006). This is particularly important to take into account in relation to the prevention of violence against women, as men may be opposed to such violence in principle, but find it much harder to express such beliefs in the presence of their male peers for instance. One of the strengths of focus groups is their capacity to provide insights into group interactions and the shared production of meaning, so they provided the opportunity to investigate these collective dynamics in an in-depth, explorative, and insightful way (Bloor et al., 2001; Braun and Clark, 2013; Kamberelis et al., 2017).

This research aimed to examine the complex ways in which the young men interpreted the messages of prevention campaigns, and how they interacted with one another as they did so, which focus groups have the capacity to provide rich and nuanced data for (Tonkiss, 2004). Rather than simply identifying how 'effective' the campaigns were in the eyes of the young men (which quantitative methods such as surveys might lend themselves towards), the project sought to explore the extent to which the campaigns had an impact on the participants, and why this was the case; how they perceived and interacted with the campaign messages individually and collectively; and what insights this could provide about their perspectives in relation to violence against women more broadly. Focus groups also offered flexibility in terms of being able to adapt each discussion as it progressed, based on the responses of the participants themselves. Crucially, they enabled the young men to openly express their own voices and views in relation to issues of violence and abuse, which provided valuable insights into their understandings (Tonkiss, 2004; McCarry, 2005). They also made it possible to hear

in-depth the views of a relatively large number of participants, without demanding unsustainable amounts of time or resources (Munday, 2014).

4.4.1 Focus group method

The eight focus groups for this study were conducted between December 2016 and June 2017, in various seminar or group work rooms on the campus of the university where the participants were based. The number of participants in each session varied: there was three in one group, four in two groups, five in two groups, six in one group, seven in one group, and nine in one group. The original goal was to recruit groups of between four and eight team members to take part, however in the group of nine, an additional team member was brought along to the session on the day, and in the group of three, one participant cancelled their attendance at late notice. Two pilot one-to-one semi-structured interviews were also carried out at the beginning of the study, in order to test the planned format for the focus groups, and to help inform and develop their delivery, content, and structure to ensure that they ran smoothly. The first focus group, which was made up of three participants, was also utilised as a pilot in this way, and this was also the only session in which the participants did not know each other beforehand (though they were still involved in different university sports). The format of these pilots was not significantly different from the focus groups conducted in the main part of the study, so the data from them has also been included in the final analysis. In total, including the pilot interviews, forty-five young men took part in this strand of the research project.

After the pilot focus group, I decided that it was important for the group composition to be as 'natural' as possible, in terms of being a pre-existing group where participants knew one another beforehand. This was to try to make the focus groups emulate the homosocial peer settings in the participants' day-to-day lives, with the same kinds of collective norms and expectations. In addition, it was hoped that by being with a group of people that they already knew, the session would feel more comfortable and relaxed, participants would be able to speak more easily, and any unease created by the artificial research environment would be reduced (which was particularly important given the sensitivity of the subject matter). The pilot focus group affirmed this approach, as the discussion in this session was more disjointed and less relaxed than it was in any of the team-based focus groups.

At the same time, it might have also been difficult for the participants to express themselves entirely honestly and freely among people they already knew. There might have been things they felt uncomfortable to talk about in front of their friends compared to people who they didn't know and were unlikely to see again; such as past behaviours that they were embarrassed about - or vocal opposition to sexism and misogyny. However, it is perhaps equally likely that there would be constraints on what they felt able to say, and moments of discomfort and awkwardness, in discussions with young men who they did not know. Furthermore, it was seen as important to attempt to recreate the 'natural' environment of young men's homosocial groups, even if that also reproduced restrictions in their ability to express themselves fully, because of their significance in the construction of masculinities. In this way, the focus groups represented an interesting juxtaposition, between relatively 'natural' peer group interactions, and what may have been a somewhat atypical conversation topic for many of the young men.

Sports teams therefore appeared to be ideal groups to ask to take part in the study, as pre-existing, pre-defined collections of young men who already knew one another, and who could easily be contacted as a group. In some ways, they may also be relatively diverse groups, with it perhaps being unlikely that there would be one dominant political outlook in most university sport teams for example. Furthermore, the environment of men's sport, and perhaps especially sport in the university context, has been identified as one in which particularly aggressive or 'hyper' forms of masculinity may often dominate (Messner, 1990; Boeringer, 1999; Hickey, 2008), and where sexism, misogyny, and violence towards women can be particularly encouraged and normalised (Forbes et al., 2006; Flood and Dyson, 2007; Palmer, 2011). For these reasons, men's sports teams have received much attention from violence against women prevention programmes (Katz, 2006; Liston et al., 2017), and thus represented a particularly interesting sample group for this study.

The schedule for the focus groups (see Appendix IV) began with some introductory questions to probe the participants' understanding of intimate partner violence, as well as their previous encounters with preventative work. Between three and five videos (depending on the time available, and what was judged to be most relevant within each session) taken from different violence prevention campaigns were then shown, and these videos are listed in Table 5.

Table 5: Prevention campaign videos shown in focus groups

1. UK Home Office: 'This is Abuse' (2010) - https://youtu.be/RzDr18UYO18
2. UK Home Office: 'Disrespect NoBody' (2016) - https://youtu.be/ObvC12uJa6A
3. Australian Government: 'Respect: Violence against women - Let's stop it at the start' (2016) - https://youtu.be/wjBfU-bfGII
4. End Violence Against Women Coalition (EVAW) UK: 'We Are Man' (2011) - https://youtu.be/ZYhaodUPqSU
5. European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE): 'White Ribbon Campaign: On the bus' (2016) - https://youtu.be/SKVWSGvaLds

These five videos were selected because they were viewed as representing either particularly important campaigns in the English context, or effective examples of important approaches to violence prevention. The first three videos focused primarily on partner abuse, however this was not the case with the final two videos, where the EVAW campaign was targeting rape culture, and the EIGE video concentrated on public sexual harassment. These campaigns were used in addition to those focusing on partner violence because they were seen to represent a particularly key message or approach, and picked up on issues which have significant relevance to the prevention of both partner violence as well as other forms of violence against women. The EVAW video depicted joking about violence against women and men challenging such behaviour within their peer groups, and the EIGE video depicted an example of bystander intervention. Preventing intimate partner violence was therefore the primary focus because it was seen as a good entry point to the conversation, a topic which the participants were likely to have at least some awareness of, but it was not my intention to restrict the group's attention only to this, and the subject matter did often broaden to other forms of violence and abuse too. This made it even more interesting to see how the views of the participants varied regarding each of the different campaigns. Linking partner violence to other forms of men's violence against women in this way also provoked noteworthy responses from the participants, and it was fascinating to observe the extent to which they drew connections between these different issues or not themselves.

After each one was shown, the participants were asked what they thought about different aspects of the video, the feelings it evoked in them, and the impact that they felt it would have on young men like themselves. Videos were primarily used because they provided a

relatively large amount of detail in a short amount of time, to offer a succinct representation of the campaign's messages (compared to, for example, posters or websites - or more intensive prevention content such as a full talk or workshop). Prevention campaign videos are also something which the young men would be likely to encounter in their day-to-day lives, for example on television, at the cinema, or through social media, and on occasion the participants were already familiar with some of the campaigns.

Once each of the videos had been viewed and discussed, the participants were then asked some more exploratory questions about their views on why partner violence is so pervasive; what society should do to prevent it; and what role men and boys should play in such efforts. The same structure was largely employed in each session, although the questions would be adapted in minor ways, and a range of different prompts would be used, depending on the issues that the participants were raising. Ostensibly, this meant that the format of each focus group was relatively similar. However, participants were given as much freedom as possible to take the discussion in directions that they wanted to, and a wide range of different topics were therefore covered in each session. Each focus group generated a large amount of free-flowing discussion, ranging in duration from between sixty to ninety minutes. The participants were informed that the focus groups would last no longer than ninety minutes as a way of encouraging them to take part, so I brought the discussion to a close at that point if it had not already reached a more organic conclusion.

Before each session began, the participants were asked to take a seat where comfortable, and were given an information sheet to inform them about the nature and procedure of the study (see Appendix V). A separate sheet was attached with details of local and national domestic and sexual violence support services, on the basis that it would be unethical to raise these issues with participants without providing information about where they could seek help if needed (see Appendix VI). The young men were then given the opportunity to ask any questions they had about the study, and were requested to complete a consent form to confirm that they were willing to take part (see Appendix VII). The consent form also included some demographic questions, to capture some basic information about the backgrounds of the participants, in order to assess the diversity of the sample. Snacks and soft drinks were provided as a minor form of recompense for the students giving up their time, as well as to help them feel more comfortable and at ease in the focus group setting. Every effort was made to make the atmosphere of the focus group as informal, relaxed, and friendly as possible, to try to ensure that the participants did not feel intimidated, under pressure, or

uncomfortable at any point, especially given the sensitive nature of the subject matter. All participants were also sent a £10 Amazon.co.uk gift e-voucher after the session as an expression of gratitude for taking part, funded through the Economic and Social Research Council's Research Training Support Grant. These two factors were also emphasised when promoting the study, in order to encourage students to take part.

In addition to the videos, in several of the focus groups I also mentioned White Ribbon as a specific example of a campaign to engage men and boys in the prevention of violence against women. At the end of the sessions, White Ribbon badges were given to the young men, as an expression of gratitude to them for taking part, and to leave them with a physical object to help them reflect further on the issues that were brought up in the discussion. In a few of the sessions, to add to the discussion and provide a further example of a different type of prevention campaign, I also showed an image of a poster from the Women's Aid 'Real Man' anti-partner violence campaign.

As with the expert-informant interviews, each focus group was recorded with a digital Dictaphone, then transcribed in full into Microsoft Word. This was more complicated than with the expert-informant interviews given that several different people took part in each session, creating a lot more data to include in the transcription, including group interactions such as members of the group talking over one another (where it was, on occasion, difficult to comprehend what was being said), or laughing together about something. I endeavoured to transcribe all of these interactions as accurately as possible, to ensure that they reflected the collective dynamics of each focus group. I also strove to keep a note wherever possible of which participant was saying what in the transcriptions, to be able to follow their perspectives over the course of the focus group, though this was not always easy in some of the larger sessions.

4.4.2 Focus group sampling

A sample of male university students was unlikely to be particularly representative of young men in England more broadly. The inequalities in admissions in English higher education, especially at 'Russell Group' universities, meant that the research sample was likely to contain a disproportionate number of participants who were white and belonging to middle and upper class backgrounds (Boliver, 2017). However, given the qualitative nature of the

study, obtaining a representative sample of young men was always going to be beyond its scope (Tonkiss, 2004). These focus groups should therefore only be seen as providing insights into *some* of the ways in which young men can make sense of prevention campaigns.

When recruiting sports teams to take part in the study, one prerequisite was for participants to be aged between 18 and 25. I specifically wanted to speak to young men because, as was discussed in Chapter 3, most existing prevention work is aimed at young people. Whilst there is a need to engage with men much more broadly, across all ages, the need to tackle sexist and misogynistic attitudes before they become entrenched mean that the experiences and perspectives of young people should perhaps be particularly important in shaping campaigns. Students were focused on in part because it was expected that this would be a relatively easy group to recruit to take part. It also meant placing attention on the attitudes of a potentially relatively privileged group of young men. When men are made visible within societal discourses on violence against women, it is frequently men who belong to disadvantaged groups, such as those who are minoritised or working class, despite such violence being pervasive across society. Placing a critical spotlight on the assumptions of men who also experience other forms of social power and privilege, whose practices are often left especially hidden within discourses on violence and abuse, was therefore seen as potentially providing a valuable perspective. Students also represented a highly interesting and relevant social group, given the increased media, political, and public attention on the prevalence of sexual violence on university campuses in recent years, and on the construction of harmful forms of masculinity intertwined with this through notions of 'lad culture' (Phipps and Young, 2013; Phipps and Young, 2015; Phipps, 2016).

Sports teams were primarily recruited to take part in the study through a form of convenience sampling - by making contact with team captains and club presidents, and organising the focus groups through them. This typically relied upon the captain managing to bring along a sufficient number of team members for the session. Recruiting teams to take part in the study was even more challenging than anticipated. Dozens of team captains were contacted, and only a small proportion of these responded at all. Among those who did reply, it was then a challenge to make the necessary arrangements and gather together enough team members for the focus group, which in a number of cases did not materialise. In other cases, captains responded simply to say that their team would be unable to participate for various reasons. It was therefore only a small minority of all the men's sports teams at the university in question

that eventually took part in the study, and their captains played a vital role in enabling the focus groups to come to fruition.

Other methods of recruitment were also attempted, including: putting up posters (see Appendix VIII), distributing flyers, posting messages in university social media groups and those of specific sports teams, and sending recruitment advertisements within university-wide mailing lists. This was the approach used for the pilot interviews and focus group, however, they garnered very few responses, whilst making contact with specific team captains was found to be more successful. Participant recruitment was therefore a highly time consuming process, especially because various channels of university bureaucracy had to be navigated in order to gain permission to conduct the research, access the students' contact details, and make contact with them.

The initial plan for the study was in fact to conduct focus groups at up to four different higher education institutions across England, in order to recruit a broader spread of university students. Attempts were therefore made to communicate with student union representatives, university sports administrators and other contacts at several different universities in order to organise focus groups on their campuses. However, these efforts were almost entirely unsuccessful. In some cases, university and student union staff were supportive and helpful, but despite their assistance, it was still not possible to recruit teams from within those institutions. The decision was therefore made to focus my efforts on one specific institution, meaning that the sample reflects a snapshot of a single English 'Russell Group' university context.

One factor which may have biased the composition of the sample is that those captains who were willing to take part in the study, and the team members they in turn recruited, may have been more likely to care about intimate partner violence as an issue. This could include young men with anti-feminist views supportive of 'men's rights' activism, as well as those sympathetic to feminism and the movement to end violence against women. Meanwhile, those young men who are more ambivalent about partner violence, or do not see it as a major issue of relevance to them, may have been less likely to volunteer. One reason to offer the participants gift vouchers was therefore to help mitigate this possibility. If some students were primarily motivated to take part in order to receive an e-voucher, then that may have created a broader sample of viewpoints than one only made up of young men with a pre-existing interest in the topic.

One possible explanation for the difficulties in finding sports teams to take part in the study may be that it reflects men's reluctance to become involved in discussions around violence against women more generally. For instance, the topic can be perceived as being a 'women's issue', and not a 'manly' thing to care about (Katz, 2006) - and so some young men may have viewed the focus groups as having little relevance to them, or they may have felt anxious that showing an interest in the study would lead to being mocked or bullied by their peers. It's also possible that many students may have simply judged that they were too busy, especially given the large number of different research projects students are invited to take part in at university. Efforts were therefore made to ensure that the process was as easy and as comprehensible to team captains and team members as possible, so that it did not take too much of their time or place extra burdens on them. This was another rationale for providing gift vouchers, to recognise the time that had been sacrificed to take part in the focus group.

A range of different types of sports clubs took part in the study (these have been anonymised for the purposes of confidentiality), including men from mixed-sex and non-team sports. Most however were from single-sex, team-based sports. This kind of group may have been easier for captains to arrange to take part in the study than sports involving individual athletes or mixed-sex groups for example. The participants were also studying a variety of different degree programmes, with no subject area in particular being dominant among them, though interestingly, no social science students took part in the research. The young men were at a range of different levels of university study, though the vast majority were undergraduate students, as can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6: Level of study of focus group participants

Level of study	Percentage of sample
First year	33%
Second year	24%
Third year	29%
Master's	9%
PhD	4%

Most of the participants were therefore aged between 18-21, as is displayed in Table 7.

Table 7: Age of focus group participants

Age	Percentage of sample
18	12%
19	22%
20	27%
21	27%
22	4%
23	2%
24	2%
25	2%

The young men were also asked about their parents' occupations in order to gain an impression of their class backgrounds, and based on this most appeared to be middle class, with common occupational sectors for their parents including business, finance, medicine, and teaching. The majority of participants - 82% - defined themselves as having a white ethnicity, with 7% defining themselves as being Asian or Asian British, 7% having a mixed ethnicity, and 4% being Black British, whilst 89% of the young men were of British nationality.

Participants were also asked about their pre-university home post code, and based on this the vast majority of students had come from the south of England. Meanwhile, none of the participants reported having a disability. In different ways then, the sample was largely made up of students from privileged social positions. This is a significant limitation for the study, as it means that the sample is highly unrepresentative of young men in England as a whole. However, it does mean that it provides insights into the assumptions and practices of a somewhat advantaged group of young men, which fits with the wider ethos of the study to place a critical spotlight onto those with structural power and privilege, to learn more about how that power is maintained.

4.4.3 Focus group ethics

There were a number of important ethical issues to consider in conducting focus groups with young men around the subjects of intimate partner abuse and violence against women

(McCarry, 2005; Braun and Clark, 2013). These included the potential for discussing such issues to cause distress to participants; especially if they had previous experiences of violence and abuse, for example as victim-survivors themselves, as witnesses, or indeed as perpetrators. Given the prevalence of different forms of violence and abuse, it is likely that this did apply to some of the participants. A number of steps were therefore taken to attempt to minimise the potential harms that could be caused to the young men as a result of their participation. Firstly, the nature of the focus groups was made clear from the outset, including in recruitment advertisements for the study and in the information sheet given out before the session began, to ensure that the young men knew exactly what the research was about, and what participating in the focus group would involve. By ensuring that the students knew what to expect about taking part, it was hoped that they would feel relatively prepared for the different issues that could be raised over the course of the session, and could choose to refrain from participating if they were concerned that doing so might cause them distress.

It was also emphasised to the young men that even after signing the consent form, they were free to end their involvement in the study at any time, including whilst the focus group was taking place, if it was becoming distressing for them in any way for example. The participants were also encouraged to take a break during the session if needed, and it was highlighted that there was no pressure on them to answer questions if they did not wish to. However, whilst it was important to make these factors clear, the masculine nature of the focus group environment may have still made it difficult for the young men to take such steps if needed. For example, would a participant have felt comfortable to leave the room if they were upset, and thus draw attention to themselves as potentially having some form of experience of violence and abuse, or of not being 'tough' enough to deal with what was being discussed?

It is important to be mindful that, even when putting procedures in place to protect participants, there are still barriers which can prevent those procedures from being applied, and which can mean that participants might be harmed in ways which never become apparent to the researcher. This could be a significant issue in research with men around violence and abuse, in which any sign of supposed 'weakness' may be difficult for the participants to express. This does not mean that such research should not take place, but it does mean that researchers should take every possible step to minimise the potential for such harms to take place, and to take into account the impacts that participating in research can have on people's lives, in ways which the researcher may never even become aware of.

This also makes it essential to ensure that participants know how to access relevant support if they need it (McCarry, 2005). Details were therefore attached to the information sheet about a range of different local and national support services for domestic and sexual violence, in case any of the participants had experienced abuse or perpetrated it, or knew someone in their lives who had, and wished to seek help. This included the Respect Phoneline for perpetrators of domestic violence, the Respect Men's Advice Line and Survivors UK for male victim-survivors of abuse, as well as local and national services for LGBT people and for female victim-survivors.

It was also possible that a participant might disclose experiences of abuse during a focus group, so it was important to be prepared for this eventuality, to ensure that they received an appropriate and supportive immediate response. For instance, if a participant disclosed that they had engaged in abusive behaviour, it would be crucial to avoid condoning or colluding in such behaviour by not taking it seriously. For this reason, participants were informed in the consent form that, should they share something which suggested that they or somebody else was at risk of serious harm, then the researcher might need to report this to relevant agencies.

None of these issues appeared to arise during the focus groups - though as has already been discussed, it is important to be mindful of the unseen impacts that taking part may have had upon the students. In addition, there were moments when the young men did talk about being involved in or witnessing problematic behaviours, which posed ethical dilemmas for me in terms of how best to respond to such statements. This raises a difficult question about precisely where the line is in discussions around violence and abuse within research, where it becomes appropriate and necessary to intervene and challenge what participants are saying, for example.

Another factor to take account to minimise possible harms to participants, was the potential for members of the focus group to cause each other distress - by responding inappropriately to one another's comments for example, or by making offensive remarks. Bringing students together to talk about violence and abuse created a risk that participants could talk in personally revealing ways, which could then be derided by their peers for instance. In a focus group setting, the researcher is not necessarily able to retain full control over the discussion, and this could place participants in a vulnerable position in relation to one another when discussing such a sensitive topic. Furthermore, focus group participants were encouraged to be as honest as possible in expressing their views, and this could open up the possibility for

prejudiced or offensive comments being made. On the one hand, this would provide important insights into the perspectives held by the participants. However, it would also risk upsetting other group members, and creating the impression that such comments are normal and acceptable, especially if they were not sufficiently challenged at the time.

This meant that the focus groups required confident and strategic facilitation, to ensure that whilst the participants felt free to talk about what they wanted to and express their views frankly, they were also respectful to one another whilst doing so. The information sheet and consent form outlined that there was an expectation of respectful behaviour towards one another within the sessions, and that if a participant was clearly and persistently causing distress to other group members, then they would be asked to leave. Participants were also encouraged to make it known to the facilitator if they were feeling distressed in this regard at any point, so that I could take steps to intervene where necessary.

4.4.3.1 Ethical issues in critical research on men

This raises wider issues about conducting critical research with men about men's violence towards women, in terms of how to respond if sexism and misogyny are encountered within the research setting. A primary aim of studies such as this one is to probe these kinds of practices, so encouraging participants to simply hide them from view in the research context seems counterproductive. However, a male researcher silently listening on whilst sexist comments are being made would surely be unethical, as it risks condoning them. The purpose of the focus groups was chiefly to listen to the views of the participants, rather than to challenge or change them. Nevertheless, this was a potential 'side effect', even if only by helping the young men to reflect further upon the issues raised by the focus groups (Flood, 2013). Whilst giving them as much freedom as possible to express themselves, I therefore sought to minimise potentially *detrimental* side effects upon participants and their attitudes, which could occur if sexist behaviour was perceived to be tolerated, for example.

Where comments were made which appeared to be in some way harmful or oppressive, the preferred scenario was for participants to step in and challenge one another, as might occur in a 'natural' setting - and this did take place on a number of occasions, as is discussed further in Chapter 6, section 6.7. However, at other times there was some level of group agreement with comments of this kind, and when this happened, or when the other group members

remained silent, I endeavoured to say something myself, to question what was being expressed. Rather than simply telling the participants that they were wrong, the goal here was to probe them about their comments, to try and encourage them to think more carefully and critically about what was being discussed, and to look at the issue from a different perspective. This typically also helped to move the discussion along into other interesting directions.

For instance, on one occasion within the third focus group, some of the young men were expressing doubts that the public sexual harassment being depicted in the EIGE video would actually happen in real life. I therefore responded by providing an example from my own personal experience, to demonstrate how such behaviours are more commonplace than the participants seemed to be assuming:

> *"There was actually um, when I was, this was several years ago now, but I was on a train, and um, it's actually, it's quite remarkable, because it was pretty similar to that, but I'm not discounting what you're saying, I mean this, in that particular case, this guy was like, drunk, but he was basically doing like, not too dissimilar from what that guy was doing, and like, it took me a while to realise, what was going on, because you know on a train it's kind of more, private anyway, but it was quite horrible as well, because you know I was like, oh God, what should, you know because it was pretty quiet as well, so, it wasn't like that situation where there was like, lots of people, like there weren't actually many people in the carriage, so I was like, God I'm really gonna have to do something here, you know…"*

Relating this personal experience did appear to help the participants to appreciate how public sexual harassment can happen in everyday life, and they did then reflect further on how they too may actually have witnessed it going on around them. Interestingly however, some of the participants appeared to home in on the fact that the man in this case was drunk, and so something like this might happen when a man was drunk, but was less likely in everyday life more broadly. Meanwhile, in the fourth focus group, some of the young men were expressing pessimism about what value there was in challenging sexist behaviours among one's peers, when they would be unlikely to listen anyway. I therefore attempted to provide an alternative perspective:

> *"And then you can see how these things are kind of just, reproduced isn't it, yeah...yeah maybe that's also trying to, like, they're trying to appeal to the population*

as a whole, because you know, what can we all do, or what things can we all do which could potentially be, impactful..."

This did then seem to lead to the young men thinking further about the important rationales for violence prevention campaigns, and the positive impacts that they can achieve. However, there were also limits to what my restrained interventions in the conversation could achieve. For example, in the sixth focus group, some of the participants started discussing what they perceived to be high levels of false accusations in cases of rape and sexual assault, and one participant questioned why the identity of the accused in such cases should be made public. I therefore interjected to highlight one reason why this is the case:

"I mean I guess the most well, perhaps the most well-known example is like the whole Jimmy Savile case, where you know, once one person came forward, then lots of other people felt able to do so..."

Some of the young men did recognise and agree with this point - however, other participants paid little attention to it, and continued to discuss what they felt to be injustices experienced by men accused of rape and sexual assault. This illustrates the limits to which a 60-90 minute focus group can encourage men to reflect on or change their existing beliefs, and it shows that there are no easy 'solutions' as a researcher when concerning views are expressed in such a setting. It might also suggest that adopting an approach which more actively and explicitly challenges such comments may be justified in the research context.

There were at least no occasions in the focus groups where I felt that any of the participants were being caused distress by what others were saying, or where overtly offensive and prejudiced comments were clearly being made. However, I decided that if this were to occur, then it would be necessary to intervene directly and stop such behaviour, and if repeated, ask that participant to leave.

This also brought into question issues to do with my sense of being an 'insider' in the field of engaging men and boys to prevent violence against women. I decided that, in order to avoid excessively influencing the direction of the focus groups, I would try to position myself as neutrally as possible in relation to the prevention campaigns being discussed. Whilst it was likely quite obvious that I supported efforts to prevent violence against women given the topic of my research, I tried not to impose my beliefs on the participants, whether in relation to specific campaigns, or with regards to feminism more broadly for example. I sought to

refrain from articulating agreement or disagreement with participants' comments, instead simply encouraging them to continue expressing their own perspectives further. This was in the hope that the young men would in turn be more open about their views, and not simply tell me what they thought I wanted to hear. However, this may have to some extent been inevitable in focus groups about the prevention of partner violence, where the participants may have felt acutely aware of the risk of being perceived as insensitive or offensive. It may be naïve to think that it would ever have been possible to gain entirely accurate insights as a researcher into the genuine views and behaviours of the participants, or of the 'natural' dynamics of that sports team, whilst present as an outside observer. Furthermore, as relatively privileged young men, many of the participants might have been particularly skilled in saying the 'right thing' for the context, whilst leaving more honest representations of themselves and their opinions hidden from view.

There is thus a danger that simply taking at face value what was said in the focus groups may place too much faith in the participants, and risked colluding with ways in which men can overtly say and do the 'right thing', whilst still upholding patriarchal inequalities in their broader lives. On the other hand, would it represent a betrayal of the participants *not* to take their comments at face value? This dilemma reflects some of the complexities within research on dominant social groups, akin to those involved in engaging men work itself. As with the expert-informant interviews, I simultaneously felt a sense of gratitude to my participants, and a duty not to exploit or distort their involvement, whilst wishing to critically analyse their involvement in reproducing systems of power, which included looking beyond the explicit meanings of their contributions. This represented a contradiction between my responsibilities to the participants, and to the theoretical and political principles of the research. I have therefore sought to find a balance between these two dynamics, by honestly considering and reporting the explicit articulations of focus group participants, whilst simultaneously exploring what could be inferred from these about gender relations and the social phenomenon of men's violence against women.

This issue also brings into question the nature of 'informed consent'. For a project looking critically at the social group that the participants belong to, there is a risk that being entirely explicit about the nature of the research could put people off from taking part. However, failing to fully inform them about the purposes of the study would be unethical. How much information is therefore sufficient to ensure that participants are able to give informed consent? Every researcher must make compromises in this regard, not least because

participant recruitment material, information sheets, and consent forms, are only able to include the most important details, given limitations in the time and interest of participants.

I therefore strove to be honest in the recruitment material about the nature of the study, whilst doing so in a way which would potentially appeal to young men - emphasising that I was interested in hearing their views and opinions, and that the project sought to help efforts to prevent partner violence. In this way, I attempted to use the wider motivations for the study as a positive factor to encourage recruitment, based on the potentially beneficial impacts that the research could have. In adopting a 'neutral' stance during the focus groups themselves, I was less explicit about my own personal and political commitments, and how these might shape the research. However, this is arguably not an essential aspect of information required by participants. Furthermore, it may have implicitly been obvious (for example, in terms of the prevention campaigns I had chosen to show), and was not 'hidden' information, in that I would have willingly explained my own beliefs if asked by the participants. I also felt that if I was more explicit about my own perspectives, then this might have an undue influence on the young men, for example by leading the discussion in particular directions, constraining what they felt able to express, or leaving them more likely to tell me what they thought I wanted to hear.

This was one reason why it was important to end the focus groups with a debriefing process. This included thanking the young men for taking part, and asking if they had any final questions or issues to raise in relation to the focus group or the study more broadly, as well as if they were comfortable with everything that had been discussed. All participants were also given my contact details, and were sent a follow-up e-mail afterwards with their e-vouchers, which also offered them the opportunity to communicate with me again if they had any further questions, or wanted to be kept informed about the progress of the study and any subsequent publications from it (which some have taken up). This also gives them an opportunity to hold me to account, if they felt that my analysis of the focus groups was inaccurate.

Another major ethical issue within the focus groups was ensuring that the identities of the young men who took part were kept confidential. This was vitally important in order to enable the participants to feel that they could express themselves openly about sensitive subject matter, in the knowledge that their personal details would not be made public. All participants were therefore anonymised throughout the research process; their demographic

information was recorded without their names attached, and the transcriptions of the sessions were made with all real names removed. Instead, participants have again been given pseudonyms, and all other information expressed within the focus groups which could potentially identify any of the participants has been anonymised. The focus group recordings and transcriptions were again stored securely on a password-protected university server, with the recordings deleted within one year, once the transcriptions had been completed.

Focus groups create additional issues in relation to confidentiality, because the identities of participants, and the things they say, cannot be anonymised from other individuals in the room - especially where they already know each other. Participants were therefore asked to follow a policy that anything said in the focus groups stayed 'in the room', and was not discussed afterwards with anyone who did not take part. This was to try to ensure that comments made by the young men, and personal stories, experiences, and views that they expressed, would not be shared elsewhere once the session was over. Of course, I could not guarantee this however, which was also made clear to participants in advance. The fact that, as team mates, the young men already knew each other may have helped to facilitate a fraternal spirit within the focus group, and a mutual understanding that what they said would be kept private. However, in some ways this may have also heightened the vulnerability of participants, if aspects of the discussion were shared beyond the group afterwards, given that the young men were likely to have shared social networks. It was therefore crucial to emphasise the importance of confidentiality to all of the participants, and to ensure that the research itself maintained high standards in this regard.

4.4.4 Focus group data analysis

After the focus groups had been transcribed, as with the expert informant interviews (and described in section 4.3.4), the data was analysed using Braun and Clark's (2006) six-phase inductive thematic analysis method, again through NVivo. The candidate themes that were initially developed are listed in Table 8, together with the key themes that were eventually decided upon from the analysis, with the numbers again indicating which candidate themes were combined to shape these final versions. The write-up of the narratives that the thematic analysis provided from the focus group data forms the basis for Chapter 7.

Table 8: Identification of themes from focus group data

Candidate themes	Final key themes
1. Gender dynamics of violence and abuse 2. Understandings of partner violence 3. Distinctions between themselves and others 4. Confusions, subtleties and grey areas between abusive/non-abusive behaviour 5. Experiences of and engagement with prevention work 6. Opinions on prevention campaigns 7. Emotional responses to subject matter 8. Resistance to men's violence against women and its legitimisation 9. Enacting or critiquing the legitimisation of men's violence against women 10. Questioning or doubting women's experiences 11. Doubting or critiquing feminist arguments and the role of gender 12. Discussing or performing masculinities 13. Naturalising explanations	1. Awareness and understanding (1, 2, 4) 2. Making an impactful campaign (6) 3. Trivialisation and simplification (2, 6) 4. Education (5) 5. Complicity (4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12) 6. Shifting the focus (1) 7. Naturalisation (13) 8. Disassociation (2, 3, 6) 9. Constructing masculinities (3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12) 10. Resistance (4, 7, 8, 9)

However, there were also some differences between the thematic analysis of the focus groups and the expert-informant interviews. First of all, whilst the analysis of the expert-informant interviews was primarily based around providing a description of the themes found, the analysis of the focus groups sought to adopt a more critical, constructionist approach to what was said by the young men (Braun and Clarke, 2013). This was because the interviews were primarily seeking to gain insights through the knowledge and experience of the expert-informants themselves, whilst the focus groups sought to probe the views of the participants at a deeper level, and explore *why* they held the perceptions that they did.

In other words, I wanted to analyse the assumptions, ideas, and meanings which may have underpinned the explicit content of the data. This required a deeper and more interpretative

approach to analysing the patterns of meaning within what was expressed (Braun and Clarke, 2013). For example, during the second stage of analysing the focus group data, when carrying out the initial generation of codes, I not only searched for overtly relevant statements from the participants about their views on the prevention campaigns. I also scrutinised the data for moments in which the young men's comments may have provided deeper insights into their assumptions, positions, and practices in relation to issues such as relationships, gender norms, and violence. If I did then identify a pattern in which these codes appeared repeatedly across the data, then it suggested to me that my interpretation of these viewpoints may have had some validity.

For instance, I interpreted some of the young men's comments as implicitly representing defensive responses to the challenge of patriarchal privilege by the prevention videos they watched. A purely descriptive analysis would not have enabled such themes to be generated. However, when patterns of defensiveness were observed across the data, this indicated to me that my interpretations of the meanings below the surface of the young men's comments were of relevance. In this respect, examining the context surrounding the extracts of data (as in, the text adjacent to the most significant coded data) was crucial to the coding process. For instance, it was not only the fact that the young men repeatedly made comments about male victim-survivors of abuse that suggested that this fitted into the theme of defensiveness. It was that these comments were typically made in the context of an immediate response to a video depicting men's violence against women, from which the main focus of the discussion was quickly shifted to men's victimisation.

Another factor specific to the analysis of the focus groups was that this research method provides a unique form of qualitative data, in that it is based upon group discussion rather than one-on-one conversation for example (Bloor et al., 2001). This was vital to take into account in the process of coding and searching for patterns of meaning in the transcripts, as a key site of interest was the interactions *between* focus participants, and the ways in which their input was collectively formulated (Bloor et al., 2001). This again highlights the importance of taking into account the surrounding context of sections of data. For example, was it part of an ongoing conversation; a response to another comment made; or an assertion potentially influenced or constrained by broader group dynamics? Analysing text does have limitations in this respect, as textual transcriptions of discussions may fail to fully capture the mood of the group, the behaviour of different individuals within it, and the atmosphere within the room at the time. Nevertheless, I strove to take into account the collective, dialogic nature

of the data during the analysis of the focus groups. This meant, for instance, coding extracts of data which included exchanges between multiple participants, or searching for patterns and themes not only within individual remarks, but also within interactions between the young men, and considering the influence of the group dynamics on those patterns.

4.4.5 Focus group reflections

Over the course of the eight focus groups and two pilot interviews a reflexive journal was kept, which provides the basis for this section, and which also gave additional insights when analysing the focus group data. In many ways, the focus groups produced even more fascinating and revealing discussions than I expected or hoped for. A major concern whilst they were being planned was that they would generate relatively little useful data; that the young men would find it difficult to talk about violence against women, and that the sessions would end quickly with little in-depth or enlightening discussion. I was fearful that, with partner violence not being seen as a particularly 'masculine' topic for young men to talk about, even if participants had things they wanted to say, they would not feel comfortable expressing themselves for fear of being perceived to care 'too much' about this supposed 'women's issue'.

As each of the focus groups began, there may have been some initial trepidation in this respect. There was typically a sense of discomfiture when the discussions first started, and participants appeared unsure about how to act in this unfamiliar environment, discussing what may have been a relatively unfamiliar topic for young men. It seemed as though they were looking to each other in an attempt to gauge what the appropriate way to behave in this masculine context was, and what appropriate things for them to say about partner violence would be among their peers, without exposing themselves in the process. I wrote the following in the reflexive journal after the first focus group:

> *"When I then started talking about my research, I could see that familiar look on their faces, of when you are trying to talk to men about something which men are not 'supposed' to talk about, that look of vulnerability and insecurity mixed with trying to preserve the outer shell of masculine 'toughness'. I was also worried at this point that maybe they would not be very cooperative with me - I confess that I still feel nervous*

about raising these kinds of issues with a group of men, because you just never know what kind of reaction you're going to get, and they could all just laugh at you."

However, this sense of unease usually dissipated relatively quickly, as one participant after another began to become engaged in the discussion, and it became clear that it was acceptable for them to do so in this homosocial setting. In order to try and facilitate this, I did everything I could to help them feel comfortable and relaxed in the discussion, by reassuring and validating participants' responses as often as possible for example, and encouraging them to make whatever kinds of contributions they wished - or none at all, if they preferred.

This was also one of the reasons why I decided that the discussions would be centred around prevention campaign videos. The videos provided an external focus, so that the young men could start talking about partner violence in relation to them, without necessarily having to delve into their own knowledge, experiences, and understandings, which could leave them more vulnerable and exposed. It was hoped that the discussion would broaden out from there, and move onto the young men's attitudes and perspectives more broadly, rather than their perceptions of the videos being the sole focus. The fact that most of the participants settled quickly into the discussion, and often spoke somewhat confidently about the subject matter, may have also been in part because these were typically relatively privileged young men, whose various forms of social advantage may have helped them to develop a degree of self-confidence in expressing their views in such contexts.

Once the participants started to appear more relaxed, and the discussion began to flow more easily, then each focus group generated a substantial amount of rich, nuanced data, and the participants offered a wide range of interesting and complex responses to each question. Indeed, on many occasions they would lead the discussion and carry it forward among themselves, probing, questioning, and responding to each other, which meant that the need for me to intervene with follow-up questions was often minimal. Indeed, some of the focus groups actually had to be cut short because the allotted time had run out, demonstrating how enthusiastically many of the young men eventually embraced talking about the different issues that had been raised.

This conversational character of the focus groups meant that the interactions between team members often felt relatively 'natural', suggesting that they may have reflected the kinds of exchanges that the young men might actually have with each other in their day-to-day lives. However, there were also risks accompanying such free-flowing discussion: on occasion, it

followed tangents with little relevance to the topic; certain group members could start to dominate the discussion; or the conversation became problematic, for example by becoming fixated on inaccurate, confused, stereotyping or victim-blaming perceptions of violence and abuse. These issues did provide interesting insights into the perspectives of the young men, however it also felt important to 'rein in' the conversation at times, for example by suggesting a relevant alternative perspective if the discussion appeared to become focused on misunderstandings about partner violence. I therefore sought to find a balance between letting the conversations flow as 'naturally' as possible, and occasionally intervening where it felt appropriate for practical or ethical reasons.

In some cases, the discussion became something of a debate between participants, for example regarding whether or not they felt that particular videos would be impactful. Whilst it was more commonplace for there to be agreement within the groups, at times these debates did lead to disagreements, even heated moments, especially when the topic was a particularly serious one, such as victim-blaming. On occasion, it appeared that these disputes might have exposed wider tensions between some of the team members. Whilst they typically appeared to be resolved amicably eventually, sometimes I wondered about the impact that the focus groups may have had on the team dynamics beyond the session. Was I provoking strains around difficult issues within some of the groups, and then leaving the young men with the fallout of attempting to resolve these strains among themselves?

This underscores why research should be treated with care in relation to the lives of its participants, especially when they are young people, and when it is focused upon sensitive issues, not least to avoid creating an exploitative dynamic with them. It would be naïve to pretend that research has no impact on the lives of the individuals who participate in it. We as researchers potentially parachute into people's everyday lives, raise a range of profound issues for them, and then depart, leaving them to deal with the ramifications - which could be particularly significant when carrying out research with a whole collective of young people who already knew each other. I was therefore especially keen for the sessions to end on a positive, amicable note, and for participants to know that they could contact me again if there were any issues that they wanted to discuss further.

On the other hand, it would not necessarily be detrimental for the focus groups to provoke reflections in the young men beyond the research itself about issues of gender inequality, masculinity, and violence. If these are major social issues which the young men's lives are

affected by, then surely it is beneficial to encourage contemplation about them, rather than leaving them hidden and undiscussed. Indeed, many of the young men were vocally appreciative about taking part in the focus groups, thanking me for organising the session and reporting that they found it to be an interesting and enjoyable experience. It became clear that talking about issues of gender, relationships, and violence was something that the young men highly valued, but which they had had little opportunity to do previously.

As a result, there was a sense that a box had been opened by the focus groups which could not easily be closed again, and I was intrigued about what the participants would have talked about together in the aftermath, and what their reflections on the session with one another would have been. The sense that this was a somewhat novel experience for them was also indicative of how little is being done to formally engage with and educate young people on the topics discussed in the focus groups. Whilst it is likely that taking part in the research will have evoked some challenges for the young men then, on balance doing so will have hopefully played more of a positive role in encouraging the participants to think more deeply about men's violence against women. I was left with the perception that, if it is conducted carefully and sensitively, participants' voices are valued, and they are made aware of how they can find relevant support if they need to, then research of this kind can have more of a positive impact on the lives of its participants than a detrimental one.

4.4.5.1 Power relations within the focus groups

My role in the discussion also raises the question of power relations within the focus groups, in particular between researcher and the participants. Compared to the first part of this study, the roles and power dynamics were clearer, and were closer to those found within most social research, in which I was leading and facilitating the conversation, and the young men were following my instructions. I was also several years older than most of the participants, was in a senior academic position to them (as a PhD researcher, who could be their seminar teacher for example), and was likely to have a greater level of knowledge about the subject matter. Given the seriousness and sensitivity of the topic, at times I sought to emphasise these distinct roles by asserting some authority as the facilitator of the group, in order to attempt to minimise inappropriate behaviour within the sessions, as well as to maintain the focus group structure, and avoid the discussion going too far off-topic. However, this may also have had

an influence on the atmosphere of the focus groups, by making the participants feel a degree of pressure to conform to what they perceived I would want them to say for instance.

For this reason, whilst trying to uphold a sense of authority and structure, I did seek to treat the participants more like peers than as a 'teacher', in the hope that this would help to generate an informal and friendly atmosphere which would help them feel able to talk openly. I therefore attempted to create the impression that I was 'one of them' - despite the clear differences between us in a number of ways - by chatting informally and sharing jokes with participants at times for example. I made use of my own experience of masculinity to assist with this, by alluding to shared experiences around, for instance, peer pressure from male friends, in order to help reduce the barriers between us. I also wanted to make it clear that, whilst there were certain boundaries within the focus group in terms of acceptable behaviour, I was going to listen carefully and respectfully to whatever they wanted to say - that I appreciated hearing their views, and was not going to be judgemental towards them. The principles commonly found within feminist research of attempting to minimise power differentials between researcher and participants, and enabling participants to have their voices heard (even if I disagreed with them), were thus held to be important even if the sample was made up of relatively privileged young men. This was both as an ethical commitment, and also to enable the production of more insightful data, with the expectation that the young men would be more honest if they felt able to speak freely, without a sense of being judged by the researcher.

An additional issue within focus groups is the power dynamics *between* participants, which should be taken into account in order to try and prevent participants feeling unable to contribute, excluded, or perhaps even bullied within the discussion (McCarry, 2005). It was pointed out within one of the sessions that there can be significant hierarchies within university sport, between students from different year groups for example. As a rule, these did not appear to manifest themselves in an overt way within the focus groups, with participants generally appearing to make relatively equal contributions, which were treated respectfully by their peers. The captains typically expressed some degree of power over the team, for example in helping to get the group to stop talking at the beginning of the session, or encouraging everyone to dispose of their rubbish at its conclusion. However, this usually had relatively little impact on the discussion itself, with the captains contributing a similar amount to the other team members - though some of the captains did appear to take on the

role of being a ‘voice of reason’, by questioning or reining in some of the more controversial comments of their peers.

In some of the focus groups, one or two participants would be quieter than their peers, which may have been due to a lack of confidence for example. If it did seem that some of the group were starting to dominate the discussion more than others, I endeavoured to intervene where possible to try and open up the conversation to the rest of the group. In this respect, I also tried to encourage quieter members of the group, by making eye contact with them for example, whilst at the same time seeking to avoid putting pressure on any one individual to answer a specific question. Eventually, all participants did make at least a small proportion of contributions. However, it should also be recognised that the focus groups were in some ways not very inclusive settings, in that they were made up of male members of university sports teams, who in most cases had either just had, or were about to have a training session, and were therefore somewhat intensely masculine environments. It was hoped that because the members of the group already knew each other, and because I endeavoured to create a mutually-supportive atmosphere within the sessions, this would be mitigated. Nevertheless, some members of the group may have found it harder to speak up in this context, perhaps especially if they wanted to raise viewpoints which did not fit with that masculine dynamic, despite my best efforts to encourage all of the young men. For example, the sessions may not have always felt particularly welcoming to gay men, as heteronormative assumptions were frequently being made within the discussions.

Across the focus groups, I was frequently taken aback by the knowledge and awareness many of the participants had about intimate partner violence, and the relative sensitivity with which they discussed the topic with one another. There could be a number of possible explanations for this. First of all, it’s possible that I had overly pessimistic expectations about the young men’s understandings of partner violence - although, as Chapter 6 will show, a deeper analysis indicated that their perspectives were a lot more complicated than this initial impression implied. Second, a degree of self-selection may have taken place among participants, where those team members who already had the highest levels of awareness about violence and abuse were more likely to take part. Despite the steps taken to diminish this possibility (such as offering e-vouchers to participants, and recruiting sports teams likely to be made up of a range of different young men), those who did volunteer to take part may still have been more likely to possess existing knowledge and interest in the topic of partner violence.

Another possibility is that the social privilege of the young men may have played a role; for example reaching university-level education may have enabled them to gain more knowledge about social issues such as partner violence. It was notable that in one of the focus groups, several of the participants discussed learning about partner abuse from a storyline on the BBC Radio 4 soap opera The Archers - a programme commonly associated with a middle class audience. The social advantages experienced by many of the participants may have also enabled them to become skilled in coming across 'respectably' in scenarios such as these, regardless of their practices in their day-to-day lives. This points to a wider possibility, that the ways in which the young men talked about violence and abuse may have often been shaped more by what they thought appropriate for a university focus group setting, than what their genuine beliefs were. In other words, at times they may have approached the focus group in a similar way to a university seminar discussion, rather than behaving how they would in a 'natural' social context with their team mates.

These considerations left me questioning whether I may have been overly sympathetic to the young men at times; that I was enacting the 'pedestal effect' (Messner at al., 2015) and giving them considerable credit for saying and doing relatively little, because they were men. This reflects a dilemma within violence prevention work, where it can be tempting to overly applaud men and boys simply for not engaging in sexist or misogynistic behaviours, or for taking rudimentary stances against violence towards women. On the other hand, given the extent to which such stances can challenge the norm for young men, especially within homosocial peer group contexts, as well as the need to encourage men to pursue such ideas further, this may sometimes be an unavoidable response. Nevertheless, I strove to be mindful of the potential to be overly generous in my interpretations of the young men's comments, or to overlook problematic behaviours or statements, or collude with oppressive views and practices, as a result of the sympathetic feelings that their apparent awareness evoked in me. This was particularly important given that my own socialisation into masculinity and male privilege may have meant that I sometimes failed to identify the operation of subtle dynamics of patriarchal power, or may have unthinkingly been prone to giving other men 'the benefit of the doubt'.

4.4.5.2 Constructing and questioning masculinities in the focus group setting

Whilst analysing the ways in which the young men enacted masculinity within the focus groups, it was vital to consider how I as the researcher did this as well, as this would have inevitably had an impact on the dynamics of the session and the ways in which the participants related to me and the research (Flood, 2013). With this in mind, I sought to adopt a relatively 'neutral' performance of masculinity. On the one hand, I attempted to use being a man to help the participants feel able to speak more openly about the issues being raised in the sessions. This sometimes meant reassuring them of my own involvement in the masculine project, for example by commenting on sports, joking about the food I had brought with me, and joining in and laughing along with some of their more light-hearted conversations (though I did not intend to do this if the discussion became problematic). In addition, my appearance and the clothes I wore (relatively plain shirts, dark jeans and dark shoes) were relatively conventionally masculine, and the degree of authority I attempted to maintain over the group also conformed to a masculine construction of my position as researcher, which was perhaps also partly an unconscious defensive measure, to protect myself from the possibility of challenging or hostile behaviour from the young men.

On the other hand, I may have also appeared relatively 'effeminate' to the young men in some ways, for example by having long hair, or in my voice and body language, or by clearly not being involved in sports myself, but also because I wanted to come across as unthreateningly to the young men as possible, to put them at ease and help them to feel that their comments weren't going to be judged in terms of how 'manly' they were by me. The very fact that I was conducting research into intimate partner violence in the first place may have also evoked suspicions among some of the young men in this regard. Given the sensitive subject matter, I also wanted to ensure that the young men felt comfortable and safe in my presence; that I was taking their comments seriously, and was able to provide support to them if needed. To some extent I may have therefore positioned myself in a relatively subordinated, caring gendered role in relation to the participants, as the 'listener'.

As a result, I perhaps vacillated between enacting what Connell (2005) would describe as hegemonic, complicit, and subordinated masculinities during the focus groups, in part because I felt that it would aid the research process, and in part through my own unthinking, everyday, embodied performance of gender. Flood (2013) has used the notion of the 'outsider within' to describe the position sometimes experienced and adopted by pro-feminist men

conducting critical research on men, as a process of 'impression-management' in which emotional and political reactions may to some extent have to be suppressed. This can involve a sense of simultaneously betraying both one's own values, and the research subject (Flood, 2013). The idea of being an 'outsider within' felt quite apt in relation to my own performance of gender and wider conduct within the focus groups, which was quite possibly interpreted in such ways by many of the young men too.

Separate to my self-presentation within the focus groups, I recorded a number of times in my reflexive journal that I felt a sense of nervousness, perhaps even unease, in advance of the sessions. I did grow in confidence after each one, and my previous experience of university seminar teaching helped in this respect. However, fundamentally I remained somewhat anxious about talking to a group of young men on my own about the topics of my research. This perhaps reflects the difficulties that men often feel in talking to other men about issues such as masculinity, sexism, and violence against women, especially if it means challenging their behaviours (even though it would undoubtedly be even more difficult for women to raise such issues with men). This sense of disquiet may exist for a number of different reasons, including a desire to avoid bringing one's own privilege into question, but perhaps especially from a fear of appearing to question or defy codes of masculinity among other men.

This sense of anxiety may have in some ways provided a constraint to the data collection, by holding me back from asking the young men more challenging questions about their views and behaviours. I felt keenly aware at times that I did not have prior experience of delivering violence prevention work, which could have helped with the running of the focus groups. In this respect, the more straightforward one-to-one pilot interviews played a beneficial role, by helping me to prepare emotionally for conducting the focus groups, as well as to visualise what kinds of issues might arise in them. However, the research context also put me in an atypical position of being detached as a researcher from some of the pressures which apply in 'natural' interactions, both in terms of being there primarily to listen to (rather than change, or indeed conform to) the young men's views, and with the preventative voices largely being externalised through the campaign videos (and thus, indirectly, the 'respectable', 'authoritative' organisations that had produced them). Whilst this made carrying out the focus groups easier, it could be argued that it also enabled me to hide from a pro-feminist responsibility to challenge the young men more directly, and embrace a more explicitly action-research approach.

This also points to both the strengths and weaknesses of using prevention campaign videos as the main subject of discussion within the focus groups. On the one hand, this externalised focus was useful in taking some of the discomfiture around the topic of the focus groups away, and may have helped to enable a more confident, free-flowing, and revealing discussion than might otherwise have been possible. However, it also meant that the conversations did at times become overly focused on the videos themselves, and issues to do with their effectiveness, composition, and production. These may have been easier topics for the young men to talk about, but were less connected to the issues of gender and violence that I particularly wanted to hear their perspectives on. The videos were intended to provide a platform from which to discuss these broader topics, however this was not always entirely successful. Nevertheless, on balance they did act as an effective springboard for in-depth discussions about partner violence and issues relating to it, which may not have been possible were the videos not used. In addition, several questions unrelated to the videos were asked before and after they had been shown, which helped to move the discussion into other, broader directions.

4.5 Summary

This chapter has explored the myriad methodological issues involved in the conducting of this research project. It has outlined the pro-feminist standpoint epistemology that provided the foundations for my approach to the research, as well as some of the ethical and political complexities and contradictions involved in seeking to enact pro-feminist research praxis as a man, doing critical research on men. This was especially influenced by feminist conceptions of reflexivity such as that described by McCarry (2007), which underlined the importance of continuously reflecting on the influence of my own personal and political commitments and positionality on the project. Such considerations are particularly paramount when carrying out research on men's violence against women as a man.

For this project I have carried out qualitative research both with those involved in developing work with men and boys to prevent men's violence against women in England, and with young men who could be participants in such efforts. The first strand of the project therefore examined the contemporary context of engaging men in England, by carrying out expert-informant interviews with activists who have played a key role in shaping this field. The second part has explored how violence prevention campaign videos, focusing in particular on

intimate partner violence, are actually understood and used by young men, through focus groups with men's university sports teams. The data collected using these methods was then inductively thematically analysed, and the thesis will now explore the themes that were generated from this analysis, looking first at the findings from the expert-informant interviews.

Chapter 5: The English landscape of work with men to prevent violence against women

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the first strand of the research project, in which fourteen expert-informant interviews were carried out with activists, practitioners, and researchers who have played an influential role in the development of the field. These semi-structured interviews were conducted to find answers to the first research question: what is the contemporary context of efforts to engage men and boys in the prevention of men's violence against women in England? The chapter has been divided into sections based upon the different themes that were generated from the analysis of the interview data. There were two main goals for the interviews: first, to build a picture of the current terrain of work with men and boys in this area, both in terms of the surrounding policy context and the work that is actually being done on the ground; and second, to gain insights into the broader issues, challenges, and opportunities facing efforts to engage men, in England and beyond. The interviews covered issues within both work carried out by men to prevent violence against women, and work to engage more men and boys in creating change. They suggested that these efforts contain a number of inherent contradictions which can provide tensions and obstacles for the field, but which also offer insights into how it can expand its impact.

5.2 'Just fighting fires' - the English policy landscape

For all of the expert-informants, one of the defining issues facing contemporary efforts to prevent men's violence against women in England was a lack of resources. They connected this to the ongoing neoliberal austerity project of central government since 2010, which has led to severe cuts to public services and the welfare state. For example, many domestic violence refuges, already operating with meagre resources, have closed due to cuts to local government funding, as was articulated in the interview with Ben:

> *"Women's services [pause], have been hit particularly hard, in recent years so, I mean it has to be a much higher priority also in terms of, well, government or other funding."*

Some participants felt that this has been compounded by the growing influence of 'gender-neutral' constructions of violence and abuse in policy and practice, especially in England (Reed et al., 2010). This has meant that the existence of male victim-survivors of abuse is being used to claim that support services should simply cater for everyone, in the same degendered way. In some cases, this has again contributed to specialist women's organisations closing and contracts being given instead to generic, cheaper, larger, depoliticised organisations (Ishkanian, 2014). Some of the interviewees felt that this 'gender-neutral' approach could also have ominous implications for engaging men, given that the rationale for this work is built upon a gendered understanding of the problem, as described by Kate:

> *"I mean you can't call it men's violence against women if you're not allowed to gender it. If you don't see violence against women as emanating from men having more power in society, you know it's [pause], I don't know how you start, like from a gender-neutral, starting point."*

However, in the interview with Carl, it was pointed out that there is also a risk that discourses around engaging men could actually be co-opted into justifications for a 'gender-neutral' approach:

> *"There's now a sense, in the sector and among policymakers, that you always have to engage men and boys, you always have to have men and boys in the room, and that I think is troubling."*

Several participants emphasised that existing efforts to prevent violence against women have predominantly originated from the women's movement, so the weakening of women's services constrains the potential for prevention work to grow. Edward described the situation as one of continuously 'fighting fires', with the struggle for survival for frontline services meaning that few resources remain for addressing the roots of the problem through prevention work. Some of the interviewees felt that despite strong words from policymakers about preventing violence against women, the failure of successive governments to invest meaningful resources in doing so compared to the scale of the problem - and compared to the billions of pounds spent on anti-terrorism strategies for example (Pain, 2014) - belies its continued under-prioritisation at the policy level. As a result, it could be argued that the approach of the English state is more about managing men's violence against women, than seriously trying to stop it.

In spite of this, the participants still believed that there have been some steps forward in efforts to prevent violence against women in England in recent years. For example, it was announced by the government in April 2017 that it would become mandatory for relationships education - up until now a significantly neglected part of the school curriculum - to be delivered in all English primary schools, and relationships and sex education (RSE) to be delivered in all secondary schools, something which has long been campaigned for by feminist activists. There are already 'healthy relationships' sessions being delivered in some English schools (Hester and Westmarland, 2005), and many of the interviewees saw building prevention work of this kind as being particularly vital. For instance, Harry commented that:

> *"I think this stuff really should run through, the curriculum, from start to finish, from primary years upwards. I think it does need to be there, and I think it, teachers need upskilling and supporting to be able do that."*

However, whether or not this shift will lead to meaningful increases in support for the subject, and the extent to which gendered violences, inequalities, and norms will be addressed within it remains unclear - especially given that at the time of writing, the introduction of statutory RSE has been delayed until 2020.

Another key development which several participants emphasised was the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention, a comprehensive legal framework requiring signatories to take a range of important steps in preventing and combating violence against women. Having signed the Convention in 2012, ongoing pressure from the women's movement has meant that it is now close to being ratified by the UK Government. This was seen as being vital by several interviewees, as summed up by Daniel:

> *"The Istanbul Convention, is shaping the discourse around, you know, it's a sort of rallying cry I suppose, and so that's useful. And the development of thinking that went into it [pause], I think it helped our thinking to develop. And within that, and I think one of the things that was important for me in terms of this, is the way in which, I think, and I don't think this had happened much before, the importance of, engaging with men and boys [pause], was clearly not an afterthought within this document."*

However, if and when it does ratify the Convention, there are few guarantees about how seriously the UK government will take putting its framework into practice.

Some of the participants also pointed out that prevention efforts have spread into new spheres in England in recent years. For example, as a result of campaigning by students, staff, and feminist activists, universities have seen considerable growth in work to prevent sexual violence on campus, such as 'consent workshops' which were first developed by students themselves, or bystander intervention programmes such as the Intervention Initiative (Fenton and Jones, 2017). However, much of the work now being initiated by universities appears to be based on one-off/short term interventions, an exclusive focus on students (rather than the entire university community), and solely addressing sexual violence rather than all forms of violence against women. A degendered approach again appears to have been influential within institutional responses too, despite there being much public attention in recent years towards the relationship between harmful constructions of masculinity (through the notion of 'lad culture') and violence against women on campus (Phipps and Young, 2013; Phipps, 2016). For example, an influential recent report published by Universities UK (2016) about tackling sexual violence at universities, 'Changing the Culture', makes no reference to addressing men and masculinities on campus or engaging men in prevention. Whilst there is increasing talk about 'culture change' by universities then, there thus far appear to have been few specifications about what this would mean in practice.

One interviewee pointed out that the ebbs of flows of policymaking itself provide a significant challenge to the sustainability of this work, as it is so dependent on the priorities of particular ministers at any particular time, as different issues shift into and out of the public eye. For example, it was mentioned that the previous Labour Government committed to a potentially far-reaching prevention strategy in a policy document on tackling violence against women and girls in 2009, which included an emphasis on engaging men, stating that:

> *"Men have a crucial role to play in challenging VAWG. Most men and teenage boys are not violent towards their partners and would condemn those who are. Our prevention strategy will emphasise the part all men can and should play in taking a stand against violence." (HM Government, 2009: 6)*

However, they were unable to take these plans forward after losing power in the 2010 general election shortly afterwards. Similarly, several interviewees discussed the initiation of the Coalition on Men and Boys (COMAB) in 2007 as a particularly significant development for the engaging men field. This was supported by and received some funding from the Labour Government, and included several different men's organisations and academics with a pro-

feminist orientation. It published a wide-ranging report in 2009 about the relationships between public policy and men and masculinities, and the need to engage men and boys in order to help address a number of different social policy issues, including violence and abuse (Ruxton, 2009; Wright and Cowburn, 2011; Hearn, 2015b). However, COMAB also experienced some internal divisions and disagreements, and dissipated in the wake of the financial crisis and the departure of the Labour Government. This provides an example of what interviewees such as Harry saw as the obstacles provided by the transience of policymaking:

> *"The civil servants move on, or the political agenda moves on, and that's that, you know. And you think, oh god, why have I been engaged in this for so long, and there's now nothing, really, to show, for all of that."*

Several of the participants also highlighted how the devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have some freedom to devise their own policies in relation to violence against women, and often take different approaches to that of the UK Government, shaped by the unique political histories of each of these countries (Charles and Mackay, 2013). Many of the interviewees felt that the Scottish Government in particular was ahead of the rest of the UK in its support for prevention work, and adoption of a gendered approach to tackling men's violence against women. It was suggested that this was linked to the power of the women's movement in Scotland (Hearn and McKie, 2010) which has also developed some especially influential prevention work, such as through the Zero Tolerance campaign which was mentioned by several participants (Mackay, 1996).

5.3 Efforts to engage men in England - the practice landscape

It was made clear through the interviews that there are now a range of organisations across England that are working specifically with men and boys to prevent men's violence against women. The most longstanding of these is White Ribbon UK, which operates principally in England and Wales, and was set up in 2004 - though the UK's first 'White Ribbon Day' took place in 1996, organised by the charity Womankind. Subsequently, in 2006 a White Ribbon Scotland was launched, and in 2010 an all-Ireland White Ribbon campaign was founded. This is now run by the Men's Development Network, which carries out a range of different

forms of work with men and boys built upon a pro-feminist approach in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

White Ribbon campaigns come in different forms and undertake a range of different activities across the world, though the UK-based organisations share some common features. This includes ambassadorship programmes (made up of trained volunteers who act as representatives embodying the White Ribbon pledge *"never to commit, condone, or remain silent about men's violence against women in all its forms"* whiteribbon.org.uk, 2017); accreditation and partnership schemes (with awards granted to organisations that take steps towards engaging men in preventing violence against women - for example, the Welsh Government is White Ribbon accredited); education and training sessions; and public-facing actions such as community mobilising and protests.

A key focus of activity is the aforementioned annual 'White Ribbon Day' on the 25th November, in which a range of different organisations such as local councils organise events and activities dedicated to ending men's violence against women, such as 'Walk a Mile in Her Shoes' marches. This has received some criticism from feminist activists, because since 1981 this date has marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, in memory of the murder of the Mirabal sisters by the government of the Dominican Republic on 25th November 1960 (United Nations, 2017). The notion of 'White Ribbon Day' could therefore be perceived to represent a symbolically significant day of feminist activism being taken over by male anti-violence activists.

The different UK-based White Ribbons have all received small amounts of government funding in recent years, demonstrating some degree of government support for the principles of the campaign. However, it was made clear in the interviews that the resources of all organisations working with men and boys to prevent violence against women in England remain meagre. Such efforts were therefore described as being in a piecemeal, fragmented state; typically being small scale, localised, and delivered by third sector organisations reliant upon volunteers.

The participants also described several other organisations carrying out work to prevent violence against women with men and boys in England. For instance, two influential organisations in this area; Great Men and the Good Lad Initiative, have recently amalgamated. Great Men was based in London, and delivers a series of workshops by trained volunteers for boys at secondary schools around challenging different aspects of gender

inequalities and stereotypes. The Good Lad Initiative was founded by students at Oxford University to deliver workshops primarily for young men in higher education around promoting gender equality and tackling violence against women on campus, and has now branched out to schools and workplaces too. They have also recently been involved in IMAGINE (Inspiring Male Action on Gender Equality in Europe), a cross-European project on preventing sexual violence and harassment with young people with the organisations MÄN in Sweden and Emancipator in the Netherlands. Meanwhile, A Call to Men UK, which was inspired by the US organisation of the same name and is based in the West Midlands in England, train those who already work with young men (such as teachers or youth workers) to become coaches of their 'FreeUP: Living Respectfully' violence prevention programme.

Some interviewees discussed how, in the words of Edward, there has also been *"a lot more cross-fertilisation going on"* in efforts to engage men and boys in recent years, such as interactions and collaborations through international projects and networks. For example, the MenEngage Alliance, which was founded in 2004 (Hearn, 2015b), was seen as being particularly influential in developing transnational networks in the field, such as by Carl:

> *"MenEngage is now a kind of, significant player internationally, representing, what, seven or eight hundred NGOs I'm not sure, and are having a presence at international events like the UN Commission on the Status of Women and other significant international events."*

In a number of different settings, including in England, UN Women's international 'HeForShe' campaign has also been used as a banner for gender justice work with men and boys, for instance. Several interviewees referred to the significance of online communications for building the field in this regard, by enabling greater connectivity among activists across the world, and enabling sharing and learning about work between organisations in different countries. Ian remarked that:

> *"I would say, for all of its negatives, social media does provide a wealth of resources, to use in this work, which has been a development over the last ten years, and it also allows you to look at the work of others around the world, which is really useful."*

One participant emphasised how valuable it can be in this regard for sometimes isolated men involved in activism to end violence against women to know they are part of something bigger; that they are part of a national and international movement. Some interviewees also

felt that social media can provide a powerful tool and arena for the delivery of prevention campaigns - whilst at the same time recognising its limitations for instigating deep-rooted change in assumptions and practices. However, Edward pointed out that the a significant space for the development of anti-feminist, 'men's rights' activism in England, which he felt was growing as a result:

> *"There has been, I think, quite a significant development of, what I would regard as men's rights activity, in the UK as well. Which is, you know, a counterweight, a countervailing force if you like."*

In this regard, one interviewee argued that it could be valuable for the engaging men field to do more to take up some of the issues that 'men's rights' activists focus on, and applying a pro-feminist analysis to them. He felt that this would potentially help both with engaging more men in feminist ideas, and with countering the influence of some of the arguments made by 'men's rights' groups.

5.4 Contradictions in efforts to engage men and boys

It is notable that recent years have seen the initiation of several organisations working in different ways with men and boys to prevent violence against women and promote gender equality in England. However, the interviews also demonstrated that there are a number of political complexities and tensions involved in this work which are vital to take into account. These are based around the fundamentally contradictory nature of work with men, in which, as described by Carl, *"the overarching problem, is around the challenge of engaging members of a privileged group, in undermining that same privilege"*. What's more, these contradictions may often not be possible to fully resolve whilst operating within a broader patriarchal social order. However, this does not mean that work with men and boys should not be pursued. Instead, the interviewees appeared to suggest that the most impactful work may be that which is able to find pro-feminist equilibriums within these contradictions, as suggested by Kate:

> *"As a practitioner [pause], you've got to tread such a line, you've got to be able to engage with people who are probably, possibly hostile to your message, and not going to understand it, like in [pause] that way, you've got to also have like, that depth of gender analysis yourself, like, understanding, and you know, but equally be*

able to, put it across in such a way which isn't going to alienate people, but also isn't going to condone, like, sexist behaviours..."

This chapter will now explore further the central contradictions within engaging men that the interviews highlighted.

5.5 The personal is political and the political is personal

One of the biggest issues faced by many of the interviewees was the highly personal nature of their work. Learning about men's violence against women had raised numerous provocative questions about their own lives; from their relationships, to their day-to-day practices, to their view of the world. The implication was that the more one examines gender norms and inequalities, the more one starts to comprehend how they pervade every aspect of our lives. Given that this work is fundamentally based around men recognising and taking apart their own power and privilege, the personal nature of it lies at its very core. The classic feminist idea that 'the personal is political' (Schuster, 2015) therefore felt highly pertinent whilst conducting the interviews, and demonstrates that men's pro-feminist political activism is also highly personal work.

It was suggested by some of the participants that this means there are few clear boundaries in terms of where the work begins and ends. They discussed how the opportunities for taking action are potentially infinite - starting from their own everyday lives. In the words of Andrew:

"Because it is pervasive, what it means is, there's so many opportunities to try and do something about it. I mean you don't have to look hard, it's everywhere, and I mean, it's about trying to get people to realise that actually, you can raise these issues, you can talk about these issues, in almost any kind of context."

It was therefore suggested that, given the pervasiveness of everyday sexism and misogyny, there is constantly the potential for preventative actions of different scales in the diverse settings in which we interact with others. Furthermore, some of the participants alluded to how, even closer to home, bringing about change in the self is perhaps the most elemental aspect of the work for men, because this inevitably in turn shapes all of their formal prevention practice, too.

Interviewees implied that this could also be one of the most difficult components of their work, because of the profoundly challenging nature of undertaking serious personal reflection and change, especially in relation to deeply entrenched patriarchal ideologies. This means that even for experienced pro-feminist activists, it is easy to make mistakes, and the potential to revert to sexist assumptions and behaviours always remains. One interviewee, Carl, therefore emphasised the importance of *"getting our own house in order"* first and foremost, because it is so important for men within violence prevention work to practice what they preach. If pro-feminist men are failing to embody change themselves then they are likely to find it difficult to convince other men to change.

Some of the interviewees pointed out that these personal dimensions can create problems within work with men and boys, as it relies upon male activists and practitioners actively undertaking ongoing critical self-reflection and change as part of their involvement. When this does not occur, it can lead to ineffective practice, damage to reputations and relationships of trust, and can potentially bring about harm to others. For example, Edward remarked that:

> *"I think there is an issue about men who want to do the right thing, in this area of work, but they haven't really thought that through, or done the work themselves, and thought about their own, attitudes, behaviour, values, sufficiently. You know, because this area of work isn't easy, and there are all kinds of elephant traps, to fall into, and I think there's quite a lot of guys who just, topple right into them, and they don't even know they've, done it, you know. And so they, they can act insensitively, they can take over women's spaces, um, you know, not be sufficiently informed about some of the issues, some of the impacts, all of these, all of these are potentially difficulties."*

Problems of this kind could undermine the rationale for work with men and boys , by suggesting that it is simply not possible for men to be effective agents of change for ending violence against women - that it is dangerous to entrust such a responsibility with members of the dominant group within patriarchy. Some of the interviewees suggested that this can be a particular issue with men acting as public representatives for campaigns (such as the 'ambassador' schemes adopted by White Ribbon groups) if they fail to stay 'on message', as expressed by Edward:

> *"I mean it comes up for organisations like White Ribbon as well, so if you, try and define, well men in particular as ambassadors, for the programme, it's perfectly possible that one or more of those ambassadors are going to fall from grace. They're*

going to do things which are patriarchal, sexist, um, criminal even, you know? And that, that can undermine your whole approach really. So you've got to be very very careful about the basis on which men, enter into this work, and you know, there needs to be a lot of critical reflection I think, um, and I know there are White Ribbons that have suffered from some of this."

The implication appeared to be that these problems are more likely to arise within work which is more superficial or tokenistic, and which asks relatively little of the men involved. If in-depth critical reflection about one's own attitudes and behaviours is not a key feature of work by and with men and boys, then the risk of problematic practices being perpetuated within it is heightened. It was thus pointed out that organisations working with men and boys have to take into account and be prepared to deal with the possibility that male agents of change could themselves enact oppressive or abusive behaviours. This demonstrates the importance of contemplating men's motivations for becoming involved in the prevention of violence against women in the first place, which may often be complex, and sometimes misguided, egocentric, or pernicious, such as doing so simply to impress women (Brod, 1998; Messner et al., 2015).

In this regard, the interviews highlighted that there are a number of different ways in which men can reproduce patriarchal inequalities even whilst undertaking work to tackle them. One issue which was discussed in this respect was the platitudes that men receive for speaking out about violence against women, akin to the pedestal effect (Messner et al., 2015). It was pointed out that even within pro-feminist spaces men's voices can sometimes be unconsciously valued and respected more than women's, men can be applauded and valorised for doing relatively little, and men can receive the credit for work which women have contributed significantly towards. These imbalances were summed up by Kate as follows:

"The second men do anything, like a little bit, it's like, oh amazing, oh brilliant, oh look what you're doing, oh great, and then you realise all these like, women that have been working away at the same thing, saying the same thing for like, 40 years."

Kate went on to discuss how this exposes a tension within work with men and boys, between the need to nurture and encourage them to take on feminist ideas, including by lauding steps forward that they do take, whilst being careful to avoid praising men too easily for relatively small levels of effort in ways that we wouldn't towards women:

> *"I always find it challenging, because you know, on the one hand it's, you totally get everyone's frustration, and you feel it, but on the other hand, you know, men do need to be doing this work, men do need to work with young men and boys, this sort of stuff does need to happen. Um, so, like you know, there's definitely bits and pieces of that, or where you've seen like, men trying to work with women's organisations but replicating the same sort of patterns, of behaviour in terms of like, letting women do all the work, getting a bunch of credit for it."*

Many of the participants therefore emphasised how important it is that men involved in the prevention of violence against women actively seek to counteract the potential replication of male dominance within their own practice. This could mean, for instance, ensuring that proper credit and recognition is given to the women upon whom pro-feminist men's work is based, taking on emotional labour and caring roles that women are frequently expected to fulfil, and being mindful about the influence of men's presence within the movement to end violence against women, such as by taking a step back from the spotlight when appropriate.

This underscores one of the fundamental political contradictions facing the field; that involving more men in the movement to end men's violence against women can potentially both exacerbate and mitigate the patriarchal inequities and practices that can accompany that involvement. On the one hand, the presence of more men could increase the likelihood and occurrence of enactments of unequal gender relations permeating within violence prevention work. However, on the other, if more men are taking action against violence towards women, then it might be seen as a less exceptional and more normalised for them to do so, and so the potential 'pedestal effect' they receive could be reduced for example. The interviews appeared to suggest that finding a balance to this contradiction requires encouraging men who become involved in preventing violence against women to do so carefully and reflexively, in support of and accountable to feminist women's activism.

5.6 When pro-feminist men separate themselves from the problem

Another major issue relating to the contradictions between the personal and the political raised within many of the interviews was that of how men involved in the prevention of violence against women choose to relate to the rest of the male population. In particular, on several occasions the point was made that there is the potential for pro-feminist men to

disassociate themselves from the problem. In other words, there is a danger that, in the process of speaking out and taking action against men's violence against women, men construct themselves as being separate from the phenomenon, which interviewees felt would be inaccurate and unhelpful, and counterproductive when engaging with other men. This was summarised by Andrew as follows:

> *"Anything that kind of others, others this process, that says it's, you know, it's out there somewhere, it's not in here. And of course that, that always tends to happen, so one has to resist it very carefully, because it's such a, it's such a temptation, and it's such a good defence, not because it's true, but because it's an easy one."*

This kind of disassociation can be understood as representing a defensive response, to the challenge of coming to terms with one's own privileged position within the patriarchal social order. From the interviews, three different potential forms of distancing were identified within men's anti-violence efforts: disassociation from other men, from men's violence itself, and from patriarchy.

5.6.1 Disassociation from other men

Some of the interviewees pointed out that, as men involved in preventing violence against women become well versed in feminist theory, it may be tempting for them to perceive and position themselves as being in some way different from other men. This arguably *should* be the case to some extent, given that a central objective for pro-feminist men is to distance themselves from the sexism and misogyny that is socialised among men and boys. However, another goal is to encourage other men and boys to join that struggle, and bring along as many others as possible in *collectively* moving towards more equal and just societies. Furthermore, interviewees stressed that an approach in which practitioners construct themselves as being in some way separate from the men that they are working with is unlikely to yield a sympathetic response.

The interviews pointed to several different ways in which disassociation from other men and boys can easily and unknowingly be carried out. For example, it could arise out of an elitist sense of being more 'progressive', and thus in some way politically and culturally superior to other men, having taken on feminist ideas. This may be an unconscious, undefined notion rather than a deliberate viewpoint, which many pro-feminist men may have felt at certain

points, for example when frustrated with dismissive responses from other men. However, there is not something *inherent* within pro-feminists that makes them 'better' in some way, and which explains why they have taken on feminism and other men have not. Rather, such men have been in a position where they have been able to encounter and engage with feminist ideas and choose to take them on board. In this respect, Carl pointed out that it is important to avoid essentialising pro-feminist values, as if some men are simply born with them:

> *"For a long time men who kind of actively espouse a pro-feminist politics get asked, you know, where the hell did that come from, why are you a feminist. And one of the, kinds of narratives that I think it would be easy to adopt, that I, that I try not to, is the kind of essentialist, or foundationalist narrative, that says I've always been the kind of man who, x y and z, or I've always believed this, you know [pause]. I don't think, that's the case…"*

Essentialist dictums of this kind can also imply that some men are inevitably sexist or abusive, which in turn removes men's agency and responsibility for their violence. Instead, Carl made it clear that there are a range of social factors in men's lives which can help enable them to embrace feminism sympathetically. For example, many of the men I spoke to had an existing involvement in political activism and commitment to social justice, as well as feminist women present in their lives who had a significant influence on their views. Structural privileges which help to enable higher levels of education for example, are also likely to make productive engagements with feminism more possible (Tolman et al., 2016).

At the same time, whilst structural factors can make it easier for men to learn about and adopt feminist ideas, many men in privileged positions do not make this choice. Indeed, it could equally be argued that men who are themselves from marginalised backgrounds may be more likely to sympathise with feminist arguments, based upon a shared sense of solidarity in relation to their own experiences of oppression. A range of social factors could therefore play a role in influencing men's gender politics, yet there is no essentialist, *intrinsic* reason why some men and not others would be able to choose to support feminist ideas, and a key task is to make it as easy as possible for more men to make that choice. It is therefore important to recognise the role of both structure and agency in enabling and shaping men's decision to support efforts to end violence against women. It is similarly useful to consider how these factors interact in men's perpetration of violence and abuse, in order to better understand why

some men do choose to behave in such ways, how they can be held to account on that basis, and how they have the agency with which to change their behaviour.

Some of the interviewees also discussed the importance of men involved in preventing violence against women examining their own constructions of masculinity, which are likely to be interwoven with - rather than separate from - those of other men. It is not a straightforward task for men to relinquish their ties to the social expectations of manhood, because they are deeply instilled and reinforced across society, throughout the course of one's life (Connell, 2005). Aspects of the identities that pro-feminist men construct may therefore continue to be shaped in part by hegemonic notions of masculinity, even as they seek to help others to unlearn them. harmless; however more constraining and damaging norms could also linger on and manifest themselves within one's prevention practice, not least because men may not always even be aware of their presence, or of an alternative way for them to be.

In this respect, the interviewees suggested that men who have already been encouraged to question norms of masculinity in their lives may have a 'head-start' in terms of embracing feminist ideas. For example, Edward commented that:

> *"I think sometimes the guys who come to feminism, pro-feminism, have come through this slightly alternative, self-defined route somehow. That they've seen the sort of dominant norms, and they've thought, that doesn't relate to me. I mean maybe we could all say that, but there's only some of us who sort of [clicks fingers] really clicked with that, and thought, yeah I've got to, you know, find something different, there must be a different way of being male than this, there really must be more to it than this, you know?"*

It may be the case then that boys who grew up in environments where they faced fewer pressures to conform to particular codes of manhood, and who were not discouraged from expressing emotionally sensitive, empathetic, and caring practices for example, may in turn be less likely to be defensive or hostile towards feminist ideas. Rather than anything essentialist inherently separating these boys from others, the context in which they were socialised may have provided a more conducive environment from which they could tread a path towards support for feminism. This illustrates how the social settings in which boys learn to become men can play a significant role in shaping their expressions of agency within patriarchy. Yet at the same time, harmful ideas of masculinity are enforced from a myriad of

different societal sources, so following such a pro-feminist path is far from inevitable, irrespective of men's upbringing.

5.6.2 Disassociation from men's violence

The interviews suggested that the second form of disassociation which could be enacted by pro-feminist men is to separate oneself from men's violence itself, as if the phenomenon was something entirely distinct from their lives. This could include a perception that it would be impossible for them to ever perpetrate such acts; that there is something intrinsic to them which would mean that this could never happen. This obfuscates the reality that using violence and abuse is a choice which men make, and whilst pro-feminist principles can make such a decision easier, men with progressive views can and do perpetrate violence against women too. Especially since, as was discussed in Chapter 3, there is not always necessarily a direct connection between one's attitudes and behaviours (Pease and Flood, 2008). In this respect, some of the participants made clear that it is important not to see men who do use violence against women as being inherently different in some way. For example, Kate suggested that this might indicate a weakness with the 'bystander intervention' approach - that it signifies a reluctance to accept the potential for anyone to not only be a 'bystander' to abuse, but to actually enact it:

> *"There's a lot of sort of talk of like, bystander work, and I think, it's a really great approach and stuff [pause]. But then there's other things about like, that just this sensitivity about like actually, you know, young men are potential perpetrators, all young men are potential perpetrators, all young men are potential perpetrators of men's violence, like you know, that's uncomfortable."*

Furthermore, some of the interviewees suggested that pro-feminist men cannot disassociate themselves from complicity in the perpetuation of men's violence against women. Whilst violence itself may not be perpetrated by all men, a key task for male agents of change is to reflect on the continuum of violence against women as a whole (Kelly, 1988), and consider the range of different behaviours that they have engaged in, colluded in, or condoned for example. With this in mind, it is likely that every man has, at some time or another, played a part in upholding men's violence against women; in helping to make it possible, excusing it, and enacting oppressing behaviours in our day-to-day lives. Disassociating from the violence

and abuse perpetrated by other men can therefore thwart pro-feminists from examining the various ways in which they too may have been, and continue to be, involved in its reproduction (Pease, 2015a). For example, Harry articulated the need for practitioners to recognise the ways in which unhealthy behaviours and relationships may have existed in their lives too:

> *"The sector itself, also perhaps needs to wise up a bit about, about that, because that, that's where the continuum, if you're thinking about perpetrators and ordinary men sits. You know, we're always drawn to the nasty people at the end of the continuum that put women in refuges, or make women need to go into refuges because they fear for their safety. Um, but I suspect almost everybody in the sector has an experience of a relationship where either they or the other person didn't really take those, weren't willing to tolerate those level of risks, that are required for that sort of emotional, learning."*

In this regard, some of the interviewees talked about the need for prevention work to be conscious of the ways in which men's use of violence can be 'othered' (Michalski, 2004; Montoya and Agustín, 2013), as described here by Andrew:

> *"The other thing I get increasingly worried about nowadays, is this kind of focusing - this is a tricky one this, this is a real can of worms - increasing focus on minority ethnic groups. And that's not to say that there might not be some particular issues in relation to some minority ethnic groups, or some groups, you know, or that there might not be variations in the way that men's oppressiveness is expressed culturally, to some extent, but I'm extremely sceptical about, again, this othering process, that it's men from this particular minority, which distances it from the majority ethnic group."*

Andrew's point demonstrates that linking violence against women solely with 'other' specific social groups based on 'race' or class for instance can be an effective way to disassociate men, masculinities, and gendered social relations more broadly from the problem. It may therefore be tempting for male agents of change to see violence and abuse as being more of a problem in 'other' communities than in their own, despite it clearly being pervasive across all sections of society. Meanwhile, they might perceive their own social group as being more 'enlightened' in some way, and more conducive to supporting feminism as a result, for example. This makes it vital that efforts to prevent violence against women do not replicate

societal discourses of othering, as to do so would obscure rather than address the roots of the problem. For this reason, Ben suggested that government approaches which focus predominantly on perpetrators of abuse rather than on men and masculinities more broadly have limited potential to address the pervasiveness of men's violence throughout society, not least because the targets are likely to end up being men who belong to marginalised social groups:

> *"...shouldn't just be thought about in terms of focusing on those people, or those men, who are labelled as perpetrators. Not a word again I like much, but it's the word that's used, or perps as they're called. Because it's like, that's a minority, and actually, the men who get involved in the system, as perpetrators, inverted commas, you know, that also is linked to other issues, like class, and so on, and ethnicity."*

There are understandable reasons why men involved in work to prevent violence against women would seek to view themselves as being disconnected from that problem. However, the interviews suggested that a vital step in reflecting upon and changing one's own practices is understanding and recognising how anyone - including pro-feminist men - has the potential to enact violence and abuse, and how all of us share complicity to varying degrees in perpetuating it. Disassociating from men's violence could therefore provide a deeply entrenched barrier to even pro-feminist men accepting the ways in which they are implicated in the problem, and understanding how it is sustained.

5.6.3 Disassociation from patriarchy

The final potential form of disassociation among men involved in efforts to prevent violence against women that was alluded to by the interviewees was based around a perception of being detached from the structures of patriarchy, as a result of one's pro-feminist beliefs. Support for feminism does not immediately imbue in men an ability to identify and eliminate all of the various ways in which they are entangled with patriarchal relations in their own lives and practices. Nor does it necessarily mitigate the power and privilege that men are denoted with based upon their position within the gender order. Some of the interviewees were therefore keen to emphasise that involvement in work to prevent violence against women does not disconnect men from male privilege, and whilst gender inequality persists, even pro-feminist men will continue to accrue the 'patriarchal dividend' (Connell, 2005).

This does not mean that men should not take steps to try and minimise the structural advantages that they receive over women. Furthermore, it is important to take into account how privilege is unevenly distributed among men, especially as a result of intersecting systemic inequalities such as those of class and 'race', which lead to some men dominating over others (Connell, 2005). It was pointed out in the interviews that the embrace of feminism by men can itself lead to punishments, rejection, and subordination by other men, based on the perception that it represents a form of emasculation or gender betrayal.

Nonetheless, no matter how hard pro-feminist men may work towards dismantling patriarchal inequalities, they cannot view themselves as having been separated from them. Participants therefore emphasised the importance of developing an awareness of the multitudinous ways in which patriarchy affects all of men's psyches, perceptions, and practices over the course of their lives - including pro-feminist men. The extent to which male dominance and the oppression of women is embedded in the ways that we see the world and conduct ourselves in it means that we cannot simply divorce ourselves from that system if we wish to do so. In the words of Andrew:

> *"We can't separate ourselves from those processes, and for me, personally, that was always the most difficult thing. And still is. To try and be honest with yourself. And to realise that [pause]. On the other hand, I think if you can actually try and do that, it can be an asset I think. I think not to do that when you're doing this work is kind of, really dangerous actually. Because you know, just to separate yourself off and say, I'm this good role model, and I'm going to change these other men, I think that's really dangerous, because it's not real, you know?"*

Andrew's point demonstrates that if men involved in preventing violence against women see themselves as being detached from patriarchy, then manifestations of male privilege within their work could in turn go undetected. Failing to recognise and address the ways in which gendered inequalities pervade all areas of social life, including our own, heightens the risk that they will be reproduced unchallenged within the engaging men field too. This highlights another one of the fundamental contradictions within this work; that whilst it seeks to disrupt men's connections to patriarchal power relations, it must also recognise that it is operating within that same system, and cannot consider itself to be separate from its inequalities and injustices.

5.7 Moving beyond a sense of shame to resist disassociation

The previous section demonstrated that resisting the urge to disassociate from other men, from men's violence, and from patriarchy is challenging, not least because these are exactly the issues that men involved in the prevention of violence against women are attempting to confront. However, there was an implication from the interviews that men can contribute most powerfully to the dismantling of patriarchy by approaching their work through a recognition of the ways in which their own lives are enmeshed within its structures. Andrew remarked in his interview that:

> *"I'm very wary of anything that actually puts a barrier between us and them, okay? It's just too convenient to have barriers between us and them. And I think it's really important to recognise that, to some extent, them is us, and us is them. And only if we have that kind of, if we break down that barrier, are we really going to get at this stuff."*

Indeed, it was suggested that men's connections to patriarchy can also mean that they are well placed to help undermine it from within. This gets to the heart of the positive contribution that men can make to the prevention of violence against women; it is *because* we are part of the problem that we can also help to resolve it (Brod, 1998). However, this does make it particularly important that pro-feminist men are honest and proactive in critically reflecting on their own motivations, assumptions, biases, and mistakes. Several interviewees alluded to how this means that no man ever reaches a stage in which they become a 'fully-formed' pro-feminist. All men involved in violence prevention work are likely to make mistakes, and in this respect, Ian described how that involvement is an ongoing educative process for practitioners as well as for participants:

> *"…it's not a transmission model, like the hypodermic transmission of knowledge model which, simply doesn't work, and wouldn't, it particularly wouldn't work in this, because it would assume an expertise on the part of the, the [practitioner], which isn't really a viable kind of concept, because nobody's perfect, and we're all constantly learning. So it, it changes over time, there's no assumptions of expertise or perfection, so it's a kind of a co-constructed dialogue, where we would expect, and I think is frequently proved to be the case, is a learning journey, as much for the [practitioner] as it is for the young men on the courses."*

For interviewees, this underscored the crucial importance of both individual activists and organisations being accountable to feminist women. Being open and receptive to being held to account, and seeking out critical feminist feedback, can help to ensure that if men are making mistakes or engaging in ineffective or problematic practice, it can be identified and addressed (Pease, 2017). It was suggested that accountability has to be enacted in a way that communicates a willingness to listen and learn, together with a readiness to accept that no one is beyond reproach. Some participants noted that it can be easy to respond defensively in such instances, and this is why it is so important to start from a position of welcoming feminist critiques.

It was also felt that honesty and openness with regards to one's own position within patriarchy could contribute to more productive practice in engaging with other men and boys. Some of the interviewees commented on how disassociating from other men can lead to the espousal of what was described as a 'holier-than-thou' approach to participants in prevention work. Whilst discussing domestic violence perpetrator programmes, Harry remarked that:

> *"I suspect most, most of the people that would be doing the work, as I said you know, would have to look quite long and hard at their own, mistakes, and that, I think that's difficult, because, there's only so much that you can reveal to the people you're working with, uh, in practice. I think if you go in with that kind of holier-than-thou approach, which some programmes do, it makes the men defensive, it makes them look for quick fixes to be someone different, rather than the more gradual journey, really."*

Practitioners are thus more likely to be able to engage with men and boys in meaningful ways if they are as honest as the circumstances allow about their own challenges, and can demonstrate that they understand the struggles involved in personal change from experiences in their own lives. A message based on solidarity and a shared struggle for pro-feminist change with other men and boys may be much more relatable than one which clearly separates practitioners from participants, or simply admonishes men and boys as if there is something about them specifically that is 'wrong'. Interviewees suggested that a perception of being reprimanded may be more likely to alienate and deter participants than one which articulates the shared need for collective change among men and boys and for society as a whole.

The interviews therefore highlighted that resisting disassociation requires a theory of change that recognises that, for pro-feminist men, there is no such thing as an end point, or a conclusion which can be reached in engaging with feminist ideas (Kahane, 1998). Several participants emphasised that personal transformations for men in this field are ongoing, lifelong processes, which are constantly and continuously struggled with. Men might be able to take steps forward (or backward) in relation to understanding and acting upon different feminist issues, but there will always be new issues to confront, and new knowledges to learn and potentially unlearn. In this way, pro-feminist men can be seen as being permanent works in progress. Especially given that patriarchal ideologies and practices remain ever-present in the world around them, ready to be re-embraced and re-applied, as described by Carl:

> *"I and other men, we're constantly, and women too, we're constantly invited back into sexism, back into misogyny. Constantly invited by media, by peers, by structural, circumstances, to live in gender inequitable ways, and so resisting that, you know, is a kind of daily process."*

Some interviewees related this issue to simplistic distinctions sometimes made by violence prevention campaigns between 'good' and 'bad' men. Constructing a dichotomy of this kind suggests that there is a clear and definitive line separating the two categorisations, with individual men falling neatly into one or the other (Castelino, 2014; Flood, 2015; Seymour, 2017). Whilst we may be able to make distinctions between specific behaviours on this basis, some of the participants appeared to feel that differences between men are likely to be much more blurred, and that all men will engage in a mixture of practices that can be seen as 'good' and 'bad' within patriarchy over the course of their lives. Furthermore, artificially separating men in this way suggests that those who are 'bad' cannot change, with the implication that those who fall into this category inevitably enact sexism for example. This in turn minimises their responsibility for their behaviour, as well as obscuring how some men may outwardly present themselves as being 'good', or even pro-feminist, in order to conceal more problematic practices.

Of course, many men who engage in sexism will choose not to change - because they benefit too greatly from patriarchy for instance - but that does not mean that they cannot do so, and should thus be held to account on this basis. Yet many 'good' men are also likely to have undertaken some form of sexist practices in their lives, and this dichotomy conceals their capacity to do so, implying that they are fully transformed or unblemished individuals who

are beyond critique. Yet if such men exist, then at what point do they enter into that category - and what would it take for them to be removed from it? The participants suggested that men's lives and practices within patriarchy are much more complex and compromised than distinctions such as that of 'good/bad' men allow for. Indeed, it could be argued that this problem also exists to some extent with other common terms and categories used in the engaging men field, such as 'male ally' and indeed 'feminist/pro-feminist man', especially when these labels are self-proclaimed. This thesis utilises the label 'pro-feminist' in the sense of a set of beliefs that an individual holds, and which men's practices can be held to account against, rather than the ascription of a fixed category. However, even this may construct simplistic, artificial distinctions which can encourage disassociation between men whose lives are in reality much more complicated.

5.7.1 Shame as productive inspiration for confronting patriarchy

One reason suggested by several of the interviewees as to why men involved in the prevention of violence against women may attempt to disassociate themselves from the problem, is that of a sense of guilt or shame about the injustices of patriarchy and their practices in relation to it. Since it is likely that all men have, at some point or another, engaged in some level of sexism and misogyny, it is understandable that learning about feminism would invoke feelings of embarrassment and shame about that. For example, when discussing the challenges faced in his work, Fred remarked that:

> *"When you're talking to boys about these issues, when you're talking about why it's not okay to call someone a slut for example, if you're working with like a Year 10 group, pretty much every boy in that room will have done that at some point. Like I know that I did when I was their age, um, because it was normalised. But it's not okay, and, you know, we need to talk about that issue, but of course there's inherently a little bit of like, shame or embarrassment from the boys, because they're thinking, oh shit I've done that, I've said that before."*

A sense of shame can therefore be seen as an entirely justified response to realisations about the nature of women's experiences within patriarchy, and one's own role in perpetuating them. However, some of the participants also noted that on their own, these emotions do little to help create change - so it is crucial to encourage men and boys to respond to them

constructively. It was suggested that dwelling on such feelings excessively within prevention work, or actively encouraging a sense of shame among men and boys, may elicit defensive responses rather than productive learning and reflection. For instance, it may push men and boys further towards disassociating themselves from the problem, based on the assumption that, if (in their eyes) they have never personally practiced violence, then they should have nothing to be ashamed of - and cannot be implicated in the problem.

Several of the participants felt that there are connections between pro-feminist advocates and men and boys more generally in this respect. The urge to disassociate from violence towards women may arise both among experienced activists and men who are new to feminism alike. This defensive response could remain a difficult issue for men to overcome in different ways throughout their lives, irrespective of the extent to which they have engaged with feminism. It is important then that pro-feminist men *make use* of the shame they feel regarding their part in the maintenance of patriarchy, as a motivation for creating change. Furthermore, contemplating the part we have played in helping to perpetuate men's violence against women can help to make sense of the ways in which that complicity can occur, and how it can be challenged.

Meanwhile, some of the participants suggested that if pro-feminist men overly fixate on shame, there is a risk that it can become an excuse for inaction, rather than a driver for change. Andrea Dworkin (1983: 165) discussed how this reflects a self-indulgent response based upon male privilege, in which men have the luxury of focusing on their guilt whilst the patriarchal status quo remains in place: *"men have the time to feel guilty. We don't have the time for you to feel guilty. Your guilt is a form of acquiescence in what continues to occur. Your guilt helps keep things the way they are."* This demonstrates another contradiction at the core of men's efforts to end violence against women; their guilt and shame in relation to patriarchy is simultaneously warranted, necessary, and unproductive on its own. It is crucial then that pro-feminist men move beyond the shame they may feel so that it becomes a source of inspiration, rather than an excuse for passivity.

At the same time, many of the participants also sought to emphasise that being involved in efforts to end men's violence against women had been a positive experience for them. Whilst it was not suggested that this should be the primary motivation for undertaking such work, several of the interviewees affirmed that engaging with feminist ideas and activism had been, and continued to be a powerful and inspirational experience. For example, Carl asserted that:

"I've found extraordinary kind of joy, and pleasure, and power, in taking on feminism as a personal project, and it's enriched in really profound ways my intimate relations with women, and my friendships with women, and with other men, and my parenting, and so on."

Some of the participants discussed how learning about feminism had been a liberating experience, for example by helping them to free themselves from the pressures to conform to rigid codes of masculinity. They described how it had helped them to develop more fulfilling, loving and egalitarian relationships with the people in their lives, and to feel better equipped to understand and deal with their emotions and personal difficulties. Whilst engaging in a serious way with feminism and the prevention of violence against women is profoundly challenging for men in a number of ways then, it appeared that it can also provide a significant source of hope and optimism.

5.8 Supporting and collaborating with the women's movement

As the previous sections have alluded to, perhaps the most foundational principle echoed throughout the interviews was that work by and with men and boys to prevent violence against women must be carried out in collaboration with the women's movement, supporting rather than supplanting it. Participants described this as meaning that it should be accountable to feminist women, and that women should be consulted about efforts by men, with critical comments from feminists taken on board and addressed (Pease, 2017). It was pointed out that a failure to do this not only brings into question the pro-feminist ethos of work with men, but can also lead to ineffective, counterproductive, or even harmful practice. There were clearly a range of approaches to pro-feminism being adopted by participants, with some more explicit about their feminist commitments than others. On occasion, some of the interviewees also appeared somewhat vague about how they themselves put accountability into practice, personally, and organisationally. However, they commonly described their work as being fundamentally shaped by feminist women's voices and experiences, as Ian discusses here:

"Listening to the range of thought within feminism. Specifically, about their views of male intervention in this sphere [pause]. If you don't spend time on that then I think you're on a sticky wicket, and can come a cropper because you're just marching on in perhaps an unguided, and unreflective instinct to do something. Now that instinct is a

good instinct, and is not to be snuffed out, and criticised wantonly. But, wanting to do something, and doing something effectively, are two quite different things."

Several participants suggested that it is important for men working to end violence against women to model egalitarian relations with feminist women and women's organisations, and to play a supportive rather than competitive or superseding role in relation to them. Indeed, some also questioned how important it is that work with men is actually delivered by men. In this respect, a number of interviewees felt that it was important to recognise that a lot of work to engage men and boys is already being done by women, both formally and informally. They pointed out, for example, that it is often women in men's lives that push them to think most profoundly about gender relations. Similarly, whilst many organisations in the field seek to recruit men as public representatives for campaigns, a lot of the behind-the-scenes work that keeps organisations running but receives less public recognition is being done by women - a dynamic which could in turn help to reinforce assumptions about male authority.

Edward argued that the central role of women in engaging men had to date not been sufficiently recognised: *"I think we're in danger of, missing the influence that women and girls have, which I think is absolutely huge to be honest."* So whilst a vital outcome for work with men is to enable them to speak to their peers about violence against women, it was suggested that some of the oft-repeated ideas about men and boys only listening to other men, and the decisive importance of male role models, may be overly simplistic (Tarrant et al., 2015). Meanwhile, when recruiting men and boys to help prevent men's violence against women, perhaps a key focus should be on encouraging them to play a more *active* role in the movement, so that more men do undertake the behind-the-scenes work and not only the more symbolic, public-facing activities that receive the most credit, without necessarily requiring more deep-rooted personal change.

A number of interviewees also felt that it is important to understand how involving more men in the struggle to end men's violence against women carries with it certain risks, such as the potential to diminish its feminist agenda and leadership, and constrain women's voices. This could manifest itself, for example, in the presence of men inhibiting women's ability to confront and speak openly about their experiences of patriarchal oppression, or the domination of discussions by men at both micro and macro levels, or issues related to men and masculinities becoming the primary focus of attention, rather than the liberation of women. Some interviewees did therefore express concern that men's involvement, no matter

how well intentioned, could have a deradicalising, depoliticising, or even colonising impact upon the movement to end violence against women. This reflects one of the major political contradictions in this work; that it is simultaneously both vital, and potentially dangerous, for men to become more active within it. Kate summed up this tension as follows:

> *"I think working with men and boys is vital, I think it's absolutely important, I think it should be well resourced. However, it's like, you want it to be the right work with men and boys, and I think that's always the, the hesitation, that women, the women's sector, tend to have."*

Some of the participants alluded to how this tension can be particularly significant in relation to resources. A core principle voiced within many of the interviews was that pro-feminist men's organisations should ensure that they don't take funding away from the women's movement (for example, by competing with feminist organisations for government contracts). This becomes all the more important given the aforementioned cuts that women's services have faced. However, some participants felt that engaging men organisations had not always been careful enough in this regard in England. This leaves the question about how work with men to prevent violence against women should be resourced. Edward described this situation as one of attempting to 'square the circle', between the simultaneous lack of funding for frontline services, and the need to tackle the roots of the problem. Lee summed it up as follows:

> *"Clearly, whilst you're trying to run prevention campaigns, you have to provide services to survivors of violence against women. Those services can't be allowed to diminish, in order to provide funding for a prevention campaign. But if you don't have a well-funded prevention campaign, you won't diminish the need for the services. So, there's that, that is just a political dilemma, on so many levels…"*

Edward felt that these difficulties could only be resolved by campaigning for gender inequality and violence against women - and all forms of work to tackle it - to be taken much more seriously by government and other social institutions:

> *"Apply for different funds, so that we're not in direct competition. But that can be difficult [pause]. In an ideal world, what would happen I think is that we would raise the profile of gender equality across the board, and therefore in a sense you'd end up*

with a bigger cake. If you can end up with a bigger cake then we're all at least going to win, more.

These dilemmas demonstrate the limitations of working to end men's violence against women within the confines of a neoliberal, patriarchal state. They also highlight another significant contradiction within work with men and boys which was raised in some of the interviews in relation to (non-financial) resources. Whilst it is vital that work with men and boys is accountable to feminism, this also places a further burden upon women, in which they may then have to dedicate time to addressing problems created by men within pro-feminist, anti-violence efforts. This tension demonstrates the importance of pro-feminist men holding one another to account as much as possible and challenging each other when necessary, so that the responsibility is not only left to women to do so (Kahane, 1998).

5.9 Both appealing to and challenging men to foster change

Within their experiences of the practice of engaging men and boys itself, one of the biggest challenges that interviewees described was that of actually getting men 'in the room' in the first place, with it being difficult to persuade them to take part in discussions about something perceived to be a 'women's issue' (Casey et al., 2017). In the words of Jose: *"I mean men don't flock to this campaign, they're not knocking our door down…"* Some suggested that this meant that participation in such conversations should sometimes be mandatory, such as with workplace training or lessons in schools. However, it was also recognised that this might impact on men's willingness to engage enthusiastically, especially if it is perceived to be a form of punishment. On this basis, some of the interviewees emphasised the importance of a dialogic, participatory approach in their work with men. For example, Marcus commented:

"You don't want them to be walking into your workshop thinking, I'm here because of a punishment. You want people to be open minded, and most of the time, we can, like change that round, but it involves, getting them to talk about it, rather than talking at them."

This touches upon another of the important political contradictions in engaging men to prevent violence against women, between the need to communicate a message to men and boys which they will take on board and not feel alienated by, whilst at the same time honestly

confronting with them the realities of patriarchy and men's practices within it. This was summed up by Edward as follows:

> *"They need to know, and think about, some of the, the very negative stuff that goes on, but at the same time, we need to give them some, possibilities, some opportunities for, being involved actively themselves, and being part of the solution."*

If men are not listening because they find the message off-putting, then they are unlikely to change - but the same is also true if they at no point feel uncomfortable or challenged by work which is ultimately seeking to deconstruct their power and privilege. However, several interviewees argued that it is possible to articulate a positive vision to men and boys which gives them a sense of optimism and opportunities for action, whilst at the same time helping them to question the ways in which they may be implicated in gender inequality. For example, Daniel described his work as follows:

> *"So it's not all fluffy and, you know, but very hard, hard edged, in terms of this is what needs to change, and we're not pretending, about anything, or any of this, but we want to, if you're going to reach men, you need to tell a positive story."*

It was also pointed out that whilst it is important to make preventative efforts accessible and relatable for men and boys, it is at the same time arguably patronising to hold them to anything other than a high standard of egalitarian behaviour. It was suggested in the interviews that focusing on the social construction of masculinity and its consequences can often provide an effective starting point to conversations with men and boys about both violence and abuse, and a range of other issues related to gender inequality. Participants also made clear that it is important for these conversations to illuminate how these gender norms connect to individual men's varied practices and experiences, and how they are situated within the structures of patriarchy and their social reproduction. This could provide a pro-feminist equilibrium within the contradictions of engaging men, by helping men and boys to make sense of the complex and interconnecting macro, meso, and micro dynamics of gender inequalities, norms, and violences, and how they relate to their own diverse lives.

In this respect, some of the interviewees felt that there can be effective ways of engaging with men and boys around preventing violence against women, without necessarily having to start the conversation from the topic of abuse itself. For example, talking to young men positively about what makes for *healthy* sex, relationships, and emotions would potentially be highly

valued by them. This would in turn help to address many of the issues involved in men's violence against women, without that having to be the initial and immediate basis of the conversation, given that it can be an intimidating, difficult, and contested subject for young people to discuss.

Several participants also suggested that it is important for work with men and boys to articulate a degree of empathy for the conditions in which they live - especially when they too are experiencing forms of structural oppression - not least regarding the constraints of masculinity that men are expected to conform to. There was an implication from some of the participants that it is important not to lose sight of the humanity in men when encouraging them to take on a responsibility for tackling sexism in themselves and the world around them. In his interview, Edward discussed a comment which he had heard within the engaging men field which had had a lasting impact on him in this regard, that *"if you don't like young men, you're going to find it difficult to convince them to change."* This points to another contradiction facing such work, which on the one hand needs to embrace and encourage men's humanity, and on the other, has to recognise and challenge the inhumane ways in which they often behave towards other people. José's description of violence prevention work echoed this:

> *"It's one of the steps towards getting men and boys back to our true selves, back to where we're humane, and connected, and loving, and caring, and so that's why I think it's really, really important."*

However, some of the interviewees also suggested that anxieties about alienating men can risk feminist principles and critiques being subsumed, or men's existing views and practices being left unquestioned. One issue raised here was that of making use of men's investments in masculinity in attempting to reach out to them. It was noted that, as discussed in Chapter 3, some prevention campaigns do deploy hegemonic masculine norms, such as notions of heroism, strength, and protectiveness, in seeking to engage men. Whilst some of the interviewees felt that this could be justified if it had a beneficial impact, others emphasised that it can counterproductively reinforce the same constructions of gender that are so entwined with men's violence itself, as discussed by Daniel:

> *"It's tempting, to go down a route that, is comfortable for a certain sort of guy, that doesn't actually challenge his basic concept of his own masculinity, and sees him almost as a sort of protector, of women. And you can sort of, you know, so who's not*

going to be against, which sort of mainstream guy like that is not going to be against violence against women?"

On this basis, it was suggested that the more challenging, yet more sustainable goal, may therefore be to persuade men and boys to disinvest from hierarchical codes of masculinity altogether; to free themselves and their peers from the pressure to conform to any specific set of social expectations about what it means to be a man. Carl also voiced doubts about how some work with men and boys normatively approaches and constructs men:

"I think there's an implicit kind of essentialism, in some versions of efforts to engage men, that assume that, you know, there are particular qualities that are somehow necessarily tied to being men, and I think that's a mistake."

Another issue discussed in some of the interviews was that of potential 'benefits' to men in preventing violence against women, and whether or not this is a useful argument to make in attempting to appeal to them. There were a mixture of views about this, and several of the participants felt that there are ways in which ending men's violence against women, and working towards that end, is clearly in men's interests, by enabling healthier and more fulfilling relationships with others for example. However, it was also suggested that if self-interest provides the basis for men's investments in preventing violence against women, this is unlikely to present a sustainable path towards individual or social change. For instance, Fred remarked that:

"I think it's really important to take that to young people, but not by saying like, as a man or as a boy like, you benefit from this as well, or like you know sort of, you need to learn this because it helps you. I think like, a lot of the time that does, it resonates with young people, but I would, I don't think an approach of sort of gender equality, of the idea that, of something in it for men, you know, is helpful in the longer term. If you want something really sustainable that's not the approach."

Whilst the ways in which men can 'benefit' may be a necessary point to make within certain debates then, the activists interviewed here appeared to express their motivations as being primarily rooted in an ethical commitment to achieving gender justice - and a belief that it is this sense of solidarity with women which needs to be cultivated among men. Furthermore, this debate can obscure how men go about maintaining patriarchal relations and perpetuating violence against women because it structurally benefits them to do so (Pease, 2015a). This

may rarely be a conscious decision, but it is unlikely that the patriarchal status quo would remain in place if men did not gain advantages from it - even if they could also gain other benefits from its dismantlement. Andrew summed up this issue as follows:

> *"That's the really interesting question, you know, why does the lid get put back on this stuff? And I mean I think you have to, the question you have to, you also have to ask yourself, in whose interests is it that this should be opened up, and in whose interests is it that it shouldn't be, in society? And I think then if you ask that question then you get a pretty good answer as to why the lid goes on it."*

Andrew's point demonstrates the importance of recognising that efforts to tackle men's violence against women do challenge vested interests and concentrations of power and privilege - which can in turn enact major obstacles to the development and delivery of that work.

5.10 Creating individual and structural transformations

Another key theme found across the interviews was the idea that efforts to engage with men and boys are needed everywhere; not only in certain settings or carried out only by certain individuals. Andrew commented in his interview that:

> *"I have this very strong belief that actually, based on experience and also reading, is that actually, if we're interested in actually doing something about men's violence, it's got to be a community response. It's not enough just to leave it to professionals."*

It was pointed out that this requires a joined-up, far-reaching, and ambitious approach from government, which many of the interviewees felt was currently lacking. For example, some suggested that whilst it is understandable that much prevention work is undertaken with young people, they cannot be the only focus - not least because of the contradictory messages they will continue to receive from the surrounding world if it does not change with them, as discussed by Lee:

> *"They go home like kids do, and you know, well up to a certain age anyway, and tell their parents what they've been doing today, and quite enthusiastically say that, and it's so easy for that to be dismissed out of hand with a single comment. And if that's what happens, then you've killed that enthusiasm."*

It was a common feeling across the interviews that formal and informal efforts to prevent men's violence against women thus need to be undertaken within every sphere and at every level of society, as part of a holistic approach to social change. This scale provides a major challenge for organisations working in this area - Gareth described them as being relatively 'diffuse' as a result, and Edward summed this dilemma up as follows:

> *"Local government has no money, at the moment, at all, so, it's tricky [pause]. When you've got this huge canvas of things you could do, how do you decide, what's the best thing to do, you know?"*

Perhaps as a result of this, several of the participants did seem to feel that the focus of engaging men work is too often placed solely on changing individual attitudes, whilst the structures of patriarchy that provide the foundations for men's violence are left largely untouched. Carl argued that:

> *"The ways we address men and boys, and the things that we try to shift, are kind of limited, and we don't necessarily address the material or the structural dimensions of domestic [pause] violence, or you know, in particular the kind of structural inequalities that are at the heart of those forms of violence."*

This raises another one of the fundamental contradictions facing the field - that on its own, 'engaging' men is not actually enough. Work with individual men and boys needs to be simultaneously accompanied by efforts to bring about broader structural change if it is to have a serious impact on the societal problem of men's violence against women. These tasks are not mutually exclusive, given that social structures are themselves created, maintained, and changed through the patterns of practice of multitudes of social actors - and that men wield the majority of power in society (Messerschmidt, 2013). However, some of the interviewees suggested that the conditions surrounding work with men mean that it can sometimes take relatively superficial forms, which have limited potential to cultivate deep-rooted individual or structural change. For instance, Gareth remarked:

> *"I guess I'm saying I've been really disappointed by, you know, sometimes when you get, things which seem very tokenistic [pause], does it make any difference to people? Um, I'm not sure that it does."*

Many of the participants therefore emphasised that in order to tackle the social legitimisation of violence against women, short-term prevention workshops and campaigns are on their own

not enough, and holistic change must be coordinated both vertically and horizontally within institutions, organisations, and communities - not least to address the ways in which gender inequalities may be embedded in their own structures. This was described by Kate in relation to schools:

> *"Wanting to bring that altogether, and see a school as, a microcosm of society. If we want to prevent violence against women in a school, it's the same as society, you can't just do one thing, you've got to be looking at the teachers, the policies, the curriculum, the, you know, everything."*

This applies to both the depth and breadth of the prevention work being carried out, with a one-off intervention on its own having limited capacity to transform a patriarchal context. Similarly, Harry pointed out that media-based campaigns such as the government's 'This is Abuse' and 'Disrespect NoBody' initiatives were important, but that they needed to be joined up with more in-depth, face-to-face interactive work: *"it's not enough on its own, you know, there's no escaping the need to talk to people"*.

Several interviewees also discussed the importance of helping men to understand not only how different forms of violence are interconnected with one another and with the structures of patriarchy, but how these inequalities also intersect with and mutually reinforce other systems of oppression, including those based around class, 'race', sexuality, and disability for example (Collins, 2000). Carl felt that work with men was taking steps forward in this respect:

> *"There's growing recognition now, in the engaging men and boys field, of the fact of...men and boys' diverse lives, and a kind of taking up, at least in some simple sense, of the, kind of fundamental feminist recognition of intersectionality."*

It was noted that this can complicate discussions within this work, because whilst all men receive power and privilege from patriarchy, there are also significant differences between men based on their positions within other systems of power. Men can therefore simultaneously dominate and be marginalised through these different systems, and some interviewees felt that this should be addressed when engaging with them, to recognise for example that structural privileges may make it easier for some men to speak out about violence against women than others. For instance, one participant pointed out that, as a white middle class man, going into a diverse room of young men and encouraging them to take

action against violence towards women without taking into account the different ways in which this message could be received and how it could actually be acted upon might receive a dismissive response. Interviewees therefore underlined the importance of prevention work being relevant and relatable to its audience - and for practitioners to be reflexive about their social positioning in relation to other systems of power as well as patriarchy.

5.11 Which feminism should work with men be accountable to?

Work with men and boys to prevent violence against women is often spoken about as if it is a singular, homogenous entity - including in this thesis at times. Yet the interviews demonstrated that, whilst there are clearly many commonalities within the field, there are also a range of different pro-feminist frameworks, strategies, and methods being adopted. A distinction was observed in the interviews between those who were relatively vague and implicit about the specifics of the feminist theories that they sought to follow, and those who were more emphatic and explicit about their ideological standpoints. Whilst the interviewees generally talked openly about being influenced by and seeking to support feminism, *which* feminism they were attempting to apply was often left more implicit.

Interestingly, those participants that were more unambiguous in this regard typically aimed to adhere to radical forms of feminism. For example, Ian described why he had come to support radical feminism specifically within his work:

> *"I'd say that, voices which articulate, a compelling logic, and a critical analysis, which makes sense and seems to relate to the real world. Um, and, they're, they're the ones that we are most, what's the word, how would you say it [pause], every group has to have some coherence of its ethical basis, and ours, it feels comfortable for us, and it feels logical, to endorse the work of, um, women who are generally described as radical feminists, because we feel there's a real logical coherence to their work."*

The influence of radical feminism may have in part been shaped by the personal histories of some of the interviewees, as several had become involved in pro-feminist activism at a time when second wave feminism (which is particularly associated with radical feminist thought) was most influential. For example, Gareth commented that:

> *"I think like quite a few men of my age, um, you know we were in relationships with women who were involved in second-wave feminism in the seventies, and that was just a, kind of huge influence, over quite a few of us I would've thought."*

Interestingly meanwhile, Fred, who was one of the younger activists that was interviewed, appeared to have been more influenced by postmodernist, third wave feminist ideas, by explicitly discussing the importance of involving trans men and non-binary people in his work for instance:

> *"Yeah there are a couple of other reasons, which make it more, practical, but, like why we have all male volunteers, or people who identify as male, trans men as well, people who are non-binary, so, would be welcome."*

This points to how wider developments, debates, and currents within feminist thought at different times are likely to have an impact on how work with men and boys is approached. The interviews suggested that the divergences which could emerge from this range of different potential feminist (and non-feminist) influences complicate some of the fundamental principles underpinning the field - most significantly, that of accountability. Given that there are always debates and disagreements taking place within feminism, it is impossible to agree with all feminists at all times. So what does it mean for being accountable, if one in fact disagrees with what some feminists are advocating? How should men involved in preventing violence against women interact with these debates - and can they make a useful contribution to them? The interviewees therefore alluded to another one of the fundamental political contradictions within work with men - it must be accountable to feminism, but what does this mean in practice, when it could indicate being accountable to a variety of different perspectives and approaches?

Many would argue, for example, that it would be highly inappropriate for men to 'wade into' debates within feminism and implicitly or explicitly signify to some feminists that they are 'wrong' about a particular issue; that it is not men's place to argue for a specific direction for the women's liberation movement to take. At the same time however, it is perhaps inevitable that pro-feminist men will adopt positions in relation to these different debates, because agreeing with some feminist arguments sometimes unavoidably means disagreeing with others. Indeed, some of the interviewees implied that a serious engagement with feminist ideas arguably *requires* men to actively consider and adopt their own positions in relation to

different issues, rather than passively accepting whichever feminist arguments they encounter.

Moreover, some participants appeared to feel that it would represent an abnegation of responsibility for pro-feminist men to pretend that contentious debates within feminism don't exist, especially since these issues are often directly related to men's practices. Indeed, evading such discussions itself involves taking a particular position (Pease, 2017). For example, it may be particularly difficult for an organisation focusing on the prevention of men's violence against women to shy away from deliberations around prostitution and pornography, given that many feminists would argue that these are themselves examples of men's abuse and exploitation of women (Mackay, 2015). Some of the interviewees did express a clear opposition to the sex industry on this basis, and felt that it should be addressed within efforts to engage men. For instance, José remarked that:

> *"the prostitution one is one that isn't fully recognised, and so, where we'd be saying, oh look we have to take this on board, others would say they weren't sure, or that their, whatever their erm, core organisation is, or their core membership is [pause], that there's persuading and awareness raising to be done you know, it doesn't, you can't just walk into a room of men and say hey, we need to support the ending of prostitution, you have to, you know it's a whole developmental process, that takes years, you know, and uh, and some men will never get there, you know, they'll still be clinging on to the old ways, and saying no I don't agree with that, and so on."*

It could also be argued that pro-feminist men also have a responsibility to make their stances about such issues clear because of how men often appear to be much less likely to receive an abusive backlash for speaking out about different feminist issues than women. In addition, Kate suggested that men's experiences may on occasion actually be able to provide an alternative, productive perspective which could provide insights and nuances within highly polarised discussions, particularly in relation to issues in which men's practices play a central role, such as prostitution:

> *"Actually that's something that I've, that I often think there could be a role for men to play, because you know like, there's a lot of, men tend to be left out of that, as like you know, and talking about whether actually, you know, paying someone who wouldn't otherwise want to have sex with you, as a man, like you know, I feel there's a lot that*

men could talk about, like you know, do you think that-, you know, but actually they tend to be sort of, left out of it, and I think that that's, a big interesting area."

However, Kate also pointed out that any such intervention from men would need to be handled very carefully; in a way which affirmed the prioritisation of women's voices and experiences, and which was based around supporting feminist activism rather than colonising discussions within it. Indeed, Brod (1998) has warned that pro-feminist men have no right to antagonise contested debates within feminism, given that it is in the interests of male power for women's movements to be divided. Weighing up and arriving at their own position on a certain issue and debating that among pro-feminist men does not therefore mean that men should also see it as their role to make claims about the directions that feminism should take.

One issue that was remarked upon in the interview with Fred as having evoked some divergences among male activists within his organisation was the question of how men who are involved in work to prevent violence against women perceive their political identities:

"One of the, the few, like the disagreement that I guess comes up between guys is um, how they define themselves in the feminist cause. So there are some who say like, I am a feminist, gender's nothing to do with whether you're a feminist, others who say like, you know they've got female friends who think that men should only call themselves feminist allies, or pro-feminist males, so they're like, you know, what side of the fence do you come down there on?"

Edward also commented on this issue, contending that:

"I would accept the label pro-feminist, but I wouldn't necessarily call myself a feminist, because I think I don't experience um, you know, uh, discrimination, violence, exploitation, whatever you want to call it, in the same way that women do. And so I've always, I mean I'm a bit old school about this [pause]. But I would accept the label pro-feminist."

This illustrates that even subtle differences in the ways in which men understand and construct their own identities within this work may carry with them important, politically contested signifiers about their interpretations of feminist thought more broadly.

There are arguably also understandable reasons why an organisation might want to be equivocal about their position in relation to the differences within feminism. For example,

they may seek to adopt an approach which has as broad an appeal as possible, and which minimises the risks of alienating some of their audience by explicitly committing to one specific form of feminism over others, or of focusing heavily upon internal debates. They may also be fearful of receiving criticism from those who hold opposing views, or of causing divisions within their own organisation; interviewees such as Ben remarked that pro-feminist groups they had been involved in had split because of internal political disagreements in the past:

> *"The reason we broke away was actually quite interesting, or broke away sounds dramatic, but we organised demonstrations, you know, separate from them, and there were several reasons…"*

The perception among some in the field may therefore be that it is unnecessary or counter-productive to overtly align themselves with specific variants of feminism as part of their work, given the potential consequences of doing so. In addition, the vagueness or lack of clarity hinted at within some of the interviews regarding debates and divisions within feminism might also sometimes not reflect a deliberate approach. It may instead be based around a lack of confidence in one's knowledge of the different feminist perspectives that exist - or a failure to engage beyond a superficial level with feminist theories to be able to clearly differentiate between them. For activists who are new to the field, this may be understandable, but for organisations working with men, the seriousness of their pro-feminist approach could be brought into question were they not to at least give these differences some reflection, even if they decided not to explicitly advocate for one position over another. When undertaking prevention work, theories of some kind are always being implemented, whether consciously or not, so it is likely to lead to more effective practice if these theories are actively decided upon and followed, in order to provide a more coherent framework for what is being done and what it aims to achieve.

5.12 Making engaging men 'mainstream'?

One of the biggest issues discussed by the interviewees was how the scale of work to prevent men's violence against women in England could be broadened, and many more men and boys meaningfully engaged with. The following were commonly seen as being crucial first steps in this respect: embedding learning about gender norms, inequalities, and violences at all stages

of education (potentially throughout the curriculum, and not only within sex and relationships education) and beyond, such as through training in the workplace; developing large-scale, impactful public campaigns to initiate conversations across communities about men's violence against women; and policy shifts which recognise the pervasive and gendered nature of men's violences against women. All of these steps demand leadership from government and other major social institutions, so it was suggested by some of the participants that a crucial area of focus for pro-feminist men must remain on social movement-building and activism which can help to apply political pressure and instigate social change.

This illustrates another one of the core contradictions facing work with men and boys, between the simultaneous need to take it into the 'mainstream', and the risk of it becoming depoliticised in the process. Some of the interviewees spoke about the increasing professionalisation of engaging men efforts - which has also been observed by Messner, Greenberg, and Peretz (2015) in the US for example - and how this carries risks such as becoming more individualised in its orientation, as described by Carl:

> *"There's a danger of it being depoliticised, of it being psychologised, of it increasingly having a, um, a kind of soft focus on individual men's attitudes, rather than I think a more radical social justice orientated focus, on shifting systemic gender inequalities."*

Participants alluded to the danger that, in the process of attempting to make the case to policymakers and fit into contemporary funding models, work with men could lose its focus on radical social change. For example, several interviewees acknowledged the importance of ongoing evaluation, to understand and demonstrate how change is being achieved. However, they also discussed how challenging it can be to show the extent to which prevention 'works' according to narrow neoliberal, positivistic definitions given how, in the words of Ian, *"preventative work is hard to quantify, in terms of its impact"*. It was pointed out that this is compounded by the lack of resources with which organisations could carry out in-depth, rigorous evaluations of their work, often meaning that they can only trace short-term attitudinal impacts as a proxy for longer-term behavioural change, for example. These issues were also emphasised by Kate:

> *"Primary prevention is always really under-prioritised. It's one of those things that's like, really important, but incredibly difficult to measure, like incredibly difficult, almost impossible to measure and evaluate, and that's not the funding context that we*

live in. We don't live in a world where people are happy to give you money, for something you can't prove at the end."

Furthermore, some of the interviewees felt that the lack of investment or political commitment to prevention also constrains opportunities for taking risks and instigating innovative and creative approaches, which were seen as being vital for its development. It was stressed that effective prevention work is long term, in-depth, resource intensive, and challenging - it needs to be carefully strategised and sustained if it is to have a serious impact, yet this rarely fits with the prioritisations of contemporary governance models in England. An additional bearing mentioned here was the impact of shifts in the political landscape, such as the UK leaving the European Union, an institution which Edward felt *"has always been a significant player in terms of gender equality."* A supportive political climate was therefore emphasised as making a significant difference in facilitating the development of violence prevention work, too.

These political turbulences highlight another point made by several interviewees, about the need to make work with men more sustainable. It was discussed that many organisations and projects focusing on preventing violence against women have come and gone within short spaces of time as a result of funding constraints. For Harry, this meant that *"the good work doesn't always last very long"*. With many organisations being significantly reliant on volunteers, or staff on low paid, insecure contracts, it can be difficult to plan ahead or retain volunteers' commitment over time, as summed up by Lee:

"To keep people on board as volunteers in any charity, is difficult, and people's ability to be part of that change is [pause], just through circumstance, not necessarily through lack of interest or whatever. But then there is also the element of keeping the interest, so that's a massive thing, as to how, how do we manage our volunteers effectively, and keep them all on board."

A crucial next step for several of the participants in building work with men and boys to prevent men's violence against women therefore appeared to be consolidation - and establishing a more sustainable base from which to grow, not least so that it can become more resilient in the face of broader political and economic shifts.

5.13 Summary

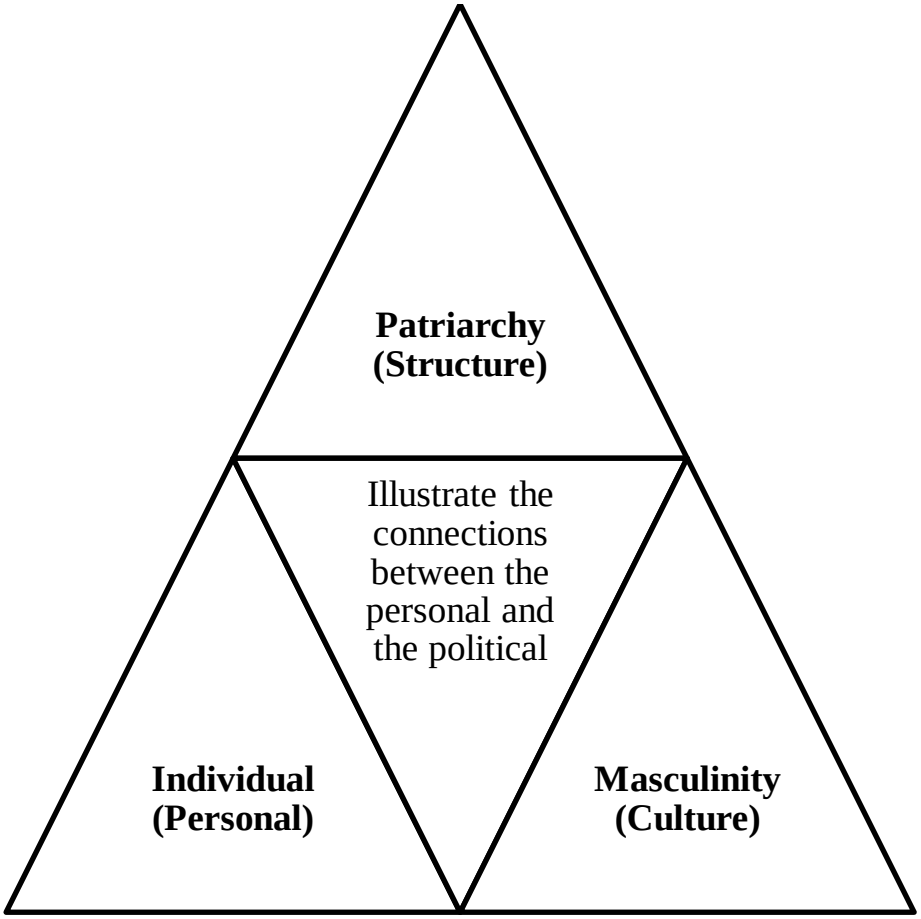
This chapter has explored many of the key issues facing work with men and boys to prevent men's violence against women in England today, based upon expert-informant interviews with some of those who have played an important role in developing this field. It has demonstrated how there is growing momentum for this kind of work in England, but that it also faces a number of policy obstacles, including: the impact of neoliberal austerity measures; the influence of 'gender-neutral' framings of violence and abuse; and the lack of serious conviction for the prevention of violence against women among policymakers. I would argue that these factors are all having a harmful impact on the English women's movement, and by extension, are constraining efforts to engage men and boys in preventing men's violence against women. As was discussed in Chapter 2, the government's ongoing strategy to tackle violence against women and girls illustrates that the policy *is* there for developing prevention work and engaging men and boys (for example, see HM Government, 2016). However, this does not appear to actually be happening in a significant or transformative way on the ground, as a result of the aforementioned obstacles imposed by the government themselves, such as austerity.

The interviews also highlighted that work with men and boys to prevent violence against women features a number of political contradictions, ranging from the complexities involved in men changing themselves in the process of trying to create broader social transformations, to the importance of enacting accountability to feminism at the same time as recognising that there is no one single version of feminism, to the risk that moving work with men and boys into the mainstream could in turn politically dilute it. I would argue that these kinds of tensions are to some extent inherent to work that seeks to engage men in dismantling their own power and privilege. They cannot necessarily always be resolved, but that does not mean that this work is not important or necessary. Instead, based on the interview findings I contend that the most impactful work with men and boys to prevent violence and abuse may be that which navigates pro-feminist paths towards dialectical balances in these contradictions. Meanwhile, a failure to take them into account and address them could lead to work which is counterproductive, for instance by internally reproducing patriarchal inequalities whilst seeking to tackle them among other men and boys.

One of the biggest contradictions faced by the field is that it must simultaneously appeal to men and boys with a positive, inspiring message, whilst challenging them through the

cultivation of a sense of discomfort about gender injustice, and their own role in maintaining it. In order to address this tension and find an equilibrium within it, I propose a triadic, three-pronged approach to engaging men as a useful way forward, illustrated in Figure 3.

Figure 3: A triadic approach to engaging men in preventing violence against women



This triadic approach would involve helping men and boys to recognise and understand three key factors and how they interconnect personally and politically: the diversity of men's individual experiences and practices; their situatedness within patriarchal structures that grant men systemic power and privilege; and the central role of masculine cultural norms both in shaping men's lives and facilitating the reproduction of the structures of patriarchy - including men's violence against women.

Chapter 6: Young men's understandings of partner violence prevention campaigns

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the second strand of the research project, in which eight focus groups together with two pilot semi-structured interviews were carried out with men's sports teams at a 'Russell Group' English university, and then thematically analysed. The focus groups were based around discussions on the prevention of intimate partner violence, and these were facilitated by the showing of several videos from different prevention campaigns. This was with the aim of providing insights into the second research question: how are intimate partner violence prevention campaigns understood and used by young men? In conducting these focus groups, I wanted to learn more about how violence prevention campaigns are actually perceived by young men, and what some of their views are towards them. In turn, I hoped that this would illuminate where campaigns face both challenges and opportunities in reaching out to young men, and what we can learn from young men themselves about how prevention work can move forward in instigating change among men and boys. In addition, I sought to gain insights into the role that men's homosocial peer groups, and the individual and collective construction of codes of masculinity, play in shaping and mediating how men understand violence and abuse, and respond to violence prevention campaigns.

6.2 Young men's awareness of intimate partner violence

One of the most interesting findings from the focus groups was that many of the young men who took part demonstrated a relatively high level of knowledge and awareness about intimate partner violence. The groups articulated recognition of the seriousness of the issue, with some understanding of its pervasiveness, and generally treated the subject with respect and sensitivity. The young men appeared to have particularly strong levels of awareness about the *nature* of partner violence, with regards to the different forms it takes and the range of harmful impacts that it can have. For example, several of the participants discussed how it is not only defined by physical acts, and that psychological and emotional abuse can often be

at the heart of partner violence. Grant (Focus group 7) felt that it was important for prevention campaigns to illustrate these dynamics:

> *"I think raising it in a much more focused way around psychological abuse, because I don't think, not a lot of people realise that that's, abuse as such, um [pause]. Obviously hitting women, and hitting anyone, is bad, but not so many people realise that, how you treat somebody psychologically is, so..."*

Some of the young men also had a degree of understanding about the concept of coercive control, and the central role that it plays in partner abuse (Stark, 2007). This illustrates the significant impact that feminist campaigning around men's violence against women has had in England in recent decades. The women's movement has had a sizable influence on public awareness of partner abuse, and this appeared to have filtered down to the perceptions of many of the young men taking part in the focus groups.

On occasion, participants made reference to particular factors which had help to shape their knowledge of the issue. For example, the second focus group, some of the young men discussed the impact of the BBC Radio 4 soap opera The Archers. This programme had a long-running storyline lasting over a year involving a case of coercive and controlling abuse in the relationship of two major characters (Stark, 2018). The storyline was developed in consultation with the domestic violence charity Women's Aid, and led to a fundraising campaign for another such organisation, Refuge, which received substantial public donations (Kerley and Bates, 2016). Some of the young men in this session discussed how they had followed the story, and that it had significantly affected them and their understanding of partner violence. Henry (Focus group 2) described the storyline to another participant as follows:

> *"Yeah on the Archers, um [pause]. And oh, it's just unreal, it goes on for like, a year, and like, it slowly just gets worse and worse, and then he hits her once, and everyone's like, ohh. But then he stays, and he's lovely again for a while, and then, ohh [pause]. It's so amazing."*

This illustrates the impact that popular culture and fictional portrayals can have in building awareness and influencing attitudes about violence against women - and the potential preventative role they can play as a result. It is perhaps particularly significant that the

Archers engaged meaningfully with specialist domestic violence organisations in the development of this storyline.

The knowledge that the young men possessed was particularly notable given that, at the same time, many of them they reported receiving little in the way of education at school or college on issues of violence and abuse. For example, Christian (Focus group 1) commented that:

> *"We had sex education class, classes, and yet, there was no reference to it [partner violence] at all really, um, so, I've never experienced, any form of education or information on it, throughout school."*

Most of the participants had at some point in their lives encountered some form of violence prevention work; however this was typically in the form of media-based campaigns. Many of the young men were particularly familiar with the government's 'This is Abuse' campaign, and several described how the video adverts that were produced as part of this had had a lasting impact on them, to the point that they still remembered them now, several years later. For instance, James (Focus group 8) commented that:

> *"Yeah, it was very much targeted at, sort of, knowing exactly where the line is for consent in sort of, young relationships, and it's brilliant, it's the best advert I've seen."*

Some participants had also come across video adverts from the more recent 'Disrespect NoBody' government campaign, though these appeared to have had much less of an impact. Generally however, they described receiving little engagement even on the broader topics of sex and relationships whilst at school or college, and where they did, it was often in the context of biology lessons on reproduction. The sessions therefore highlighted the paucity of education being given to children and young people in England about violence, abuse, and related issues, and many of the young men agreed that it was important for the government to make relationships and sex education a compulsory part of the school curriculum. For instance, Barney (Focus group 3) stated:

> *"I didn't do a play or anything like that that was, proper in-depth or anything, it was just kind of, the whole thing I got was, just the teachers being like, yeah, condoms, consent, go! That was like, the extent of, relationships and sex ed. So, like, a lot of the reaction I had was, yeah, well obviously, and that was the only reaction, there was no, ooh I didn't think about it that way, there was nothing like that."*

Meanwhile, several of the participants reported that they had received some engagement in violence prevention since arriving at university, typically in the form of a consent workshop. However, some pointed out that these were generally focused specifically on sexual violence, rather than partner abuse. It did appear that sexual violence and notions of 'lad culture' were topical issues on the minds of many of the young men, and that they had partaken in both formal and informal discussions about them since arriving at university. Indeed, the participants themselves drew connections between these issues and the conversations about partner violence. Again, this underscores the impact of feminist activism, which has contributed significantly to raising awareness and demanding institutional action with regards to sexual violence and other forms of violence against women on university campuses in England in recent years (Westmarland, 2015; Phipps, 2018). For example, Bruce (Focus group 1) expressed concern about what he saw as the increasing influence of 'lad culture' and sexism at university, and in society more broadly:

> *"Yeah it's a social issue as well, and, I don't know if that's got bigger, or it's just presented in a different way, but things like Unilad, Lad Bible [pause], there's a massive, culture of it, um [pause]. Not just at universities, 30-40 year old men still doing it, um, people younger than that, there's that sort of respect element, or people look up to, oh that guy's just done a backflip and, um, broke his nose or something, and it's like, there is that sort of thing, and I think, objectification of women comes into, that lad culture, um, and that is, I, I mean I don't have a statistic for it or whatever, but like, I think it's going up, personally, um, and I'm not sure how you're going to stop it, unless [pause], there's serious education about it, and people do start changing their opinion a little bit."*

It is important not to assume that these findings about the levels of awareness of partner abuse, sexual violence, and 'lad culture' can be generalised to all young men. As was discussed in Chapter 5, there are a number of reasons why the members of this research sample may have possessed greater knowledge about partner abuse than most young men. For instance, because they were participating in university-level education (which may include features such as the aforementioned consent workshops); that these were relatively privileged young men (who may have easier access to knowledge and information on the issue, for example); and because they volunteered to take part in the focus groups in the first place (which may itself suggest an existing level of awareness). Nevertheless, it was interesting to find that large numbers of young men involved in university sport, a domain

renowned for encouraging hyper-masculine norms, did have relatively high levels of understanding about partner violence, and recognised its seriousness as a social problem. It's also possible that this finding reflected that, because of some of the aforementioned factors, the young men were skilled in saying the 'right thing'. Whilst the knowledge that the participants demonstrated was clearly authentic then, this cannot necessarily be taken to infer anything about their assumptions and practices more broadly.

In addition, in many cases the awareness that the participants appeared to possess did have limits. Whilst they had a strong level of knowledge of intimate partner violence as a phenomenon, their understanding of the wider social patterns and structures in which it is situated was more partial. For example, the young men articulated less understanding of the gendered dynamics of partner violence, and of its relationship with gender inequality. When it came to trying to *explain* partner violence then, the articulations of the participants became more confused and contradictory, again drawing attention to the lack of preventative educational interventions the young men had received around issues of gender and violence.

6.3 What makes for an impactful campaign?

A key focus of the discussion after each of the prevention campaign videos was shown was the extent to which the young men viewed them as being potentially effective. These opinions provided valuable insights into some of the factors that can help a campaign to engage with young men from their own perspective, as well as revealing aspects of the participants' perceptions in relation to a number of other, broader issues.

6.3.1 Problematising trivialisation and condescension in campaigns

One of the key points which arose from most of the focus groups was that it is important for campaigns not to trivialise partner violence, by in some way minimising its seriousness and harms. Many of the young men felt that some of the campaigns they had encountered about violence and abuse, including some of the videos shown in the sessions, were guilty of doing this. For example, Armen (Focus group 2) commented that:

> *"I haven't, in my day-to-day life, but I have seen, I had a lecture last year about it, and we spent a week in seminars looking into them, so, I've seen a few. I think a lot of*

them, in my opinion, trivialise, in quite a major way. And also, sort of, make it very clear that a lot of them are targeted towards men, the overwhelming proportion are targeted towards men, which is probably, statistically significant, given that there are more cases of men versus women. But stuff like, the Kick it Out one, from a few years ago, I thought, really trivialised domestic violence. Like oh yeah, let's all do football things, men must, men that beat women must love football, so you know, let's target it at them, and I just thought it was a bit, trivial."

The recurrence of this point demonstrated the recognition among the young men of the gravity of the issue of partner violence. In addition, the way in which trivialisation aggrieved many of the participants suggested a perception that campaigns aimed at young people sometimes adopt a patronising tone, as if partner violence *needed* to be trivialised in order for young people to pay attention to it. Their comments implied that it may be condescending, and thus potentially counterproductive, to assume that partner abuse has to be 'dumbed down' or made light of in order to be communicated about effectively to young people.

The video taken from the UK Government's most recent campaign to prevent violence against women, 'Disrespect NoBody', was particularly criticised in this regard. In the video, which uses computer-generated animation, various talking body parts make comments about forms of violence and abuse which young people might experience. The clip ends with the statement "There's a person attached to every body; respect both". Many of the participants perceived that the campaign had adopted this cartoonish approach in order to gain young people's attention, and make important points in accessible and light-hearted ways. However, they argued that this actually made it difficult to take the video seriously, and jarred with the seriousness of the subject matter, which could in turn lessen its impact as a prevention campaign. For example, Kevin (Focus group 6) argued that:

"I actually found the animation a bit, I think it, it almost trivialised it a little bit, you know because it was a little bit like, cartoony, animation, it was like an incredibly serious message behind it, but I was just kind of a bit like, oh it's a talking bra."

Indeed, some suggested that this kind of trivialisation of partner violence could risk contributing to rather than helping to tackle the problem, given the ongoing failure of wider society to take partner violence seriously. Others felt that this campaign was too simplistic, and was potentially admonishing young people about behaviours which might not necessarily be, in themselves, problematic. For instance, Barney (Focus group 3) felt that:

> *"I think it goes, completely, too far. If someone, like when it says um, if someone asks you for a nude pic, well, there's nothing wrong with me asking my girlfriend for a nude, and if she wants to send it, she can, but there's nothing wrong there, and it's [pause], it's like, yeah, there's a couple of things in it where, actually, there are quite a few circumstances where, that kind of thing would be fine. And it's trying, it seems like the advert's trying to say, no, you can't do this, you can't do that, you can't do this [pause]. Well hold on, if we're two people that are, happily, you know, voluntarily doing it, we can do what we want. So some of it's, a bit, I don't agree with some of the messages, I think they go a bit far into, telling me how, telling people how they can and can't live their lives. Obviously some of it's completely, yeah obviously [pause], like the hand, that one what the hands are saying, that was [pause], but, yeah."*

Barney's comments could be interpreted as a defensive response to being challenged about unhealthy normalised behaviours in relationships. However, they demonstrate the potential weaknesses in simply telling young people that a specific practice is wrong, without explaining or contextualising how it can fit into a wider pattern of abuse, inequality, or oppression. Some participants did also point out that the campaign was likely to be aimed at people younger than them, who might feel differently about its approach. In response to Barney, Emilio [Focus group 3] argued:

> *"I'm sort of thinking of it as, who is it it's actually aimed at? A lot of young people, who are probably much younger than us, so you really have to simplify the message, and I think it's, I think it's appropriate, I think it's appropriate. It isn't going to be as like, it's not going to have those um, connotations of, of who are you tell me what to do, you know or like [pause], or be patronising, I don't think really, I don't really think it's patronising."*

Emilio's comments could be seen as an attempt to defend the anti-violence messages from the campaign, but his viewpoint was a minority one, with many participants criticising the 'Disrespect NoBody' video for being trivialising and patronising in its representation of violence and abuse. Yet his argument demonstrates the challenges involved in creating a campaign which a range of different potential audiences can engage meaningfully with. This is perhaps especially true in relation to young people, whose levels of maturity and awareness

can change rapidly, meaning that a prevention campaign aimed at one age group may become less impactful with another slightly older or younger one, for example.

Interestingly, these perceptions contrasted significantly with those about the earlier government campaign, 'This is Abuse', which the majority of participants felt was the most impactful example that they were shown in the focus groups. This video took a notably different approach to that of 'Disrespect NoBody', in that it was entirely serious and hard hitting, and depicted a (fictional) example of abuse in a relationship. The video portrays a dialogue between a heterosexual teenage couple, in which the boy enacts coercive and controlling behaviour and becomes increasingly abusive, and at the end of the video it is implied that he is going to rape his female partner. Meanwhile, the same boy is watching his own actions behind a plate of glass and hammering on it, attempting - but failing - to stop himself. The video ends by asking, "If you could see yourself, would you stop yourself?" Many of the participants described the video as having had a significant impact upon them, not least because they felt that it was quite shocking.

Furthermore, it appeared that the campaign affected many of the participants not only because of its realistic depiction of abuse, but also through the points it makes about partner violence. They saw it as a powerful demonstration of how coercive control works, the different types of abuse that it can involve (with emotional, physical, and sexual abuse all being illustrated in the video), and how they can be escalated, including in young people's relationships. Some of the participants felt that the question posed by the video, "would you stop yourself?" could genuinely lead to audience members reflecting on their own practices within their relationships, and encourage those who are perpetrating abuse to stop and think about their behaviour. For instance, Darren (Focus group 7) commented that:

> *"It's a very good campaign, because it forces you to look at yourself. If you could see yourself, would you still continue, with those actions, like [pause], and I think it is really effective, you know."*

A similar point was made in this regard in one of the expert-informant interviews in the first part of the project by Harry, who also felt that 'This is Abuse' was a particularly poignant campaign:

> *"I think the more recent Home Office campaigning, the 'This is Abuse' campaign, I think was more clever. I mean, a bit like some of the drink driving, speeding kind of*

campaigns, that stop and make you think [pause], this could be me, um, it's not quite me, it could be me though, if I don't do something about it now. And give the viewer the chance to feel uncomfortable, but also a chance to think, well I could do something about this, I don't have to carry on the way I have been, I think is the sort of message which gets you to identify, not with the, campaign, but with the potential perpetrator, and then enable you to dis-identify with that person if you're prepared to. I think that's, that's a much cleverer way."

At the same time, there was some discussion about whether the 'This is Abuse' video might actually be *too* shocking, especially for use with younger people, and one participant recalled reading that the video had received some complaints on this basis. However, the consensus appeared to be that whilst this meant that it should be shown in an appropriate context (for example, in a school-based education session, or at an appropriate time on television), it was important that it did realistically articulate the harrowing nature of partner violence, in a subtle and non-exploitative way.

It is also important to note, regarding the Disrespect NoBody video, that many of the young men did not necessarily appear to feel that it would *always* be inappropriate for prevention campaigns to use humour to get their message across. For example, they were less critical of the use of comedy in the video that was shown from the End Violence against Women Coalition's (EVAW) 'We Are Man' campaign. This video begins with a range of comedic home recordings of young men performing stunts which go wrong in various ways, and then switches to a group of young men who are about to perform a prank on a skating ramp. A woman walks past, and one of the men shouts "oi oi darling", before remarking to his friends, "I tell you what, she could do with a good raping". However, rather than laughing along with the joke, all his friends go silent, and turn and look at him in a shocked, disapproving manner. The video then states "every 9 minutes, a woman is raped in Britain", and shows each of the young men staring at the camera individually, whilst one of them comments in the voiceover, "that's not who I am - are you?"

Opinions about this video were mixed, mainly in relation to the quality of its production and how effectively it managed the transition from the random home videos, to the serious message at the end. However, few of the young men took issue with its use of humour itself, and several felt that this was an effective way of attracting the audience's attention - and then

having a profound impact when the subject matter suddenly changes. This view was voiced by Kostas (Focus group 3) for example:

> *"I think it worked quite well, um [pause], just, like, and they were also just, hilarious videos, I want to keep watching that, I'll watch the rest of the advert because I want to keep watching that, because it's funny. And that, that like, draws audience attention for, well not the punchline but, like, the, the message at the end. And then, like, how abrupt it cuts out, and everyone's like, wait what? Like, I think it hits really hard, and it's quite effective."*

The key factor may therefore not be the use of humour itself, but how it is used, and whether or not young people perceive the message as one which takes them and the issue of violence and abuse seriously. For this reason, some of the participants pointed out that elevating the voices of young people themselves, and emphasising the role of peers in challenging one another, was likely to be a powerful approach in attempting to reach out to young people. It was suggested that they would be much more likely to listen if they felt that their peers were calling them out, as opposed to being instructed to do something by adults in positions of authority. For instance, in response to the EVAW video, Jack (Focus group 8) commented as follows:

> *"It's definitely good. Like it shows, it shows his peers being like, wait, no, that's not alright [pause], rather than some, outsider agency, it's not the police coming along and saying, no you can't do that, it's everyone else saying, hold on no, we're not about that, I think that's really good. Because if everyone laughed, it would've made it acceptable, and within that group, it would've been normal then, wouldn't it."*

Meanwhile, some of the young men pointed out that the format of a video advert can also risk lending itself to the trivialisation of an issue such as partner violence. For example, there is often little control over the context in which such a video is consumed, and so the content which surrounds it, such as preceding and subsequent adverts on television, or surrounding material on social media such as comments from other users, may conflict with serious messages about preventing violence and abuse. Baird (Focus group 6) pointed this out as follows:

> *"The problem with a lot of adverts is, people don't really pay attention, so you're just kind of looking at it as an isolated incident thing; they're just having an argument in a*

car, that's stupid, don't look at the end. So that's, that's the problem when you kind of like have a long build-up, um, advert, you kind of don't pay attention to the whole thing. But yeah, if you watch it for the first time, or you're in a room like this, or it's shown in a lecture hall where you're concentrating, then they're really effective, but like, again on daytime TV when you're just kind of, having your dinner, then not so much."

One might start watching a television advert mid-way through for example, or encounter it repeatedly, and in such cases its impact, and the seriousness of the subject matter, could be diminished. Some participants also pointed out that, in the case of the 'This is Abuse' campaign for example, there is a risk that audiences could become desensitised to its depiction of partner abuse if it was encountered multiple times. Liam (Focus group 2) felt that:

"The problem with that though, and I don't agree that you can trivialise it, but the first time you see the advert, you're like wow yeah that's really impactful, but when you sit and watch the Simpsons, and you've seen this advert for the fifth time, or an Oxfam advert for instance, I'm a bit like, I'm having my dinner, do I have to sit and watch this? It gets quite intense and quite heavy [pause], and it's very effective the first time, but the more you watch it, the more you see it, I don't think it has a positive impact. It gets, it's a bit like, oh I've got to watch this again."

The context in which a prevention campaign is encountered can therefore potentially create unforeseen consequences which may diverge from that which it sought to achieve. These issues highlight that whilst media-based campaigns are an important tool for prevention, it is vital that they are combined with more in-depth efforts such as face-to-face, interactive programmes. Whilst they may be effective in initiating conversations and reflections, they may be limited in their capacity to advance sustained, deep rooted individual and collective change.

Another issue discussed within some of the focus groups was whether it would be more useful for a prevention campaign to adopt a hard hitting, shocking approach, or to focus more on illustrating the subtleties and nuances of partner abuse. For instance, Barney (Focus group 3) commented that:

"The longer and more subtle ones, I feel make you think more about them, as you're watching, and when you've just watched them, but it is the harsh impact that stands out, months and years down the line, like it's the glass one ['This is Abuse'] that I remember, but it's not that one that made me think the most, when I was watching them."

These comments point to how a more subtle approach might be more relatable to and reflective of the everyday experience of abuse, and could encourage the audience to think more deeply about the problem and how it relates to their lives. However, such an approach might also be less memorable or impactful, and difficult to represent effectively in a short video. The young men appeared to feel that, in principle, both of these approaches could be powerfully adopted by prevention campaigns if they provided accurate insights into partner violence, potentially in combination. For example, it was notable that so many of the participants could clearly remember the 'This is Abuse' campaign, and that this did also manage to depict some of the subtleties of coercive control. Their views demonstrate the importance of carefully strategising the goals and targets of a campaign in the process of its design - for example, is it simply to create a memorable message, or to actually help spark behavioural change? - in order to maximise its potential to achieve the desired outcomes, as summed up by Michael (Focus group 7):

"So obviously with the second advert ['This is Abuse'], we're definitely thinking about it more, and we're always going to remember that one, but whether that, changes the way people think, is definitely a different measure, whereas the [Australian] third advert might be, less memorable, but the fact that it might make you learn something, understanding something about snowballing which you hadn't considered before, where you forget about it, subconsciously whether you retain that, or you're less likely to do it in the future, that is a completely different thing."

6.3.2 Moving beyond simplistic messaging about stopping abuse

Connected to the trivialisation of partner violence, many of the young men expressed criticisms of what they saw as the use of overly-simplistic messages by some of the campaigns they were shown. Participants pointed out that in some of the videos, the fundamental idea expressed was simply "partner violence is wrong", or "don't perpetrate

abuse", and whilst these messages are important, on their own their potential impact on people's thinking or behaviour is likely to be limited. Interestingly, these criticisms were most pronounced in relation to most recent campaign, 'Disrespect NoBody', as expressed out by Xavier (Focus group 4):

> *"I think the other problem with that one is, all they're just, they're highlighting things and just saying like, that's not okay, like, that's just kind of obvious, you could say like yeah, don't murder someone, that's not okay, that's not really explaining why , it's just saying, don't do it."*

There was recognition that campaigns to some extent have little choice but to adopt a concise message, given the short space of time available for a television advert for example, and the need to succinctly retain audience attention. However, the participants did not appear to feel that all of the videos were overly simplistic, despite their short duration. Furthermore, it was pointed out that campaigns which are based around simply telling young people not to do something may risk coming across as lecturing them, and may discourage them from listening to the message as a result.

In relation to this feedback, the focus group participants also demonstrated their awareness of some of the wider social factors that play a role in perpetuating partner violence. For example, some felt that campaigns should seek to address the ways in which wider society helps to legitimise and excuse violence and abuse. These comments did include some recognition of the role that gender inequalities play in propagating the problem. For instance, Vincent (Focus group 8) valued the Australian video because it highlighted these issues:

> *"I think that one, that one focuses on the issues a bit more. 'Cause, like I haven't done any research into it, but presumably a lot of, domestic violence kind of stems from, the idea that, this, men, is like, the more powerful, and then the woman is less so [pause]. And the kind of idea that, it's okay, for the, the like, for the man, the boy, little boy, to push over the girl, that he's just being mean 'cause he likes it, he likes her and that kind of thing. I think a lot of the other ones were just very situational, and one thing, where I think that's, like you say, you were saying there, a bit more broad."*

Views such as these suggested that the young men actually appreciated being engaged with in a serious way and encouraged to think about the broader social issues surrounding partner violence, rather than simply being instructed not to do something.

Another viewpoint which arose regularly within the focus groups was with regards to the complexities of partner violence, and how abusive behaviour is often not as clearly demarcated and overt as some of the videos suggested that it might be. Some of the participants talked about how partner abuse does not always have to involve the extreme forms of physical violence depicted in some of the videos, and that more subtle, hidden, and escalating forms of abuse could be equally harmful, if not more so. There was a recognition that psychological and emotional forms of abuse would be harder to portray in a short, impactful television advert, but that they were particularly important for prevention campaigns to raise awareness about, given that a lot of people might not recognise such behaviours as being abusive. Some of the participants expressed concern that, in attempting to attract audience attention, campaigns might depict particularly shocking forms of violence and abuse (such as images of women with black eyes and bruises), which could actually misrepresent the day-to-day reality of coercive control, and which people experiencing abuse might find it hard to relate to. For instance, Ted (Focus group 2) argued that:

> *"I would say fairly confidently, everyone knows that what he did in that video ['This is Abuse'], was like, a hundred percent not okay, and actually, the stuff that maybe you wouldn't think about so much, the stuff to do with like, coercive behaviour, just like little things, is actually more important, because they're stuff that, if maybe viewed on their own you wouldn't, think was such a big deal and as like, stuff that you do need to change about people's behaviour that you'd never, like that isn't actually addressed, whilst everyone's taught from a young age, don't hit."*

Many of the young men also appeared to show some recognition that unhealthy, unequal, and controlling behaviours might be relatively widespread within intimate relationships. Indeed, several participants talked about how they themselves had engaged in, or were aware of their friends engaging in, individual acts which could be seen as being in some way unhealthy, and which, if repeated, could become abusive. They appeared to possess some degree of awareness of how such practices by men could be experienced by women as being dominating, intimidating, or oppressive even if not intended as such, and yet are to some degree normalised within heterosexual relationships. At times, they also expressed a degree of uncertainty about what they saw as 'grey areas' in this regard, in terms of where the boundaries lie between what should be considered abusive behaviour and what is not. In response to the 'Disrespect NoBody' video, Walter (Focus group 7) remarked that:

> *"The fact that they only list a few things like, you can't check people's phones, you can't ask for nude pics, they're not okay, but, where's the line drawn where it is okay kind of thing? Is there anything you're allowed to do on someone's phone, is there any sort of checking up you're allowed to do on a partner, is any of it okay? Probably not, I don't know, but there is that question."*

As a result, many of the young men felt that it is important for prevention work to address the more subtle, complex, and difficult to define harmful behaviours within young people's relationships, in order to prevent abusive behaviour from developing and becoming normalised in the first place. Their comments suggested that the notion that young men don't understand and need to be taught what 'consent' and 'abuse' are may sometimes be misplaced, and could be interpreted as being condescending, by setting the bar too low for young men - as evidenced by the fact that their awareness levels about partner violence for example were already relatively high. Instead, the implication appeared to be that the focus should be placed more on helping them to appreciate how many of men's practices towards women within sex and relationships which are normalised, commonplace, and condoned within patriarchal societies can in fact have dominating, coercive, controlling impacts, and can feed into oppressive and abusive dynamics.

Meanwhile, they appeared to feel that simplistic messages about overt and extreme forms of violence were unlikely to address these more insidious and subtle abusive practices. By focusing on more pervasive, normalised, and small-scale behaviours, many of the young men felt that this could also make prevention campaigns more relatable to people's everyday experiences. Being relatable to young people's day-to-day lives was repeatedly emphasised as a key task for impactful prevention work, not least because it would make it more likely that they would pay attention and take on board the messages being delivered. At the same time, participants did recognise that it is challenging for prevention campaigns to provide efficient and accessible messages about the subtleties of partner violence, and so several emphasised that clarity in the message being offered must be retained for a campaign to be successful.

6.3.3 The significance of education for young men

When asked about what more they felt society could do to help prevent partner violence, most of the young men stressed education as being central to the solution. Some, such as Owen (Focus group 6), felt that it was vital that this started from a young age:

> *"If we were to maybe do stuff, at a much earlier age, maybe the kids won't get the full connotations of it, right then, but they'll get the idea in their heads that, yes, no, we can't be, doing things like this. I don't know, maybe it's, maybe it's ridiculous to say that, because the smaller kids won't understand what we're talking about at all, but I just feel that like, when we get to a certain age, as teenagers, we, we just choose to not pay attention, rather than as kids not understand it."*

This point was all the more pertinent given the lack of education many of the young men themselves had received whilst at school in relation to partner abuse and other forms of violence against women. On a number of occasions, participants were vociferously grateful about having the chance to participate in the focus group, describing it as an enjoyable, interesting, and educative experience. Several commented that despite it being such an important topic, it was something they had very rarely, if ever, had the opportunity to sit down and discuss before, not only at school, but in any other setting. For instance, Christian (Focus group 1) stated that:

> *"Yeah, I think it is quite useful, 'cause I've actually quite liked it, like I've quite enjoyed talking about, 'cause like [pause], it's not something that you really talk about in life, but it's so important."*

This demonstrates the extent to which many of the focus group participants seemed to sincerely value having the chance to talk about issues of gender and violence, in a safe and supportive environment. It was undoubtedly difficult to recruit sports teams to take part, suggesting that a key challenge may be instigating these conversations in the first place in ways which make it easy for young men to participate, without in some way exposing them in the process. However, once they had come 'through the door' and the discussions began, the young men typically had a lot to say about partner violence and the issues connected to it, and genuinely appeared to embrace and enjoy having the opportunity to talk about these things. The consensus from the focus group participants therefore appeared to be that they

would be grateful for more opportunities of this kind being available to young men, not least during their time in education.

6.4 Men's complicity in the perpetuation of violence against women

One issue which was already highlighted by the expert-informant interviews as being central to the reproduction of violence against women, and thus a crucial factor for prevention work to address, is that of men's complicity. It is a subject which some campaigns do already (sometimes implicitly) focus on to some extent. For instance, one of the clips that was shown was taken from the Australian Government's 'Respect' campaign, and this illustrated a number of different examples of how behaviour by family members and peers can help to enable and legitimise violence against women, such as a father telling his son not to "throw like a girl" in front of his daughter. The video ends with a depiction of partner violence itself, being enacted by a man who at the beginning, as a boy, shuts a door in the face of a girl, who is told "you're ok, he just did it 'cause he likes you". The video concludes with the statement "violence against women: let's stop it at the start".

The issue of complicity was both alluded to and exhibited in a number of different ways within the focus groups. For example, the following exchange took place in the fourth session, after the Australian video was played:

> *"One of them there was clearly like [pause], being uncomfortable with what was being done, but like, feeling unable to like, I think, act on it or anything, and that's an interesting, I think that's an interesting dynamic, because where, where many people might not be able to, um, relate specifically to issues of domestic violence and that kind of thing, complicitness in kind of attitudes towards women, which might, make, you know, facilitate that sort of, um, that sort of reasoning into people who do commit these, can be a bit more, can strike a bit harder with people who otherwise wouldn't engage with it."*
>
> *"It did try and focus on those people didn't it…"*
>
> *"Yeah 'cause like I just said about how, how awful it is, the things that go on in darts and pool and all that [pause]. That said, if I was to lose to a girl, and they said do a*

yard, I would have to, I would just do it, I would never stand there and go, no it's wrong, it's, just 'cause, yeah..."

"Yeah, 'cause it's hard to do that right?"

"'Cause we're all just, we're all just part of the system really."

This conversation demonstrates how complicity can provide an important and useful concept through which to understand and address the ways in which men, and society as a whole, contribute to the problem - and how prevention work can encourage resistance to it. On a number of other occasions, the young men articulated a recognition of some of the ways in which practices within the wider community can play a part in the perpetuation of partner violence and violence against women. Sometimes this included an acknowledgement that such behaviours might be particularly pervasive among young men. For example, Emilio (Focus group 3) commented that:

"Society's participation is quite important, so if you see something happening, and also, the way you talk to your friends like, like I'm sure people make comments when they're in a group of only guys, like you know, like that silly videos ad was talking about, I think that's also very important, if you create this dynamic where, those things are acceptable."

Some of the participants spoke about how the prevention videos they were shown had helped them to reflect on ways in which they too may have enacted these forms of complicity. Kostas (Focus group 3) spoke about how this could in turn encourage people to think about the positive role they could play in helping to tackle the problem:

"Looking at the Australian advert, you might think, oh I might have said, don't hit like a girl at some point, you know I could change, sort of, I could do something positive, even though I'm not, I don't feel like I'm contributing to domestic violence you know, if I just slightly alter my actions, then I might not, might make a little bit of an impact, and I think that's quite good yeah."

On a number of occasions, participants talked quite candidly about their involvement in the kinds of sexist or objectifying collective behaviours amongst young men which can help to legitimise violence against women. This rarely meant actually confessing to enactments of sexism and misogyny themselves, but they did speak about moments in which they had

witnessed such behaviour among their peers for example, and stayed silent about it. This can be seen in the following quote from Bruce (Focus group 1), who also mentioned how watching the campaign videos had encouraged him to think more about how he should speak out:

> *"I think it [the Australian video] does work on all levels actually, because even if you know, because I've been in positions, obviously I think probably everyone has, where someone's said something a bit inappropriate, and you think to yourself; probably shouldn't say that, but you know, it kind of, I didn't do anything to stop it at that point. So I think, it also highlights that like, even just for people that wouldn't do it themselves, it kind of highlights, maybe you should. And that can be for like, everyone, whether they're actively abusing someone or not, has a part to play in stopping it, so I think that, kind of works quite well."*

There were therefore a number of instances in the focus groups in which the discussion led the participants to relate to, and reflect honestly upon, their own potential complicity. For instance, Giles (Focus group 2) noted that campaigns which address these broader practices of complicity can be more relatable for a larger number of people:

> *"…the number of times if you're a guy, you are in, that sort of situation, you're in a social situation with other guys, your age, there's, this term bantz comes up a lot, um, sort of going on, whereas you might look at the video before ['This is Abuse'] and go, oh, it hasn't happened to me, it's not going to happen to me, I'm not that kind of guy, um…everyone I would imagine has been in that sort of situation [in which peers are joking about violence towards women].*

Some of the young men thus expressed a degree of awareness that their own practices and those of their peers could be seen as being implicated in the perpetuation of violence against women. Connections were often made between such behaviours and the masculine environments and male peer cultures in which they typically took place, as reflected in this story from Ugo (Focus group 4):

> *"I really thought about it the other night at our darts match, we played it and it was quite a big crowd around there, and there was just, I was looking around thinking, there's just so much like, everyone just trying to be the biggest lad in the room, going on here, and I was just thinking, there's such a bunch of dickheads in this room to be*

honest. And then, the girls came in , and it was just, some girls came in to watch, and I just felt like the way they were [pause], like one of the lads, came in, and the girlfriend of one of the guys who plays for our team, and she was just kind of stood on the edge of the room, I think she knew that if she would've come into the room, she'd have been subjected to something, even if it was just some little joke or something, and she felt quite intimidated in that room, you could tell, so, yeah. I don't think it's that big a problem in a lot of places, but definitely like, pub sports at [university name] I've really noticed it a lot."

On other occasions, some of the young men contemplated ways in which they or their peers had behaved in ways which might not necessarily have been abusive, but were potentially problematic in some way, especially if they had formed part of a wider pattern of behaviour. There was some degree of acceptance in these conversations that they might share a degree of complicity in enacting unhealthy or oppressive practices within sex and relationships, which are in turn closely connected to the perpetration of violence and abuse itself. For example, Dwight (Focus group 8) commented that:

"And lots of people are probably guilty of slight sort of, mental, domestic abuse, that they wouldn't really, like, realise. Like even this talk has made me think of like, stuff that I've said, and been like, actually that could possibly be classed as sort of like, domestic abuse if I like, kept doing it, on like a grander scheme."

These admissions articulated a recognition that it is not only those that directly use violence and abuse that are complicit in reproducing inequalities within sex and relationships. This demonstrates that, if patriarchal norms are engrained to some extent within all of us, then it is important to consider men's conduct within intimate relationships more broadly, and not only those men who are perpetrators of violence. Indeed, when considering these continuums of behaviour, the distinctions between perpetrators of violence and 'normal' men may not always be as clear as we might like to think. However, even within these discussions, the young men rarely acknowledged links from their own complicity and unhealthy behaviours and those of their peers to the social construction of masculinity, or to issues of male privilege and entitlement within gender inequality. For example, in the following quote, Fabio (Focus group 2) suggests that behaviours seen in some contexts as being toxic or aggressive, could also be a normal, unproblematic part of other relationships, and could come from 'both sides':

"The only problem I have with these adverts, like, thinking about it, is like, whilst they're showing like, aggressive behaviour and whatever, and it's been like, this is really bad, which I totally, agree with. But also, what it's not saying is like, there are couples out there who, aren't domestically abusing each other, but who are, who argue very, like, vociferously, and who argue in a very violent way, um, and you know that, what that doesn't, bring in, is the fact that yeah, some couples do really fight. Some couples, like, you know, might break things in front of each other or whatever, but they're still not, domestically abusing each other. And just because, you know, and obviously that woman in that advert was upset by it, and that's not okay, of course, but, what it's not really, what it's not actually saying is that, actually, you know, people also do just get, really angry with each other sometimes, and lots of couples do fight, and you know, it's not, there's not abuse. So what I think, I don't know [pause]. It's not that I, I'm trying to condone violence and sort of, arguments in couples, but I think there should be more sort of like, you know, people do also argue, and people do act violently towards their partner, and cannot, domestically abuse each other."

This highlights how the young men sometimes talked about what they saw as the 'grey areas', complexities, and ambiguities of sex and relationships in ways which suggested a lack of recognition of the unequal gendered context in which they were taking place. The failure to appreciate the impacts of this social context on individual intimate relationships for example meant that they sometimes struggled to appreciate the gendered reality of coercive control, how this shapes the impacts of different behaviours, and how they can constitute abuse as a result. Furthermore, sometimes the participants appeared to minimise or excuse aggressive, dominating, or toxic behaviours within relationships, so long as they were a 'one off', and not part of a pattern of abuse. For example, Eric (Focus group 4) commented as follows:

"I know of someone recently who's seen, a text flash up on his girlfriend's phone, from a guy, a graphic text, and then gone into the phone, and realised that they were actually, at least that this wasn't like a, this was not a random event, this had been happening for ages, and therefore found out. But then again, according to that advert that would technically be, not okay, but then, I don't know [pause]. If I was, if I was in my room, and saw that flash up, and it said, whatever it said, or a picture of, some guy's dick or whatever, I'd be like, okay that's, I'm gonna investigate that a little bit."

It was interesting then that whilst the young men had demonstrated relatively high levels of awareness about partner violence and the subtle manifestations of coercive control, their willingness to critically question men's practices within sex and relationships only went so far, and they expressed a degree of tolerance for harmful behaviours if they were not part of a clear pattern of abuse. This is despite the fact that many of the practices that contribute to coercive control may initially appear to be acceptable on their own. This suggests that a crucial area of focus for prevention work should be in talking about and building healthy and equal relationships more broadly, and not only in relation to explicitly tackling violence and abuse.

On occasion, in attempting to make sense of and legitimate their own problematic behaviours, the participants may have also constructed implicit mitigations and excuses both for themselves and for perpetrators of abuse. For example, in the following quote, Fabio (Focus group 2) attempts to explain controlling behaviour as often being based around the 'fear of losing someone', and minimises its connection to the exertion of power:

> *"With all those adverts, there was certainly a controlling aspect to it, I think, in fact most of it, I mean that, that guy, you know, grabbing, grabbing that girl's hair, that resulted, that resulted from her diso-, like being out of his control, being like, you know, texting somebody he didn't want her to text, and it's like, where does that controlling aspect come from, is it like, this you know, is it like a, is it really, like, exerting, is it a power thing, is it like, trying to exert power over someone? I don't, I think in most cases it's probably not a power thing really, I mean it's almost like a fear of losing someone really, and you know, and it kind of resulted, to that as well, it's like um, you know..."*

Fabio went on to describe a situation with his girlfriend where he arrived at her house in a drunken state and persistently asked to see her, in a potentially intimidating way. He recognised that this behaviour was unacceptable, but still attempted to explain it on the basis that it was motivated by his 'fear of losing her' and because he 'just wanted to see her'. At times then, some of the young men did attempt to justify and provide excuses for their own potentially harmful or oppressive practices and those of other men, rather than demonstrating a willingness to critically reflect on such behaviours further. This illustrates how complicity can subtly be enacted as men attempt to make sense of and rationalise their own practices within patriarchy. Even if this may be entirely innocent in their own case, it has the potential

to contribute to the legitimisation of abusive behaviours on the part of other men towards women.

Meanwhile, on some occasions, the young men also defensively expressed views which were more overtly victim-blaming, rationalising or excusing of men's use of violence, and feeding into myths and stereotypes about violence against women, such as those around the notion of 'false accusations' of abuse. For example, within the fifth focus group focus group there was an ongoing conversation about how some of the participants felt that women could take steps to stop themselves from being a victim of sexual violence, with Tim stating:

> *"I think it would be a good idea to educate people on how to reduce their exposure to the risk of being in those situations. I'm not saying that if you put yourself in the situation where it could happen that it's your fault, but I'm saying there could be, some sort of, information and education on how to, limit the chance of being in a, difficult situation."*

The focus groups therefore illuminated some of the different ways in which men can be individually and collectively complicit in legitimising violence against women amongst one another - which the participants at times acknowledged about their own behaviour, and at other times enacted within the sessions themselves. Reflecting about these issues sometimes led to observations from the young men about how they could do more to help tackle the problem. This illustrates that complicity can provide an important conceptual lens for men and boys to better understand how they contribute to the perpetuation of violence against women, as well as how they can, and should, become agents of change in its prevention. However, as will be explored in the next section, on many other occasions discussing violence against women led to defensive responses from the young men, and this defence of the patriarchal status quo is one of the central ways in which complicity is maintained.

6.5 Defensive responses to the challenging of patriarchal norms

A recurring feature within the focus groups was what I interpreted as being defensive responses to the different campaign videos that were shown. These were typically occasions in which the participants appeared to quickly dismiss or reject the messages of the campaigns in various gendered ways - as opposed to making more carefully considered and constructive criticisms of their content. These knee-jerk reactions therefore suggested a lack of more in-

depth reflection about the messages of the prevention campaigns - indeed, they sometimes appeared to act as barriers inhibiting such reflections from being made, or perhaps provided an excuse for the young men to avoid doing so. These responses fundamentally appeared to revolve around the protection of patriarchal norms and privileges, when they were being questioned in some way by the prevention campaigns - or indeed by other participants. Defensiveness of this kind could therefore be seen as helping to preserve men's complicity, by ensuring that the relationship between their own lives and patriarchy is left untouched and unexamined.

This may not necessarily be an explicit or even conscious aim of such reactions. They may often represent an almost automatic response when confronted with the injustice of male privilege, and a concurrent desire to deny both the existence of gender inequalities in the first place, and one's own part in perpetuating and benefiting from them. However, whether or not they are deliberate does not change the impact that they have, in helping to maintain men's existing view of both themselves and the outside world. These defensive responses thus appeared to allow the young men to avoid seriously contemplating the phenomenon of men's violence against women and how it relates to their own lives and social worlds. As a result, they often enabled the participants to refrain from scrutinising their own practices and positionalities and the ways in which they might be implicated in the problem, or any accompanying sense of responsibility to do something about it.

Observing these patriarchal defence mechanisms within the focus groups demonstrates the obstacles that they may provide in engaging men and boys to prevent violence against women. Three major forms of defensiveness were identified in this respect: shifting the focus onto men's victimisation as a way of 'neutralising' attention towards the gendered dynamics of partner violence; the naturalisation of men's violence as a biological inevitability; and disassociation from 'other' men's violence. This last response was already noted in the previous chapter, as being a potentially problematic response from men involved in violence prevention work. However, it also is likely to provide an even greater barrier when attempting to make the case to men and boys about ending men's violence against women. This chapter will now examine the manifestation of each of these defensive responses within the focus groups in turn.

6.5.1 Shifting the focus onto men as victims

A common occurrence within each of the focus groups when a prevention campaign was shown which depicted men's violence against women, was the rapid transferral of the conversation onto men's *victimisation*. This would often take place immediately after a video was shown. For example, after watching the 'Disrespect NoBody' video in one focus group, the first response came from Isaac (Focus group 7), who said:

> *"My first, thought of that, and I've seen it before and I was thinking that, it's only focused on men, being the perpetrators of domestic violence. Like, obviously it's probably more common for physical violence to be, carried out men, but women can just as easy, easily, create the mental sort of stuff, that was going on. So yeah that was my sort of, view on it, and probably why it had a number of dislikes, if people thought that too."*

On other occasions the discussion would gradually shift in that direction, and it was a regular feature of the focus groups for one or several of the participants to raise the issue of men's experiences of violence and abuse in response to the campaign videos. The participants often criticised the campaigns for portraying violence perpetrated by men against women, but not illustrating the abuse of men by women. In some cases, they also felt that there is not enough attention given to violence in LGBT people's relationships. The use of videos depicting men's violence against women was a deliberate choice, because I wanted to gain insights into how the young men made sense of campaigns focused specifically on preventing this phenomenon. However, the videos were also taken from some of the most mainstream recent violence prevention campaigns in England and beyond, so were perhaps also the ones that the young men would have been most likely to come across in their day-to-day lives. Furthermore, points were also sometimes made about what they perceived to be an excessive focus on men's violence and a disregarding of men as victims in response to standalone questions, or pre-emptively near the beginning of the session, and not only in relation to the videos, demonstrating a wider sense of grievance about this issue among several of the young men.

This caused me to reflect on whether or not some of the points made by the participants in this respect could actually be seen as valid in some respects. If a campaign is focusing specifically on intimate partner violence for example, there are challenging questions about how the different possible gendered dynamics with which that problem can manifest itself

should be addressed. How can prevention work simultaneously tackle men's violence against women as a specific societal problem, and by far the most common form of partner and sexual violence, whilst still taking into account abuse which takes other forms? The answer to this question perhaps depends partly upon context. For example, in-depth programmes will have more opportunity to devote sufficient time to these different factors. It may also be necessary to have specific prevention campaigns which focus on different issues, such as specifically addressing abuse within LGBT people's relationships. This underscores the need for more resources to be devoted to in-depth prevention work in the first place, given both the scale and complexity of the different issues involved.

These issues in no way diminish the importance of dedicating efforts specifically to ending the phenomenon of men's violence against women. It is quite possible to have a genuine concern for male victim-survivors of abuse, and the prevention of violence against men and against LGBT people, whilst simultaneously focusing on tackling men's violence against women and girls as a specific and especially pervasive structural issue. However, this did not necessarily appear to be the basis for many of the participants' protestations. Whether or not they were expressing genuine concern for male victim-survivors of abuse, their emphasis on this often appeared to resemble more of a knee-jerk response to being confronted with the realities of men's violence against women. In other words, the young men's attempts to shift the focus onto men as victims may have often have articulated a response of deflection (which it literally achieved), in order to avoid reflecting on the nature of men's violence, either as a societal issue or in relation to their own lives.

Focusing on men's violence against women as a specific social problem is imperative to its prevention. This does mean that other forms of interpersonal violence and abuse are not important or serious issues. However, it is the primary manifestation that partner violence takes. When the young men shifted the focus onto partner abuse against men, it often appeared to represent a denial of this reality - a conscious or unconscious assertion that they did not recognise, or take to be important, the gendered dynamics of partner violence and their implications. This is perhaps unsurprising, because acknowledging the role of gender in partner abuse can in turn bring into question many taken-for-granted assumptions about how society works and the way we live our lives within it. Raising men's violence against women as a specific social problem, or recognising it as such, can therefore feel threatening for men, because it can provoke uncomfortable questions about our own positions in society.

Many of the responses in which the young men rapidly shifted the focus onto men as victims may have therefore represented the operationalisation of defence mechanisms - an attempt to shift the focus *away* from men's violence against women, and neutralise its political implications. By deflecting attention onto men's experiences of abuse, the participants were able to deflect attention from themselves, and curtail any potential sense of obligation to reflect upon their own lives and practices in relation to violence against women. Of course, this does not mean that placing attention on male victim-survivors of abuse is always inherently problematic. However, when it appears to be at the expense of, and a deflection away from, a discussion on men's violence towards women, then it is important to critically question the motives of such a shift. This also doesn't mean that anyone who responds in such a way is deliberately attempting to undermine feminist analyses of the problem. Defensive assumptions of this kind can perhaps instead often be understood as a manifestation of ideological training in the protection of patriarchal norms, whereby, for example, society conditions us to treat problems experienced predominantly by women as being intrinsically less serious or important.

In this regard, some of the participants discussed how they felt that men's experience of partner violence was a 'hidden' social issue. For instance, one of the first comments made within one of the sessions, by Zack (Focus group 4), was to express the view that a lack of attention is given to male victim-survivors:

> *"I'm pretty sure that I've seen some stuff about, I don't know where I've seen this but, coming up lately about, how everything's aimed at, male, as was just said, male on women violence, male on female violence, rather than, the other way round, which does exist [pause]. While I guess men wouldn't go and report it if they were, cause it's the stigma attached to it."*

Yet in spite of this perception of concealment, violence against men often became central to the discussion in the focus groups, which suggested that it was already at the forefront of many of the young men's minds in relation to partner abuse. On a number of occasions, there were particularly detailed conversations about women's potential use of violence, which also included specific examples that the participants had witnessed in their own lives. Indeed, there seemed to be a degree of fascination or obsession with this topic, and with what an appropriate way for men to respond to such behaviour would be, which often fed into

discussions about 'natural' differences between women and men. For instance, in one focus group, Jonas (Focus group 2) raised the following question, which led to considerable debate:

> *"Do you reckon, the question, for everyone, if they wanna answer it, if there were no repercussions, and it was an environment where no one else saw, so no one else knew what happened, not necessarily you but, whether you think, you can't think of any arguments why it wouldn't be okay, if a woman hit you, X hard, do you think that as a, just because you're a man, you shouldn't be able to hit her back at the exact same level?"*

This extensive focus on women's use of violence, and men's experience of it, was perhaps to some extent unsurprising. Narratives about male victim-survivors of abuse being ignored at the expense of a focus on violence against women have become commonplace and mainstream, often through the influence of anti-feminist, 'men's rights' activists (Lombard, 2013). Meanwhile, as was explored in Chapter 5, 'gender-neutral' discourses of partner abuse, advocated on the basis of taking into account male victim-survivors, have become increasingly influential within policy and practice - and perhaps, by extension, public perceptions - in England.

As one example of this, in two different focus groups several participants discussed how they had seen a video produced by the men's domestic violence charity ManKind Initiative. This video depicts a 'social experiment' which compares the public response to witnessing abusive behaviour, first from a man towards a woman in which several bystanders intervene, and then by the woman towards the man where no one intervenes, and some appear to be laughing about it. Some of the participants felt that this video evidenced how partner abuse is treated differently depending on its gender dynamics, claiming that it illustrates the lack of seriousness with which male victim-survivors are treated. For instance, Philip (Focus group 7) remarked:

> *"I've seen a video, um, it was a social experiment, a man was being aggressive and violent towards a woman, and most people off the street would, were instantly reacting, instantly intervening, um [pause]. Switch the roles round, and people were ignoring it, looking the other way, and they was even a few people, um, mocking, the man."*

However, other participants questioned the veracity of the video, and pointed out that many so-called social experiments are scripted and acted, rather than being authentic live recordings. Furthermore, even if it was entirely accurate, the points made by the video would not detract from the pervasiveness or seriousness of men's violence against women as a specific societal problem. Yet for some of the young men, this campaign appeared to provide support for their dismissal of men's violence against women as a particularly significant issue, and their shifting of focus onto men as victims. This suggests that campaigns which seek to raise awareness about violence against men by *comparing* it to responses to violence against women can - whatever their intentions - feed into the defence of patriarchal relations, and the delegitimisation of efforts to prevent men's violence against women.

The frequency with which this issue was brought up within the focus groups raises the question of how violence prevention efforts should address men's victimisation. For example, it could be argued that if men have a tendency to immediately dismiss work which focuses explicitly on men's violence against women, for utilitarian reasons it might on occasion be more impactful to at least begin conversations about partner abuse through relatively 'gender-neutral' language. Yet pretending that the gendered dynamics of partner violence do not exist is unlikely to get very far in tackling the roots of the problem. This demonstrates the potential utility of a triadic approach to engaging men, as a way of overcoming some of the defensive responses that it can encounter. This could mean focusing on the construction of masculine norms as a starting point (given that this *is* both specific to and shared among men), and helping men and boys to recognise that whilst individual men's experiences are highly varied, they still exist within a patriarchal social context in which men structurally dominate over women, and which the phenomenon of men's violence against women serves to maintain.

The focus groups also demonstrated that it is important for prevention work to challenge deflective defensive responses, because they often appear to help to reproduce neutralisations and obfuscations of violence against women. They can thus present a major obstacle to impactful prevention work, by taking attention away from the gendered factors which are so important for it to address, such as constructions of masculinity. Furthermore, they may often be shaped by misunderstandings and misinterpretations about the realities of partner violence. For example, some of the young men brought up statistics in an attempt to demonstrate that the phenomenon is in fact 'gender-neutral', but these often appeared questionable, potentially misrepresenting the gendered patterns of partner violence, as can be observed in these comments by Barney (Focus group 3):

"Some of it I think focuses too much on men. I can't remember where I saw it, but I thought I saw the, that 40% of domestic violence is against men? And obviously, you'd expect, if it was statistically equal it would 50%, so it is a bigger problem for women, but the disparity in the adverts that you see, and the campaigns that you see, is like, it's not 60% targeted at men and 40% targeted at women, it's, 100% targeted at men. So in a way, I think it, a lot of them go too far in saying, well, sometimes men hit women and that's bad. I think it would be far more effective to say, sometimes people hit other people, but then like you know, specifically in this case, sometimes people hit the person they're in a relationship with. That's not okay. I think that would be a more effective ad. And it reaches a wider audience. 'Cause then you're targeting all domestic violence cases, domestic abuse cases, rather than, 60%, if it's 60%, of them."

It should be recognised that it is also in men's interests to maintain this apparent blindness with regards to the gendered nature of partner abuse. Defensive responses which shift attention away from men's violence against women can allow men to maintain a sense of denial about patriarchal structures of inequality, or about the idea that they receive gendered power and privilege as men. Indeed, some may attempt to claim a status of victimhood themselves as a result, by suggesting that men's experiences are in some way being marginalised by 'mainstream' understandings of partner violence. In this respect, men's victimisation is a key area of focus for anti-feminist 'men's rights' activists, who often attempt to use male victim-survivors of abuse as a tool to delegitimise feminist frameworks of violence and abuse (Kimmel, 2002; Mann, 2008; Dragiewicz, 2012; Lombard, 2013). The influence of these kinds of arguments upon young men's attitudes could at times be observed in the focus groups. For example, one participant, Dean (Focus group 5), would raise the issue in response to almost every question or video that was shown, and played a significant role in shaping the dynamics of the focus group and the contributions of other team members as a result. Shortly after the session began, he remarked:

"I think everything that was brought up was, men, men taking advantage of women, and I think for like, a male that's not, that's not interesting for me. Like because it doesn't, it doesn't affect me in any way. So I think the fact that it's so focused on, like, male violence towards women, makes it harder for younger men to get involved in it."

6.5.2 The naturalisation of violence and abuse

Another recurring theme which was interpreted as representing a defensive response within the discussions involved the young men attempting to understand and explain partner violence through 'natural' gender differences. Lombard (2015) and McCarry and Lombard (2016) found a similar pattern within research they carried out with young people about their attitudes towards violence and abuse, and described such constructions as 'naturalising' the problem. Lombard (2015) found that the young people she spoke to viewed violence as being a prerequisite of masculine identity, whilst violence used by girls would be seen as 'unnatural', or indeed not as violence at all. They viewed violence as being the physical embodiment of strength, and the consequence of a 'natural', linear progression in which, as boys become men, they develop the potential to use violence. McCarry and Lombard (2016) discuss how many of the young people they spoke to would naturalise differences between women and men, polarising these distinctions and defining them as being embodied, and that it was through this lens that they made sense of inequalities based upon gender.

Very similar constructions to these were frequently observed in the focus groups conducted for this study. Not only did many of the participants see partner violence as to some extent being an inevitable and potentially unpreventable problem as a result, they sometimes perceived the unequal gender relations upon which it is based as being largely inescapable too. When asked about how they would explain the existence and pervasiveness of partner violence, many of the participants felt that it could ultimately be traced back to 'natural', biological differences between women and men in terms of physical size and strength, or hormonal tendencies towards aggressive behaviour in men for instance. In the first focus group, the following exchange took place:

> *Daniel: "Obviously like most things, like most, harms, it seems to be, to some extent intrinsic. I mean you look at most things, social issues, and you look at how long they've been social issues, and you can go a long way to reduce the harm, of things like this, but you can never really truly eradicate them."*
>
> *Christian: "Part of me kind of, it sounds really horrible to say, but sort of maybe it's, not part of human nature, but kind of like a, maybe just a biological-"*
>
> *Bruce: "Innate sort of-"*

Christian: "Innate sort of thing. Like you see it all the time, like you know like, animals dominate other animals for particular things, and maybe it's just a human expression of that socialisation, except that kind of, we kind of recognise that's not, it's not the way to do it, because it causes emotional harm, and psychological distress, and all, everything like that, so I think [pause], yeah it's like you were saying, partially you can never truly eradicate it, because partially possibly it's based on that biological precedent."

These views suggested that the participants' levels of understanding about why partner violence takes place were more limited, and they often fell back on claims which naturalised the phenomenon as a result. For instance, perhaps either deliberately or as a result of lacking awareness, it was less common for them to make sense of partner violence through gender relations. That is not to say that such ideas were not raised at all, with gender inequality still being mentioned as a possible explanatory factor on a number of occasions. For instance, by Emilio (Focus group 3):

"I think, it's cultural, to some extent, like we, as, you know if, you get the idea since you're little that, you know man is the person who should, protect the woman and, you know man is the strong, man is superior to the woman to some extent, then I think these things [partner violence] are meant to happen right? Because you are already creating that division, and that, hierarchy in a sense."

Gender inequality was a particularly common topic of discussion in relation to the Australian Government campaign, which perhaps most clearly linked partner violence to patriarchal inequalities and norms. Interestingly, this video was generally received well by the young men. They seemed to understand and take on board its key messages, and in many cases, agreed with the notion that treating girls and boys differently and unfairly as they grow up could play an important role in the perpetuation of violence against women. For example, Muhammed (Focus group 6) commented that:

"The other thing, I noted, was the whole, don't throw like a girl thing. Which is quite disparaging and sort of, suggests a lack of respect for women, which [pause], none of the other ones talk about respecting women, because like, the kid shuts the door, and that's not lack of respect, that's just being a bit of a dick. The shouting in the car, it's not so much lack of respect, as much as it is sort of, a very violent emotional outburst. It's just very sort of subtle, sort of men being superior to women thing, that none of

the other ones, none of the other incidences in there had, and none of the other adverts really had, was the very sort of, don't throw like a girl, which can sort of, disparage them from the get go."

However, where gender inequality was discussed by the young men, it was typically seen as *part* of the explanation (and even this was still sometimes contentious), in addition to 'innate' differences for example, rather than as being at the core of partner violence. Ultimately, even conversations about gender injustices themselves often returned eventually to naturalised distinctions between women and men, as if these inequalities also have some unavoidable basis in human biology. For example, in response to a point made about gender inequality, Ted (Focus group 2) stated as follows:

"But not necessarily, because, obviously, physiologically, men are-, have kind of, you know different kind of hormones, that would make them, perhaps act out more, in terms of aggressive, aggression. And so, although they may have that built into them, yes we are equal, at the same, the men is more, the man is more [pause], the man is more likely, we're just going to lash out, whereas a woman wouldn't do that, so then at that point there is an instant like..."

These perceptions of partner violence as a biological inevitability could in turn be interpreted as mitigating men's responsibility for perpetrating violence against women. Indeed, by seeing it as being to some extent unpreventable, some of the participants may have by extension absolved themselves or wider society of a responsibility to do something about it. This is why these 'naturalising' views were interpreted as being a defensive response, because by implying that there will always be some men who perpetrate abuse, and that this has little to do with men more broadly, the participants both rationalised the phenomenon and detached themselves from it. These understandings also demonstrate the importance of engaging with young people not only about violence and abuse itself, but about why it happens, and how it relates to the social structures and norms of gender. Many of the young men had clearly been influenced by somewhat conservative notions of gender norms and differences being rooted in biology, demonstrating the sway that such constructions continue to hold in relation to understandings of partner violence.

These naturalising ideas simultaneously conflicted with other aspects of the young men's understandings of partner violence. For example, the knowledge they displayed about physical violence only forming one potential component of partner abuse contradicts the

emphasis placed on the role of physical size and strength. Of course, physical violence does not actually have to be enacted for the threat of it to play a crucial role in men's exertion of power and control over their female partners. However, the significance of emotional and psychological abuse demonstrates that physical dominance is not a necessary component of partner violence, especially in a society where such abuse is underpinned by men's structural dominance over women. Furthermore, the awareness expressed by the young men about the nature of coercive control contradicts the idea that was also articulated about partner violence to some extent representing an expression of uncontrollable aggression by men, based upon hormonal differences.

The use of naturalising explanations of partner violence by the young men also contradicted some of their emphasis on men's victimisation by women. On the one hand, some of the participants argued that the role of psychological and emotional abuse in partner violence demonstrated that anybody could perpetrate it, because physical strength was largely irrelevant in this context. It was suggested that women have an equal capacity to utilise these forms of abuse in relationships, and that a 'gender-neutral' approach to partner violence was warranted as a result. However, this notion itself hints at essentialised and stereotypical assumptions about differential gendered capacities to utilise particular forms of violence, and women and men being 'predisposed' to certain behaviours, rather than them being rooted in gender norms and inequalities. This was highlighted, for example, in the postulation of the idea on a few occasions that women might actually be more adept at perpetrating emotional abuse, because of their supposedly superior ability to emotionally 'manipulate'.

In the same focus groups where the potential for anyone to perpetrate emotional abuse was being raised then, partner violence was simultaneously being naturalised as an inevitability based on 'natural' physical differences in between women and men. This articulates some of the confusions and contradictory positions which the young men appeared to simultaneously hold in relation to partner violence, which Lombard (2015) and McCarry and Lombard (2016) also found in their research. This appeared to be shaped in part by the context being discussed. For example, where men were being talked about in relation to violence perpetration, their behaviour seemed more likely to be naturalised, whilst in discussions about women's use of violence, they appeared keener to emphasise the agency of the perpetrator of abuse. This dynamic can be observed in the following quote from Robin (Focus group 4), in which significant emphasis is placed on a woman's actions, whilst the man's behaviour is minimised and described passively ('he just pushed her, and she went through a window'):

> *"I remember there was a video that went round, a couple of years back or something, of some guy, who's in a takeaway, or it was some sort of night out scenario, and this girl was, he got into an argument with this girl, and this girl was just punching him, hitting him hitting him hitting him, beating the shit out of him, and then he, just pushed her, and she went through a window, and like, half the people, it was like really split, opinions, people like, oh my god you can never do anything like that to a girl, and then other people like, at the end of the day, she was, beating the shit out of him, he's gotta react, no one was stepping in, he had to do something to protect himself [pause]. And it was the question of, sort of men hitting women, versus women hitting men..."*

This provides one example among several within the focus groups in which the participants discussed in substantial depth cases of women using violence against men, in a way that they rarely did with men's violence. This may point to a wider social phenomenon, in which the use of violence by women (which may be a source of shock and fascination due to its deviation from norms of femininity) and men (which may often be minimised and seen as normal or understandable for example) is understood and constructed considerably differently. For example, in research on how the police respond to and record different cases of partner violence, Hester (2013) found similarly gendered contradictions to be commonplace in perceptions of the use of abusive behaviours by men and women, with women three times more likely to be arrested per incident for example.

It is also perhaps unsurprising that the young men expressed a degree of confusion in their understandings of partner violence, given that they are likely to receive a range of mixed messages on the issue from a variety of conflicting perspectives in wider society. For example, the idea that men's violence is a 'natural' phenomenon, linked in some way to physical and hormonal differences, may be significantly influenced by wider cultural myths and stereotypes which remain in place about the supposed biological roots of gender (Fausto-Sterling, 1992; Skewes, Fine, and Haslam, 2018). This again demonstrates why it is so important to engage with and educate young people about issues of gender from a young age, so that they are equipped to deal with the contradictory messages they will receive from the world around them.

6.5.3 Distancing oneself from intimate partner violence and its prevention

The previous chapter discussed the potential for men involved as agents of change in the prevention of violence against women to disassociate themselves from the problem in different ways. This form of defensive response is likely to represent a much wider issue in attempts to engage with men and boys, as articulated by the commonplace retort of 'not all men' within conversations about men's violence against women. This oft-repeated phrase reflects the perception that violence against women only represents a problem with the men who directly commit it, and has little to do with men more generally (Castelino, 2014). Such views are likely to provide a major barrier to more men fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility for tackling violence against women. This was an important finding within the focus groups, in which the participants frequently appeared to disassociate themselves from the problem both in response to the prevention campaigns and in discussions about the issues they raised.

6.5.3.1 Disassociation from men's violence

All three of the forms of disassociation identified as a result of the expert-informant interviews were also regularly observed within the focus groups, and this was especially noticeable in the way that participants talked about the phenomenon of partner violence itself. Whilst the young men did generally recognise its significance as a social problem, they also often described partner violence in terms which framed it as something with little relevance to *their* lives. There was often an implied inconceivableness that they or anyone else in their lives could perpetrate, or be a victim of such a phenomenon. For instance, with regards to the 'This is Abuse' video, Emilio (Focus group 3) commented that:

> *"I don't think any of my friends when we were like, 14 or 15, would do something like the guy was doing to his girlfriend or something, you know like, at least to that extreme, you know? So, I think that's kind of the, where to put the line, it's the tricky bit right? But then again, if it's a more subtle video would you remember it, so, like would you actually, I don't know."*

By finding it difficult to imagine partner violence being enacted within their own contexts, many of the young men seemed to perceive themselves as being detached from the problem, as if it was something which had little to do with them. One of the key manners in which this

distancing was constructed was in their interpretation of partner violence as a problem separate from their lives as young people. Instead, it was often connected to 'adult' relationships in conjugal settings. For example, Christian (Focus group 1) discussed how he found it difficult to relate to the practices depicted in the Australian Government video because it focused in part on what parents teach their children:

> *"I suppose we're sort of in a between age, um, and you can't associate with, a forty year old bloke who's been in, what, a 20 year relationship or whatever, or, um, a 5-6 year old child, um [pause], it's quite difficult, um [pause], whether it's that lack of association, or just the fact that, you would want to distance yourself from that even if you were, older, or younger, um [pause], yeah, it's tricky."*

Whilst Christian's comments demonstrate the need to produce campaigns which are easy for audience members relate to, he himself also points to the desire to disassociate ourselves from the problem. In this regard, some of the participants appeared to find it particularly difficult to imagine partner abuse taking place among young people like them, in the university setting for example. This was despite the fact that several of the campaign videos which were shown were attempting to raise awareness about violence and abuse in young people's relationships. Some of the young men themselves recognised this contradiction, and the content of the videos did lead to the topic becoming an area of discussion within several of the focus groups. In some cases, participants suggested that whilst they were aware that partner violence *could* be perpetrated by young people, they still found it harder to visualise, and abuse in a domestic setting was still the first thing which came to mind. For example, Ernest (Focus group 5) noted that:

> *"Usually I don't think it's something that I'd, that we would really think about, at our age, because it's something that comes to mind like, as in, I know it sounds a bit weird but like, like a married couple? Or people that like, live together. Obviously because that's where the domestic part comes in, so they already live together? Whereas at, our stage, if we like, are to have like, partners, we wouldn't be living with them, so, domestic violence, kind of, I think that's the one thing, the domestic sense kind of implies a sort of, shared space in the living quarters, so that's maybe why, we're not really exposed to it, because we don't think of it applying to our age demographic."*

This suggests that more work still needs to be done to develop understandings about the range of contexts in which partner violence takes place, including across the life course, to

help young people to recognise abusive behaviours in their relationships and those of their peers. It is interesting that many of the young men did not associate partner violence with their own surroundings, given that there was an awareness about sexual violence and 'lad culture' on university campuses. This demonstrates how, even if we have a theoretical understanding of how a problem can exist within our environment, this does not necessarily equate to connecting it to our own lives and social worlds. These findings also indicate that whilst universities have started to pay more attention to sexual violence on campus, there has not necessarily been enough recognition by institutions about how this links to other forms of violence against women, including partner violence.

6.5.3.2 Disassociation from other men

Similarly, the participants often appeared to separate themselves from the problem by associating the perpetration of partner violence with 'other' men, who they distinguished themselves from. On some occasions, it was suggested that perpetrators of abuse are simply deviant or abnormal in some way, with Barney (Focus group 3) partly explaining the phenomenon on the basis that *"some people are just scumbags"*, whilst Dean (Focus group 5) felt that *"some people are just fucked in the head"*. On other occasions, this distancing seemed to stem from a differentiation between the social group of participants and those 'other' men committing violence. The young men alluded to a number of different factors in relation to their social positioning, such as because they were well educated, and attending a 'Russell Group' English university, which meant that it was a problem to some degree separate from their lives. There were also vaguer notions that issues of violence and abuse were not problems among 'guys like them'. For instance, Liam (Focus group 2) stated as follows:

> *"Obviously as, like, well, I think I can call us educated young men, um [pause], we like, I mean for us, we see these things and we go, yeah, obviously, common sense, don't hit women. But like, so, I think it's quite, and we're actually quite fortunate in that we're exposed to this kind of, like, you know like, moral, sort of thing, but like, so, we see that and go, yeah obviously, but..."*

Such comments appeared to imply that it was improbable that young men belonging to their social group could enact abusive behaviour towards women, and that prevention campaigns

were not really aimed at or necessary for them. Whilst there was some general recognition that partner violence permeates across society, many of the young men still seemed to feel that it was unlikely to be a problem which affected their own social group.

This illustrates how violence and abuse can easily be othered through the idea that it is a different group of men 'out there', who are not like us, that are primarily responsible for its perpetration. The implication appeared to be that those 'other' men who perpetrate abuse would not be members of their sports team, attending this elite university. I often interpreted this to indicate an association of partner abuse with those from working class backgrounds, echoing wider societal discourses of othering in which violence and abuse is frequently constructed as being a problem primarily with marginalised social groups (Sokoloff and Dupont, 2005; Montoya and Agustín, 2013). This was also replicated in relation to 'different' cultures and countries. For example, several of the participants in one focus group found it hard to imagine that the public sexual harassment depicted in the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) 'White Ribbon' video could actually take place in England (unlike other countries), as articulated by Emilio (Focus group 3):

> *"Especially I think, in like, kind of, Western cultures, because I'm sure these things would happen, like I read so many stories of like, in India for example, like this kind of public transport where these kinds of things happen and no one truly does anything, so I think, the context is broader, makes that difficult to believe it as well, yeah."*

Several of the young men therefore appeared to make use of these discourses of othering in response to the prevention campaigns they were shown, to separate themselves and their social group from the problem, in turn enabling them to disown a sense of responsibility about its prevention.

6.5.3.3 Disassociation from patriarchy

In a number of different ways, many of the participants also seemed to distance themselves from the patriarchal relations that underpin partner violence. Most overtly, this was manifested in the denial of gender inequality in the first place, either as a problem entirely, or as one which could help to explain the reproduction of partner abuse. This was sometimes articulated by simply avoiding it as a topic of discussion, even when asked specifically about

their views on the causes of partner violence for instance. Given the close relationship between gender inequality and partner abuse, and the fact that the Australian video did directly address this relationship, it was a topic notable by its absence in many of the discussions. Meanwhile, on other occasions, some of the participants explicitly rejected, downplayed, or struggled to see the relevance of gender inequality to the conversation, as expressed by Barney (Focus group 3):

> *"But, just the whole, introducing like, gender roles into saying, well the guy goes out and, does this, and this is the woman's job, and this is the man's job, well, as long as they're both-, respect's the key issue, so if they're both respecting each other then, well, there's no, there's no reason for that to lead to, to abuse [pause]. Like I say my grandparents, they did have those dynamics, and it, it all like, it didn't railroad them into abuse or anything, it, so, well actually, if anything, from my granddad's point of view he's less likely to, to be abusive towards my, my grandmother, because it's his job, his job to protect her, not to, do that kind of thing, so [pause]. I don't think those two are inherently linked..."*

On other occasions where gender inequality was raised, the direction of the discussions implied that some of the young men had been influenced by the idea that English society is now 'post-feminist' (O'Neill, 2015). The implication of their comments was sometimes that even if some inequalities do still exist, they are no longer a significant social issue, and tackling them will not necessarily make a major contribution to the reduction of partner violence.

This also connected to a pattern of reductionism within some of the views articulated by the young men, in which examples of male dominance and gender inequality were sometimes talked about in ways which reduced them only to very specific incidents. For example, in some of the focus groups, discussions around the Australian video became fixated on whether or not the use of phrases like 'don't throw like a girl' in specific circumstances is harmful, reducing the conversation to the specificities of the term itself, and removing it from the wider gendered context in which the term is used. As a result, with their connections to the broader social milieu obscured, such incidents could then on their own be portrayed as being relatively insignificant and unworthy of attention, as can be seen in this quote from Dean (Focus group 5):

> *"In sport, yeah, calling someone a pussy, yeah, so what? You called them a pussy, it's a colloquialism, it's like um, what's the word, it's like an informal just like, throwaway comment, you know."*

At times, some of the participants were therefore able to minimise the impact of patriarchy itself, and women's experiences of oppression within it, by reducing that oppression to individual, 'minor' occurrences unconnected to one another. This allowed them to maintain a denial of the idea that they live in an unequal society in which they, as men, occupy a privileged position.

However, other participants did recognise the significance of gender inequalities and norms to some extent, both in general and in relation to partner violence. Yet even in these instances, they were often discussed in quite broad, abstract, and theoretical ways. Gender equality frequently appeared to be perceived as an external problem, in the wider world, but not in the lives and experiences of the young men themselves. In the following example, Caleb (Focus group 7) draws links between partner violence and gender inequalities, as well as the role he could play in tackling them, but only considers this in relation to if he was to one day to become a parent:

> *"It's just like, oh are you acting like, you're acting like a woman [pause]. That is just like, it's an immediately derogative thing, and it's something that they have clearly shown leads up to, if we allow it to continue, will lead up to more cases of, domestic abuse in the future, and it's something like that that I've then just looked at myself and been like, actually yes, if, maybe I should then, if I'm ever to have kids in the future, maybe I should be more careful about things that I say to them."*

Discourses of this kind could be interpreted as defensively detaching the participants and their personal lives from the injustices of patriarchy, leaving little onus on them to play a part in counteracting them. This form of disassociation could present a serious obstacle within violence prevention work, because a recognition of how gender inequality affects each of our lives, and denotes men and boys with structural power and privilege, is crucial to understanding the part we can all play in tackling the problem. It is clearly not enough to accomplish this only on a theoretical, abstract level, because men can still perceive themselves to be separate from the problem on this basis. Patriarchal inequalities must therefore be made personal and relatable within prevention work, so that men and boys can understand how they affect their own positions, practices, and experiences, and so that an

ethical responsibility to create a more gender just society can be cultivated rather than dismissed.

6.6 The construction of masculinities within the focus groups

One of the most fascinating aspects of the focus groups was the various ways in which masculinities were collectively constructed and the hegemony of men reproduced in this homosocial peer group setting. In some ways, as with gender inequality, the topic of masculinity itself was often notable by its absence from the discussion. There frequently appeared to be a degree of reluctance among the young men to discuss partner violence in relation to men and masculinities. Indeed, where men were specifically mentioned, it was as likely to be in relation to their experiences as victims. This was despite the fact that I asked a question in each focus group about what role participants thought men could play in preventing partner violence. There often appeared to be little willingness to entertain the idea that men specifically might have a responsibility or role to play in this regard, even if the participants were supportive of society as a whole doing more to tackle partner violence. In fact, some of the participants responded with hostility to the notion that men might have a particular responsibility to take action, as can be seen in this exchange from Focus group 3:

> *Barney: "I think some of them, focus too much on men, um [pause]. The bus one, the tagline, men need to stand up, then we all need to stand up. Well how about we all just stand up to stop this thing? Like, I don't see the add, that that adds any effect, to the advert, I don't think it helps at all. "*
>
> *Emilio: "Yeah, why is it only men..."*

Similarly, the young men often appeared to struggle to draw connections between the construction of masculinity and violence. When these issues arose, the participants sometimes seemed to find it difficult to express themselves clearly or grasp how they might be interlinked. For instance, in discussing the Australian video, Armen (Focus group 2) valued its emphasis on gender inequality, but appeared reluctant to link this directly to men's practices or positions in society, and instead simply suggested that 'everyone' needed to be more aware:

"But that was, that was also interesting, with that, don't throw like a girl. Because obviously, the first bit, where the mother said, it's okay it's only because he likes you, is, was obviously teaching the girl, yes, this is um, this is okay this is fine, and then that one, although it may have been a different kid, it was also coming from the father? And so that is clearly showing that, this kind of, negative attitude, however young it's starting, is coming from both sides, of the relationship, of the family relationship, and so it like, it's a good way of highlighting that, these negative opinions, are coming from both sides of the family, both, everyone needs to, be aware of what they're saying, which is very, very good."

On the one hand, Armen is absolutely right to say that everyone needs to be more aware. However, at the same time, his comments also appeared to diffuse responsibility, so that rather than considering the role that men and masculinities specifically, and gendered power dynamics more broadly play in perpetuating partner violence, it was simply a problem for everyone to deal with. The struggle to explicitly problematise men's location within gender relations may have in part reflected a trepidation to speak openly and critically about masculinity among their male peers. The young men may have also lacked the appropriate language and knowledge to confidently discuss issues surrounding gender norms (given that, for example, none of them had a background in social science). For instance, it was interesting that the young men did more willingly discuss and critique notions of 'lad culture'. This may have been because the term felt more relevant for them, not least because it has been popularised in England in recent years by the media. Or it may have been because this language felt easier for them to use, by externalising the problem and focusing in on a particular cultural manifestation, rather than having to reflect upon men and masculinities more broadly.

However, some of the young men did still bring gender norms into the discussion, and how they might play a role in social harms such as sexism and abuse. There was a particular focus here on the participants' experiences of toxic elements of male peer group cultures in university and sport environments, as articulated in this quote by Ugo (Focus group 4):

"A lot more relatable for us I guess [pause], 'cause of the whole, we've all grown up being told don't, this a girl's thing, and this - us athletes - it's a man's game and all that, and it's [pause], people just using the, even like things saying, oh that's gay to do that, or that's, that's, what a woman [pause], you know, that's for girls, this is for

boys. Even like, to the point of uni though now like, we, play, darts and pool and stuff like that, and there's rules in place that we all stick to, things like if you lose to a girl, which when you think about it it's so terrible, if you lose to a girl you have to do a yard or whatever, or you have to, do some sort of punishment. That's down to pool and darts actually, in college, if you lose to a girl, you have to do, a yard..."

However, these critical reflections on dominant expressions of masculinity were typically made through indirect allusions rather than as clear denouncements of the gendered expectations that they felt they had to conform to as men. For example, in the following quote, Diego (Focus group 2) does question norms around masculinity, yet he appeared unable to provide answers to the questions he raised:

"That fourth advert is, it's really, for all the stupid videos, it is really interesting, that every stupid video, like ninety nine percent are all blokes doing stupid things, why is that? Why do we do that? Why do women not do that as much as we do? And I don't think that's making a generalisation, or being sexist, I have never seen a video, of a woman doing something like that, and whether that's because, well, are women not filming it, or not putting it on YouTube, but it's all still happening, or is it just men doing it..."

Interestingly, the first response to these questions, from Jonas (Focus group 2), provides a good example of 'shifting the focus': *"But domestic abuse does occur from the other side of it, it does occur from women too."*

In addition, when the young men did express scepticism about masculine norms, they were typically discussed in relation to observations about other men's practices; it was less common for the young men to talk about how these norms had affected them too. The focus was also typically placed on relatively 'extreme' forms of macho, chauvinistic behaviour. On the one hand then, the participants did articulate some understanding and critical insights into how the gender norms that they are expected to conform to can be harmful. However, they seemed to find it more difficult to relate these harms to their own lives and practices, or to consider how less obvious or extreme practices or 'cultures' of masculinity could also contribute to gendered inequalities. Indeed, placing attention on more 'extreme' expressions of masculinity could sometimes be interpreted as a way of positioning oneself as being separate from them, whilst leaving one's own practices unexamined. For the most part then,

broader hegemonic norms around men and masculinities, and their relationship with violence against women and gender inequality, were left unchallenged in the focus group discussions.

6.6.1 The collective dynamics of masculinity

The atmosphere within the sessions was, by and large, a supportive one. For the most part, the participants appeared to treat the discussion and the contributions made by their peers with sensitivity and respect. The focus groups were typically relatively relaxed and friendly environments, and on occasions participants made jokes (that were generally not inappropriate) which helped to lighten the mood. However, the young men themselves emphasised the importance of context for such discussions, and implied at times that the focus group setting was a unique environment, in which their behaviour might differ from elsewhere. For example, whilst several of the young men denounced examples of sexist practices that they had encountered, they also remarked that they might find it difficult to voice such criticisms to their peers in their day-to-day lives. This articulates the significant step required for men from being opposed to iterations of sexism and misogyny in theory, to actually starting to speak out about them when they arise in our everyday lives.

In spite of the supportive atmosphere, it was also clear that gendered expectations and pressures still applied both individually and collectively within the focus groups. For instance, at times it appeared that the young men felt hesitant or unsure about how far they could go in expressing themselves about partner violence and issues of gender, perhaps based upon an uncertainty about how their peers would react. This may have been influenced by a fear that it might be seen as emasculating to express too much care for topics related to violence against women, gender inequality, and feminism (which was not mentioned explicitly at all in the focus groups). It was also interesting to observe the ways in which the dialogue of the sessions was shaped collectively by the dynamics of the group, with the young men bouncing ideas off each other and potentially steering one another in particular directions for example. The following dialogue (from Focus group 2) demonstrates one manifestation of this, and also interestingly provides an example of the young men collectively normalising aggressive behaviour as being a standard feature of manhood:

"The thing is, when you're talking about smashing plates, I've not had, an argument like that before, but that's something I could see myself doing, if I got really pissed off."

"Yeah..."

"Really?"

"Just because I'd, you know, I don't, you know, I don't think I'd ever take it out on, my partner, but definitely I think I'd, you know, have a tendency to break things when I do get a bit..."

"Mad, yeah..."

"Get really angry, like, um-"

"As a way of alleviating your stress..."

"Exactly, yeah."

"You can tell how angry he is." [group laughter]

"You know, I wouldn't use it as an intimidation tactic, you know, that wouldn't be my, thought process behind, like you know, I've not, like I say I've not done it, but like, that's something I definitely could see myself possibly doing, because I know that, when I do get really pissed off, like I do just kind of like, you know-"

"Break something, yeah."

"Break things..."

"Or hit something..."

Meanwhile, in the fifth session, one of the participants, Dean, continually expressed particularly strident views which could be interpreted as being strongly influenced by anti-feminist or 'men's rights' discourses. He also often dominated the discussion, significantly shaping its orientation and dynamics, and his peers appeared to be significantly influenced by this in terms of the subjects they focused on, the language they used, and how they often ended up agreeing with his arguments. For example, his repeated claims that too much attention is placed on female victim-survivors of abuse and not enough on men meant that the

rest of the group then had to constantly acknowledge that both women and men could be victims of abuse, whilst discussions about issues which were not based around this dynamic, such as men's role in preventing violence against women, were to some degree shut down or avoided. On another occasion, in response to the EIGE video, he argued against the idea that people should intervene if they witness sexual harassment in public, and as he did so, other members of the group increasingly supported him:

> *Dean: "I don't think you should get involved at all, no, of course not. Because then you're putting yourself in such a vulnerable position. What if he turns around and pulls out a gun or something? Or pulls out a knife? Or says right, get outside [pause], even if it's fists, what if he goes, alright, we'll have a fight, and we go outside and he kicks your head in. It's not worth getting involved."*
>
> *Keith: "Fair enough it's daytime, and it's a crowded bus, but, like if it was at night, a night bus, you're the only three passengers on the bus..."*
>
> *Dean: "Yeah!"*
>
> *Keith: "Like myself I probably wouldn't do anything, where I'm from in London..."*

It is thus important to consider that not only may the participants have sometimes told me what they felt I wanted to hear, but they may have also been telling each other what they thought they would want to hear too. Collective discussions perhaps inevitability limit the possibilities of what research participants feel able to express, and the desire to conform to gender norms is likely to have a significant impact on this. This applies both to the focus group setting and to the young men's broader homosocial peer group environments, which are likely to play a significant mediating role in their interpretations of and responses to prevention work as a result.

One example of this is how at times within the focus groups the young men appeared to struggle to express empathy for the experiences of women. Even whilst taking partner violence seriously as a social issue, they typically discussed it in abstract ways, and rarely talked about the phenomenon specifically from the perspective of victim-survivors, even less so in relation to women specifically. On other occasions, they appeared to find it difficult to fully understand or believe reports and depictions of women's experiences of abuse, where there sometimes appeared to be a knee-jerk response of doubt or suspicion. For instance, a degree of scepticism was sometimes vocalised about the extent to which violence against

women specifically is a problem in the first place, such as when statistics about this violence were brought into the conversation. These figures sometimes appeared to be treated with reservations by some of the participants, as illustrated in this response from Christian (Focus group 1):

> *"In a way I actually think sort of, putting like the statistic on the back [of a White Ribbon badge], only 5% of young women feel safe in Britain, 23% worry about being raped [pause], part of me's going, oh my god, and then also another me sort of, invites sort of scepticism, in a sense. You kind of go, well where's that statistic coming from? You sort of, pluck numbers from [pause], obviously you can't footnote a placard, but it's still sort of, that sort of, well where's that coming from. And I can very well believe it being a real statistic, like, I don't doubt it, but I think it does open that scepticism for anyone to go, well where did you get that figure that from."*

On other occasions, the young men seemed to assert doubts about the nature of experiences of abuse being reported by women, or failed to (attempt to) understand or sympathise with women's practices in the context of that violence. This was a frequent response after watching the EIGE 'White Ribbon' video for example. This video depicts a fictional scenario on a bus, in which a young man sits down and starts sexually harassing the young woman that he is sitting next to. The situation becomes increasingly tense but no one on the bus intervenes, and a young man sitting behind them looks at another man and says "do something", but he looks away. The young man then appears to build up the courage to intervene, and says "she's fine mate, you can leave her alone" to the man harassing the woman. In response, he says "whatever" and gets off the bus, whilst the young man who intervened asks the woman if she is okay. The video ends with the statement "About half of women in the EU have experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15 - up to 100 million women. Men need to stand up. We all need to stand up." Emilio (Focus group 3) was one among several participants who, after watching the video, focused on how the young woman in it responded to the sexual harassment she was experiencing:

> *"If I was, if I was closed on the bus, and someone came up and started touching my face, like, not just me but like, anyone really, I can't imagine anyone just going, oh okay, yes this is happening. I can't imagine anyone doing that, like [pause], the way she reacted didn't seem, didn't seem how, I imagine someone would react. So it, it made it feel, kind of staged, which obviously it is, they're actors, but like, I feel it*

lessened the impact, because she was just sort of like, yeah alright. Whereas I can't really imagine someone doing that, if you're on a crowded bus, and someone starts coming up and touching your face, it's not gonna be, okay, could you stop please? It's gonna be, get the hell off me! I can't imagine, I just can't imagine, a scenario playing out like that, for real..."

Emilio's comments suggested an absence of consideration about the different forms which public sexual harassment might take, and the different ways in which women might respond to it - not least out of fear for example, or in attempting to protect themselves. In part, the views of this kind that were expressed may reflect a lack of awareness about different manifestations of violence and abuse. However, they may also have been shaped by empathy itself not being seen as masculine, especially in relation to women's experiences. The performance of not being empathetic in the presence of their male peers may have sometimes therefore been as significant for the young men as whether or not they actually felt that way.

6.6.2 Responses to representations of masculinity within prevention campaigns

There were also revealing responses among the young men towards some of the ways in which masculinity was constructed within the prevention campaigns. For example, some of the participants took issue with attempts to appeal to men based upon claims that 'real men' don't use violence against women, echoing criticisms that have been made in the academic literature (for example by Salter, 2016). This sometimes appeared to be based upon a defensive perception that all men were being critiqued through the masculine idea of not being 'real men', because of the violence enacted by some. Meanwhile, others appeared resistant to attempts by campaigns to utilise, and thus potentially reinforce, normative notions of masculinity in order to stigmatise men's use of violence, based on some level of understanding that those norms themselves might be damaging. Tyler (Focus group 5) surmised this problem by stating:

"One tries to, basically destroy this idea of like, gender, social, sort of, social gendered constructs, whereas this one is trying to, with the best intentions, it reinforces those, distinctions, and probably, does more harm than good in that sense..."

Some of the young men appeared to feel aggrieved when they perceived that campaigns were in some way reproducing the same kinds of codes of gender that are embedded in the problem of partner violence itself. For example, in one focus group a poster from Women's Aid's 'Real Man' campaign was shown. On the one hand, this campaign plays with notions of masculinity (the poster that was shown featured actor Ricky Whittle wearing a t-shirt with 'I'm a real man.' printed on it, whilst carrying a stereotypically feminine handbag with a small dog inside it, against a pink background), however on the other it still rests on the claim that 'real men' are opposed to partner violence. Upon seeing this, Christian (Focus group 1) commented as follows:

> *"I don't actually like that, that much, particularly, it doesn't do much for me. Every time I think, I don't know, it sounds a bit sort of, postmodern, but I think sort of, to confine people to sort of, it's sort of going, this is what we're like, it's just kind of, putting, feminine stereotypes on there, and just putting in a man in it, and going [pause], I don't know, I don't really like the idea of saying, I'm a real man, like, I wouldn't, wear that t-shirt, around, just because, a) probably a lot of people wouldn't ask me what it meant, but they'd sort of go, well he's a bit obnoxious [pause]. And like, I don't think, you know, I wouldn't wear that, but obviously I agree with, I would wear this [points to White Ribbon badge], I wouldn't wear something that, ostentatious, because I just, I just don't think it's a good idea, because [pause], you're not any less of a man for not wearing the shirt, and you don't agree with it any less because you're wearing the shirt, so I'm actually not a huge fan of that."*

Comments such as these within the focus groups suggested that a more effective approach may be one which challenges the idea that men should conform to some version of masculinity altogether, rather than attempting to utilise those expectations in order to reach out to men, which in this case at least, appeared to cause confusion and frustration among some of the participants. This point was also made in relation to the EVAW 'We Are Man' video, where some participants felt that it was implying that all young men enjoy the kinds of pranks and stunts depicted in the first part of the video, and that the remainder of the clip would appeal to them as a result. These responses could be interpreted as reflecting a degree of resistance to assumptions and stereotypes being made about young men based on social expectations of masculinity. Prevention work could therefore draw on these kinds of perceptions of unfairness about stereotypes as a way to help young men to further question and deconstruct gender norms and their consequences. On the other hand, some of the

participants did not have a problem with appealing to men on this basis, and felt that it would be an effective way of reaching out to large numbers of people, as argued by Eric (Focus group 4):

> *"I don't think it's a bad way of trying to do it, because, I think, I'd still say that, most men, don't think it's a bad thing-, would still, identify with trying to be manly in that sense, so, I don't think by, necessarily, trying to, you know, break down the, social constructs of gender, is a good way of going about ending domestic violence. I think that's probably a way of appealing to more people..."*

These comments demonstrate the importance of prevention campaigns clearly deciding upon what they seek to achieve and how they aim to do so from the outset, for instance by giving careful consideration to whether or not they want to potentially feed into men 'trying to be manly' in attempting to tackle partner violence.

The EIGE 'White Ribbon' video also provoked some interesting responses from the young men, and in several sessions, it led to the participants discussing whether or not they felt that they would intervene in such a situation. There was sometimes an assumption made in these conversations that 'bystander intervention' of this kind requires a degree of physical stature and strength, and by extension, a certain standard of hegemonic masculinity to be effective, as can be seen in this quote by Barney (Focus group 3):

> *"If I see something like that, then I'm, less afraid that the average person would be, oh what if he attacks me? I'm much less afraid. [laughter] I'm well hard me. [laughter] Much less afraid of that, than I would expect Joe Bloggs to be, like [pause], thinking about, some of my friends, would I want them to step up? Well actually, yeah no they should step up, but if the guy had, if someone attacks them, they're not in the best position to defend themselves, and they're gonna have to rely on other people around them as well, or just, you know, be quite lucky, or something like that. And then, yeah, I feel like, just, I'd be more likely to step in, and less afraid, of the physical repercussions against me [pause], than I expect is the average. So, yeah, I suppose showing that there were no physical repercussions, might help the average person?"*

The implication from these comments appeared to be that it is because of their masculinised physical strength, as young men involved in sport, more so than any other reason that the

participants should intervene in such circumstances. The actions that men can take to contribute to the prevention of men's violence against women extend far beyond physical intervention - which in many cases may also not be the most appropriate response. However, as Barney's interpretation of the EIGE video demonstrates - in spite of it attempting to suggest that any man can intervene in such a scenario - notions of bystander intervention utilised by some prevention campaigns could inadvertently encourage the perception that men have an obligation to intervene primarily because of their assumed physical size and strength, rather than out of a commitment to gender justice for instance. Some of the young men, such as James (Focus group 8), were put off from the campaign based on this interpretation of it:

> *"I'd also like to think that, as a young, athletic male [group laughter], there isn't a, there isn't in that context an assumption that I'm the one that should be stepping in, that, that everyone else, who is less physically able, who may not be male, has not got the same prerogative, or the same, obligation to step in, as someone like, someone like in our shape and size [pause], in a social setting like a bus, um, I just don't, I don't see how, it is only the responsibility of young men to step up, and I think that, that unfortunately was, maybe an inadvertent message."*

James's comments could in part be seen as attempting to evade a sense of responsibility for men to take action against violence towards women. However, he also articulates the danger that prevention campaigns which emphasise the importance of 'intervening', or the idea that men need to 'stand up' as the EIGE video does, might sometimes feed into normative perceptions of masculinity, and even ideas of benevolent sexism, by potentially implying that men need to 'rescue' women in some way. Indeed, in this kind of representation of bystander intervention, the man intervening could be interpreted as taking on a dominant gendered position, and asserting the hegemonic form of masculinity which in turn helps to legitimise the continued subordination of women by men in wider society.

6.7 Expressions of resistance to men's violence against women

In drawing attention to the recurring themes of complicity and defensiveness within the focus groups, my intention is not to dismiss or ignore the content of what the young men said, but to try to understand *why* they said what they did, what that means, and how such

conversations can be taken forward with men and boys in the future. In this respect, it is important to note that there were also a number of moments in which the young men articulated and embodied what could be understood as resistance to men's violence against women within the focus groups. This typically involved making points about how the social legitimisation of partner violence could be tackled, why they felt this was important, and what they could do about it. It reflected not only an understanding or awareness of the problem, or a simple expression of moral opposition to it, but actively challenging the reproduction of violence against women - including among their peers in the focus groups. For example, in the fifth session, which was regularly dominated by the anti-feminist assertions of Dean, whilst most of the group generally went along with his arguments or openly expressed agreement with them, one member of the team, David, repeatedly and openly challenged them. This led to a number of debates and disagreements between these two participants, which sometimes became quite heated. However, David continuously questioned the problematic claims made by Dean, even if his attempts to express counter-arguments sometimes meant going against the group as a whole, as can be seen in the following exchange (Focus group 5):

> *Dean: "I think a big one as well is like, there's a lot of focus on what women wear, like on, like when they go out clubbing and stuff. And I, am all for women like, wearing what they want and doing what they want, but I think, it's not a case of stopping it from happening, but I think like, it begs a question of why would you wear something so provocative, if you're interested, if you're not like, looking for some sort of like, I don't know, sexual kind of like, verification from men or something? [group agreement]"*
>
> *David: "But I think raping someone isn't an example of sexual verification. I think, I mean this isn't, regardless of anything, um, women should be able to wear what they want, I don't think it, I don't think it should be a discussion in domestic violence or anything."*

David's interventions demonstrated the bravery and resilience that can be necessary for young people when speaking out and challenging one's peers about the legitimisation of men's violence against women. Meanwhile, in a discussion about challenging sexist behaviours after watching the EIGE video, Barney (Focus group 3) discussed a recent

experience in which he had attempted to question sexual harassment being enacted by his colleagues:

> *"Some people that I, worked with over the summer, just cash in hand work in dirt, to get some money for rent, yay [pause]. Um, they, they'd like, they'd be driving along in the van, and they'd scream something out of the window at a woman, and I'd say what, what's the point of that, what have you, why have you, what have you achieved? Why have you done it? And then, they'd say oh well it's not a big deal is it? And that, you know I spoke to them about it and said look, like, well it can be, you've not, why have you done it, you've not achieved anything. Like there's no motivation for you really to do it. And they said oh, what's the big deal. So I think an ad like that, where it highlights actually, this is the impact of what you're doing, cause that might be helpful. But especially for those kind of people that I, I had to work with, was um [pause], I don't know if they didn't understand, didn't consider, or if they just, plain old didn't care, about what the impact of their actions were. Well they hadn't, they clearly hadn't thought about, what it'd be like to be on the receiving end."*

Comments such as those made by Barney illustrate the complexities and contradictions within the focus group discussions. In the same session, a wide range of different stances would often be taken, sometimes by the same individuals. On occasion, the same young men who appeared to reinforce legitimisations of violence against women in some respects went on to challenge them in other ways. This demonstrates the kind of ideological confusion which may be experienced by many young men with regards to gender inequality in contemporary English society. For example, on the one hand, they are likely to experience some degree of socialisation to protect the patriarchal power relations which continue to privilege them, and on the other, through the impact of feminism may feel some sense of solidarity with women based on a degree of awareness of the injustices that they experience within patriarchy. Whilst it is important not to be naively optimistic about the attitudes of young men in England today, this may at least articulate the potential that men and boys have to change, and to embrace more egalitarian ways of thinking and being.

One key point which was made by some of the focus group participants referred to the potential that violence prevention campaigns have to galvanise and open up new insights and opportunities for young men to take action. For example, when asked about whether they felt

that prevention work should challenge people after watching the campaign videos, Bruce (Focus group 1) expressed a realisation he had made:

> *"I think, the whole thing we were talking about earlier about like, the objectification of women is entirely normalised, you're not gonna change that unless you, sit someone down and go, well look, how, how, this is what you think, is it actually right? Because as a society probably, if it's normalised, you have to challenge it to change it, I suppose."*

If prevention work can offer men and boys alternative ways of looking at the world, then it could in turn help to illuminate a different path for them to take, which can lead towards active resistance to men's violence against women. In this respect, participants discussed how some of the prevention campaigns helped to show what is possible; that they don't have to simply go along with sexist practices for example, and that these can be challenged. This was discussed both in a practical sense, through their illustration of some of the ways in which men can actually go about challenging such behaviours, and in a more philosophical sense, in showing a different and desirable way that men can be.

Sometimes, the participants viewed these alternative paths with pessimism, stating that even though they knew that there were behaviours that they should dispute within their peer groups, they were unlikely to take the step to do so, because no one wants to be 'that guy'. To rationalise this, they pointed to a number of different ways in which taking a stand against acts of sexism and misogyny amongst their male peers would be highly difficult, or would be unlikely to have a significant impact. For example, the following exchange took place in one focus group:

> *Ugo: "That's when you know it wouldn't make a difference, if I stood there and turned to a group of, lads in the bar and said, nah I'm not gonna do it 'cause it's wrong, they're not all gonna go, yeah god you're right, we'll never do it again, they're all just gonna go-"*
>
> *Robin: "We never saw it that way, yeah."*
>
> *Ugo: "Exactly, and they know I'm not gonna do it, for that reason."*

Whilst it may well be true that speaking out in such circumstances would be difficult, this pessimism seemed to enable the young men to permit their continued inaction - not least by

ignoring the fact that many of their peers within the focus group appeared to actually agree that such behaviour was wrong, and that the potential might exist for collective action and support on this basis.

On other occasions, the young men were more optimistic about the possibilities and consequences of taking action, and the importance of doing so, as was exemplified in the moments in the focus groups when they did question one another about comments which they disagreed with, or felt were problematic. In the second session, there was a lengthy discussion about how some participants felt women's use of violence towards men is often not taken as seriously. Eventually however, another member of the group, Henry, interjected with a counterpoint to this conversation, which was effective in changing its direction and dynamic:

> *"But I mean, I mean this is very, this is very egotistical though, I mean there are also many many ways that women are, significantly disadvantaged, to us, here, as white males..."*

Meanwhile, as was discussed in the previous section, the young men often appeared reluctant to express - or be seen to express - empathy for women's experiences of men's violence. This made it all the more noteworthy when participants did on occasion openly articulate consideration and understanding in this respect, such as in this comment by William (Focus group 3) about why it would be difficult for victims to leave an abusive relationship:

> *"Well, you should be able to assure somebody that if they leave, their relationship, an abusive relationship, that they'll be protected, straight from, straight from the start, like they won't need to go back and that. 'Cause I feel like, most of the time, oh well, I can't really, I don't have any sort of data or anything, but I imagine that, domestic abuse isn't really so sporadic as, like [pause], it's just a build up of sort of things, like first of all you say, I don't want you speaking to that person, and then soon it leads into other things, rather than hitting them straight away, and I feel like, once one person, starts allowing these things, because, unless, they get used to it, and it builds up, and then they feel like they can't leave, and in the end, if they're scared to leave because they're scared of what, the other person might do, then they won't really want to call the police, or they won't want to walk out, so, I feel like the first step is like, ensuring safety sort of thing?"*

In this regard, given the extent to which codes of masculinity can repress men's capacity to empathise with the positions of women, it could be argued that expressing empathy with women's experiences could itself be interpreted as a small act of resistance. This is especially true when this empathy is explicitly and openly vocalised among other men - and applied to the impact of men's violence and patriarchal inequalities upon women. For instance, in a discussion about the EIGE video in Focus group 7, in which Michael struggled to understand the response of the woman experiencing sexual harassment, Grant provided an alternative perspective which enabled a more empathetic direction for the conversation:

> *Michael: "I felt like, she wasn't, herself particularly resistant to anything, I mean I know she was saying, don't, stop, but at the same time, like, I dunno I felt like she was, like you say a little bit, kind of, timid, and [pause]. But I suppose you would be in that scenario, 'cause you'd be nervous and-"*
>
> *Grant: "Yeah, I think maybe part of that, yeah, I think like part of that is, so say at the end like, one in how many woman are, like, suffer assault, I think part of the, part of what the advert could have done a bit more, is highlight how common it is for a girl to go through that, the fact that she was timid was because, she's had to go through it so often. Whereas it didn't really emphasise that enough, um, yeah. So I agree with that, yeah, that the advert could've done more to, explain why the girl was reacting in the way that she did, because at the end of the day she was reacting in a way which kept her safe, because no one else was helping her."*

It is important not to excessively reward men for relatively basic acts of respectfulness and compassion such as adopting a more empathetic perspective, because this could actually reinforce low standards of expectation. However, overt expressions of empathy can still be seen as an important defiance of the hegemonic codes of masculinity which suppress men's capacity to change. Indeed, building empathy for women's experiences within a gender unequal society can in turn encourage men to start questioning those injustices further, and motivate a sense of responsibility to do something about them. For example, the following observations by Emilio (Focus group 3) about women's experiences of violence lead him to reflect on his own privileges:

> *"Cause, like I know many girls, like, who're actually scared of walking alone at night sometimes, you know, 'cause [pause]. And so then it's so difficult for, for me at least to relate you know? 'Cause I, I never think oh, you know, that will be a problem for*

me, walking, going home, on my own you know? It's something that we, it's also like if you talk to friends, it's like they always kind of go home together, and it's like, oh are you okay going home alone and those kind of things. Like, I never have to worry about this, you know [pause]. I've got like, some areas you might not go into because, they're dodgy or whatever you know, but just, walking home?"

It is interesting that Emilio made these comments, given that he is also quoted earlier making an unsympathetic assessment of a woman's response to public sexual harassment. This again demonstrates the contradictory views that the young men sometimes expressed, as they tried to make sense of the different issues surrounding partner abuse and violence against women. Indeed, Emilio himself appeared to recognise that the privileges that men have, in being able to walk more freely in public spaces for example, may in turn act as barriers to them relating to and empathising with how women's experiences of the same context may be different.

At the same time, even when the young men did talk about ways in which sexism, misogyny, and the legitimisation of violence against women could and should be resisted, this was often in relatively abstract terms. Of course, there was no way of knowing about the extent to which the participants actually would put such resistance into practice in their day-to-day lives. However, it nonetheless seems significant that many of the young men did talk about why they felt that challenging sexism, harassment, and abuse was important - and sometimes enacted this within the sessions. It shows that young men do have the capacity to take on board and embrace such ideas, and the potential to put them into practice and work towards creating change in themselves and their peers. This potential also broadens our ability to hold men to account for their silence and inaction, because whilst taking a stand undoubtedly can be difficult, the bar is raised because we know that some of their peers are already doing so. In other words, it is important to recognise that men and boys do have agency within the structures of patriarchy with which they can help to resist and change those structures - and some are already doing this.

6.8 Summary

The focus groups conducted with men's university sports teams as part of this research project yielded a number of important findings. First of all, there was a relatively high level of awareness about the issue of partner violence among the young men. This led to a range of

insightful observations from them about some of the ways in which prevention campaigns could be developed in impactful ways. Within several of the focus groups, there was a particular emphasis on the importance of not trivialising partner violence or patronising young people in attempting to reach out to them. For example, several of the participants were critical of what they perceived to be overly simplistic messages used by some campaigns, such as simply instructing young people that certain behaviours are wrong. I would contend that one reason why simplistic messages of this kind are limited is that they do little to address the broader complicity of men in the perpetuation of violence against women, which was alluded to by several participants.

This complicity was also exhibited in different ways within the focus groups, for example through defensive responses from participants to some aspects of the discussion around partner violence. This defensiveness appeared to be based around the protection of patriarchal norms and privileges, and included: shifting the focus away from men's violence and onto men as victims; explaining partner violence as a biological inevitability based upon naturalised gender differences; and disassociating oneself from the problem. Combined with the individual and collective reproduction of hegemonic codes of masculinity within the focus groups, such responses appeared to provide barriers to the young men recognising how partner violence related to their own lives, and how they might play a role in its prevention. I would argue that 'personalising' violence against women in this way is a key step in encouraging men to take action against it. Yet several of the participants did still talk about ways in which they felt both they and wider society should help counter the legitimisation of violence and abuse - and sometimes enacted this resistance within the sessions, for example by challenging comments made by their peers. The focus groups therefore suggested that the understandings and perceptions the young men held about partner violence were often quite conflicted and contradictory. As a result, I propose that they illustrate the urgent need for much deeper levels of education and engagement with young people, and especially young men, about issues of gender norms and inequalities, as well as violence and abuse. Indeed, this was emphasised a number of times by the young men themselves, who often appeared grateful to have the opportunity to sit down and talk about these matters, in many cases for the first time.

Chapter 7: Discussion and conclusion - Developing future efforts to engage men and boys

7.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters have laid out the key themes that were found within the expert-informant interviews and focus groups conducted for this research project. This chapter will now bring together these findings and consider what they mean more broadly for the field, in relation to the final research question: how can the practice, theory, and research of engaging men and boys in the prevention of men's violence against women be developed in the future in England? In order to answer this question, this chapter represents a synthesis of the data and the findings from both parts of the study, and a broader interpretation of the implications of my analysis of both the expert-informant interviews and focus groups for the advancement of efforts to engage men.

The chapter will therefore discuss what we can learn from the research about how efforts to engage men and boys in England can be scaled up, and what innovations might be necessary in practice and policy to facilitate this. It will assess the implications of the study for the development of work with men itself, both in terms how those involved in this work can go about addressing some of its contradictions, and how existing practice can be built upon and advanced to bolster the impacts it has in mobilising men and boys to create change. The chapter will then contemplate what the research findings mean for our theoretical understandings of men and masculinities in contemporary English society in relation to men's violence against women and its prevention. Finally, it will offer some reflections from the researcher's standpoint on what can be learnt from the study for future critical research on men, masculinities, and violence against women. My key arguments and recommendations based upon the research, which this chapter will elucidate further, are as follows:

- Whilst the professionalisation of work with men and boys brings with it important benefits, pro-feminists must also not lose focus on building a mass movement of men speaking out against men's violence towards women. This must be conducted in a sensitive way, in support of the broader feminist anti-violence movement, and in ways which avoid simply being co-opted into the system.

- Policy and practice in England still have much to do to fully recognise the gendered nature of different forms of men's violence against women. This must include placing a critical spotlight on men and masculinities, and the role they play in creating and perpetuating the problem - without re-centring men in our discourses in the process.
- Violence prevention work with men and boys should place more of a focus on building a critical consciousness of *complicity*. This could simultaneously serve to challenge men and boys about how we each play a part in perpetuating the problem, whilst highlighting a positive vision of how we can all contribute towards preventing it.
- Organisations and advocates within the engaging men field should reflect more openly and explicitly upon the nature and type of feminist theory and strategy that they are adopting in their work, not least so that they can be more transparent in their accountability to feminism. This should include careful reflection and development of both the theory and strategy of work with men, to build effective and coherent practice. Similarly, it is also important to ensure that critical studies on men and masculinities retains a close relationship with (different forms of) feminist scholarship.
- The concept of 'lad culture' is limited in terms of its potential to help us to understand or challenge men's violence against women on university campuses. It can enable men to suggest that the problem lies elsewhere, within a specific subculture, rather than helping us to think critically about men, masculinities and gender relations on campus more broadly.
- Violence prevention campaigns must reflect carefully on how they approach, construct, and challenge notions of masculinity, in order to avoid reproducing the same gender norms that are at the roots of men's violence against women. For instance, at the heart of violence against women and its social legitimisation is the deep-rooted assumption that men are superior to women and are thus entitled to dominate over them - which notions such as that of 'saving' women or being a 'real man' for example may inadvertently reinforce.
- Whilst men and boys may be experiencing increased cognitive dissonance in relation to gender inequality and their gendered positions in society (not least thanks to the impacts of feminist thinking and activism in English society in challenging and changing longstanding patriarchal norms), the persistent pervasiveness of men's

violence against women as well as other structures of patriarchy illustrate that scholarship on men and masculinities must not lose its critical lens.

- The project has highlighted the value of pro-feminist standpoint epistemology when carrying out research on men and masculinities. There is much to be done to develop this approach further, including taking greater account of the feminist theory of intersectionality; deeper consideration of how men in academia can enact pro-feminist principles and accountability within our own practice; and how pro-feminist action research approaches can be applied when studying men's violence.
- The research has demonstrated that there is an urgent need to engage with many more men and boys in more depth about men's violence against women, and the gender norms and inequalities at its roots. Pro-feminist, critical research on men and masculinities can make an important contribution to informing, developing, and conducting such efforts.

7.2 What next for practice?

The findings from this study suggest that we are facing a crucial moment for efforts to engage men and boys in the prevention of men's violence against women. There is perhaps more attention and acceptance than ever before in England towards the idea that both formal and informal work should be carried out with men and boys to help tackle violence and abuse. This has been influenced in part by the increased awareness and renewed focus placed on men's violence against women in the wake of the '#MeToo' movement, together with the cumulative impact of decades of feminist activism, which has long been calling on men to speak out in solidarity with women. Flood (2015) has therefore rightly suggested that it should be seen as a significant feminist achievement that work which emphasises the responsibility of men in preventing what is overwhelmingly men's violence is becoming increasingly sought after. However, how can this work grow further from this point, so that many more men and boys can be engaged with, in impactful and transformative ways? This chapter will now explore some of the key lessons from the project in relation to this question.

7.2.1 Sensitively building a pro-feminist anti-violence movement of men

To begin with, whilst recognising the progress that has been made, it is important not to exaggerate the development of the field in England. While there are a growing number of increasingly professionalised initiatives around engaging men and boys, they remain, in the words of expert-informant interviewee Andrew, *'chickenfeed'* compared to the scale of the problem. Indeed, efforts to prevent men's violence against women generally continue to be significantly under-prioritised and under-resourced in the English context. The expert-informant interviews therefore appeared to indicate that a key focus for pro-feminist men has to be on campaigning for much more ambitious commitments across society towards ending men's violence against women, of which work with men and boys would form one part. This highlights the importance of the momentum built by the '#MeToo' movement being taken advantage of to help create lasting social change, in terms of profound shifts in governmental, institutional, and societal recognitions of the pervasiveness of men's violence against women and its role in maintaining the systemic oppression of women.

There was thus a sense across the expert-informant interviews that it is vital for those involved in engaging men to prevent violence against women not to lose sight of the roots of that work in social movement-building and activism. Whilst the professionalisation of men's anti-violence work could in some ways be seen as a beneficial development, I would argue that this must be combined with broader efforts to create and support feminist political and social change if it is to achieve the kind of far-reaching societal impacts that are needed (Messner et al., 2015). Indeed, one of the central goals of this work could be seen as recruiting men and boys to a pro-feminist movement, which supports and acts in solidarity with feminist efforts to end men's violence against women. Otherwise, there is a risk that work with men could be co-opted to provide tokenistic or superficial interventions for institutions and organisations which enable them to claim that 'something is being done', without having to implement more substantive changes to their own patriarchal structures, and without serious challenges being placed on men's practices.

Similarly, it was raised in the interviews that there is a risk that arguments for engaging men and boys could be used as part of attempts to depoliticise feminist struggles to end violence against women, and absorbed into 'gender-neutral' framings. Calls to engage men and boys in violence prevention could be assimilated into wider demands for men to be engaged 'equally' in all settings, and thus contribute to the delegitimisation of specialist women's

services and a specific focus on violence against women and girls. When making the case for engaging men then, it is vital to resist the potential for co-option in these ways, and to articulate a rationale based upon a gendered approach to preventing men's violence against women embedded within a feminist framework. This is one reason why it is so important to conceptualise work with men as being situated within a broader feminist and pro-feminist movement that seeks to end men's violence against women, through which close supportive and collaborative links with feminist activists and organisations are maintained.

It is also important to remember when advocating for engaging men and boys that the political contradictions within this work may receive little critical attention or recognition within 'mainstream' settings, such as among policymakers. There is a risk that in the desire to build this work, and as its momentum grows, feminist concerns and critiques could be subsumed and deprioritised. This makes it all the more crucial that addressing the contradictions within work with men is placed at the forefront of its priorities. Rather than seeing these tensions as issues which can simply be resolved in one direction or another, attempting to dialectically find pro-feminist balances between the different dilemmas which engaging men inherently poses must remain an ongoing, core task. For example, instead of adopting either a rose-tinted or overly pessimistic view of men's capacity to change, work with men should seek to simultaneously embrace and encourage their humanity, whilst honestly confronting the inhumane practices enacted by men towards others within patriarchy. Such an approach should enable the field to develop in ways which can effectively cultivate meaningful individual, collective, and structural change, and make the case to policymakers without diminishing its pro-feminist ethos in the process.

As the expert-informant interviews highlighted, these issues are particularly relevant to questions of funding. No matter how urgent it is to engage men and boys, the principle not to take away resources which could otherwise go to women's organisations must be preserved. This is not least because, if it is growing at the expense of the women's movement, then work with men will lose its core purpose, to support feminist change. The autonomous, specialist women's sector is the bedrock of the movement to end men's violence against women, and if it is diminished, so are prevention efforts. The messages disseminated by prevention campaigns are undermined if victim-survivors do not receive justice, support, and solidarity from wider society. I would therefore contend that a crucial area of activity for pro-feminist men has to be campaigning for more resources for all facets of tackling men's violence

against women, including both the provision of support services, and the development of prevention work.

7.2.2 Reaffirming the centrality of gender to violence and abuse

This research has demonstrated that a crucial requirement for the growth of work with men and boys in England is for policy and practice to meaningfully recognise the gendered nature of violence against women, and devise strategies to tackle it on this basis. This has to be connected to a wider programme of tackling gender inequality across society - together with a critical scrutiny of how gender norms and inequalities are also embedded within, and reproduced by, policy and practice. It also means addressing not only how interpersonal, intimate forms of violence such as partner abuse and rape are predominantly experienced by women, but that they are predominantly perpetrated by men. Indeed, it is important to acknowledge that the vast majority of crimes more generally in society, both violent and non-violent, are being perpetrated by men. We have little hope of preventing violence and abuse if we are unable to confront who is responsible for it and why that is the case.

I would therefore argue that a vital step for policy and practice would be placing a critical spotlight on men and masculinities, and considering the gendered roots of a range of different policy problems, including violence and abuse (Hearn and McKie, 2008). This is also an important task for mainstream criminological research, which too often fails to critically analyse the role of men and masculinities in the crimes that it studies. This means that we have to consider the ways in which we continue to construct men as the default whilst leaving their practices invisible and unscrutinised within different discourses around men's violence against women, as well as many other areas of public policy. Otherwise, the onus will continue to be placed on women for stopping men's violence, and for dealing with the consequences of the myriad other social problems created principally by men and masculinities. The embrace of work with men, and violence prevention work more broadly at the policy level, would thus represent an important acknowledgment that the responsibility for violence against women lies with men and with society as a whole - and that these phenomena are not inevitable.

At the same time as shifting our critical focus onto men's practices, it is important to avoid, in the words of Hearn (2012), re-centring men in the process. This shift must therefore be

built upon listening to and elevating women's voices and understanding their experiences. Placing the critical spotlight on men and making men's gendered positions explicit should be based on the recognition that dominant androcentric discourses leave men's practices concealed precisely because they are treated as the standard in the first place (Hearn and Pringle, 2006; Hearn and McKie, 2010). Yet the use of men's experiences of abuse to attempt to delegitimise feminist explanations of violence against women demonstrates how explicitly gendering men can also risk re-centring them in the discourse, and marginalising women's experiences once more. In the process of advocating engagement with men and boys then, this advocacy must not become an end in itself, where our focus becomes solely placed on men's experiences within patriarchy for example, or on the idea that men are the main victims of masculinity (McCarry, 2007).

With these issues in mind, as it gradually enters the political mainstream there is a need for further research into the extent to which the engaging men field is succeeding in living up to its pro-feminist principles, and where it is failing to do so. Such an analysis could help us to develop a deeper understanding of how the contradictions within work with men can be meaningfully addressed in the process of undertaking this work, and where equilibriums based upon achieving feminist transformations can be found.

7.2.3 Developing a critical consciousness of complicity among men

The research findings suggest that a key focus for work to prevent men's violence against women must be in building what Freire (1970) describes as 'critical consciousness' among men and boys, about their situatedness within patriarchy (Watt, 2008). This means developing an understanding of the ways in which we as men are implicated in the perpetuation of violence against women, together with the other structures of patriarchy which privilege us (Walby, 1990). However, this is unlikely to be achieved through simply telling men and boys that they need to change. Instead, prevention work should aim to engage in a dialogue, which helps men and boys to develop the skills to look more critically at their own behaviour and how it is located within a wider, gendered social context. Pro-feminist personal change is an ongoing, lifelong process for men, including for experienced activists. Even in-depth prevention programmes cannot therefore expect to produce comprehensively anti-sexist men and boys on their own. This is why it is so important to build the critical skills which men and boys need to be able to look at their lives and the world around them from a

feminist-informed perspective, unencumbered from the expectations of masculinity - and to be able to continue doing so long after their participation in a prevention programme has come to an end.

The research findings suggest that complicity provides an important conceptual lens through which to raise men's critical consciousness (Watt, 2008), and is key to understanding men's role in both perpetuating, and preventing, violence against women. Approaches to engaging men which focus excessively on reassuring them, and avoiding potential feelings of discomfort, may in turn fail to illustrate how men are intertwined with the problem, and thus risk encouraging them to disassociate themselves from it. For this reason, I would agree with Pease's (2015a) argument that focusing on men's complicity could actually provide a more impactful way of reaching out to men, and motivating them to become agents of change. By illuminating how we are all implicated in the problem of men's violence against women, an emphasis on the role of complicity has the potential to help develop a sense of ethical responsibility in men and a personal attachment to tackling the issue, which can enable them to become more invested in taking action.

At the same time, it should be recognised that complicity with patriarchy is not an easy topic to discuss with men. It can invoke feelings of shame, guilt, and embarrassment for example, as awareness grows about our own role in the problem, and how we are structurally advantaged by it. There is a risk that this approach could antagonise some of the defensive responses which it seeks to overcome. Focusing on complicity could be perceived to carry a negative or condemnatory tone towards men; and even if such a tone may be warranted at times, it could push some men away. However, it is possible to frame this issue in a positive way, which can offer men a sense of hope and optimism, and crucially, opportunities for action and change. Developing an awareness of complicity can in turn lead to a positive vision of the role that *all* men can play, and of the social action that is needed from each of us, in every societal sphere, in order to end men's violence against women. Prevention work can thus make the case that we all have the potential and the agency to create change, and to help solve this problem in our own everyday lives. I would therefore argue that such an approach could genuinely challenge men, in a personalised way which they can relate to, without alienating them in the process. In this way, it could offer a degree of equilibrium within one of the major contradictions of engaging men. This could include encouraging critical reflection on the previous behaviours and currently-held assumptions of oneself and one's peers, and a nurturing of transformations in men's view of the world and future

practices within it, to help foster change in their own lives and in the practices of other men and boys.

Addressing complicity could also help men and boys to make sense of their own positionality and experiences in relation to gender and violence. For example, an approach which reassures men that there is nothing necessarily problematic about masculinity itself, only certain 'toxic' forms of it, may actually contribute to a sense of confusion about how they can contribute to creating change. Men and boys may sometimes receive mixed messages from prevention campaigns in this respect, when on the one hand they are presented as being separate from the problem, as 'bystanders' for example, and on the other, are still being encouraged to do something about it. Being open with men about the complicity which we all share may therefore help them to understand with more clarity what the problem is, and how it can be tackled. Such an approach means being honest about the realities of violence and abuse within patriarchy, and placing trust in men and boys and their capacity to change. By contrast, it could be argued that some of the anxieties around alienating men within violence prevention work are potentially somewhat patronising. The implication is that men may to some degree be incapable of understanding and recognising issues of structural inequality, systemic violence, and collective complicity. Patently, the existence of male agents of change such as those interviewed as part of this study demonstrates that this is not the case, and setting a low bar for men in this way risks feeding into the essentialist idea that pro-feminist men are in some way separate from others, or that some men are inevitably sexist or violent. Of course, many men do not currently possess sufficient understanding and recognition of these issues, but I would argue that this is largely because they have not had the opportunities to develop a critical consciousness about them, or have chosen not to do so, rather than because they cannot do so.

In the process of communicating messages about complicity, it would also be important to make clear that the purpose of prevention work is not primarily to reproach individual men for their behaviour. The key point is that *all* men are complicit in men's violence against women to varying degrees. Rather than constructing a separation between prevention practitioners and participants in this regard, it is important for those who are delivering prevention work to be as honest as possible about their own complicities, too. Such an approach could help to break down barriers between practitioners and the men and boys who are taking part, in demonstrating shared positionalities and experiences, which could in turn help to diminish defensive responses in participants. This demonstrates the importance of

men involved in work to end violence against women making a concerted, ongoing effort to resist disassociation in their own practice, as part of their broader critical self-reflection, in order to help build bridges with men and boys and model the ownership of one's complicity. This has the potential to cultivate a shared feeling of solidarity, and a sense of collective responsibility among men and boys towards building gender justice, which is crucial for the development of a movement of men against violence towards women.

I also do not seek to suggest that it is only men who are complicit in men's violence against women. Women can also enact forms of complicity; from victim-blaming to reaffirming the gender norms which underpin violence. However, women's complicity is qualitatively and quantitatively different. Surveys consistently suggest that men are more likely than women to hold views which legitimise different forms of violence against women (Flood and Pease, 2009). Generally, women are likely to have higher levels of awareness and understanding of interpersonal violence - not least because they or their peers may have some form of personal experience of it. Even if they have not directly been a victim of men's violence, harassment, and abuse, the threat that it *could* be perpetrated against them has a substantial impact on women's experience of the world. For instance, Kelly (2011) and Vera-Gray (2016) have shown how women are forced to adjust their day-to-day practices on this basis through 'safety work', with their liberty and space for action significantly constrained in the process. Furthermore, women are also much more likely to be involved in efforts to tackle violence and abuse, whether that is through organised work and activism, or informal feminist practices in their everyday lives (Wright, 2009).

Meanwhile, men's complicity is particularly central to the perpetuation of violence against women, given the role that men collectively play in shaping the codes and expectations of masculinity that underpin that violence, for example within their homosocial peer groups. In this respect, violence against women itself can often be seen as rooted within relations between men, in which women are used as a currency through which men attempt to accomplish masculine bonding, status, and power amongst one another (Hearn and Whitehead, 2006; Flood, 2008; Hearn, 2012). When considering the continuum of sexual violence (Kelly, 1988), my focus groups with young men illustrated that distinctions between 'perpetrators' and 'non-perpetrators' or 'normal' men are not always simple or easy to make. Given the extent to which unhealthy, unequal, and dominating practices and patterns of behaviour are normalised for men in heterosexual relationships for example, or how commonplace men's intimate intrusions into women's lives are, it is clear that men's

complicity in the oppression of women, and the actual perpetration of violence, harassment, and abuse can shade into one another, and are not always clearly distinguishable. This suggests that the assertion made by some prevention campaigns, that it is only a small minority of men that perpetrate violence towards women, may fail to reflect the complexities and the extent of men's complicity in it (Pease, 2015a).

Furthermore, when women do enact complicity in men's violence, they do not benefit from the phenomenon on a structural basis as men do. Whilst individual women may derive benefits in terms of their positioning over other women within the gender order - as described by Connell (2005) in terms of 'emphasised femininity' - fundamentally men's violence against women serves to enforce social relations in which women are collectively as well as individually subordinated by men. Whilst acts of complicity by women must also be challenged, they do not serve their own structural interests as a sex class in the same way that they do for men, even if they may sometimes benefit individual women's power and position. Men's complicity therefore plays the most significant role in constituting violence against women and its social reproduction as one of the core structures of male domination - and this is also why engaging men and boys specifically in prevention is so important.

Of course, patriarchy is not the only system of power and inequality in operation in people's everyday lives, and it is possible that women's complicity with violence and abuse could enhance their structural power in relation to other systems such as racism and colonialism, for example by reproducing myths about black men being particularly likely to perpetrate rape. Indeed, theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991) have demonstrated the complexities *within* the social categories of women and men, where significant hierarchies exist that can challenge the notion of 'sex classes', and where intersecting systems of power can mean that some women may possess more power than some men in certain contexts for instance. However, I would maintain that the conceptualisation of sex classes as political categories in which men hold structural power over women remains an important and highly relevant one, and that women's complicity with men's violence does not serve their gendered structural interests in relation to patriarchy, even if may sometimes do so in relation to other systems of power.

7.2.4 Responding to divergences in feminist thought

As efforts to engage men and boys grow, increasing attention is likely to be paid towards which types of feminism are being adopted and particularly influential within it. Indeed, there is a possibility that this could create divisions both between and within organisations where different approaches are being advocated (Messner et al., 2015), as was alluded to in some of the expert-informant interviews. Yet the tensions regarding 'which feminism' work with men should be accountable to often goes unacknowledged. Indeed, there can often be ambiguities surrounding the theoretical underpinnings of this work, where the specificities and emphasis of its feminist commitments may be left implicit, and this was sometimes observed within the expert-informant interviews. These ambiguities could cultivate a lack of transparency, which would inhibit the capacity of work with men to be accountable to feminism. I would therefore argue that it is important for the field to reflect upon, rather than ignore, the divergences and debates within feminist thinking, and contemplate the positions it should take in relation to them. Otherwise, a dearth of clarity in relation to the ideological framework being adopted could risk contributing to a lack of cohesion and coherence between the change that is aspired to and how it will be accomplished in practice, which could in turn lead to disjointed and ineffective work.

The question of 'which feminism' may often go undiscussed within the engaging men field because it raises one of the key contradictions within it; between the need to be accountable to feminism, and the need to engage actively with it in a critical and independent way, rather than simply placing the burden upon women to make decisions on pro-feminist men's behalf (Brod, 1998; Harding, 1998). Because of the wide range of different approaches to feminist theory and activism, in practice accountability may therefore often mean being answerable to specific feminist women, and specific iterations of feminism. This does not mean that work with men and boys should not make itself open to being held to account by other feminists too. However, only being accountable to a vague notion of 'feminism' as a broad singular entity, rather than to specific individuals, organisations, and strands of feminist thought and activism, may in fact mean relatively little in practice (Messner et al., 2015; Pease, 2017).

At the same time, being accountable may also mean interrogating why it is that one does sympathise with some forms of feminism over others - and listening to a diversity of women's experiences and feminist viewpoints, even (and perhaps especially) if it challenges one's existing beliefs (Pease, 2017). Otherwise men may simply adopt whichever feminist

theories fit most easily with their existing view of the world. Supporting a particular school of thought within feminism does not therefore mean that men should engage only with those ideas - after all, one cannot meaningfully adopt a position without considering the range of others available. Furthermore, it is important to maintain an awareness of the directions and analyses of the broader women's movement, because if there is a significant gap between those and the frameworks that pro-feminist men are adopting, then that too would bring into question the effectiveness of their accountability. Such an approach might also help organisations and activists to deal with occasions where they are aware of conflicting arguments from different feminists, or if they are unsure about feedback or viewpoints from individual feminist women (Pease, 2017).

Nonetheless, this still leaves men involved in the prevention of violence against women with the decision of which feminists they should be accountable to. One way of doing this can be to pragmatically seek out collaborations with whichever feminist organisations are geographically closest. Working with and supporting local feminist organisations can be an important element of pro-feminist activism, and being accountable only to them would be the simplest approach. However, the dominant perspectives within local feminist groups may not be the most convincing ones, or they may not be compatible with impactful 'engaging men' work. There may also be a range of different types of feminist activism present in the local area, and debates and disagreements between them. Simply being accountable to whichever form of feminist activism that is expedient would also position men involved in preventing violence against women in a passive role, and it is difficult to see how this can foster genuine 'ownership' of a pro-feminist perspective. Pro-feminism surely requires actively engaging with different feminist interpretations of the world and making them 'our own', rather than uncritically taking on whichever version is encountered first (Brod, 1998; Harding, 1998). Accountability does not mean leaving it to women to undertake the intellectual labour involved in being pro-feminist on men's behalf, or placing the onus on women to 'train' men in feminist theory and activism, so that men don't have to do the hard work of applying it to their own lives (Castelino, 2014).

This also raises deeper questions about the very purpose of pro-feminism. Is it simply to mirror or echo feminism more broadly? If so, then the specific feminist approach in question, and the strength of its project of social change, may be relatively unimportant, so long as the goal of replication has been achieved. Yet this in itself again asks relatively little of men who are serious about pro-feminist praxis. On the other hand, if pro-feminism develops

independently from feminism to such a degree that connections in theory and practice between the two become largely imperceptible, then it could surely no longer be considered to be pro-feminist. I would therefore argue that the key for pro-feminist men may lie in striving for an equilibrium between learning from feminist theorising and strategising, and reflecting upon and applying which of those ideas are interpreted to be the most powerful and relevant to one's own context.

7.2.4.1 Understanding differences within work with men

It would therefore potentially be useful to explore in more depth the different positions and approaches that organisations working with men and boys to prevent men's violence against women are adopting in relation to feminism. This could help us to identify trends in pro-feminist activism, and observe which approaches may be most impactful in engaging men in different contexts. There are several different ways in which such distinctions could be made. For instance, what *type* of feminist theory are organisations and activists most strongly influenced by? Lorber's (2012) distinction between what she describes as reform, resistance, and rebellion forms of feminism could prove helpful in this respect, for example. Alternatively, we could evaluate the *degree* to which different strategies and methods for engaging men could be considered pro-feminist - and where different organisations would sit along a continuum based on the extent to which they succeed in putting pro-feminism into practice. This would mean identifying some of the key factors in determining the extent to which a particular programme or campaign could be defined as pro-feminist - which would depend on one's understanding of feminism itself. It would therefore represent an inherently subjective analysis. Nevertheless, there may be some value in contemplating and attempting to measure the extent to which different examples of work in this area do follow what might generally be considered to be some fundamental principles of pro-feminist practice.

Asking questions of this kind could in turn help to provide greater clarity about the aims and strategies of specific initiatives, and enable the development of more coherent and systematic approaches to engaging men. In addition, if organisations working in this area are more open and specific about their pro-feminist commitments, this could encourage a deeper, more concrete and focused level of engagement with feminist thought. It would also help efforts to engage men to become more transparent, and thus facilitate organisations' accountability, if their pro-feminist rationales are named and explained from the outset. This does not mean it

would be necessary to make every aspect of an organisation's theoretical frameworks explicit to everyone at all times; the relevance of certain debates and complexities would vary depending on the audience and context. However, being prepared to thoughtfully engage with those debates in the first place could have a number of useful impacts in developing work with men.

It is also important to consider whether there may be a relationship between the type of feminist theoretical framework that an organisation adopts, and the extent to which that organisation succeeds in putting pro-feminism into practice. For example, it could be argued that by its very nature, radical feminism demands more deep rooted levels of individual and social change than other forms of feminism, and so adopting a radical feminist analysis is likely to lead to more profoundly pro-feminist praxis (Brod, 1998). If we are asking more far-reaching and challenging questions about ourselves and the world around us, then it might be more likely that the strategies and methods we adopt will also be more clearly and acutely feminist.

At the same time however, this is not inevitable. We cannot necessarily take aspects of an organisation's practice for granted because of the theoretical framework they are adopting. Taking up radical feminist ideas does not automatically detach men from patriarchal privilege and entitlement, and working to recognise and dismantle their manifestations remains an everyday task, in which mistakes can easily be made by all pro-feminist men, regardless of which form of feminism they subscribe to. Supporting radical feminist ideas may help one to become more attuned to such dynamics, but it could also lead to problematic behaviours of its own, such as a 'holier-than-thou', competitive, masculinised approach to being more 'radical' than other men, or spending more time criticising feminist women with whom one disagrees than on the day-to-day work of engaging other men. It could also counter-intuitively lead to a failure to reflect adequately upon one's own practices, based on the assumption that having adopted a radical feminist analysis, one had reached a point of being 'beyond' the possibility of sexist behaviours. This again demonstrates why consistent accountability to feminist women is so crucial within men's work in this area, whatever its theoretical underpinnings.

So is there a certain feminist direction in which the majority of work with men and boys currently leans? It could be argued, for example, that when men do connect with feminism, it is more likely to be in ways that ask relatively little of them, or which they find less challenging - at least in the initial stages of their engagement (Pease, 2017). This might mean

there is a greater tendency for men to support more 'liberal' forms of feminism. However, radical versions of feminism more than any other have focused on men's violence against women as a central cause and consequence of patriarchal inequalities (Robinson, 2003; Mackay, 2015), which might mean that men who seek to become involved in efforts to prevent violence against women are more likely to already hold beliefs aligned with radical feminist analyses (Brod, 1998). In addition, working in an area which confronts some of the most harrowing consequences of patriarchy could also foster a more critical and radical perspective. This might illuminate a potential difference in theoretical influences within the broader engaging men field, between work which focuses specifically on violence and abuse, and that which centres upon other aspects of gender inequality.

The current relationship between critical studies on men and masculinities (CSMM) and the practice of engaging men and boys is also important to consider in relation to this question. Traditionally, these two fields have been seen as closely linked, with both being heavily influenced by (pro-)feminism (Hearn, 2015b). However, the rapid growth of scholarship on men and masculinities in recent decades now means that it is more difficult to draw such generalisations about this field of inquiry, and its links with both feminist theory and the practice of engaging men are often more tenuous (O'Neill, 2015). For example, Beasley (2012; 2013; 2015) has argued that there is now some degree of disconnect between feminist scholarship and studies on men and masculinities. She has noted that a large amount of the former has for some time been significantly influenced by postmodernist, poststructuralist theorising, whilst the latter continues to be strongly shaped by more modernist, structuralist modes of thinking. As a result, men and masculinities scholarship could be perceived to be failing to maintain its ties to contemporary feminist theory. However, it could be argued that a similar distinction applies to some extent between feminist theory and feminist scholarship on violence against women specifically - so it is possible that CSMM has been able to retain more of a connection with the latter, although this may not be the case with men and masculinities research more broadly. As Beasley (2015) herself suggests, this might also hint at growing cleavages *within* the men and masculinities field, both in terms of different relationships with feminism, and with the practice of engaging men.

Beasley raises an important question about the extent to which contemporary research on men and masculinities can be said to be influenced by feminist theorising. If the link between CSMM and work with men remains relatively close, and if Beasley's analysis is correct, then the theoretical underpinnings of this work are likely to be rooted in the modernist thinking

most associated with 'second wave' radical feminism. This might be unsurprising, given that the anti-sexist men's movement perhaps developed most significantly out of the rise of second wave feminism (Ashe, 2007; Messner et al., 2015). However, on the other hand, the wider shifts in feminist theorising, as well as the influence of other schools of thought linked to postmodernism and post-structuralism such as queer theory, will no doubt also have had some impact on engaging men efforts, as it has on other forms of feminist and LGBT-rights activism for example (Lorber, 2012). In the expert-informant interviews for example, it did appear that both schools of thought were having some influence on the perspectives of the participants. It will therefore be important to monitor how the theoretical basis of work with men to prevent violence against women develops in the future, and how this will interact with shifts in both feminist theory and CSMM.

7.2.4.2 Linking theory and practice to achieve pro-feminist change

These issues illustrate the need to take into account both the theory and practice of work with men, and developing harmonious alignments between the two in order to enact pro-feminist praxis effectively (Jewkes et al., 2015b; Storer et al., 2015). An organisation can have a highly methodical and radical theoretical framework, but this could be relatively meaningless if the work it does on the ground does not match up to that. The type of feminist theory adopted may therefore not be as important as whether or not pro-feminism is actually put into practice successfully. That said, an organisation might be undertaking a wide range of innovative activities, but if these are not built upon a coherent theory of feminist social change, then how can the aims, and thus the effectiveness, of those efforts be assessed?

This underscores the importance of developing a strong theory of change to support the practice of engaging men (Jewkes et al., 2015b; Storer et al., 2015). In other words, beyond a commitment to general pro-feminist principles, how are organisations actually expecting their work to bring about transformations in men and in wider society? What kind of change do they specifically want to bring about? Why is that change necessary and beneficial - what are its intended (and potential unintended) consequences? The answers to these questions will all be shaped - consciously or not - by the theoretical framework that an organisation adopts. It could be argued that an important element in determining the extent to which work with men can be seen as pro-feminist is the impact that it has - in other words, whether or not it is actually bringing about change (Hasyim, 2014). With this in mind, can organisations

demonstrate the ways in which they are achieving this in their work? Similarly, some of the expert-informant interviewees felt that showing that they were having an impact was an important way for them to be accountable to feminism.

At the same time, this issue may expose a tension which exists *between* the theory and practice of organisations working in this area. Often the goals of work with men and boys may be somewhat broad, in terms of aiming to achieve deep rooted, large scale social change, compared to the reality of what can be achieved with the resources and numbers of people involved. This can create disconnects between theory and practice in terms of how the scope of the work that is being done relates to the individual, collective, and structural change that is being aspired to.

Does this mean that work with men and boys will inevitably be constrained to making relatively minor reforms, rather than contributing to fundamental transformations in society? If not, if we do have a theoretical framework which aims to help create broad social change, how is it possible to realistically translate that into day-to-day work with men? Part of the challenge here may reflect the need to scale up prevention efforts, so that it is actually possible to accomplish the kinds of far-reaching social impacts that are aspired to, which are urgently needed in order to seriously tackle men's violence against women (Flood, 2015). However, it may also be necessary to be honest and realistic with ourselves about what any one programme can achieve within one part of the social order, when working against the backdrop of the ongoing reproduction of patriarchal inequalities across society. This also highlights the need for the continued theoretical as well as practical development of efforts to engage men, in order to better understand how to create the kind of change that is needed.

Another factor to take into account is that organisations in this area are often complex, multi-layered entities, with a range of different roles being taken on by those involved. Meanwhile, some of those individuals involved in the field may be carrying out a mixture of independent advocacy, research, activism, and programme delivery, for a range of different organisations. Many of the third sector, voluntary organisations conducting work with men may have board members, a small number of paid full-time and/or part-time staff, and a larger group of volunteers, who are all involved in some way in the practice of violence prevention. It may therefore be unreasonable to expect the same depth of reflection on theory and strategy at all of these organisational levels. Similarly, an experienced pro-feminist activist will likely have been able to spend a much greater amount of time doing so than a newly-recruited volunteer.

For these reasons, it is important to avoid over-generalising about the organisations and individuals who are involved in engaging men. For example, it would be unrealistic to expect all those in the field to be equally well versed in different strands of feminist theory, especially in the early stages of their involvement. As a result, it might be counterproductive to shun activists who are relatively new to such work if they make minor mistakes on this basis. The key factor may be the *effort* made to sensitively engage with and put into practice feminist analyses in a serious and substantive way. This may sometimes be more significant than the duration of an individual's involvement in the field, or the specific types of feminism that they most agree with. It should also be recognised that there are challenges involved for organisations working with men in adopting a more reflective and explicit approach regarding the specific feminist theories and strategies they are adopting, not least because this requires an in-depth, ongoing engagement with different strands of feminist thought. However, it could be argued that for those who are serious about practically supporting feminist social change, this kind of engagement is vital.

In addition, given that some of the debates within feminism are so contentious and polarised, it is important that the engaging men field treats them with care. It would be inappropriate for men, as members of the dominant group within patriarchy, to intrude on these, or attempt to dictate to feminists the direction which they think the movement for *women's liberation* should take, as if they can solve dilemmas that feminists have grappled with for decades. This does not mean that men should avoid engaging with these issues in their work - not least because ignoring them is near-impossible within violence prevention, and would arguably represent an abdication of responsibility for men who are serious about taking on feminist ideas.

For example, given the influence of different aspects of the sex industry (such as pornography and prostitution) on contemporary English society, together with the role of men's practices in relation to that industry, and its potential ramifications for gender relations and the perpetuation of violence against women, it could be seen as being negligent for these institutions not to be critically discussed within prevention work. At the same time, pro-feminist men must be careful not to contribute to or antagonise divisions around these issues within feminism. Well-intentioned men could help to preserve patriarchal inequalities if their actions contribute to sustaining feminist schisms - or if they see themselves as 'saviours' of feminism who possess the solutions to contentious issues within it. It is therefore important for pro-feminist men to craft a careful balance in response to the contradictions posed by the

'which feminism?' question; by developing an active 'ownership' of feminist ideas in applying them to one's own life, at the same time as remembering that whilst it is important for men support feminism, it does not belong to us.

7.3 What next for theory?

Now, the chapter will move on to outlining some of the main theoretical issues which have been raised by the research findings, particularly in relation to existing thought within CSMM.

7.3.1 Limitations in using the concept of 'lad culture'

A topic which was brought up several times within the focus groups was that of 'lad culture' (Phipps and Young, 2015; Phipps, 2016). This was clearly an issue which carried pertinence for many of the young men, with several talking about their experiences in relation to it and some openly voicing their disapproval of it. However, there may also be problems with this concept and the way it appeared to have influenced some of the young men's perceptions of masculinity. Within the focus groups it appeared that the young men were much more willing to talk about 'lad culture' than notions of masculinity. This could also be said of the English media, where the idea of 'lad culture' has gained much more traction in relation to coverage of sexual violence on campus than discussions about masculinities.

I would argue that 'lad culture' is likely to a more palatable concept for young men - and for wider society - to talk about than men and masculinities more broadly. Focusing on 'lad culture' allows men to externalise the problem to some degree, and detach ourselves from it. When the term was being used in the focus groups, the implication was typically that the problem is 'out there', with a specific set of practices being enacted by some young men, rather than a problem of norms among young men more broadly, regardless of whether or not they take part in this particular campus peer culture. 'Lad culture' may therefore have limitations in its conceptual potential to challenge men's perspectives, practices, and complicities in relation to violence against women and patriarchy. Indeed, the same criticism could arguably sometimes also be made of attempts to categorise and differentiate between 'types' of masculinity, rather than problematising the construction of masculinity as a whole.

This is not to deny that there have been particular developments and trends in cultures and forms of men's practices across English university campuses in recent years, which need to be highlighted and investigated. However, I would contend that these can often be seen as new expressions of familiar patterns of behaviour rooted in the hegemony of men, such as sexism, misogyny, and homophobia (Jackson and Sundaram, 2018). Indeed, beyond these behaviours, which are commonplace both within and beyond 'lad culture' and the sphere of higher education, it can be difficult to pin this idea down to a specific set of practices which distinguish it from other enactments of masculinity by men. Fundamentally then, 'lad culture' may represent a particular, often hegemonic construction of masculinity in the practices of some young men - and should be challenged on this basis. However, rape and other forms of violence against women on campus are not limited to men who conform to the influential norms of masculinity associated with 'lad culture', such as heavy alcohol consumption and participation in university sports (Jackson and Sundaram, 2018). Such notions could therefore risk concealing men in university contexts who don't fit into these categories of behaviour, but may still enact violence against women or complicity in it - for example, men who participate in student feminism societies, or male university staff.

At the same time, it could be counterproductive not to make use of the current cultural narratives around 'lad culture', which did appear to have some resonance among the young men I spoke to. Talking about 'lad culture' may therefore offer a useful route towards discussing constructions of masculinity and enactments of male dominance on campus more broadly with young people. The conversation could then be moved on to questioning how other aspects of our peer cultures, and not only 'lad cultures', help to legitimise and encourage oppressive and abusive behaviours. So whilst there may be theoretical problems with the concept of 'lad culture' as a lens for understanding men's violence against women, it could still at times provide a useful stepping stone for addressing men and masculinities, both more broadly and more specifically.

7.3.2 Challenging the hegemony of men through violence prevention

Within both the focus groups and the expert-informant interviews, the utilisation of normative ideas of masculinity by prevention campaigns was sometimes brought into question. The most common perception appeared to be that whilst this may present an accessible way to appeal to men and boys, it also risks being counterproductive, in replicating

the same kinds of norms that ultimately need to be deconstructed. Indeed, based on the research findings I would argue that dismantling masculine codes - even if elements of them can be harnessed positively - represents a core aspect of sustainable efforts to end men's violence against women. It may therefore be necessary to scrutinise the ways in which violence prevention campaigns may sometimes abet the reinforcement of gendered expectations which, fundamentally, serve to facilitate the hierarchical division of men and women in society. For example, to what extent do notions of 'bystander intervention' feed into masculine ideas of 'saving' or 'protecting' women - and thus help to legitimise the maintenance of an unequal gendered power dynamic?

Similarly, it could be argued that it is an oversimplification to reach out to men as 'bystanders' to violence against women - not least because this ignores the significant proportion of men who are actually perpetrating abuse. In addition, this obfuscates the everyday complicities that men enact with sexism and misogyny, and addressing these may be more impactful than promoting notions of 'heroic' interventions in 'other' men's violence.

These tensions allude to an important point made by Hearn and Whitehead (2006) among others, that men's violence towards women is likely to often be rooted in insecurities about their ability to attain standards of masculinity, as opposed to their successful accomplishment. When men enact violence against women, they frequently appear to be motivated by the attempt to reclaim and reaffirm a sense of masculine power and control. An important element of much violence against women is that men know that they can carry out such acts with little chance of facing sanctions. However, the ability to exert power and control over women with relative impunity does not mean that one has power in relation to other men, which within patriarchy remains the key determinant of men's social status. Even for men in highly privileged, powerful social positions, they may still be motivated in part out of a feeling of inadequacy; a sense of failing to match up to the impossible standards of masculinity that their social context demands. Men's craving for the total control which masculinity requires of them means that whatever power they possess will never be entirely sufficient, and women often become the collateral damage in this unattainable pursuit.

In this way, whilst men's violence against women is about the exertion of power and control, men for whom such violence is unnecessary for the confirmation of their dominant masculine status may often uphold a more hegemonic position within the gender order. This means that hegemonic forms of masculinity can involve vocalisations of opposition to violence against

women, because the need to use violence in the first place in order to maintain male dominance may be seen as an expression of weakness, a lack of control, and thus of emasculation in relation to other men. Some prevention campaigns may therefore risk bolstering hegemonic expectations of masculinity in encouraging perceptions that men's primary role in the prevention of violence against women is, for example, to 'intervene in' and 'stand up to' the behaviour of other men towards women. Indeed, some of the focus group participants perceived that a successful intervention of this kind would require characteristics which are often closely associated with dominant norms of masculinity, such as self-confidence and physical strength.

I would therefore argue that the key issue which prevention work needs to address is not simply one of building opposition amongst men to violence against women. Instead, it is men's culturally-instilled belief of their superiority over women, which in turn creates the assumption that men have the right - that they are entitled - to dominate over women within different spheres. It is this belief which naturalising explanations of men's violence, for example, fundamentally allude to. This is why the social construction of gender itself is so harmful; because whilst the norms and ideologies attached to it vary depending on context, it is fundamentally founded upon this unchanging, inherently hierarchical dynamic, in which the masculine is superior to and hegemonic over the feminine. This is why it is so important that prevention campaigns are careful in how they approach, construct, and critique gender - otherwise they may risk subliminally reinforcing this hierarchy. For instance, as Bridges (2010) found in his study of 'walk a mile in her shoes' marches in the US, even actions against men's violence which seek to transgress gender boundaries can sometimes inadvertently reaffirm them.

Within each of the focus groups, there was typically a sense that it 'goes without saying' that using violence and abuse towards women is unacceptable. This relates to responses of disassociation, in which the young men generally appeared to view it as being inconceivable that they could perpetrate such acts. In this respect, the hegemonic position appeared to be one featuring explicit disapproval of (at least some forms of) violence against women. If such a view applies within many of men's homosocial peer groups, then how is it that men's violence against women can remain so pervasive? First, because the unachievable pressures to achieve different aspects of that same hegemonic masculine status produce significant insecurities and fragilities in men, providing the foundations for a range of issues which are frequently expressed through the triad of men's violence, in which women and others become

collateral damage (Kaufman, 1987). Second, because of the aforementioned enduring, deeply embedded assumption of men's superiority over women, which in turn constructs legitimacy for and complicity in men's violence against women within certain contexts. This could be seen in the focus groups, where at the same time as expressing opposition to violence against women, the young men also expressed a range of views which could be interpreted as legitimising it on this basis. Whilst in theory, we as a society see men's violence against women as being unacceptable, in practice we enable and excuse it in a variety of ways, because of the underlying (yet typically hidden and unrecognised) assumption that men do have some form of entitlement to dominate over women. This may be how unequal, oppressive, and abusive behaviours can be practiced by men who simultaneously see themselves as being opposed to violence against women. Indeed, that opposition itself may in part be built upon perceptions of male superiority - which create the idea that women are in some way 'weaker' and in need of protection or saving for example - rather than a belief in women's right to freedom from violence.

For instance, within the university context, the pervasiveness of sexism, misogyny, and violence against women on campus is likely to be rooted at least in part within the deep-seated sexist assumption that women don't belong and are unwelcome in such a setting. This applies to many traditionally male-dominated institutions, and in this instance, intellectual activity itself often remains associated with norms of masculinity. In words, universities may express an opposition to violence against women on campus - or are at least starting to do so, as a result of feminist activism. Yet in deeds, universities remain structurally male dominated, patriarchal institutions in numerous ways, if we examine the composition of their management and senior staff or their gender pay gaps for example. This embeddedness of gender inequality throughout the structures of our social institutions in turn reproduces the implicit notion that men are 'naturally' superior, and have the right to dominate over women - and men's violence against women is often tolerated in such contexts as a result. More than anything else then, it is these gender inequalities, built around the assumption of male supremacy, which must be vocally opposed and made unacceptable, in order to address the roots of men's violence against women.

I would therefore agree with Hearn's (2012) assertion that complicity can in fact often be understood as representing the hegemonic form of men's practices within the gender order. This certainly appears to be the case in relation to men's violence against women, where complicity may be more commonplace, normative, and socially desirable than abusive

behaviour, whilst still legitimising patriarchy. If this assessment is accurate, then this leaves us with important lessons for prevention work. First of all, simplistic prevention messages simply instructing men and boys not to perpetrate violence and abuse, or telling them that such behaviours are 'wrong', are on their own unlikely to be sufficient to change behaviour, because few would explicitly disagree with such statements, yet men's violence persists (though this is not to suggest that making clear which behaviours are unacceptable in sex and relationships is not important, not least because doing so can raise awareness for victims that what they are experiencing is abuse). In addition, emphasising that 'real men' don't perpetrate violence against women, or that taking action to prevent it can be viewed and heralded as a masculine endeavour, risk actually feeding into the gendered power relations between men which underpin much of men's enactments of abuse towards women. This suggests that the impact of prevention campaigns will be limited, and could even cause more harm than good, if they fail to take account of these dynamics.

Of course, it is understandable that campaigns would seek to reach men at the level they are currently at, rather than conveying a more radical or complex message which they may be less likely to listen to. However, I would argue that it is quite possible to reach men at their existing level of understanding and awareness, whilst crucially addressing the gender norms and inequalities that men's violence against women is founded upon. If we can bring into question the deeply entrenched ideologies, practices, and complicities that perpetuate these inequalities, together with their roots within the assumption that men have the right to dominate over women, then this could create serious impacts in changing behaviour to prevent men's violence. Further theoretical development about the interactions between the hegemonic and the complicit in men's practices and uses of violence would therefore be useful in helping us to understand more about how prevention campaigns might be able to address these dynamics most effectively. It would also be interesting to investigate further where pro-feminist men fit and position themselves within this gender order, and how masculinities are constructed and disrupted by men engaging in violence prevention work.

As Hearn (2012) points out, the distinctions that Connell (2005) draws between hegemonic, complicit, and subordinate masculinities are somewhat blurred and unclear in relation to men's violence against women, where hegemonic, complicit, and subordinate practices and expressions of manhood often intertwine with one another. For this reason, I would concur with Hearn's argument that an analysis of men's violence against women suggests that conceptualising the hegemony of men may be more relevant than notions of any particular

hegemonic masculinity. This also underscores the point made by McCarry (2007) that, whilst the concept of masculinity is highly useful in helping us to make sense of normative configurations of gendered practices among men, it is vital not to lose sight of men's practices themselves in the reproduction of hegemony over women, children, and other men. Otherwise, there is a risk that masculinity becomes reified so that disembodied notions of 'complicit masculinities' might be seen as the source of the problem for example, rather than how men go about enacting complicities in their everyday practices (McCarry, 2007).

7.3.3 Cognitive dissonances in young men's perspectives on violence and abuse

In this regard, it is vital to take into account the argument made by O'Neill (2015), that scholarship on men and masculinities must retain its critical focus, in particular regarding men's position and role in maintaining patriarchal power relations. For example, O'Neill's critique of inclusive masculinity theory (Anderson and McGuire, 2010) had considerable relevance to this research. There undoubtedly were a number of positives to be taken from the focus groups, such as the demonstration of awareness by many of the young men about intimate partner violence, and the degree of resistance expressed to ways in which it is socially legitimised. However, to interpret this as meaning that the participants were constructing some form of 'inclusive masculinity', would mean overlooking the multiple ways in which they also responded defensively to violence prevention messages, enacted forms of complicity with patriarchal inequalities - which they themselves acknowledged doing - and reproduced constraining and oppressive notions of masculinity itself. Based on this, I would argue that whilst it is important to take into account the contemporary diversities in men's performance, experience, and construction of gender, it is also crucial not to lose a grip on the critical, pro-feminist traditions of research in this area, given the ongoing persistence - indeed, reformulations and reassertions - of male dominance in society, including through violence.

In this respect, the comments made by the young men who took part in the focus groups often articulated somewhat contradictory positions and perspectives. On the one hand, it was clear that the societal influence of feminist ideas had had a significant impact on their understandings of the world around them, including in relation to violence and abuse. However, on the other hand, whilst taking partner violence seriously as an issue, they often appeared to feel that it had little connection to themselves, and saw their own lives as

separate from the problem. Similarly, there was relatively little consideration of how gender inequalities and harmful constructions of masculinity might be relevant to their own practices and interactions. The participants therefore often appeared to see themselves as being 'above' the issues raised by the prevention campaigns, a perception which may have been heightened by their privileged social backgrounds. This was one way in which the young men frequently engaged in the discussions through what I interpreted as defensive responses to the questioning of patriarchal norms. Another example of this was through claims that partner violence is a 'natural' and thus inevitable phenomenon, in which some of the participants may have unintentionally voiced deep-rooted assumptions about men being superior to women, and entitled to dominate over them. These factors appeared to combine to inhibit reflections in the young men about how they might be implicated in the problem of men's violence against women, and how they could have a role to play in its prevention. The homosocial peer environment of the focus group also appeared to play a part in shaping what the participants felt able to express in this respect, demonstrating the importance of men's peer groups in the collective construction of codes of masculinity, and mediating how they respond when these codes are challenged.

It was clear then that a multitude of forces were contributing to shape the young men's understandings of partner violence, and perceptions of the prevention campaigns. For example, in some cases it seemed that 'men's rights' narratives had impacted upon the participants' perspectives, illustrating the broader influence of misogynistic, anti-feminist political views of this kind upon young men. As a result, on a number of occasions the participants appeared to express forms of cognitive dissonance (Watt, 2008), as they attempted to make sense of violence and abuse and the range of different, sometimes conflicting ideas that they had come into contact with in relation to it. A decisive factor however, appeared to be the ongoing influence of deep-seated patriarchal assumptions and norms in many ways, which seemed to manifest themselves not only within the young men's overt attitudes, but also nestled more deeply in their psyches, and within the interpretations and expectations of masculinity exhibited among them.

In this regard, despite the significant social changes within gender relations in England in recent decades, and the transformations in understandings of partner violence that have taken place for example, age-old ideas justifying patriarchal inequities and men's entitlement to hegemony arose on a number of occasions within the sessions. What's more, it could be seen as unsurprising that the young men would hold such views, given that they will have grown

up in a world in which sexist and misogynistic ideologies continue to circulate throughout the different social institutions surrounding them. Rather than having disappeared, in many cases patriarchal discourses may instead have simply been reformulated (if we think about the increased influence of pornography on young people's lives for example) in contemporary English society, whilst continuing to shape and constrain how young people see the world. This situation was summed up in the expert-informant interview with Andrew:

> *"What strikes me more than anything is the kind of, the difficulty about really, getting below the surface on these things. Or how in a sense men's oppression, men's oppressiveness, can kind of recreate itself, mutate, and you know, you tackle it in one particular place and it pops up somewhere else, so it turns itself around and becomes another manifestation."*

7.4 What next for research?

This final section will reflect on some of the observations made during the study about the research methodology, and future research on engaging men to prevent violence against women.

7.4.1 Developing pro-feminist standpoint epistemology in critical research on men

A key reflection from the research project has been the value of pro-feminist standpoint epistemology described by Pease (2013) to the critical study of men and masculinities. Indeed, social science research much more broadly still has a great deal to learn from feminist epistemologies (Walby, 2011). However, much work remains to be done to develop the pro-feminist standpoint approach, to assist with its application in a variety of different research settings. This is not least because of the myriad issues which are evoked by doing research as a man, primarily with other men, about male dominance (Flood, 2013; Hearn, 2013). I have sought to adopt a critical perspective towards men's practices (including my own) informed by feminist theory and activism throughout the research project. However, feminist standpoint epistemology illustrates that I am in no way separate from the men I have studied - and that it would be dangerous to see myself in this way. The different findings from this research therefore apply just as much to me as they do to any other man - indeed, I have

learned a lot over the course of the project about how my own attempts to put pro-feminism into practice could, and should, be improved. It is important to recognise that I too am complicit in, and privileged by, the structures of patriarchy that I have drawn attention to in this thesis, and that I must continue to endeavour to understand and attempt to diminish these complicities personally, politically, and professionally (Hearn, 2015b).

Feminist scholarship and activism had had a significant impact on my life before the project began, but it was made clear throughout the study that I still (and will always) have so much to learn from it, which demonstrates the extent to which conducting research can itself be a highly educative process. Indeed, in this sense I feel that this project marks only the beginning of my educational journey with (pro-)feminism. Speaking to key advocates for engaging men and boys, and to young men themselves about their views on prevention campaigns, illuminated to me the complex, dynamic layers involved in the maintenance of patriarchy and the perpetuation of men's violence against women - and how these might be tackled. It also underscored to me that it is one thing to read feminist theory in books, quite another to seek to apply it meaningfully and systematically in research, not to mention in one's own day-to-day practices - yet it is also only through praxis of this kind that feminist social change can be realised.

Carrying out the interviews and focus groups therefore raised a number of different questions for me about my own positionality and practices, both with regards to conducting research and more broadly. Engaging with feminism inevitably encourages men to reflect on their own assumptions, behaviours, and positions in society. However, attempting to formally implement a pro-feminist approach to research raised further questions still. For instance, in principle resisting collusion with male research participants may seem relatively simple - however, in practice it was much more complicated. It is not always obvious to discern whether one is colluding or not, especially since, as men, we are conditioned not to identify the power inequalities that we may be participating in. This was exacerbated by the sense of gratitude I wanted to communicate to the participants for taking part in the research, especially given how difficult it was to recruit young men for the focus groups. In addition, I sought to encourage them to speak as freely and as honestly as they could about their views. This in turn meant that there were occasions in which problematic comments were left unchallenged in the focus groups, creating the possibility that the young men may have interpreted that I endorsed such views. I also felt that I sometimes failed to probe the expert-informants critically enough about their work and comments in the interviews. However, to

intervene more actively in these situations may have impinged on the openness of the participants, and brings into question the extent to which it would be appropriate for my own views as the researcher to potentially influence the research process in such ways.

There rarely appear to be easy answers to these questions, and it seems that, just as in engaging men and boys itself, conducting pro-feminist research with men poses a number of contradictions which are difficult to entirely resolve. However, more work needs to be done to bring these tensions to light, and to develop tools which can help them to be taken into account and addressed within research methodologies. For example, a key emphasis within the academic literature is for men involved in efforts to prevent violence against women to be accountable to feminist women. Yet to what extent are male pro-feminist researchers putting this into practice transparently and systematically ourselves, and making our own practices and work accountable to feminist scholars and activists?

Academic work can sometimes be quite an individualised, isolated experience, perhaps especially with regards to doctoral research, arguably making it all the more important that we make ourselves accountable to feminist colleagues. For instance, there is a danger that the pedestal effect (Messner et al., 2015) can facilitate renowned individual male pro-feminist scholars becoming academic 'celebrities', whilst taking few steps to open themselves up to feminist critique in the process. Yet there has been relatively little discussion about how accountability can be put into practice within CSMM to date. At the same time, a more systematic approach to doing so could lead to yet more burdens being placed on feminist women in academia, again demonstrating the contradictions involved. I would therefore contend that it would be beneficial for male academics who consider ourselves to be pro-feminist, and/or are conducting research on men and masculinities, to engage in more critical and open reflection about the complexities of putting pro-feminist research into practice, both with ourselves and with one another, and to do more to hold each other to account in the process (Kahane, 1998). The development of more tools, such as the edited collections by Digby (1998) and Pini and Pease (2013), which can support researchers seeking to engage with pro-feminist epistemologies and methodologies to consider the kinds of tensions which can arise and how they can be taken into account and addressed, could be particularly useful in this regard.

This issue feels particularly relevant at the time of completing this thesis, when it has become clear that one of the most influential US-based academics within CSMM, Michael Kimmel,

whose work has been used within this research, has been accused of sexual harassment (Mangan, 2018). This reiterates that no one can be considered beyond reproach or accountability within pro-feminism - and no matter how much knowledge and awareness men have, or how much time they have spent as an activist in this sphere, they are still entirely capable of practicing patriarchal oppression, violence, and abuse. Indeed, their pro-feminist reputation could even facilitate or provide a cover for such behaviours, or an additional barrier for victims to overcome if reporting them.

A key weakness with this study, and one of my biggest regrets during the research project, is a failure to speak to a more diverse range of men, both within the expert-informant interviews and the focus groups. This is not just because of the failure to represent the diversities among men, but also because it limits our research if we to some extent treat pro-feminist men or men more broadly as a homogenous group, and do not do enough to take into account the range of different experiences that men and boys have in relation to different systems of power and inequality. Whilst all men are structurally privileged to some degree by patriarchy, their experiences within that system vary significantly based upon other structural sources of power and oppression in their lives. This is vital to take into account when thinking about how to effectively engage with men and boys, who make up such a vastly diverse group of people. As Peretz (2017) has shown, it is also crucial to reflect upon in relation to men's engagements with feminism and anti-violence activism, which may differ substantially based upon their intersecting positions in society. I would therefore argue that CSMM still has much to learn more from feminist theories of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; 1990), and to consider how this vital theory can be meaningfully applied in future research on men and masculinities. This is something that I personally commit to doing.

Carrying out this project has also illuminated to me the potential for activist and action-based research methods to be used more within CSMM (Flood, 2013), and not only in terms of the research being used by advocates in the engaging men field. I conducted the focus groups primarily with the objective of building an understanding of the young men's views on men's violence against women rather than seeking to change them, beyond the potential for beneficial 'side-effects' to be experienced from watching and discussing a number of prevention campaign videos. However, the degree to which the young men appeared to embrace and express gratitude for taking part in the focus groups, suggested to me that their involvement in the study did appear to have a positive impact for a number of them. I do not wish to exaggerate this impact, given that these were only one-off discussions of sixty to

ninety minutes in length. Nevertheless, these comments indicated to me that demonstrating and engaging in forms of prevention work with young men as a research tool does have the potential to not only provide scholarly insights into men's violence against women and its prevention, but also to help instigate change among research participants. In future research then, I would seek to more decisively and explicitly embrace an activist-research approach from the outset, to maximise the potential for both of these possibilities to be fully realised.

In addition, I would argue that the focus group method appears to lend itself particularly well to conducting critical, action-based research on men and masculinities. The creation of a safe, supportive, reflexive space for the young men to discuss issues of gender and violence with a researcher and with one another appeared to be greatly valued by them. It seemed to offer the opportunity for them to (re)negotiate, test out, reflect upon, and critique ideas among their peers in ways which could have the potential to initiate changes in both individual and collective assumptions, norms, and practices in relation to gender. This demonstrates the need for more such spaces to be provided to all young people - and the possibilities for research in this area to play more of a role in actually engaging men in the prevention of violence against women, as well as helping to inform others who are doing that work.

7.5 Conclusion

The findings from this research provide a number of important lessons for the future development of efforts to engage men and boys in the prevention of men's violence against women, in England and beyond. The expert-informant interviews that were conducted with key activists have shown that building this work faces a number of obstacles at the policy level, based around having to simultaneously work within and challenge a neoliberal, patriarchal state. One particularly urgently-needed step in this regard is the substantially increased provision of opportunities for young people to have in-depth and compulsory education, engagement, and discussion around issues of gender norms, inequalities, and violences, which the young men in this study appeared eager to receive despite initial challenges in recruiting them to take part. In addition, the interviews illustrated that engaging men and boys is inherently politically contradictory in a number of different ways, both in terms of men taking action to dismantle their own power and privilege, and seeking to recruit more men to become agents of change.

Meanwhile, the focus groups carried out with men's university sports teams demonstrated that a key area of focus for prevention work must be men's complicity in the perpetuation of violence against women. This has the potential to simultaneously challenge men and boys by making clear how they are implicated in the problem, whilst also illuminating how they can and should play a positive role in its prevention. This will be not an easy task however, not least because of the ways in which men are socialised to defend the patriarchal norms which privilege them. A particularly significant defence mechanism which was identified in this regard is that of disassociation, in which men separate or detach themselves from the problem of violence against women - and it is especially vital that the tendency to distance oneself from 'other' men's violence is actively resisted by pro-feminist activists. I have proposed a triadic approach as a way of overcoming these defensive responses, which would involve helping men and boys to understand and recognise that whilst men's individual experiences and practices are highly diverse, they are significantly influenced by cultural norms of masculinity, which in turn help to maintain the structures of patriarchy - including violence against women - that personally and politically privilege all men to varying degrees.

I therefore conclude that whilst work with men and boys to prevent men's violence against women in England does face numerous challenges and contradictions, this does not mean that it is not valuable or necessary. Indeed, I would argue that if these contradictions can be addressed, and pro-feminist equilibriums are found dialectically within them, then it has the potential to make an important contribution in support of the movement to end men's violence against women. Both the interviews and focus groups highlighted that men do have the potential and the capacity to change, to challenge one another, and to help contribute towards the dismantling of their own hegemony. However, it is also important to remember that engaging men and boys is not an end in itself; it is fundamentally about supporting the cultivation of radical, holistic feminist social change - because this is what is necessary to prevent violence and abuse. Feminist women have been leading the way towards the creation of a society free from men's violence for decades. It is predominantly feminist women who have encouraged men and boys to speak out for gender justice to date, and who are continuing to do so as this field grows in prominence. It is my hope that this thesis has helped to demonstrate why we men have an ethical responsibility to join that struggle.

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Appendices

Appendix I: Expert-informant interview topic guide

Your experiences

1. Can you tell me a bit about your background in terms of the kind of work you have been engaged in relating to the prevention of violence against women, and in particular work around men and boys?

2. What would you say it was that led you to get involved in work around men's violence against women in the first place?

Your knowledge

3. What would you say have been some of the key moments in violence against women prevention work around men and boys since the 1990's, in the UK/internationally?

4. Can you think any particularly key networks and campaigns related to violence against women prevention work with men and boys since the 1990's?
    a. Prompt: Do you think there have been problems with any particular prevention campaigns or approaches?
    b. Prompt: What do you think are some of the main differences between campaigns?

5. Would you say there are some key ideas or theories that are particularly important to violence prevention or which have been especially influential in your work?

Your views

6. What do you think is needed most urgently in order to engage more men and boys in opposing and speaking out against men's violence towards women?

7. What do you think is most challenging or difficult about working with men and boys to prevent violence against women?

8. Why do you think it is so important to work with men and boys in order to prevent violence against women? What opportunities does this work present us with?

Appendix II: Expert-informant interview participant consent form

Durham University

'Preventing violence against women' study
Interviews with key actors
Interviewee consent form

Everyone who participates in this research project is required to give their informed consent. This means that I have a responsibility to make sure that you fully understand what taking part will involve for you before you agree to do so. Please therefore familiarise yourself with the accompanying information sheet, and fill in the form below - and don't hesitate to ask me if you have any questions about the research project and your involvement in it.

	Yes	No
I agree to take part in a one-to-one interview with the researcher.		
I have read the information sheet and been given the opportunity to ask questions about the research project, with satisfactory responses.		
I understand that I have the right not to answer any question I do not feel comfortable with, and that I can stop or take a break from the interview at any time.		
I give my permission for the interview to be audio recorded and transcribed.		
I understand that the interview data will be stored securely; that when the audio recording has been transcribed it will be deleted; that any identifiable information about me or others will not be included in the transcript; and that I will be able to read the interview transcription when it is completed to ensure I am happy with it.		
I understand that whilst my name will not be used in any publications related to this research project, it may still be possible for me to be identified based on comments that I make during the interview, for example about the work I have been involved in.		
I am aware that what is discussed in the interview will be kept confidential, but that if the interviewer feels that I or somebody else is at risk of serious harm, they may need to disclose this to relevant agencies.		
I understand that I am free to choose whether or not to take part in this research project, and that I am also free to withdraw from it at any point both during and after the interview has been completed, up until the analysis stage of the research project in June 2017.		
I understand that I can keep a copy of this consent form for my records.		

Having read the information sheet and consent form, I confirm that I understand what is required of me for this research project and that I am happy to take part.

Signed: _____ (Participant)

Signed: _____ (Researcher)

Date: ___ / ___ / _____

Appendix III: Expert-informant interview participant information sheet

'Preventing violence against women' study
Interviews with key actors
Participant information sheet

Thank you for agreeing to take part in my research. Our discussion shouldn't take more than 45-60 minutes, but we can stop or take a break whenever you want. This interview is part of a doctoral research project which is investigating work with men and boys to prevent violence against women in the UK and beyond. This part of the project aims to map out the policies, programmes and campaigns relating to the engagement of men and boys in the prevention of men's violence against women that have been developed in the UK and beyond to date. The aim for this research is to help further our understanding of this kind of work and how related policies, campaigns and research can be developed in the future, and therefore hopefully to help inform efforts to tackle violence against women.

You have been asked to participate because you have been identified as playing an important role in the development of violence against women prevention work with men and boys and/or related fields, so I would really appreciate hearing about your experiences and your views in order to help inform the research project. You will be asked a series of questions about the work you have been involved in and your perspectives more generally on this kind of work, but if there are any questions that you would prefer not to answer, that is absolutely fine.

The findings from my interviews with you and others will be utilised in my doctoral thesis and possibly in other academic publications and presentations. Anything that you share with me will be kept confidential and reported anonymously, and your real name will not be mentioned in my research (instead you will be assigned with a pseudonym). However, given the nature of this field, please bear in mind that it may still be possible for people to identify you from comments you make in the interview which are subsequently discussed in my doctoral thesis or other publications.

I would like to record the interview using a digital dictaphone, and will then transcribe and analyse the recording. These files will be stored securely on a password protected Durham University server. I will also send a copy of the transcription to you when it is completed to ensure you are happy with it being used. Please note that you do not have to answer specific questions if you don't want to. You can also stop the interview whenever you want, and are free to withdraw from the research project at any point, up until when I aim to have completed my analysis in June 2017, so please just let me know if you wish to do so.

Any issues or questions? Contact me!

Researcher: Stephen Burrell – s.r.burrell@durham.ac.uk

Supervisor: Professor Nicole Westmarland – nicole.westmarland@durham.ac.uk

Appendix IV: Focus group schedule

1. What things come to your mind when you think of 'partner abuse' or ‘domestic violence’? What words?

2. Have you ever seen or participated in any prevention campaigns or programmes about domestic/partner violence before today?
    a. Prompt: If so, where did you see them? What did you think of them?

3. Show examples - for each one: What goes through your mind when you see this campaign? What do you think it’s trying to say?

4. Do you think these campaigns would be effective in terms of helping to prevent partner violence? How could they be improved?
    a. Prompt: Which one do you think would have the most impact on men - and why?
    b. Prompt: Do you feel that any of these campaigns challenge you and your assumptions? Is this a good or a bad thing?
    c. Prompt: As a man, how do these campaigns interact with your ideas about manhood and masculinity?
    d. Prompt: Do you think that you would intervene if you witnessed some form of abusive or violent behaviour?
    e. Prompt: In what ways do you think these campaigns differ from each other?

5. How do you think campaigns against partner violence could be improved and taken forward in the future?
    a. Prompt: What are some of the important things that you think should go into future partner violence prevention campaigns?

6. Why do you think partner violence is so prevalent in our society? What do you think we need to do to stop it?

7. What do you think about the role of education and the role of men in preventing partner violence?
    a. Prompt: Do you think we need to do more to engage men and boys in preventing partner violence?

Appendix V: Focus group participant information sheet

Views of young men on domestic violence prevention campaigns: Participant information sheet

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research. The focus group will be made up of yourself and 3-7 other participants, and it will last around 60-90 minutes, but you can leave or take a break whenever you wish. It forms part of a doctoral research project which is investigating campaigns to prevent domestic violence, and how they can engage men and boys. The aim for this research is to explore how young men actually make sense of this kind of work. It is hoped that this will help to further our understanding of how policies, campaigns and research around tackling domestic violence can be developed in the future. The purpose of the focus group is therefore to discuss some video examples of prevention campaigns together and your opinions on them, as well as to consider how these campaigns impact upon you as a man, and your understanding of domestic violence more generally. Please therefore don't be afraid to speak your mind and be as honest as possible about what you think.

The findings from these focus groups will be used in my doctoral thesis and possibly in other academic publications and presentations. Anything that you share in the group will be kept confidential and anonymised, and your real name will not be mentioned in my research (instead you will be assigned with a pseudonym). However, please note that if I feel that you or somebody else is at risk of serious harm, I may need to disclose this to relevant agencies. I will record the session using a Dictaphone, and will then transcribe and analyse the recording, which will be deleted once the transcription process is completed. All files will be stored securely on a password-protected Durham University server.

Domestic violence can be a difficult subject to talk about, and I will also give you a sheet with information about local and national services which can help if you or someone you know needs support. Please therefore note that you do not have to answer any question in the focus group if you don't want to. You can also leave the session whenever you want, and are free to withdraw from the research project at any point. There will be no repercussions to this so please just let me know if you wish to do so. Finally, please make sure that you treat all other members of the group with respect at all times. It is important that whatever is said within the focus group does not leave the room, so please do not share comments that are made within the session outside once it is over. It is also possible that other participants may express views which you disagree with, or which could even potentially make you feel uncomfortable. If this happens and is causing you distress, please make this known to the facilitator, in which case individuals may be asked to leave the room. If you would like to feed back on anything raised in the group setting but were not able to bring it up at the time, please contact me using the details below.

Any issues or questions? Contact me!
Researcher: Stephen Burrell – s.r.burrell@durham.ac.uk
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Appendix VI: Focus group support information sheet

Local and national support services related to domestic violence [Prototype]

Durham University

If you or someone you know has been affected by any of the issues raised in today's focus group, you can access support from the following organisations:

National

Men's Advice Line: Advice and support for men experiencing domestic violence.
Freephone: 0808 801 0327. Open Monday-Friday 9am-5pm, or you can leave a voicemail.
E-mail: info@mensadviceline.org.uk, Webchat: www.mensadviceline.org.uk

Respect Phoneline: Confidential information and advice to help perpetrators of domestic violence stop and change their abusive behaviours.
Freephone: 0808 802 4040. Open Monday-Friday 9am-5pm, or you can leave a voicemail.
E-mail: info@respectphoneline.org.uk, Webchat: www. respectphoneline.org.uk

Survivors UK: Provides support for men who have been raped or sexually abused.
Textchat: 020 3322 1860, WhatsApp: 074 9181 6064, Webchat:
www.survivorsuk.org/speak-to-us/
Open Monday-Friday 10.30am-9pm, Saturday-Sunday 10am-6pm
E-mail: info@survivorsuk.org

Galop: Support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans victims of domestic violence.
Telephone: 0800 999 5428, Open 10am – 5pm Monday-Wednesday (1pm – 5pm Tuesday is trans specific service), 10am – 8pm Thursday, 1pm – 5pm Friday, 12pm – 4pm Sunday
Online chat: www.galop.org.uk/domesticabuse/, Open 3pm- 7pm Saturday and Sunday
E-mail: help@galop.org.uk

National Domestic Violence Helpline: A national service, run by Women's Aid and Refuge, for women experiencing domestic violence, or family, friends, colleagues and others calling on their behalf. Freephone: 0808 2000 247 (Open 24 hours).

Local

Harbour: Support for men and women affected by domestic violence in County Durham.
Telephone: 03000 20 25 25 (Open 24 hours), E-mail: info@myharbour.org.uk

The Meadows: County Durham Sexual Assault Referral Centre, which provides telephone and face to face support for men and women who have experienced rape or sexual assault.
Telephone: 0191 301 8554 (Open Monday - Friday 9.00am-3.30pm - An answer machine is available to leave a message outside these hours), www.themeadowsdurham.org.uk

Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre: Free confidential counselling and support to women in County Durham and Darlington who have experienced any form of sexual violence
Telephone: 01325 369933, Open Monday - Thursday 6:30pm - 9:00pm, www.rsacc-thecentre.org.uk

Durham University Counselling Service:
Telephone: 0191 334 2200, E-mail: counsel.service@durham.ac.uk, Online Support:
www.dur.ac.uk/counselling.service

Appendix VII: Focus group participant consent form

Views of young men on domestic violence prevention campaigns: Consent form

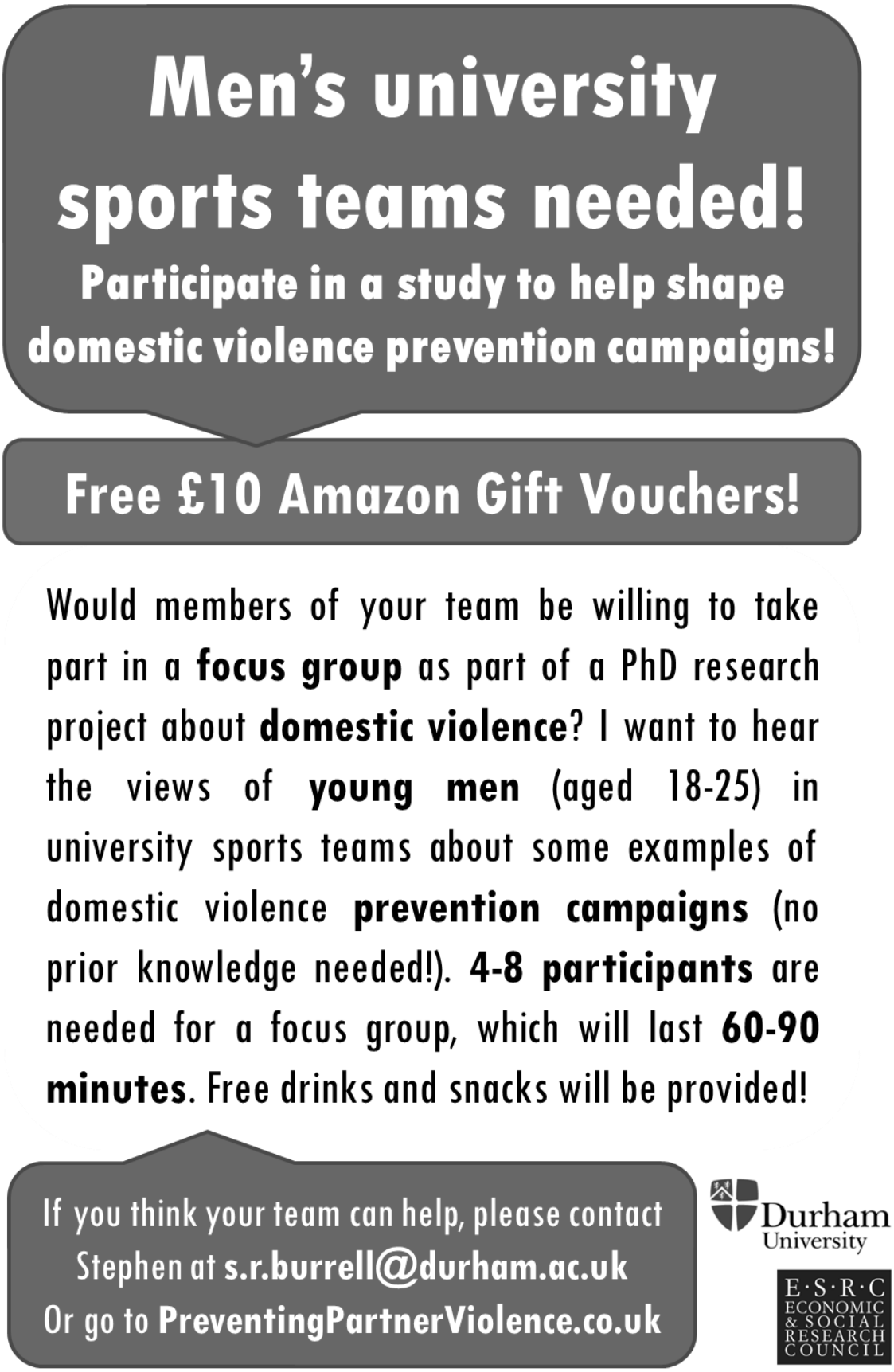
Everyone who takes part in this research project is required to give their informed consent. This means that the researcher has a responsibility to make sure that you fully understand what being a participant will involve for you before you agree to take part. Please therefore familiarise yourself with the attached information sheet, and don't hesitate to ask if you have any questions about the research project and your involvement in it.

	Yes	No
I have read the information sheet and been given the opportunity to ask questions about the research project, with satisfactory responses.		
I understand that I have the right not to answer any question I do not feel comfortable with, and that I can leave or take a break from the focus group at any time.		
I give my permission for the focus group to be audio recorded and transcribed.		
I understand that all data will be stored securely, that when the recording has been transcribed it will be destroyed, and that any identifiable information about myself or others will not be included in transcriptions.		
I am aware that my name will not be used and that my identity will be kept anonymous in any publications related to this research project.		
I understand that what is discussed in the focus group will be kept confidential by the researcher, but that if they feel that I or somebody else is at risk of serious harm, they may need to disclose this to relevant agencies.		
I commit to behaving respectfully towards other focus group members at all times, and will not discuss anything expressed in the focus group or mention the identities of other participants with anyone else after it is over.		
I am aware that the researcher has asked all members of the focus group not to discuss anything that is said in the focus group or the identities of other participants with anyone else after it is over, but understand that this cannot be guaranteed.		
I understand that I am free to choose whether or not to take part in this research project, and that I am also free to withdraw from it at any point during or after the focus group has been completed, up until the analysis stage in July 2017.		
I understand that I can keep a copy of this consent form for my records.		

Having read the information sheet and consent form, I confirm that I understand what is required of me for this research project and that I consent to taking part.

Signed: _____ (Participant)

Signed: _____ (Researcher) Date: ____ / ____ /_____

Your demographic details
Degree programme:
Year of study:
Age:
Nationality and ethnicity:
Occupations of your parent(s)/guardian(s):
Postcode of your permanent home address:
Do you have a disability?:
E-mail address for voucher:

Appendix VIII: Focus group recruitment poster