

Master Thesis

Ann-Elen Orvik

**Intimate Partner
Violence Against
Men: A Critical
Policy Analysis of
the Danish
National Action
Plan 2014-2018**

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List of abbreviations

IPV – Intimate partner violence

WHO – World Health Organization

DAV – Dialogue Against Violence

NGO – Non-governmental organization

EIGE – European Institute for Gender Equality

EU – European Union

WPR - `What is the problem represented to be?`

Abstract

Domestic violence is a problem that persists globally and has gained a lot of attention throughout the years in Denmark. This paper seeks to shed light on a little-researched aspect of domestic violence, namely intimate partner violence (IPV) against men committed by females. The purpose of this paper is to research if there exists coherence between how the problem of IPV against men is presented at the policy level and at the practical level. This thesis seeks to answer the question: How does the problem representation of intimate partner violence against men in the National action plan from 2014 align or not align with the practical level's perception of the problem?

In order to answer this problem statement, different types of methods and analytical tools have been used. The research design entails a single case study focusing on Denmark. The policy level's perception of IPV against men is analyzed by conducting a critical policy analysis of the National action plan from 2014 with the use of Carol Bacchi's 'What is the problem represented to be approached'. The practical level's perception of IPV against men is analyzed through qualitative interviews with the men shelter in Aalborg, Odense, Copenhagen and with the previous shelter in Viborg. This research has a deductive qualitative framework and a feminist constructivist perspective. In order to answer the problem statement, this paper researches how the policy level and practical level includes concepts like gender equality, patriarchy, gender stereotypes, and masculinity in their perceptions of the problem.

By analyzing the policy and the practical level perception of IPV against men, the following has been discovered:

The problem representation of IPV against men at the policy level is to enhance the qualifications of the professionals and offer more suitable measures towards male victims of IPV. The practical level view socially constructed notions of gender – gender stereotypes as a reason to lack of knowledge among professionals and insufficient measures tailored male victims of IPV. The problem representation at the practical level is therefore an attitudinal change in the society regarding notions of gender stereotypes. This research revealed several problematic aspects such as problematic cooperation between the men shelters and other actors, inequality at the juridical level and, how gender is understood in IPV and difficulties with the financial situation.

Keywords: Intimate partner violence, masculinities, gender stereotypes, WPR approach, critical policy analysis

Introduction

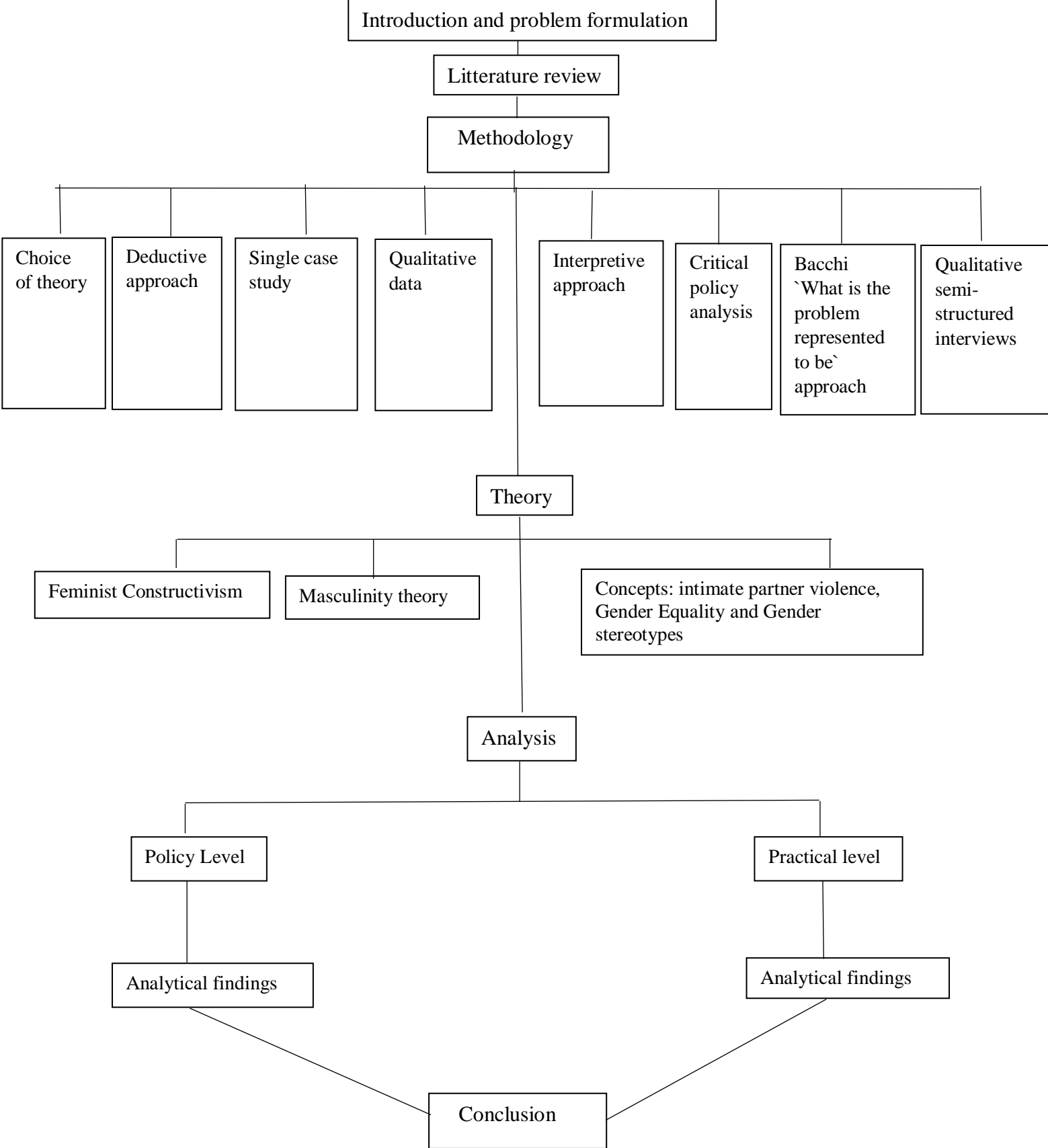
Approximately 19.000 men were victims of physical IPV in 2017, nonetheless, this is a unfamiliar subject for many people. IPV undermines gender equality, democracy, and fundamental rights. Male victims of IPV are contrary to the feminist literature that view IPV as a consequence of patriarchy. IPV against women is an area that has gained an enormous amount of focus the last decades. However, the same can not be said about IPV against men. The Danish Government has published four action plans towards domestic violence in the timeframe of 2002 to 2014 (LOKK, n.d.). However, male victims of IPV was not addressed as a main focus area until the current action plan published in 2014. I find it interesting that an entire group of victims were excluded at the policy level for several years.

This research will look into the current national action plan published in 2014, named “Measurements To Combat Violence In The Family And Intimate Relations”, and analyze how the policy level have represented the problem of IPV against men. Furthermore, the practical level’s perception of IPV against men will be analyzed in order to see if there exist coherence between the policy level and practical level. Studies on the IPV against have concluded that this subject consist of barrier that can hinder the men to reach out for help (Plauborg & Helweg-Larsen, 2012 & Gravesen, Olsen & Winther, 2015). I am interested in if these findings are included in how the problem is presented at each level. This topic is under-researched in the Danish context and there is a lack of quantitative and qualitative data.

A critical policy analysis with the use of Carol Bachii `what is the problem represented to be` approach will be conducted in order to go into depth with the action plan and bring in views and perspectives from several local actors that are working with this issue on a daily basis. Therefore, my problem statement is:

How does the problem representation of intimate partner violence against men in the National action plan from 2014 align or not align with the practical level perception of the problem?

In order to answer this problem formulation, I must research how each level represents the problem of IPV against men. Furthermore, I want to research if the so-called taboos are present and have an influence on this topic today. This thesis aims to explore this paradox of IPV against men in Denmark and contribute with new knowledge to this under-researched topic. I have divided the thesis into six chapters, and it is constructed according to the model following the next page.



Literature review

In the literature of IPV against men England and Norway are often mentioned to have come a long way regarding this topic (Holmer, 2017, p.142 & Gehlert & Haukrogh a, 2010). The latest action plan even refers to a Norwegian research regarding the needs of the male victims.

Denmark

Male victims were not addressed as a main focus area before the current national action plan that were published in 2014 by the Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and social Affairs (MCGEIA, 2014, p. 16). Most of the studies conducted on the subject of IPV against men are national reports. Male victims of IPV were shortly mentioned in a national report regarding violence against men published by the Ministry of Equality, which concluded that 8000 men were victims of physical IPV in 2005, and men in bisexual or homosexual relations were at a higher risk for experiencing IPV. However, this study did not research into the gender of the perpetrator (Frederiksen & Helweg-Larsen, 2008, p. 26).

Three years later, a national research looked into the men shelter in Copenhagen and Aarhus. Men shelters offer counseling and living facilities to men in crisis, thus have an offer to male victims of IPV. This research emphasized the importance of the men shelters existence (Ministry of Social Affairs, 2011, pp. 5-8). A year later the first study focusing on the experience of the male victims were conducted. The study concluded that there exists barriers related to the subject, and the vast majority of the male victims experienced psychological violence (Plauborg & Helweg-Larsen, 2012, pp. 9 &32).

The only research that is not a national study is a thesis published in 2015 by students Marie Winther, Ida Dal Gravesen and Mette Tegtmeier Olsen which focus on male victims and their storytelling. The study concluded that male victims of IPV experienced difficulties with the system and with identifying as a victim (Gravesen, Olsen, & Winther, 2015, p. 119). In 2018 a National report concluded that 19.000 men were victims of physical IPV in 2017 (Deen et al., 2018, p. 8).

Most of the research on the topic of IPV against men in Denmark are National reports, and the only scientific research I have been able to find within this area is the master thesis mentioned above. This might indicate how the problem of IPV against men is understood in the Danish context. The area of problem representation of the subject at policy and practical level have not been addressed.

Norway

In 2005 a National research on men and women's experiences of IPV concluded that one in five males had experienced physical IPV (Schei, Haaland, & Clausen, 2005, p. 13). A national research was conducted in the time period of 2008-2009, which focused on the male victims needs. This report revealed that male victims were affected by barriers related to gender stereotypes (Sogn & Hjemdal, 2009, pp. 6-8). In 2009 a gender-neutral law was implemented which made all the 47 crisis centers obligated to offer equal treatment options to both men and women (Lovdata, 2009 & Bufdir, 2018). In the time period of 2012 to 2015 the implementation of the gender-neutral law was evaluated, and confirmed that male victims still experienced barriers related to masculinity (Grøvdal & Jonassen, 2015, pp 9-11).

The last years several researches have been conducted with the aim to bring new knowledge regarding the subject of IPV against men. An ongoing research conducted by the Government will examine the underlying reasons, measurements and cultural understandings of IPV (Bufdir, 2015). Another national research concluded that male victims lack knowledge on where to seek help and addressed the challenges male victims meet related to their masculinity and with the authorities. According to this research the society possess gender notion regarding masculinity and femininity (Proba, 2017, pp. 1-3).

There are several actors that include IPV against men in their work, for example, the regional resource center on violence, traumatic stress, and suicide, offer education and courses to professionals that work within this area (RVTS, u.d.) Reform resource center is a center which offer help and counseling to men in crisis, and in addition, educate the public sphere on subject related to men in crisis. Reform can be compared with the men shelters in Denmark, however, reform is funded by the Government (Reform, 2018). The National action plans towards domestic violence is evaluated every 6 months (Norwegian Government, 2017). Furthermore, every municipality has their own action plan regarding domestic violence. The fact that every municipality has their own action plan and the obligation to offer equal treatment offer regardless the victim's sex show that Norway is one step ahead of Denmark (Ministry of Justice and Public security, 2014).

England

Compared to Norway and Denmark, several criminologies and psychological researches on the topic of IPV against men have been conducted in England. Erin Pizzey is an acknowledged family care activist who establishing the first crisis center in 1971 (one for women, and one for men). She conducted a study with 100 of the female residents, and concluded that women

are as likely to be violent as men. Thereby she argued that IPV is due to dysfunctional family structure and therefore is not gendered (Pizzey, 2009, p. 61).

Researcher Catriona Mirrlees-Black published a research on the topic of male victims of IPV already in 1999. This study concluded that the IPV threaten the men`s masculinity. Mirrless-Black claimed that embarrassment and shame are outcomes when men are assaulted by women (Mirrless-Black, 1999, pp. 61-61). Researcher John Archer cocluded in a study from 2010 that women use more physical aggression, while men were more likely to inflict an injury (Archer, 2000, p. 651). Danish and Norwegian studies concluded the same, however, the studies were conducted several years later (Plauborg & Helweg-Larsen, 2012, p. 9 & Proba, 2017, p. 2).

Some of these researchers in England concluded that male as often as women experience IPV. These studies also show that women take more damage from the violence than men, and according to researcher Mirrlees-Black, this is because men are physically stronger than women. This is compatible with Connell`s view on men and power, that is presented in the theory chapter (Mirrlees-Black, 1999, p, 62). Research within the area of IPV against men use different methods, and the studies that concluded equal violent behaviour between men and women often use a method name `conflict tactic scale`. This method measures the number of incidents, without taking the surrounding environment into consideration. This means that in a situation where one partner is acting in self-defense two incidents of violence will be registered. This method does not include stalking, choking or sexual abuse. The most famous study with this conclusion were conducted by the Americans researchers Strauss and Gelles in 1995 (Berns, 2001, p. 267).

None of the above mentioned research from Norway or Denmark use this methods, however the study by Mirless-Black do. In fact, some of the studies from Norway and Denmark expressed scepticism towards this method (Schei, Haaland & Clausen, 2005, p. 24 & Plauborg & Helweg-Larsen, 2012, p. 18). It can be problematic when Danish literatur and scholars refer to studies conducted with the conflict tactic scale method, since this will give an uncertain statistic. Therefore, it is important to be aware when this method is used. In depth analysis of the topic IPV against men were conducted on an early stage in England (1999) and Norway (2009), while Denmark did not have any extensive research before 2012.

Methodology:

In this section the methodological choices and consideration made throughout this research process will be explained. According to feminist researchers Brooke Ackerly and Jacqui True methodology is “*a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed*” and methods “*are the techniques for gathering, producing and analyzing evidence*” (Waylen G. , Celis, Kantola, & Weldon, 2013, p. 136). IPV against men is a complex topic and the reasons I chose to conduct a research on this subject were several, however, I must state that I encountered many limitations along the way. First of all, this area lack research. Furthermore, it was challenging to research into such a complex and sensitive topic, since it is contrary to the feminist literature view on violence. For IPV to occur there must be an uneven power relation, and the most common way to see this uneven power relation in feminist literature is with the man as the superior to women (FRA, 2015, p. 24 & Men shelter, 2018).

Theoretically, when researching on IPV, feminist researchers have focused on traditional notions of the patriarchal family structure in order to explain why IPV occur. The concept arrives from the society and can possess different meanings based on the culture.

Methodologically, feminist researchers have relied mostly on accounts from abused victims themselves, with the main focus on female victims (Johnson, 1995, p. 284).

I as a researcher must emphasize that I do not claim that IPV against men is more important than IPV against women. I argue that it is important to defeat IPV regardless the victim`s sex, gender, sexuality, race, class and so on.

Case study:

Case studies is the most suited strategy when how question is used as problem statement. According to Researcher Robert. K. Yin a case study is an empirical inquiry that is used as a research strategy to investigate a “*contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident*” (Yin, 1994, p. 13). A case study is the preferable research method when the researcher wants to reveal contextual conditions. Believing that these contextual conditions is of high pertinent to the studied phenomenon. The strength of case studies is the ability to handle a variety of evidence. However, case study as a research method have received criticism regarding lack of rigor, where the researcher`s equivocal evidence has influenced the direction of the research (Yin, 1994, pp. 8-9 & 13).

The research design in this paper is based on single case study and according to researcher Alan Bryman, a single case study is “*a research design that entails the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case*” (Bryman, 2016, p. 688). The main topic in this research is IPV against men, and a focus within this topic can be narrowed down to for example a country. This area of focus can be considered to be a case study since I am looking into the situation in Denmark, and not into the situation of all the Scandinavian countries. This research focus on how IPV against men is represented at the policy and practical level. This means that this study will provide a throughout understanding of this specific case; Denmark.

The generalizability of a single case is discussed amongst researchers. Bryman claims the generalizability can be low since it is uncertain if the findings are representative on a general level due to external validity. External validity is concerned with if the results can be generalized beyond the research context. Bent Flyvbjerg question Bryman`s view on single case studies and generalizability and claim that formal generalization is overrated as the main source of scientific progress. Low generalizability does not mean the knowledge obtained can not be of value in the process of knowledge accumulation in a specific field (Flyvbjerg, 2006, pp. 219-220 & 226-227). Flyvbjerg argues:

“One can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific developments via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific developments, whereas “the force of example” is underestimated

(Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 228)

My argument is that a detailed study of IPV against men in Denmark on the policy and practical level can shed valuable light on this complex and sensitive subject. In addition, the men shelters interviewed represent different geographically regions which contribute to the external validity and generalizability of this study. Such a case study might be central to scientific developments within a topic that is low researched and understood as IPV against men are.

I have chosen to conduct a qualitative approach in this study since I want to go in-depth in understanding how the issue of IPV against men is perceived at policy and practical level. I will adopt a deductive approach, which means that my theory will guide me in my analysis. Therefore, my theory is of great importance. I am aware that by working deductively, I can miss important features in the data because I am focusing on features that are in relation to the

theory. I will try to avoid the pitfalls of working deductively by paying attention to all important aspects and include those which are relevant to my analysis.

Ontology and Epistemology

Ontology is about how the researcher see reality and understand existence. Researcher Lindsay Mack define ontology to be the study of

“claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up to and how these interact with each other”

(Mack, 2010, p. 5)

There are two different ontological stands. If the researcher is external to the findings and believe that there is something to discover the researcher takes on an ontological position as objectivist. A constructivist ontology, on the other hand, is when the researchers believe that social actors influence the findings. The reality is not external to the actors. Social phenomenon is produced through social interaction, and the reality has something to do with relations. These interactions are in a constant state of revision (Bryman, 2016. pp. 28-30,693 & 689). In this study, I will take a constructionist ontological stand, based on the belief that the policy and practical level problem representation of IPV against men is influenced by relations and social actors, and is constantly changing.

Epistemology can be defined as *“a theory of knowledge”* and is concerned with which one can obtain the knowledge about the reality (Mack, 2010, p. 5). Bryman talks about three different epistemological stances: positivism, realism, and interpretivism. A researcher with an epistemological stand as positivist use methods of natural sciences to study the reality. The knowledge must be confirmed by the senses in order to be considered valuable knowledge, and it is only the knowledge gained through experience that is confirmed as approved knowledge (Bryman, pp. 14,16 & 690). A researcher with an epistemological stand as realist believes that the reality is independent of the senses. The categories that are created by the scientist refer to real objects. Realism is divided into empirical realism and critical realism. Empirical realism is when the researcher believes that the reality can be understood if the appropriate methods are used. Critical realism is when the researcher believes that the study of the social world is concerned with the identification of the structures of the world. Critical realism aims to identify structures in order to change them, therefore this stand acknowledges that the identified structured might be amenable to the senses and experiences (ibid, p. 690). The third stand, interpretivism, is concerned with acknowledging the differences between

people, institutions, and objects. The researcher should take a subjective epistemological position, and knowledge is seen as relative to the observer (Mack, 2010, pp. 7-8). In this study, I will discuss concepts such as IPV, gender equality and gender stereotypes. Feminist researchers are often interested in how masculinity and femininity shape politics. Feminist researchers “*open innovative areas of research by asking new questions and reframing old problems*” (Waylen et al., 2013, p. 140). I am interested in male victims of IPV and how this subject is represented at the policy and practical level. Male victims of IPV are incongruous with the traditional feminist theoretical literature, which explain IPV due to patriarchy and power structures. For me, as a feminist researcher, a feminist approach means to research with the aim to defeat civil, political and social inequality for both sexes. I will take on a feminist approach and my epistemological assumption is that “*knowledge claims are always socially situated*” (Harding, 1993, p. 54). The way we conceptualize and what kind of epistemic inquiry we use are socially and historically decided. The background of the researcher, meaning e.g. gender, ethnicity and class will affect the way of knowing. In this study, I will take an interpretive epistemological stance, as this is compatible with my feminist approach.

Critical policy analysis and Bacchi’s ‘what is the problem represented to be’ approach
In order to answer my problem formulation, I will conduct a critical policy analysis, taking the current national action plan as a starting point. Researcher William Dunn has defined critical policy analysis to be a process that “*critically assesses, creates and communicates information about the policy-making process*” (Dunn, 2014, p. 2). My aim with this research is to critically analyze the fourth National action plan problem representation of IPV against men, in order to see if there exists coherence with the perception at the practical level.

According to professor Emanuela Lombardo, Petra Meier and Mieke Verloo there are two main stands in the literature regarding gender and policymaking. The first is concerned if the feminist ideas, interests, and needs make it to the political agenda and into the policymaking process, while the other is interested with the construction of the policy problem. In the latter stand the ‘what is the problem represented to be approach’ (WPR) developed by the acknowledged professor of politics Carol Bacchi is suited (Lombardo, Meier, & Verloo, *Policymaking and Gender*, 2012, p. 6). This approach is a helpful tool and an analytical strategy to critically analyze policy documents and to understand the discursive constructions of policy problems. This method look beyond the main actor in order to understand the governing process. It offers a way of thinking that challenges the commonly accepted governing practices. This method does so by including other aspects and factors that could

have an influence on the governing process (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 13 & Bacchi, 2009, p. 26). Lombardo, Meier, and Verloo express the importance of the WPR approach in order to

“uncover the norms embedded in particular constructions of policymaking strategies, which are far from neutral and rather reflect hegemonic assumptions and taken-for-granted beliefs”

(Lombardo et al., 2012, p. 9)

This can explain why there can be slow progress or unintended consequences in some policies that have the aim to foster gender equality, because *“there is deeper cultural and institutional mechanism that reproduce patriarchal power”* (Lombardo et al., 2012, p. 9). This approach focusses on the aspect that governmental practices can produce a problem in the way it is represented. The WPR approach is inspired by Michel Foucault's idea about problematizations, and how these problematizations play a role in policies. These problematizations, meaning how specific issues were conceived as problems and their underlying assumption, interested Foucault. In his view, power was something positive and productive, that could make things happen. He claimed our views of the world are shaped by power and power relations. Even though Foucault claimed that the individual is separate from the power-taking actors, he stated, that we are affected by the power being exerted, since it affects our view on our self and others (Bacchi 2009, p. 5 & 37- 38). When the Government presents different action plans and other measures, it is assumed that a problem needs to be fixed. Bacchi argue that citizens are *“governed through the problematization rather than through policies”* (Ibid, p. xi). Politicians and governments are active in the production of a policy problem. Which issue that becomes a problem, depends on how the politicians and Governments view the specific issue, meaning that the political actors influence the way the problem is represented (ibid p. 1) The WPR approach is based on different aspects of a critical discourse analysis, since the researcher is interested in factors beyond the main actor. This method focus on how a problem is represented in a specific policy, and why it is presented in this specific way. By looking beyond the main actor the researcher is able to take a critical look at the productive activity. Bacchi claims that policies have a cultural dimension, and are shaped within a historical, national and international context. Through this approach values and norm in the policy are made visible (Ibid p. 1). The WPR approach consist of six questions that the researcher can use as a frame when conducting a policy analysis:

- 1)What is the problem represented to be in a specific analysis?
- 2) What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the `problem`?
- 3)How has this representation of the `problem` come about?

4) What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are the silences? Can the problem be conceptualized differently?

5) What effects are produced by this representation of the `problem`

6) How/where has this representation of the `problem` been produced, disseminated and defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted and replaced?

(Ibid, p. 2)

The WPR approach can be criticized for have a structured frame and make the analysis more divided. However, the list of question is only a proposal to how a policy analysis can be conducted. In this study I will not focus on question 5 regarding effects. This is an interesting research area; however, it is not relevant in order to answer my problem statement.

Furthermore, question 6 regarding focus on means through which the problem representation has been produced, defended and criticized is not fully addressed in this study due to lack of space. This question link to question 3 which focus on genealogy, therefore, aspect that reflect on why the problem representation have become dominant, and criticism to it is briefly presented under question 3. Since question five is not included in the study it is not presented below.

The first question explores why this exact policy is created. The aim is to “*identify implied problem representations in specific policies or policy proposal*” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 4). The WPR approach works differently than other policy analysis, since it goes backward, from the policy proposal to the reason why this proposal is suggested (Ibid, pp. 2-3). I will use this question to research what the fourth national action presented to be the problem.

The second question has the aim to “*identify and analyse the conceptual logics that underpin specific problem representation*” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 5). Question 2 open for a discourse analysis of the problem representation. Bacchi emphasizes the importance that discourse is more than languages, and includes what she calls conceptual logics, meaning values, assumptions, accompanying signs and presuppositions that needed to be in place in order for the policy proposal to make sense. An important aspect in this question is that the researcher is interested in the presuppositions and assumptions that “*lodge within the problem representation*”, and not the policy makers meanings and beliefs (Ibid, p. 5). By researching in binaries, key concepts and categories the researcher are able to identify how a meaning is

created. Binaries are present where there exists a hierarchical relationship where the one side is more privileged than the other. Concepts are filled with different meanings from individual to individual. Key concepts in policies are no exception. Therefore, it is of great importance to be aware of how people define the key concepts used in the specific policy (Ibid, pp. 7-8). In the governing process, we often find categories, especially people categories, and those categories play an important role in how the governing takes place. The aim of researching into the categories in the policy proposal is to see how these categories function, in order to give particular meaning to the representation of the problem. Foucault claims that categories of people are created throughout time, and these categories affect how you think about yourself and others (Ibid, p. 9). I will use question two in order to reveal the knowledge that is taken for granted in the problem representation in the action plan.

The third question is concerned with the decisions and developments (named the non-discursive practices) that have taken place in order for this problem representation to be developed. The researcher should look at the history of the problem – the genealogy – in order to see when possible key decisions were made (Ibid, pp. 10-12). Bacchi states that the aim of question 3 is “*to highlight the conditions that allow a particular problem representation to take shape and assume dominance*” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 11). Key decisions in the genealogy affect how the problem is presented, therefore the genealogy is of great importance in order to understand the problem representation (Ibid, p. 11). I will use question three in order to reveal key decision and development that could have had an influence on the problem representation.

The fourth question has the aim to “*raise for reflection and consideration issues and perspectives silenced in identified problem representation*” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 13). Looking into the limits of the problem representation the aspects that fail to be problematized is revealed. I will use question 4 to research into the aspects that have been silenced in the problem representation.

The sixth question is concerned with the relationship between the speaker, discourse, and the audience (Ibid p. 19). This question builds on question 3 regarding genealogy. The researcher is concerned with whether the problem representation achieves legitimacy and if it is able to influence/reach the target group. One factor that is important when answering question 6 in the WPR approach, is the role of the media.

The WPR approach is suited in order to answer my problem statement since it gives me the possibility to go beyond the main actor and look at how the sensitive topic of IPV against men

is perceived at the policy and practical level. Furthermore, the WPR approach is concerned with power relations, and IPV is a subject that includes uneven power relations.

Dataset

Primary sources

Primary sources are original materials that have not been interpreted or evaluated by other (Bryman, 2016, p. 11). I rely on different types of sources in this study. My primary source is the current national action plan published in June 2014, named “*Measurements to combat violence in the family and in intimate relations*” (hereby referred to as the action plan) (MCGEIA, 2014). The action plan was published by the Ministry of Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs, on behalf of the Government. An action plan is a policy created by the Government and is therefore influenced by the respective party’s ideology. When the action plan was created the Government consisted of the parties Social Democrats and the Center Party: Radical Left. The ideologies are explained under the theory chapter. One of the main focus areas in the action propose to strengthen measures and knowledge about male victims (MCGEIA, 2014, p. 7).

My second primary source is qualitative interviews I have conducted in order to analyze the practical level’s perception of IPV against men. There are none tailored facilities for male victims of IPV. However, two crisis centers for men (in Horsens and Fredericia) and five men shelter work in the area of IPV against men (in Aalborg, Århus, Odense, Esbjerg and Copenhagen). None of these works explicitly with the area of IPV, but towards men in crisis in general. The crisis can be due to financial status, divorce and so on. The crisis center has a broader target group than the men shelter. The men shelters mainly focus on IPV against men, however, it is still not explicit towards male victims of IPV.

In this study I have decided to focus on the men shelters, and not the crisis center for men, since the target audience is broader for the crisis center. The first men shelter was established in 2006 in Copenhagen. Today five men shelters in Denmark exists (Aalborg, Århus, Odense, Esbjerg and Copenhagen). The latest statistics show that 5.064 men contacted the men shelters in 2014, and 108 of them needed a place to live. In 46 % of the cases the men shelter did not have any room available (the statistics also included the two crisis center for men) (National Board of Social Services, 2016, p. 9). The interviews in this research are conducted with employees from the men shelters in Aalborg, Odense, and Copenhagen. The men shelter in Esbjerg and Århus could not participate in this research due to lack of time and resources. The interviewees have different work positions and by interviewing different levels it is

possible to uncover different types of challenges and perceptions. The respondent was given the opportunity to be anonymous, however, the interviewees wanted to be recognized by their name. The interviewees are:

Name of interviewee:	Work position:	Work place:
Rene Vinding Christensen	Head of department	Aalborg men shelter
Kalle Vestergaard	Social Worker	Aalborg men shelter
Helle Øhlenschlager	Coordinator	Odense men shelter
Marie Winther	Project coordinator	Copenhagen men shelter
Morten Ebdup	Former leader	Viborg Men shelter

The interviews represent different men shelters geographically and thus it will increase the analytical generalizability of the research. The interviews are semi-structured because I emphasize the importance of having a dialogue, so the interviewees so can talk freely. Furthermore, I want to be able to vary the sequence of questions and provide follow up questions (Bryman, 2016, p. 488). The interviews with the men shelters are comparative designed in order to find out if they have different perception of IPV against men. This is achieved through asking the same set of question, however, some follow up questions have been asked in situations that needed clarity or more elaboration. In some interviews several questions have been answered in some way in a previous question, therefore some questions are not asked. The interviewees were not given the questions beforehand. The questions are open-ended in order to encourage the interviewee to share information unasked. This gives me the opportunity to pay attention to all important aspects and features, and not just those that are important to my concepts and theories. By conducting semi-structured interviews and the fact that the interviewee contribute freely to the dialogue will minimize the risk of working deductively (Ibid, pp. 201 & 468). For feminist researchers, the semi-structured interview has become the preferred data gathering method. This method minimizes the use of power relations that can occur in a structured quantitative interview. Semi-structured interviews with a focus on dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee gives the researcher the possibility to offer information to the interviewee without a hierarchal relationship (Westmarland, 2001, p. 8 & Bryman, 2016, p. 488). A face to face semi-structured interview is therefore the preferred research method for me as a feminist researcher, however, not all the participants were able to offer me this kind of interview. Therefore, I had to use different methodological tools in order to gather the data. The

interviews with the men shelter in Aalborg and Copenhagen were face to face interviews. Due to financial cost and time, the interviews with Odense men shelter and Morten Ebdrup were conducted over telephone. It would be preferable to use the same research method with all the interviewees, but unfortunately, that was not possible in the data gathering period. The personal face to face interviews is conducted in the interviewee's familiar environment – in the men shelter they work. This is a decision that is conscious in order to make the interviewee feel comfortable and in a familiar surrounding that can help them feel more secure, and thus tell me more. The several interviews methodological tools have pros and cons. With a telephone interview, I am able to have a dialogue and follow up questions. On the other hand, I am not able to read the body language of the interviewee. I have thought carefully about the quality and structure of the interview, since the interviews are of significant importance in order to gather data that can represent the practical level.

I used different interview guides for the men shelters and with Morten Ebdrup. Both consisted of main topics and sub questions, however, I was not bound by the sequence, since I wanted to have an open dialogue with the interviewee. The interviews with the men shelters were concerned with their challenges and views while the interview with Ebdrup were mainly concerned with the financial difficulties he experienced as the leader of Viborg men shelters. I acknowledge the importance of the relation between the interviewer and the interviewees, in order to make the interviewee comfortable to tell me about their understanding of the problem and their considerations. This is why the first set of questions are about their practical challenges. This gives the interviewees the opportunity to tell about their own experiences. The questions regarding the relation with the Government are presented at the end of the interview, as long as the interviewee do not present this relation earlier themselves. I emphasize the importance of having a natural flow and dialogue. If I had opened up the possibility to criticize the Government earlier in the interview, the following answers would might have been influenced and therefore more focused on the challenges and reflections from the Government and not their personal perception. See appendix 1 on the set of questions. By structuring the interview in this specific way, I minimize the risk of bias when working deductively.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed with consent from the interviewees. The interviews are transcribed as close to the spoken language as possible in the following days after the interview (Kvale & Brinkman, 2014, p. 240). All the participants received the opportunity to do the interview in English or Danish. Four out of five interviewees were

comfortable with expressing themselves in English, while one interviewee wanted to speak Danish and the interviewee is aware of the bias with translation. Regarding use of foreign language in interviews, there are pros and cons. Some interviewees can experience this as a barrier, and therefore limit their capacity of talking freely. On the other hand, when interviewees talk in their mother tongue some meanings can get lost in the translations. In order to reduce the bias connected to translation, all the interviewees have approved the quotations used in the study. The data was coded directly after the transcription in order to take a critical look and understand the data. According to Bryman coding is “*generating an index of terms that will help you to interpret and theorize in relation to your data*” (Bryman, 2016, p. 581). The significant marks in the data were noted.

Secondary sources

Secondary sources are data that have been interpreted by others (Bryman, 2016, p. 309). My secondary sources are studies that support or have other measurements to offer. I will rely on the four action plans published towards IPV. In addition, I rely on research conducted for and by the Danish Government in order to analyze their policies, measurements, and official position. I will also look into other sources that have other measurements to offer. One of those are a Danish study on male victims of IPV and their storytelling, conducted by three master students named Ida Dahl Gravesen, Mette Tegtmeier Olsen and Marie Winter. This is the first research conducted in Denmark with a main focus on the voices of the male victims, and this research gives me knowledge about the different challenges the male victims meet. Furthermore, the National Institute of Public Health published a report in June 2018, that gives me quantitative statistics on the number of male victims of IPV.

Criteria for research design

Internal validity

Internal validity relates to the issue of causality. If I as a researcher can be sure that x causes y, meaning that there are specific factors that cause the action (Yin, 1994, p. 35 & Bryman, 2016, p. 692).

External validity

The validity of the data is concerned with if the data is trustworthy, meaning if the data has been confirmed and used by others. External validity is fulfilled if the findings can be generalized beyond the research context (this is discussed in the section case study) (Yin, 1994, p. 35 & Bryman, 2016, p. 691). I am using a method of analyzing where I supplement various data sources in my research, meaning that I only rely on sources that have been

confirmed by others and be aware of methodological barriers. This will increase the trust in the validity of findings in this study.

Several Scandinavian articles and reports refer to statistics which conclude that men and women are equally violent (Holmer, 2017, p.142, Ugeavisen Odense, 2009 & Gehlert & Haukrogh a, 2010). However, research conducted in Scandinavia conclude that women experience more incidents of IPV than men (Deen et al., 2018). The fact that there exist several contrary studies leads to non-valid statistics about the number of male victims of IPV. Furthermore, it leads to insecurity and confusion about this topic that is so little researched. The reason for these contrary statistics is due to the different definition and research methods on the topic of IPV against men. Most of the studies that conclude the same amount of male and female victims use the method named “conflict tactics scale”, as presented in the literature review. Based on these findings it is difficult to find an exact statistic that is valid, however, since Denmark is one of the Scandinavian countries, I will rely on research done in Scandinavia and be aware of the methodological barriers.

reliability

Reliability of the data is concerned with stability of the data. External reliability is fulfilled if the study can be done several times and achieve the same findings. Therefore, it is important that my study has a high level of transparency. Internal reliability is fulfilled if the answers from a survey or interview are coherent. When this is fulfilled errors and biases in the study is minimized (Yin, 1994, p. 36 & Bryman, 2016, pp. 692 & 695).

Relevance

Relevance is concerned with the selected sources, and their relevance to the research topic. My research topic is IPV against men, therefore sources about other forms of violence against men are not of high relevance since it will provide insufficient data (Bryman, 2016, pp. 383-386 & Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008, pp. 271-272)

Since I am using different types of sources, and different research methods, I will increase the trust in the validity and reliability of the findings in this study. I expect the chosen sources to give me sufficient data in order to make a coherent analysis and minimize the risk of bias. It is of great importance that my sources fulfill the criteria of reliability, validity, and relevance.

Theory:

In this section, I will introduce and define the theories and concepts I use in analyzing how the policy and practical level represent IPV against men. When asking this question, we can look at theories that focus on social interactions, and how these interactions can influence the view on a specific problem. The theories I will use in this research is feminist constructivism and masculinity theory. Furthermore, the concepts I will use are IPV, gender equality, patriarchy, gender stereotypes, and masculinity.

In this study, a feminist approach is used to examine power relations and the constructions of hegemonic notions of masculinity and femininity. Many feminist researchers connect IPV with male dominance over women. When the roles are switched there is a lack of research and literature. In this study a focus on a feminist analysis has a twofold goal: to understand how IPV against men is represented at policy and practical level and to explore the construct of gender and masculinity. Therefore, I will use feminist constructivism to guide this research. Furthermore, I will use Connell's masculinity theory in order to analyze if the policy or practical level refer to masculinity, and if this is the case, which type of masculinity.

Feminist constructivism

feminist constructivism builds upon the theory of constructivism, since it provides with an epistemological approach where meanings and knowledge are believed to be generated by human interactions and ideas, through norms, dialogues, and rules. The difference between constructivism and feminist constructivism is that the latter focusses on how ideas about gender influences politics (Vaiphei, 2015, p. 17). According to Vaiphei feminist constructivism *“argue that gender differences between men and women unlike the anatomical differences, are constructed due to socialization and cultural training”* (Vaiphei, 2015, p. 17). Feminist constructivism promotes the idea that gender differences are constructed due to cultural and social environments, meaning that their concepts and definition are socially constructed (Vaiphei, 2015, pp. 17-18). Feminism have been defined as the belief in political, social and economic equality of the sexes. However, most of the studies which have a feminist approach focus on women. Feminist theories of international relations have received criticism for this, and to exclude masculinity of power in their studies (Vaiphei, 2015, pp. 6 & 25). Human behavior is constructed by the surroundings.

Feminist constructivism is chosen in this study due to an understanding of politics and meanings as being socially constructed. In this sense, how the policy and practical level view IPV is viewed as constructed in a process of social interactions. I will use the theory to see if

the constructed power relation has influenced the policy level perception of IPV against men. Considering the definition of feminism both sexes should receive attention where it is needed, and therefore I argue that the theory of feminist constructivism can be used when researching into the area of IPV against men.

Masculinity Theory

An acknowledged feminist researcher on masculinity is Raewyn Connell. Her theory on hegemonic masculinity, emphasized femininity and gendered power relations is viewed in a context to violence. Connell address this connection mainly with IPV against women, however, Connell`s concept of hegemonic masculinity is important in order to understand hierarchies among men. She addresses the aspect of power in gender relations, and gendered power relation is understood as male dominance over women. The concept of gendered power relation is also linked to body politics, meaning that men have a physic that naturalize the power they have over women. Masculinity is not only created as an opposite to femininity but there also exists other forms of masculinity. She talks about masculinity in several forms – hegemonic, subordination, complicity and marginalization (Connell, 2005, pp. 77-80 & 85) According to Connell, masculinity is socially constructed and changes across time and space. Connell emphasize the importance of relations between different forms of masculinities, in order to prevent a subdivision of characters (Ibid, p. 76). She also states that all the forms of masculinities mentioned above are in relation with each other, however, some forms of masculinity are more powerful than others, namely hegemonic masculinity.

Hegemonic is inspired by Antonio Gramsci`s concept about culture hegemony, which is defined as a process where a social class has a dominant position in the society. This form of power is based on an understanding and a form of acceptance between the strong and weak part of the society (Groes-Green, 2009, p. 295). Connell explains hegemonic masculinity as an ideal and as “*the form of masculinity that is culturally privileged at any one time*” (Waylen et al., 2013, p. 120). In Connells theory hegemonic masculinity is connected to characteristics as aggression, authority and power, and it privileges a certain group of men, and thus subordinate other groups (Connell, 1987, pp. 186-187). This means that hegemonic masculinity is about power relations between men and women, but also between men (Connell, 2005, p. 77). This form of masculinity is changeable since it is socially constructed, however, this is not an easy process. In order for something to be called hegemonic, it should possess institutional roots, meaning through practices in politics and military. It has to have a

successful claim to authority (Ibid, pp. 75 &77). A man that experience violence from a female partner and seek help will not be defined as hegemonic masculinity (ibid, p. 77). There exists a need for understanding how to analyze forms of masculinities that do not fit into the category of hegemonic masculinity. Subordination masculinity is a form of masculinity that is dominated by hegemonic masculinity. Complicity masculinity is a form of masculinity that takes benefit of hegemonic masculinity, but however, does not live up to its normative definitions. The last form of masculinity, marginalized masculinity, is masculinity that marginalizes different groups of people in the society due to class and race (Ibid, pp. 78, 79 & 80-81). By using a constructivist approach, masculinities and femininities are understood as social and cultural constructions.

In this study I will mainly focus on the masculinity aspect, however Connell also addressed femininity, and in order to understand the view on power relation, femininity is therefore explained below. Connell argued that emphasized femininity have a lack of hegemony, since there is not evident for a dominant relationship, which can be seen amongst men. Connell associate emphasized femininity to sociability and child care responsibilities (Connell, 1987, pp. 182 & 187-188). Even though Connell's theory is acknowledged, it has been criticized for the division of masculinities. Therefore, Connell opened up for a more performative approach where masculinity can vary from context to context (Messerschmidt & Connell, 2005, pp. 836 & 841-843). The Danish gender researcher Christian Groes-Green critics Connell's theory for only adress masculinity in negative terms. He argued that:

“Although Connell clearly leaves room for alternative masculinities, these are primarily defined in negative terms, as male practices and ideals that are subordinated to more hegemonic forms and therefore it remains unclear how phylogynous and gender equitable masculinities might develop”

Groes-Green, 2012, p. 95)

The masculinity, as presented by Connell, consist of negative characteristics such as aggressive, unemotional and non-nurturing. Groes-Green talk about philogynous masculinities as *“representing diverse male subjectivities that challenge prevalent gender hierarchies”* (Ibid, p. 93). Groes-Green talk about masculinities that can blend together, where males can manifest in myriads of different performances, practices, and discourses, all shifting from one context to another, and must be understood as locally constructed subjectivities (Ibid, pp. 91-94). I as a researcher acknowledge that male victims of IPV can possess different forms of masculinity depending on the social context.

In this study, I will use the theory of masculinity to see if the aspect of masculinity is included in the policy and practical level representation of IPV against men. The concept of masculinity and femininity is seen as important when researching into IPV and in order to understand how the policy and practical level view these terms, and IPV against men.

Ideologies

There are three classic ideologies – liberalism, socialism and conservatism. Liberalism is for little state interfering and free competition (Heywood, 2013, s. 32). Socialism on the other hand is concerned with social responsibility, where the state is the leading actor in the society. Furthermore, equality is one of the most important elements in the ideology of socialism (Ibid, 2013, p. 39). Conservatism is for a moderate state power and is against equality, meaning that equality influence the possibilities of the elite. Furthermore, this ideology is concerns with keeping the traditions (Ibid, p. 35). In addition to these classic ideologies there exists newer ideologies such as social-liberalism, which is between these two ideologies and is concerned with Social responsibility and free competition. I will use these ideologies while looking at the respective Government, and their view on gender and gender equality. However, these classic ideologies were founded by men, and the ideologies is therefore built on men`s assumption on the world, and their world view. Therefore, the ideology feminist emerged which has been analyzed in terms of a division between socialist, liberal and radical schools (Ibid, p. 49).

Concepts

In the following section, I will provide an explanation of the concepts used in this research, namely IPV, gender equality, gender stereotypes, patriarchy and power relations. I will show my approach in using these concepts in this study.

Intimate Partner Violence

My starting point for this study is the current national action plan toward violence in the family and in intimate relations. While IPV can be understood as violence in the family, and not only between partners, I will use the term intimate partner violence (IPV), as it is used in the action plan (nære relationer). However, these concepts are widely used with the same meaning in the literature. The concept of IPV is not defined in the action plan, however Denmark have ratified The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). This convention`s

definition of domestic violence is often referred to in studies regarding IPV. The Istanbul convention defines domestic violence as:

“Domestic violence shall mean all acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrators share or has shared the same residence with the victim”

(Council of Europe, 2011, p. 3).

As the title states, this convention is concerned with domestic violence against women.

However, the definition in the convention is gender-neutral.

The World Health organization defines intimate partner violence to *“any behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship”* (WHO, 2002, p. 89). IPV can be acts of physical aggression, various controlling behavior, and psychological abuse (Ibid p. 89). In this study I will not analyze different forms IPV, since my problem statement is concerned with how the policy level and the practical level represent IPV against men. I am focusing on IPV where women are the perpetrator and men is the victims. The definitions mentioned above of IPV does not focus on which sex the victim possesses. In this study, I am focusing on how the action plan is presenting the problem of IPV against men and how the practical level perceives this representation. An aspect I must consider when reading studies on IPV, is that it can be seen differently from country to country. Therefore, I will focus mainly on Scandinavian studies regarding IPV. Furthermore, statistics referred to in this study show physical IPV, due to lack of studies regarding phycological violence.

Gender Equality

Denmark is a member of the European Union (EU), and the European Institute for gender equality (EIGE) is a body of the EU developed with the aim to strengthen and contribute to the promotion of gender equality. EIGE defines gender equality as:

“This refers to equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women`s and men`s rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female” (EIGE, u.d.).

This definition includes both men and women and reflects a society where limitations do not exist due to the victim's sex. Gender equality is important in my study since IPV is contrary to this fundamental right. I am interested to see if the policy and practical level perception of the problem of IPV against men has taken the gender equality definition into consideration.

Gender stereotypes

Feminist researcher Judith Butler talk about gender as something that is socially constructed and created by a series of acts that is influenced by religion, class, race, sexuality, society, environment, culture and so on. Gender is influenced by acts that the individual learns through their lives and confirming what is known as masculine and feminine, also known as gender stereotypes. Characteristics of a group are generalized based on their gender (Butler, 1990, p. 523). Sex is defined as biological and is related to anatomical features. Sex does not define the gender, and it is important to emphasize that these two terms are different from each other. It is important to emphasize that different societies give different meaning to gender stereotypes. Masculinity and femininity are socially constructed categories that are constructed by the surroundings on how a male and female should act. These views on gender and sex are confirmed and reused by several feminist researchers, such as researcher Walter DeKeseredy (Waylen et al., 2013, pp. 33-47 & DeKeseredy, 2011, p. 299).

A man is often associated with masculinity, while a woman is associated with femininity. These categories are socially constructed sets of behavior's that the society associates with either a woman or a man (Waylen et al., 2013, p. 145). Masculinity is linked to the provider and protector and is associated with domination, freedom, and command. Femininity, on the other hand, is linked to being emotional, weak, caring, and is associated with obedience and subordination (Ibid, p. 116). These expectations of what it is to be a man or a woman might have an influence on policies, institutions and how men and women live their lives.

Sociologist Michael Kimmel and Michael Messner claimed that "*Men are not born; they are made. And men make themselves, actively constructing their masculinities within a social and historical context*" (Fleming, Gruskin, Rojo & Dworkin, 2015, p. 7). Men and women learn these gender stereotypes throughout a process of socialization. Many studies and researchers such as Kimmel and Messner claim that this process can lead to men commit violence, in order to maintain or regain masculinity and control. In fact, there are few studies that focus on the opposite direction – where the male is the victim and the gender stereotypes are

influencing. In this study, I will research if the gender stereotypes have an influence and/or is present on at the policy and practical level.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy can be defined as a system of male power, where the men have power over women (Waylen et al., 2013, pp. 112 & 115). The acknowledged researcher Sylvia Walby claims in her book *“theorizing patriarchy”* that male violence against women cannot be understood without the patriarchal aspects (Walby, 1990, s. 128). Feminist scholar Kate Millet claims that *“patriarchy is a universal phenomenon with a wide range of tools at its disposal”* (Waylen et al., 2013, p. 15). According to Millet, this can be seen in how the sexes are socialized, how the family is structured with the male as the head of the family and the use of power in order to keep the women a subordinate place. Millet talks about patriarchy as a dyadic relation. Where the one part is dominant, and the other part is subordinate. This view on patriarchy is supported by other scholars like Catharine MacKinnon and Shulamith Firestone. The latter says that the history shows that power structures are male dominant, and males have used their power in order to keep women in an inferior position (ibid, p. 115).

None of the researchers mentioned above talks about the situation where the male is the subordinate. Many feminists use the theory of patriarchy to explain why IPV occurs. This is a theory that is so embedded in the feminist literature, that a situation where the male is the victim is unrealistic. This ideological construction of masculinity in the literature, research and in the society may render it less acceptable for male victims to be acknowledge.

Researcher Vanita Sundaram talks about violence and masculinity in her Ph.D and conclude that violence and masculinity have become naturalized, although what actually links violence and masculinity is the social constructions of masculinity (Sundaram, 2007, p. 47). Author Philip W. Cook argues in his book *“abused men – The hidden side of domestic violence”* that IPV occurs from more complex factors than patriarchy. Furthermore, he questions how the patriarchy explains IPV in a homosexual relationship. Cook claims that the environment surrounding the individual has an influence (Cook, 1997, pp. 28-31). I will use the concept of patriarchy to see if the policy and practical level use this concept, if so, how do they use it, and if it has an influence on their work.

In the literature of IPV several studies connect IPV with power and gender relations and argue that these factors are the reason for IPV. Connell`s theory, and the concepts presented above will be used in other to research how the policy and practical level view IPV against

committed by female perpetrators, since this is contrary to many of the studies (Walby, 1990 & Ali & Naylor, 2013).

Analysis

In this analysis question 1,3 and 6 from the WPR approach will be divided into policy and practical level. The policy level will be analyzed with the current action plan as the main source. The practical level will be analyzed with interviews from men shelters as the main source. In addition, other sources that support or question this view will be used. Under question 2 and 4 each assumption and silences the policy and practical level will be analyzed. In order to provide a clear analysis.

Problem representation

Question 1: What is the problem represented to be in the National action plan from 2014?

This question is concerned with the problem representation, and a problem in this approach is referred to as the change that is implied in the proposal (Bacchi, 2009, p. xii). How the problem is represented will reveal how the policy level view the problem of IPV against men. In order to answer question 1, the action plan will be analyzed in order to see which changes that is suggested in the area of IPV against men.

Policy level

IPV against men have entered the political agenda, despite of the statistics showing a low number of male victims compared to female victims of IPV. The action plan refers to high statistics regarding IPV against citizens in Denmark and express the necessary to focus on this problem due to gender equality. The action plan state that “*Violence in intimate relations does not reflect our opinion of a society based on respect and gender equality*” (MCGEIA, 2014, p. 5). This understanding of IPV is coherent with Connell’s understanding of power relation where an unequal power relation is what cause IPV (Connell, 1987, pp. 184-187).

Within the area of IPV against men two main changes are presented. The first address the lack of sufficient knowledge regarding this subject among the professionals. It is not explained who the professionals are, and this category is open for discussion. However, the workers at the men shelters expressed difficulties with other actors such as social workers, police and the municipality due to lack of knowledge. At the policy level this lack of knowledge is assumed to be due to taboos. Again, the action plan does not go in detail with which kinds of taboos it refers to and if it is due to cultural norms (MCGEIA, 2014, p. 12). Previous studies conclude that the barriers are related to notion of gender stereotypes (Plauborg & Helweg-Larsen

2012), thus it can be assumed the professionals might be holding onto constructed expectations related to gender.

According to the action plan, the professionals have limited experience of handling male victims of IPV, and this is expressed as a reason for why the level of knowledge is low. It can be argued that this is connected to Connell's view on gendered power relations where women are subordinate to men (Connell, 1987, pp. 186-187 & Connell, 2005). By stating that this is an unfamiliar area, the action plan confirms that male victims of IPV do not "fit into" the category of how men are usually viewed by the professionals (Ibid, p. 12).

The action plan states that a consequence of these views on gender is that the male victims are not being taken seriously. Dialogue Against Violence (DAV), which is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that offer counseling to both partners experiencing IPV. According to DAV 10 % of the perpetrators in their program is women, however only 2 % of the victims are men. The majority the participants in their program is or were in a heterosexual relationship. This indicates that several male victims of IPV do not seek help (Dialogue Against Violence, 2018, p. 5). Can the taboos that influence the professional's knowledge also influence the male victims to not seek help? This aspect is not elaborated on in the action plan and will be addressed under the chapter 'Silences in the Problem Representation'. There is a wish to enhance the knowledge the professionals possess in order to challenge the existing norm regarding men as superior to women.

The second change that is presented in the action plan is to develop more sufficient measures tailored male victims of IPV. According to the action plan male victims are not offered suitable services and facilities, and there is a gap between the measures offered to male and female victims. As mentioned in the methodology chapter there exists none tailored measures towards male victims of IPV, and this do not reflect a gender equal society. The sex of the victim determines which support are offered, which indicates discrimination. This is further elaborated under question 2 regarding assumptions to the problem formulation. In order to offer sufficient measure practice-based studies are developed with the aim to offer knowledge of this low-researched area. This is an ongoing project that will end this year. In addition, an already existing hotline will be upgraded to included information about male victims of IPV (MCGEIA, 2014, p. 12).

The Government (Helle Thorning-Schmidt II) emphasized that including male victims and a shift in focus regarding IPV did not lead to less support for female victims. In fact, the action plan is mainly concerned with IPV against women and defend this by referring to statistics showing that the majority of IPV are women (MCGEIA, 2014, p. 5).

To sum up, the problem representation at the policy level is to enhance the qualifications of the professionals and to offer more suitable measures towards male victims of IPV.

Practical level

The practical level focus mainly on one aspect that needs to change, namely gender stereotypes. In their view, the professional's knowledge and the insufficient measures are due to the notion of gender relations and use the words "*tradition*" and "*old way of thinking of gender*" as reasons to why the men are not offered equal measures compared to female victims (Appendix 2, p. 2 & Appendix 3, p. 3). By using these types of words, it is referred to patriarchal view on violence where men are superior to women. This view is also coherent with Connell's view on gender relation. However, the practical level challenge this understanding of power relations when claiming that men can also be victims of IPV.

Kalle claimed that these notions of gender relations influence all aspects in the society and emphasize the need for an attitudinal change in several aspects than just among the professionals. The gender stereotypes are created through a process influenced by social and historical interactions, and Kalle referred to situations in the public sphere that reinforce the gender stereotypes. Among others, he mentioned media as a contributor to uphold these notions of gender relations through for example advertisement (appendix 2, pp. 2-3 & 9).

The action plan stated that male victims could experience barriers in the process of seeking help, due to lack of knowledge among the professionals. This is confirmed at the practical level which told stories where men are automatically assumed to be the perpetrator (Appendix 3, pp. 6-7). This can be seen as a consequence of lack of knowledge among the professionals due to gender stereotypes. This is supported by the study by Winter, Gravesen and Tegtmeier Olsen where several of the interviewed men emphasized the need for understanding and sufficient help from the authorities (Gravesen, Olsen, & Winther, 2015, pp. 63-65).

According to the practical level, the male victims experience barriers not only from the professionals, both also in the public sphere. Helle claimed that male victims are not accepted in the public sphere and stated that people think "*you are a joke if you say that you are a*

victim” (Appendix 5, p. 8). The difficulties regarding acceptance of male victims can be seen as an effect of the gender stereotypes. Connell talked about hierarchy between groups of men, and the group of male victims can be seen as subordinate to the group of hegemonic masculinity. Male victims also have difficulties with identifying as a victim. According to Rene, this is due to own expectation on what it is to be a man and to the society’s expectations of the male gender. This can relate to Connell’s understanding of hegemonic masculinity as the ideal form of masculinity (Connell, 1987, pp. 186-187).

To sum up, the practical level is concerned with gender stereotypes as a taboo that leads to lack of knowledge among the professionals, and lack of sufficient measures. The problem representation at the practical level is therefore an attitudinal change in the society regarding notions of gender stereotypes

The different perceptions of the problem representations reflect a division between the policy level and the practical level. Since this study is a critical policy analysis, I will in the remainder of the analysis use the problem representation at the policy level and implement the practical levels perception on this problem representation.

Presuppositions and assumption to the problem formulation

Question 2: What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the problem?

Question two in the WPR approach is concerned with the background knowledge that is taken for granted in the problem formulation. The aim is to reveal which meanings that needed to be in place in order for such a proposal to be suggested. According to Bacchi, discourse is knowledge in the WPR approach, and I as a researcher is interested in the knowledge that the problem formulation rely upon (Bacchi, 2009, pp. 5-7). I will research into the presuppositions and assumptions that needed to be in place in order for the Government to present the problem representation of enhance the qualifications of the professionals and offer more suitable measures towards male victims of IPV. Below each assumption the practical levels views will be implemented.

Increasing problem

Policy level

An assumption to the problem representation of enhancing the professionals qualifications and created tailored measures towards male victim of IPV is that IPV against men is an increasing problem. Most of the statistic conducted on victims of IPV rely on registrations of the victims. Therefore, it exists a high insecurity regarding the numbers of IPV against men.

In 2012 a National report concluded that 13.000 men experienced physical IPV each year, however, this research relied on registrations, and a survey conducted with men who had been registered (Helweg-Larsen, 2012, s. 74). A National report published later the same year expressed concerns with the existing statistics and claimed that the number of male victims of IPV can vary from 9.000 to 18.000, since the earlier statistics were based on registered incidents. This research used different types of methods, from quantitative registrations of incidents to qualitative interviews with male victims and workers at the men shelter. In addition, the research relied on two National surveys with respectively 6.946 and 1.234 respondents (Plauborg & Helweg-Larsen, 2012, p. 22). The latest statistics regarding IPV concluded that 19.000 men were victims of physical IPV in 2017. This statistic is based on self-reported exposure from the Danish National Health Survey from 2017 (Deen et al., 2018, pp. 8 &12).

These researches concluded that the number of male victims of IPV have increased, however, the increased level can be due to increased awareness IPV against men. However, several reports conclude that even though there has been an increased awareness of IPV against male victims, the area still consist of barriers related to notions of gender that have a negative influence on male victims (Plauborg & Helweg-Larsen, 2012, p. 67, Ministry of Social Affairs, 2011, pp. 49-50 & National Board of Social Services, 2018, Gravesen, Olsen & Winther, 2015).

To sum up, statistics show that there has been an increase in the number of male victims of IPV, however, this increased can be questioned to be due to increased awareness regarding the subject.

Practices level

The organization Fundamentet, which is the umbrella organization for the men shelters in Denmark, were established in 1998, and were supported financially from the special pool for the social areas. The first shelter for men opened in 2006, following two men shelters in 2008, one in 2009, and another one in 2010 (Fundamentet, u.d.). As mentioned before, the men shelters are directed towards men in crisis, and not specific due to IPV, thus it is not known if the special pool for social areas focus on IPV against men, or if the focus was directed towards men in crisis in general.

News articles from 2011 stated that the men shelters were crowded and did not have the capacity to help more men (TV2, 2011 & Extra-bladet, 2011).

The practical level claimed that the vast majority of the men who contacted the men shelters experienced some kind of IPV, either psychological or physical (Appendix 5, p. 2 & Appendix 2, p. 1). So even though the men shelters are directed towards men in crisis in general, the statements from the practical level indicates that most of the men contacting the men shelters have experienced IPV. In the interviews with the men shelters it was revealed that the men have difficulties identifying as a victim, due to the notions of masculinity. According to Marie, men often contact the men shelters asking for practical help, such as legal counseling and living facilities, and the stories regarding IPV are first discovered throughout the process (Appendix 4, p. 2). The fact that many of the men come to the men shelters for practical reasons, and not for explicitly for the violence can indicate that several men live with IPV and do not seek help until there is a practical problem.

The former leader of Viborg men shelter, Morten Ebdrup, stated that the men shelter was forced to close down in 2014 due to financial issues. Ebdrup argued that the number of demands were too many for the men shelter to handle, since it was mainly run on voluntary work.

To sum up, the men shelters were established in the time period of 2006-2010 and was already crowded in 2011. The interviews from the practical level show that the majority of men contacting the men shelters have experienced IPV, furthermore, the workers confirms that the level have increased.

Discrimination exists

Policy level

An assumption to the problem representation of enhancing the professionals qualifications and created tailored measures towards male victim of IPV is that IPV against men is that discrimination exists. Several studies on IPV against women have been conducted, but IPV against men is still an under-research subject. This leads to lack of knowledge among the professionals and in the public sphere regarding how to deal with IPV against men. As mentioned under question 1, the action plan expressed the need to deal with IPV since it is contrary to gender equality. According to Bacchi, the need to focus on gender equality is based on the fact that discrimination is present (Bacchi, 2009, pp-187-188). Not having equal treatment offers is a barrier to the concept of equal opportunity which is a dominant discourse that has a major role in shaping the views on gender relations. Uneven distribution of measures towards male and female victims of IPV indicates that discrimination exists, since the treatment offers presented for the victim, is based on the victim's sex.

This assumption relates to the fact that usually we expect this discrimination to be directed at women but in this case, it is the contrary. This action plan reinforces the idea that both sexes are discriminated against, and experience IPV. The policy level challenge Connell's understanding of gender relations, by introducing male victims of IPV.

In Denmark, women are secured by the service law §109 that ensure all female victims of IPV and their children access to women shelters and thereby tailored treatment options. Men on the other side, are not included in this paragraph. Male victims of IPV who contact the men shelters and need a place to stay, are registered as homeless under the service law § 110. This paragraph secure living facilities to citizens who are homeless and have social problem. In other words, it is gender-neutral. The paragraph that secure victims of IPV, only secure female victims, thus male victims are discriminated. The law possesses notions regarding to gender relation, where women are subordinate to men. The social service law is gendered, meaning that it reproduces distinctions in gender identities (Ministry for Children and Social Affairs, u.d. & Krook & Mackay, 2010, p. 6). The fact that the victim's sex influence the treatment options is not coherent with EIGE's definition of gender equality (EIGE, u.d.). In addition, the Danish law of gender equality aims to counteract direct and indirect discrimination based on the victim's sex (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2013).

To sum up, the assumption that discrimination exist is confirmed at the policy level through the uneven distribution of tailored measures towards male and female victims of IPV.

Practical level

All the interviewees claimed that male victims of IPV are discriminated. Kalle argued "*when you don't have the same law for women and men, it's kinda like discrimination. Its very discrimination*" (Appendix 2, p. 3). During all the interviews the topic of discrimination were brought up by the respondents as a major issue in the area of IPV against men (Appendix 3, pp. 8-9). A consequence of not offering male victims of IPV tailored measures is that some men that are considered too dangerous, due to threats that follow him, are not offered any help at all. The men shelters lack security measures and resources, and is not tailored to male victims of IPV (Holmer, 2017, pp. 135-136 & Appendix 4, p. 3).

It can be discussed if there is a need for equal policies regarding IPV in general, or if there is a need for a target policy regarding the male victims, named gender-specific actions (Lombaro, et al, 2012, p. 16). Rene was the only interviewees who brought up this question and expressed the importance of not having a target policy regarding male victims and argued

that it would only divide the genders even more. Distinguishing between male and females will only contribute to the gender bias and according to Rene “*sends a signal to the society that domestic abuse is a separated issue* (Appendix 3, p. 5). It can be assumed that Rene has a patriarchal resistance view on IPV. Statistics from the men shelters in 2014 concluded that the perpetrators of IPV against men were mainly women. This has challenged the understanding of IPV against men as something that is due to patriarchy and male domination (National Board of Social Services a, 2017 & National Board of Social Services, 2016, p. 21).

To sum up, the practical level confirms that discrimination exists, and rely this assumption on the fact that male and female victims of IPV are offered different treatment options based on their sex.

Professionals knowledge

Policy level

One assumption to the problem representation of enhancing the professional’s qualifications and created tailored measures towards male victim of IPV is that if the professionals gain knowledge then part of the problem will be solved. The action plan states that

“the experience of handling men exposed to violence is limited for professionals in the local authorities etc. Also, violence against men is subjected to special taboos. A need, therefore, exists to offer professionals knowledge and information about this group of people exposed to violence” (MCGEIA, 2014, p. 12).

Measurement with the aim to enhance the qualification of the professionals presented by the action plan is to upgrade the homepage `violence in the family` (Ibid, p. 11). This website present information on certain taboos, such as loss of masculinity and difficulties talking about the subject. The factors are socially constructed norms, and the professionals lack knowledge regarding these norms (National Board of Social Services, 2018).

To sum up, one assumption to the problem representation is that by enhancing the professional’s knowledge, a part of the problem will be solved.

Practical level

The practical levels expressed difficulties when working with other actors within the area of IPV against male victims, due to lack of knowledge (Appendix 2, p. 6 & Appendix 3, pp. 1-2). This is further elaborated under question 4 regarding silences in the problem representation. Nonetheless, even though some part of the problem is due to lack of knowledge among the professionals, the practical level emphasized the importance of dealing with the view on gender stereo types in all the layers of the society. If the notions of gender

relations and hegemonic masculinity influence the male victim do not seek help, the fact that the professionals possess sufficient knowledge will not solve the problem. There is a need for an attitudinal change within the society regarding these notions of gender stereotypes that creates

To sum up, the practical level expressed difficulties when working with other actors in the subject of IPV against men, however, the main focus is to deal with the gender stereotypes in the society.

Understanding of gender in IPV

The understanding of gender in IPV is an assumption that needs to be addressed. How the policy level understands gender in the context of IPV influence how the problem is represented. The question if IPV is gendered have been highly discussed between different scholars. On the one hand researchers in family conflicts have argued that IPV is due to family disfunction and therefore is not gendered. Researchers such as Erin Pizzey and Philip W. Cook is advocates for this view on violence (Pizzey, 2009, p. 61 & Cook, 1997, pp. 28-31). On the other hand, feminist scholars argue that IPV is due to patriarchy and therefore is gendered. Researcher Johnson argues that the *“pattern of violence is rooted in basically patriarchal ideas of male ownership of their female partners”* (Johnson, 1995, p. 284). While Researcher Sylvia Walby from the book *‘theorizing patriarchy’* argue that violence can not be understood without analyzing the social structures of patriarchy (Walby, 1990). Researchers who argues that IPV is gendered often argue that female victims are more severe injured than male victims. The researchers which argue that IPV is not gendered often argue that the number of incidents is close to equal for men and women (Straus, 2010, pp. 349 & 347). In this section I want to research if the policy and practical level view IPV as gendered, in order to understand their problem representation.

Policy level

The policy level overall focus in the action plan is towards IPV against women and the Governments 2020-goal is to reduce the number of women needing more than one stay at a crisis center by at least 30 % (MCGEIA, 2014, p. 5). However, male victims of IPV are acknowledged at the policy level since male victims are introduced as a main focus area in the action plan. The action plan state that *“The focus of the Government's measures has been and still is to combat violence against women and children”* (MCGEIA, 2014, p. 5). Nonetheless, the action plan emphasizes that *“all people must have the possibility of a life free from violence”* (MCGEIA, 2014, p. 5). This action plan sends mixed signals regarding

understanding of gender and reproducing of gender stereotypes. On one hand, the action plan is the first to present male victims as a main focus area, which is contrary to the understanding of IPV as gendered. On the other hand, the action plan continues to reproduce the patriarchal view on gender, when the majority of the focus and measures are towards female victims, and by excluding female perpetrations in a pilot-study regarding perpetrators if IPV. This prioritizing of focus can be because the statistics show that more females are victims of IPV against men. More women are severe injured by male perpetrators, however, that does not mean that it doesn't happen to men. These statistics are coherent with Connell's understanding of hegemonic masculinity where the severe injuries caused on female is due to the physical strength of the men. Furthermore, the severity of IPV can also be connected to Connell's understanding of hegemonic masculinity which possess characteristics as aggressiveness (Connell, 1987, pp. 186-187).

The policy level's understanding of gender in IPV is influenced by ideologies. The fourth action plan were created by the Government under Helle Thorning Schmit and consisted of the parties Social Democrats and the Center Party Radical Left. Both these parties are concerned with barriers related to gender and this have most likely influenced the view on gender in IPV (Stelling, 2013 & Nielsen, 2013). However, there are aspects that reproduce the notion of gender stereotypes in the action plan, one of those is the initiatives for a pilot study with temporary facilities for male perpetrators (MCGEIA, 2014, p. 8). Implying that women are victims, furthering the notion that women are subordinate, and send a signal that female perpetrators do not exists. Throughout the action plan the main focus is on women as victims, and from this it can be assumed that men are seen as the perpetrator of IPV. This indicate assumptions that men have power and are aggressive while women are perceived as submissive. This is also coherent with Connell's understand of unequal power relations where she implies that men as perpetrators are superior of their partner. The fourth action plan opens up for the possibility of bilateral violence and male victims, however, as mentioned before the main focus is still on violence against women. Despite that several international studies conclude that bilateral violence, meaning that both partners are violence towards each other, is the type of violence that is most often conducted (MCGEIA, 2014,p.15 & Elkit & Bøgelund, p. 25).

The question is where the focus should be, and if the policy level should recognize that female perpetrators exists. The dividing of the sexes where the females are given much more attention than the males, give the impression that the IPV against women is of a greater

importance than IPV against men. Nonetheless, the fundament was asked to contribute with input to the fourth action plan, this is a huge step forward is getting acknowledged by the Government (MCGEIA, 2014, p. 18). The Government have an underlying idea of violence as a gendered perspective, since the main focus is on female victims. However, by including male victims in the action plan this Government goes against what has been commonly understood as a feminist approach to IPV, based on the structural explanations related to patriarchy and gender stereotypic roles. It can seem like the Government are drawn between two stands, one that focus on IPV as a gendered issue, and one that emphasize gender equality for both sexes. The Danish Government states that “*violence in unacceptable, regardless of who is exposed to it and that all people exposed to violence have access to support and help*” (MCGEIA, 2014, p. 6). When presenting male victims in the action plan, the Government distance themselves from the patriarchal reasons for why IPV occur.

To sum up, it can seem like the policy level is drawn between two stands, where it at one hand address IPV as gendered since the action plan reproduce gender stereotypes in some section, and the main focus is on female victims. On the other hand, the policy level included male victims of IPV and thereby challenge Connell`s notions on gender relations. It can seem like the policy level view IPV as gendered, however, that does not mean that the level does not acknowledged male victims

Practical level

The interviewees at the practical level claimed that IPV is not gendered. Rene relied his argument on statistics that showed IPV in homosexual relationships. Statistics from 2018 concluded that 11% of the men asked had a male partner, and 9% of the female asked had a female partner (Deen et al., 2018, p. 8). Rene argues that “*and as such it generally shows that this is not a gendered issue, its actually more common for women to beat each other up than it is for men*” (Appendix 3, p. 2). IPV is so tabooed, that we will never be able to know exactly how many victims of IPV exists. A study demonstrated that masculinity is something that men do, and not what men is. Masculine traits are learned throughout social interactions, and it is argued that females can learn to do masculine gender. The same can be said about males doing feminine gender. This can explain the situations where women conduct IPV against men. In addition, it can also explain IPV in a homosexual relationship where the one partner possesses masculine traits, while the other possess feminine traits (Próspero, 2008, p. 641). Furthermore, IPV in a homosexual relationship can be due to gender stereotypes, since

power relations can also be between men. Hegemonic masculinity dominates other types of masculinity (Connell, 2005, p. 77).

Furthermore, Rene states it does not make sense to differentiate between sexes or sexualities. Only women are allowed in the crisis shelter for women in order to be protected against violent men. According to Rene, the women crisis shelter argues this is because the women would be traumatizing the women to be in the same place as men. According to Rene, this argument does not hold anymore, he argues that

“Any women victim of domestic abuse from a female partner will then just, from their [The women shelter. Red.] argument be retraumatized every day by being forced to be in a shelter where there are only women. So, their argument doesn’t really hold in regard to gender and sexuality in any way” (Appendix 3, p. 2).

It is clear that Rene do not acknowledge the dividing of male and females regarding to crisis shelters, and in general in the policies. Again, statistics show that IPV conducted by a male perpetrator towards a female victim is more severe It can be questioned if this is related to Connell`s understanding of hegemonic masculinity where aggressiveness is related to the severity of IPV (Connell, 1987, pp. 186-187). A lot of men are physically stronger than women, and when we look at history there have been power relations where men are the superior over women. Most of the IPV against women is conducted by men (97%), and this could explain why the women shelter argue that it is important to secure the women. Rene challenges Connell`s theory by claiming that the physical strength of the man do not necessary mean that the damage he make is more severe, in fact, Rene claimed that many male victims that do possess physical strength is *“beaten completely senseless by a small woman”* and do not hit back due to the idea that a man should not hit a woman (Appendix 3, p. 3). This does not mean that male victims should not receive the same amount and quality of help, however, there are some aspects that needs to be included, such as power relations (Deen et al., 2018, p. 8).

Kalle emphasized the importance of a gender-neutral approach to the whole area of IPV against men and stated that *“you just have to realize that a person in need, is a person in need. It is gender neutral”* (Appendix 2, p. 5). The idea of male superiority and female inferiority is challenges in the statement by Kalle regarding gender-neutral approach.

It is clear that the interviewees understand sex and gender as something that should not define the policies and argues that the policy should be gender-neutral in order to achieve

gender equality and provide sufficient measures towards male victims. If gender is removed, the consequence is that gender is not a factor anymore. However, when there is an uneven power relation, gender is a factor and Connell relate IPV to hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005, pp. 76- 78).

When Rene argues with a patriarchal-resistance discourse he reframes the problem of IPV from a patriarchal problem to a problem of human violence. Kalle stated that *“I think the number of male victims and female victims must be approximately the same. Why shouldn't it be?”* (Appendix 2, p. 9). When Rene and Kalle degender the frame, meaning removing gender from the framing of the problem, and argue for a gender-neutral policy, they undermine the role of gender and in the abused relationship (Berns, 2001, pp. 265-266). Researcher Nancy Berns argue that the argument that *“men and women being equally violent, is often used as a strategy to degender the problem”* (Berns, 2001, p. 267). However, several researchers with patriarchal resistance such as Kathrine Dunn, Armin Brott, Sidney Siller, Judith Sherven and James Sniechowski, rely their argument on studies that concluded that women are as violent as men. The most addressed study in this field were conducted by Strauss and Gelles in 1995 in England, that concluded that women and men were equally violent to each other (Berns, 2001, p. 267). As mentioned under the chapter literature review, the study by Strauss and Gelles use a method named `conflict tactic scale` where the purpose of the violence is not taken into consideration. Most of the critics of the female-centered approach to IPV refer to the study by Strauss and Gelles. However, even Strauss and Gelles have acknowledged the possibility for misuse among the criticism, and have stated that regardless to the amount of violence, and who started it, women are more likely than men to be injured (Berns, 2001, p. 267)

Rene argued that dividing the sexes and not having a gender-neutral policy and law forgets to take into account that there exist different sexualities, non-binary gender and gender identifications. However, the argument that women and men are equally violent ignores the statistics and research that conclude that the majority of victims are women. Marie adds that not having a gender-neutral law send a signal that men is not exposed to IPV Marie expressed that *“there are some special rights that you have, which are connected to that specialized paragraph that men that are exposed to domestic violence doesn't have”* (Appendix 4, p. 4). Morten argued that *“If people need help, they should get the help regardless if they are a women or a man, black or white and so on”*(Appendix 6, p. 3). Not offering tailored

treatment offers to male victims can indicate that discrimination based on the sex of the victims exists.

To sum up, the practical level argue that IPV is not gendered.

These assumptions or knowledge taken for granted is necessary to disclose in order for the problem representation to be intelligibility.

Genealogy

Question 3: How has this representation of the `problem` come about? The third question in the WPR approach is concerned with the non-discursive practices such as key decision and developments that have taken place in order for this problem representation to be presented (Bacchi, 2009, pp. 11-12). I will research when the problem formulation, or when the topic of IPV against men achieved focus in the political sphere.

Policy level

The Danish Government has developed four National action plans towards IPV. The problem representation of the policy level is enhancing the professional's qualification and create measures towards male victims, however IPV against men have not been addressed in detail at the policy level. Therefore, the context in the policy level in this question focus on IPV against men in general.

First and second action plan

In the first and the second action plan men are associated as the perpetrator of IPV. Even the title of the second action plan says so; "*National action plan to prevent men's violence against women and child in the family 2005-2008*" (Danish Government, 2005, p. 1). Through these action plans the categories of perpetrators of IPV and victim of IPV are presented as gendered categories. This contribute to the notion of gender stereotypes and give the professionals and the public sphere the impression of which sex belongs to which category – men as perpetrators and women as victims. Nothing indicates that male victims of IPV exist in the first and second action plan. Sociologist Donileen R. Loseke researched how views on battered women influenced how the professionals met these women. The main findings in her research is that wife abuse was not acknowledged in the public sphere in 1970, but that did not mean that wife abuse was not present. The same can be said about male victims of IPV. Even though male victims were not included in the political sphere in the first and section action plan, does not mean that it did not occur in the private sphere (Loseke, 2001, p. 107).

Male victims of IPV were not a social problem and therefore did not gain attention in the public and political sphere.

Third action plan

Male victims were first introduced on the political agenda when the third action plan was launched in 2010. The title “*National Strategy to combat violence in close relations*” was for the first-time gender neutral. The first sentence in the action plan stated, “*no women, men or children shall live with violence*” (Danish Government, 2010, p. 5). This is the first-time men got recognized as possible victims of IPV. Male victims show a different picture of power and contradicts the gendered categories. Connell’s definition of masculinity and femininity neglect the aspect of women’s IPV towards men. However, the action plan still reinforces the gendered categories as men as the perpetrator and women as victims. Treatment offers is directed towards male perpetrators of IPV and the possibility of female perpetrators are not addressed (Danish Government, 2010, p. 8). These action plans are coherent with Connell’s theory on gender relations.

In 2010 Lars Løkke Rasmussen was the Prime Minister and the parties in the Government were the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party. Lykke Friis from the Liberal party was the Minister for Gender Equality. The Liberal Party stand for a society where everybody regardless their sex, age, religion and so on have equal rights, however, the party believes that it is not the right way to interfere with legislation. Conservative Party is for gender equality however, the party do not want to interfere in the family and believes that the citizens know best. It can be assumed that the Conservative party with their conservative ideology have a more traditional view on gender than the Liberal Party (Liberal Party, n.d & Conservative Party, n.d.). In a news article Friis did not divided between men and women when talking about IPV but addressed the issue as gender-neutral (Nyhus, 2010). There are few news articles in the years before 2010 that address the issue of IPV against men. However, one news article from 2009 highlights the problematization with discrimination from the authorities and negative influence from the gender stereotypes (UgeAvisen Odense, 2009). One could assume that the ideology of the Liberal Party might had an influence on why the title were gender-neutral (Prime Minister’s office, u.d.). The third action plan did not mention the problematic with lack of knowledge among the professionals or lack of sufficient measures towards male victims. However, it did call out for a research on male victims in order to achieve knowledge regarding the support system. So, it indirectly stated that there exists a lack of knowledge on the topic of IPV against men. The outcome of this initiative was

the already mentioned research conducted by Helweg-Larsen and Plauborg (Danish Government, 2010, p. 20).

Fourth action plan

As already mentioned, the fourth action plan is the first that presents male victims of IPV as one of the main focus areas, however, the main focus overall is still on women. The action plan refers to statistics concluding that 29.000 women and 10.000 men were victims of IPV in 2012 (MCGEIA, 2014, p. 5). The number of victims varies every year, so the reliability of these statistics can be questioned. However, the increased number on the statistic can be a reason for why the latest action plan still has a main focus on female victims. Based on the increased focus on male victims in the political sphere it can be assumed that male victims of IPV have started to become a more societal and public problem. This indicates a change in the political focus within the topic of IPV. The focus has shifted from only women to both women and men.

The Government during the establishment of the fourth action plan consisted of the parties Social Democrats and the Center Party Radical Left, with Helle Thorning Schmit (Social Democrats) as the Prime Minister. Schmit was the first female prime minister and a self-presented feminist (Ministry of the State of Denmark, n.d.). Both these parties emphasize the importance of dealing with barriers related to gender, and their ideology have most likely had an influence on why male victims were given focus in the fourth action plan.

Manu Sareen was the Minister for Children, Gender Equality, Integration and Social Affairs. He was the first male minister for gender equality and was an advocate for including male victims of IPV in the policies. In the years before the publishing of the fourth action plan media started to give the subject of IPV against men attention in the public sphere, most likely because of the report published in 2012 by Plauborg and Helweg-Larsen. The Minister of Gender Equality Manu Sareen stated that he would bring knowledge from this research by Plauborg and Helweg-Larsen when the Ministry were going to develop a new action plan (Jyllands-Posten, 2013). In a news article in 2013 he argued that no matter the sex, the victim should be offered sufficient treatment offers. Furthermore, he claimed that the authorities do not possess adequate and sufficient knowledge, and a consequence is that the male victims experience discrimination when reaching out for help. He emphasized the importance of enhancing the qualifications to the professionals and wished for a debate in the public sphere with the aim to create an understanding and language for this problematization (DR a, 2013). The combination of Helle Thorning Schmit as the first female feminist prime minister, and

Manu Sareen as the first male minister for gender equality have most likely influenced the focus in the fourth action plan. This Government emphasizes the importance of gender equality in several aspects, and the Minister for Gender Equality Manu Sareen stated that gender equality should be implemented in the service provided by the municipality.

The focus on gender equality indicates that this is a part of a broader agenda for this specific Government, and therefore the Government distanced themselves from the feminist discourse on violence when presented IPV against men as one of the main problem areas in the fourth action plan. Thus, challenge the patriarchal thinking regarding IPV as discussed under question 2 section `understanding of gender in IPV` (Stelling, 2013 & Nielsen 2013). In August 2013, the Government granted 36 million to the area of IPV. Manu Sareen expressed that he would emphasize that a part of the money would be used in regard to IPV against men (Kristeligt Dagblad, 2013). The action plan refers to a Norwegian research from 2012 that elaborate on the specific needs of the male victims of IPV (Bufdir, 2012 & MCGEIA, 2014, P. 16). This indicate that the Danish Government has been influenced by the Norwegian policies and research on the area of IPV against men.

After the action plan

In 2015 a new Government were elected. This Government consisted of Denmark`s Liberal Party, and Ellen Trane Nørby was the Minster of Children, Education and Equality. In an article in the newspaper `Berlingske` she defended the focus on male victims of IPV. She stated that IPV against men have not been prioritized sufficiently, and that the number of male victims is increasing. Therefore, according to Nørby, there is a need for focus and help to both sexes (Mansø, 2015).

A new Government were elected the year after (2016), and consist of the parties Liberal Party, Liberal Alliance and the Conservative Party. Karen Ellemann from the Liberal Party was the Minister for Gender Equality from November 2016 until May 2018. She expressed the importance of acknowledging different forms of IPV, where both men and females are victims (Folkemann, 2018). In 2017 the Parliament launched an initiative named live without violence founded by the special pool for social areas, which have the aim to spread knowledge about IPV and offer counseling to both professionals and victims. The actors in this national unit are dialogue against violence, LOKK, Danner, Mothers Aid Organization and fundament (National Board of Social Services b, 2017) .The fact that the fundament is included in this cooperation is a huge step forwards regarding IPV against men.

From May 2018 Eva Kjer Hansen from the Liberal Party is the Minister for Gender Equality. Hansen is a self-proclaimed feminist who stand for equality. In an interview with the newspaper `Politiken` in June 2018, Hansen emphasized the importance of reevaluate the effort in the area of IPV, since the statistics show an increase in both men and female victims. She stated that there is a lack of women crisis center and men shelters, and this was not sufficient (Mølgaard, 2018). The shift in focus regarding male victims of IPV can be explained by the politicians' background and ideology.

However, this shift from a focus in IPV against women to IPV against women and men have received criticism. GREVIO, which stands for Council of Europe`s Group of Experts on Action Against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, is an independent expert body. GREVIO has aim to monitor the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating violence against Women and Domestic violence (The Istanbul Convention) by the members of the European Union. In November 2017 GREVIO published a report that criticized Denmark`s fourth action plan for being to gender neutral. GREVIO expressed concern regarding the shift in political focus and claimed that it would lead "*fewer women-only specialist support services exist*" (GREVIO, 2017, p. 7). This group of experts state the importance of continue to address violence against women as a gendered phenomenon since some types of violence affect women disproportionately. The debate regarding IPV as a gendered phenomenon or not is the core of this criticism. The action plan state that everybody should live a life without violence. Due to the social constructed societies expectations of masculinity and femininity IPV against men is a subject that needs to be addressed. The Danish Government (Lars Løkke Rasmussen III) defended the shift in focus by stating:

"The Danish Government believes that every individual who has been subject to violence in intimate relations shall receive appropriate assistance and support based on the needs of the individual – and that efforts must be made to prevent violence in intimate relations regardless of the gender of the victim (Danish Government, 2017 p. 22).

This statement indicates that the Danish Government under Lars Løkke Rasmussen view IPV as gender neutral.

To sum up, from the first-time male victims of IPV were mentioned in the third action plan in 2010 there have been an important development. The different Governments ideologies have most likely had an influence in why the topic gain focus in the political sphere. The different Ministers of Gender Equality have defended the shift in focus from IPV against women to IPV against women and men. The shift in focus regarding male victims of IPV can be explained by the politicians' background and ideology.

Practical level

The development of the organization Fundamentet and the men shelters from 1998 to 2010, have pushed for attention towards the area of IPV against men. According to Rene the men shelters have pushed for a bottom-up approach and pressured the Government regarding financial support since 2007 (Appendix 3, p. 9). Furthermore, he mentioned that several civilians put pressure on the Government in the years before the fourth action plan by presenting research on the topic. In 2010 Journalist Bøge Gehlert and Line Lykke Haukrogh published a series of articles regarding taboos linked to IPV against men. The articles presented the issue of discrimination from the authorities towards male victims, the psychological violence and the challenges of gender stereotypes (Gehler & Haukrogh a, 2010, Gehler & Haukrogh b, 2010 & Gehler & Haukrogh c, 2010). This serie of articles presented the problematic taboos in the public sphere such as shame, discrimination of the authorities, and difficulties with identification as a victim. Karin Helweg-Larsen and Rikke Plauborg are also important players with their research from 2012. After this research were published the National media started to give attention to the subject and addressed the taboos (Juul, 2013, Fyens Stifttidene, 2013 & DR b, 2013). It can be assumed that the research by Helweg-Larsen and Plauborg and the attention in the media was a key development that influenced the problem representation in the fourth action plan.

Kalle argued that the debate in Norway regarding implementing male victims of IPV in the law influenced the debate in Denmark (Appendix 2, p. 6). In fact, all of the interviewees mentioned the debates in Norway as an aspect that might had influenced the Danish Government focus on male victims. The debates in Norway regarding treatment offers to male victims started in 2008, when the Ministry of Children and Equality suggested to establish a gender-neutral law regarding crisis center for both men and women, in order to defeat discrimination and fight for equality. Some actors were critical to this proposal and argued that including men would mean less focus and security for the female victims and remove the

aspect gender have in IPV (Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality, 2008). However, the suggestion got approved in the Government, and the gender-neutral law was implemented in 2010. The fourth action plan even refer to a Norwegian survey, which indicate that the Danish Government were influence by the debates in Norway.

A breakthrough for the men shelters regarding being acknowledged came in 2017 with the establishment of the national unit named live without violence as mentioned under the policy level. According to the interviewees this national unit have addressed the subject of IPV against men in the public sphere, and to be included in the collaboration is a step in the right direction (Appendix 2, p. 7 & Appendix, 3, p. 15). However, it is not without difficulties, as Rene said, “*they [the other actors in the national unit. red] still believe it is significantly one-sided towards the woman*” (Appendix 3, p. 15).

Regarding the public debates the subject of IPV against have received attention, however, Marie mentioned that “*we have to shout out low*” in order to get attention in the public sphere (Appendix 4, p. 7). This shows that the development has moved in the right direction, even though the subject of IPV against men still meet a lot of challenges and difficulties In fact, all the interviewees brought up this collaboration as an important step in the fight for gender equality (Appendix 2, p. 8, Appendix 3, p. 15, Appendix 4, pp. 7-8 & Appendix 5, pp. 6 & 11). This co-operation will most likely give more focus on the aspect of male victims of IPV in the public and political sphere.

To sum up, the civil society have pushed for a bottom-up approach since 2007 with demands on financial support to the men shelter and by revealing taboos linked to the subject of IPV against men. The debates in Norway regarding the topic of implementing a law is seen as a key decision to why the topic gain political focus according to the practical level. The shift in focus have been defended by establishing the national unit `Live Without Violence` and implementing the men shelters.

Silences in the problem representation

Question 4: what is left unproblematic in this problem representation? where are the silences? Can the problem be conceptualized differently?

This question in the WPR approach focus on perspectives and issues that have been overlooked in the problem representation, in other words, the aspects that fails to be problematized. Bacchi states that “*specific policies are constrained by the way in which they represent the `problem`*” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 13). This question reveals what the policy level

did not emphasize in their problem representation. Thereby, I am available to address and discuss the aspects that are left out of the policy. In this research I will address the silences that fails to be problematized in the action plan and use the empirical data from the practical level to identify the silences.

Financial support

Policy level

The women crisis center is supported financially by the municipality and the state refund 50 % of the used amount of money. In 2012 the budget for the women crisis center was 220 million, while the men shelter had a budget of ten million (Holmer, 2017, s. 137 & 140).. The action plan state that there exist eight man-centers and two crisis centers for men, and at four of these centers' men can stay temporary. However, several of these men shelter have been shut down due to financial status, and today there only exists 5 men shelters and two crisis centers. The men shelters have received financial support through the special pool for social areas, however, the amount of financial support, and if they even receive support differ from time to time. This creates an unsecure environment for the men shelters.

To sum up, the men shelters are supported through the special pool for social areas, however, this is uncertain from year to year.

Practical level

The fact that male victims of IPV is not included in §109 that secure female victims of IPV effect the financial situation of the men shelters. A high number of the men that visit the men shelters receive treatment without the need of living facilities. This is of course positive however, the men shelter does not receive financially support from the municipality when the male victims are not enrolled in the center as homeless. As a consequence, a majority of the workers at the men shelters are volunteers. The men shelters have been supported with both Governments and private funds to contribute with different projects, however according to Rene the amount is not sufficient in order to handle and give quality counseling to the male victims (Appendix 3, pp. 11-12). Morten Ebdруб, the former leader of Viborg men shelter, told that the shelter were forced to close down due to financial issues, the men shelters were promised financial support through the special pool for social areas and through the finance law, however, the offer did not stand. The majority of the workers were volunteers, and the number of male victims increased, and therefore the amount of help offered, and the amount of help needed were not coherent (Appendix 6, p. 1). In fact, several men shelter have experienced difficulties with the financial aspect, and some of them were forced to shut down

According to Rene, this is due to the difficulties and challenges with the service law §109, where men are not included (Petersen, 2015 & Østergaard, 2015). Furthermore, he emphasized the difference between the crisis center for women which receive financial support, and the men centers that experience difficulties (Appendix 3, p. 2). The men shelters and crisis center for women should not be compared due to different target group, however, it is difficult to not acknowledge the difference in financial support.

It is interesting that the Danish Government is aware of the need to address the insufficient measurements towards male victims, however, after the latest action plan were launched several of these men centers have been shut down due to financial issues.

To sum up, the men shelters are reliant on financial support and this leads to an uncertain future and several men shelters have already been shut down.

Gender stereotypes

Policy level

As mentioned before the action plan state that the subject of IPV against violence is subjected to taboos without going into details which taboos the policy refer to (MCGEIA, 2014, p. 12). A reason for not going into depth with these taboos could be that the policy level lack knowledge. A measurement that supports this claim is the ongoing project with the aim to conduct knowledge on this topic. Can these taboos influence the workers at the men shelters and the male victims to not seek help? The study conducted by Plauborg and Helweg-Larsen in 2012 concluded that gender stereotypes influence the male victims (Plauborg & Helweg-Larsen, 2012, p. 9). The action plan mentioned that the men meet barriers, and the aspect of not living up to the hegemonic masculinity can be seen as one of the barriers. These findings are also supported by other researches on the topic, such as the study by Helweg-Larsen and Plauborg. Their research concluded that male victims had conceptions on what it would say to be a `real man`, and that being a male victim of IPV was not one of the aspects that fit into this category. The report stated that male victims experienced the victim role as a defeat since this is contrary to their conception of a `real man` and that a `real man` does not show weakness. This can be seen in relation to Connell`s theory where the hegemonic masculinity possesses traits as aggressiveness and power. Furthermore, a male should handle his problem on his own, and not search for help elsewhere (Plauborg & Helweg-Larsen, 2012, p. 9). All these assumptions are connected with Connell's hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987, pp. 186-187).

So, already in 2012, a study showed confirmed that gender stereotypes have a negative influence to the male victims, however, gender stereotypes is not mentioned in the action plan from 2014, unless this is the taboos that is shortly mentioned. Male victims of IPV is contrary to the patriarchal view on violence. The structural concerns regarding the understanding of violence as gendered and patriarchal thinking are not discussed in the action plan.

To sum up, the action plan mentioned shortly taboos without going into details. The gender stereotypes are therefore not directly addressed in the action plan.

Practical level

According to the practical level gender stereotypes is one of the main challenges and barrier in their work, and for the male victims themselves (appendix 2, p. 4, appendix 3, p. 15, appendix 4, p. 8 & appendix 5, pp. 11-12). Rene describes a situation where men are not acknowledged as victims and is “*automatically misbelieved and assumed that his actions are the violent or the aggressive in the conflict*” (Appendix 3, p. 3). This is coherent with Connell’s view on gender relations. The victim role is not assumed to belong to a man, but to a woman. Helle expressed that being a victim contradicts the lifetime process that teach the men how to act. This statement builds on the idea related to gender as being socially constructed (Appendix 5, p. 10). These notions of power and hierarchy are related to Connell’s understanding of hegemonic masculinity, and gendered power relations. Within hegemonic masculinity, a group of men can be superior to other groups of men. Here male victims are subordinate to the hegemonic group of men.

Gender stereotypes as a taboo is supported by the study conducted by Gravesen, Olsen and Winther, where male participants expressed difficulties in relations to gender stereotypes (Gravesen, Olsen, & Winther, 2015, pp. 71-72). According to Rene, male victims experienced difficulties with identifying as a victim, since this is a challenge due to his “*masculinity and ideals and understanding*” (Appendix 3, p. 3). Navigating in different forms of masculinity, and sometimes be subordinate to hegemonic masculinity is a challenge to the male victim. Rene argued that many of the men see the policeman as the ideal form of masculinity “*it’s a big strong policeman protecting us*” (appendix 3, p. 2). When identifying the policeman as big and strong, and in addition mention that many of the men feel humiliated different levels of masculinities are addressed. The policeman represents hegemonic masculinity, and the male victims of IPV is a form of subordinate masculinity. This is compatible with Connell’s theory which state that it can exist hierarchy between groups of men (Connell, 2005, pp. 77-78).

Furthermore, the practical level states that the gender stereotypes are reproduced by the authorities and the public sphere. Incident were the male victims have been wrongly accused for IPV by the authorities, and reactions to IPV against men in the public sphere with comments such as *“how can you even call yourself a man”, “be a man” “you can take it” and “what is all the whining about”* reinforce the gender stereotypes (appendix 3, p. 16). These socially constructed reactions reflect hegemonic masculinity and the assumption that a man is supposed to be tough and take care of his own problem. By identifying as a victim, the men step away from the role as the superior.

These notions of gender influence the male victims, and according to Kalle *“He is very much double hurt because he can’t talk about it”* (Appendix 2, p. 3). This is a notion of gender, which link men to not being able to express their feelings. Again, men should handle the problem of their own. He continued *“I [the male victims. red] am not man enough, I am not strong enough”* (Appendix 2, p. 2). The notion of physical strength as something a man possess, is coherent with Connell’s view on hegemonic masculinity. Kalle claimed that *“the taboos are the main reason why men do not try to seek help”* (appendix 2, p. 9), and question the statistics regarding male victims. Kalle emphasized that there is a need for an attitudinal change where it is general accepted that males can be victims of IPV too. Not just among the professionals, but also among the citizens (Appendix 2, p. 9).

Rene expressed the importance of talking about the positive aspects of masculinity, and not just the bad masculinity, as he referred to as toxic masculinity. Toxic masculinity is, according to Connell, a feature of the hegemonic masculinity that use practices that are toxic to gain male dominance, like physical violence and sexual aggressive behavior (Messerschmidt & Connell, 2005, p. 840). Rene argues that this is important in order for the men to feel that they do not lose their masculinity when speaking about being a victim of IPV (Appendix 3, p. 17).

The taboos are not given a high level of focus in this action plan, and this can give the impression that the measurements that are presented are superficial, and there is a need to dig deeper in order to combat IPV against men. Kalle emphasized the importance of focus on why gender stereotypes are a problem *“You have to inflect to make people change their mind about it because it’s not that people want to have those gender stereotypes, they just don’t know better”* (Appendix 2, p. 3). With this statement the gender stereotypes are referred to as

something that is embedded in us, it is not a choice that we take, but have been socially accepted throughout time.

The need for awareness towards gender stereotypes have been addressed before the fourth action plan. In the study mentioned under the political level by Plauborg and Helweg-Larsen, but also the former Director of the organization Dialogue against violence, Rikke Høgsted, mentioned the taboos regarding expectations to men as a gender in relation to IPV the year after (DR c, 2013).

In order to defeat the taboos, it is important that the male victims are met with understanding and knowledge among the professionals, something that is not present according to the interviewees (Appendix 2, p. 6, appendix 3, p. 1, appendix 4, p. 2 & Appendix 5, pp. 3-4). Marie argues that the gender stereotypes have “*affected our understanding of this whole problem*” (appendix 4, p. 8). Males are associated as the perpetrator and female as the victims, and this is so embedded in the society, and affect how the problem of IPV against men is viewed.

To sum up, the aspect of gender stereotypes is silenced at the policy level, however, this is one of the main challenges the men shelter met in their work with male victims of IPV. These findings from the practical level confirm that expectation to how a man (and female) should behave according to the socially constructed categories of masculinity and femininity is present in the Danish society. In order to defeat this societal problem, there is a need to address the constructed expectation in the society that is connected to one’s gender. There is a need for enlightening the different aspects and consequences of these gender stereotypes, and furthermore, make an attitudinal change among the professionals and in the public sphere.

Root causes of why IPV against men exists

Policy level

The root causes of IPV or potential differences between violence against men and violence against women are not addressed in the action plan. In order to understand IPV against men and what is needed to defeat it, there must be an understanding of the root causes to IPV.

There has not been research on this subject in the Danish context, however some international studies exist.

IPV committed by females is a controversial subject since the traditional feminist theories see IPV as a consequence of patriarchy. This view explains IPV against men as female defensive violence, meaning a response to a violent man (Duttona & Nicholls, 2005, pp. 682-683).

Research find it difficult to distinguish if underlying reasons for IPV is self-defense or not. In some studies, such as the ones that use the methods conflict tactic scale, violence in self-defense is registered as IPV. This provide an uncertain statistic, and the question of this method`s validity is raised.

The debate regarding reason for IPV is heated between the feminist researchers on one side, and family conflict research on the other side as elaborated under the section `understanding of gender in IPV against men` under question 2. I will not repeat the discussion in this section, only state that this aspect is silenced at the policy level.

To sum up, the aspect of why IPV against men occur it not addressed at the policy level.

Practical level

The practical level does not directly address the root causes of IPV, however, Kalle and Rene argued that IPV is not gendered (Appendix 3, p. 2 & Appendix 2, p. 10). Marie did not go into the aspect of reasons for IPV, however, she did question the existing literature and reflected if the reason behind IPV could be *“something else that we have not seen all these years when we have been working with domestic violence”* (Appendix 5, p. 6).

This is already discussed in the section `understanding of gender` under question 2. However, when the root causes of IPV against men is not addressed, the number of male victims will likely not decrease. The focus at the practical level is more concerned with dealing with the taboos that male victims experience, rather than why some men experience IPV.

To sum up, the aspect of why IPV against men occur it not addressed at the practical level.

Problematic cooperation between shelters and other actors

Policy level

A silence at the policy level is the problematic cooperation between the shelter and the municipality. The action plan state that the professionals at the local level lack knowledge, however, the action plan does not into depth with other consequences, such as cooperation between the local actors. The male participants in the study conducted by Plauborg and Helweg-Larsen stated that there is a need for neutral behavior from the professionals, due to many of the men experienced being judged by their sex (Plauborg & Helweg-Larsen, 2012, p. 9). As mentioned above, this is a study conducted on the behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Therefore, one would assume that this problematic cooperation has been noticed at the policy level. However, the problematic cooperation is not mentioned in the action plan

To sum up, the policy level only address difficulties with the relation male victims and the professionals, and not the relation between men shelters and other actors.

Practical level

Rene talked about challenges in order to be acknowledged and get recognition for the need of a men shelter by the municipality and other actors. He claims that IPV against men is “*regarded as a non-issue*” and that “*in many ways, they assume you are helping violent men because men in relation or interpersonal violence would be the abuser in most people`s definition*” (Appendix 3, p. 1). The other actors view on gender relations is coherent with Connell`s understanding where men are superior to women. The man is assumed to be the perpetrator since it is so hard to believe that the man could be the victim.

The vague framing of §109 in the social service law give the men shelters challenges regarding financially support with the municipality, which often do not acknowledge the need for a men shelter. Sometimes the financial cost is lower by referring the male victim to a homeless shelter, and the men shelters need to argue the importance of the men shelter. According to Helle, the homeless shelters is a place for “*drug and alcohol misuse*” and is therefore not suited for male victims of IPV (Appendix 5, p. 4). This can be seen as a consequence of the framing in § 109, and the fact that IPV against men is unfamiliar for many professionals.

Helle is a project coordinator and have launched conferences in order to “*get the commune to understand what it is actually is about*” (appendix 5, p. 3). She argues that the lack of knowledge among the professionals in the municipality is problematic since many citizens contact the municipality to receive help.

Helle expresses the uneven treatment opportunities, and state that lack of knowledge among the professionals affect the male victims and their view on themselves. Marie argued that the complex and problematic cooperation between the shelter and the municipality is due to financial issues.

“*When the commune has to pay something. You know it`s a question for money, and I think there is still a long way, also for professionals to be aware of men exposed to domestic violence*” (Appendix 4, pp. 2-3)

All the interviewees have expressed a situation where the professionals at the practical level lack knowledge, and this has a major influence on the male victims. According to Kalle “*they know nothing about this area and some of them will not acknowledge that the problem is*

here” (Appendix 2, p. 6). In addition, Rene argued that *“the majority in caseworkers in the local commune and in similar positions, the majority are very reluctant to believe that a man can be a victim of domestic abuse”* (appendix 3, p. 2). This can be due to the notions of gender relations that have been a part of the society for several years. Kalle confirm this assumption when stating *“it's not that people want to have those gender stereotypes, they just don't know better”* (Appendix 2, p. 4). This emphasize that the topic is tabooed and under-researched.

Morten were the only participant who had a good experience with Viborg municipality. He stated that the men shelter was offered a two years contract regarding financial support. After the two years, the men shelter would be supported by the special pool for the social area and be included in the finance law. Unfortunately, that did not happen, and Viborg men shelter had to shut down due to the financial situation (Appendix 6, p. 3).

Regardless of the Government efforts to bring focus on the male victims, the men shelters experience difficulties with other actors. Due to lack of knowledge among the professionals and in the society in general the practical level feel unacknowledged and that they must speak out loud in order to be heard. Nonetheless, Rene emphasized that the good co-operation in the National Unit named *‘live without violence’*, which was mentioned under question 3 regarding the genealogy of the problem representation.

To sum up, the practical level experience difficulties regarding the cooperation with other actors, and especially with the municipalities. The financial aspect, and the lack of knowledge is aspect that is contributing to the problematic cooperation.

Subject of male victims in the public sphere and in the educational system

Policy level

Violence against women was a hidden aspect until it gains focus in the public sphere through campaigns and activism. In order to defeat IPV against men it is of course needed to have sufficient offers, but at the same time there is a need to focus on the subject in the public sphere. Both to encourage male victims to seek help, both also to defeat the gender stereotypes. If several men do not use the offers because of the gender stereotypes, then the Government will never have the real picture of the situation. The fourth action plan claimed that targeted measures and repeated information campaigns have contributed to reducing the taboos regarding the subject of IPV against women. Furthermore, the action plan state that *“There is also a need to step up the information activities to include partner violence against*

men” (MCGEIA, 2014, p. 13). This show that the Government is aware of the lack of sufficient measures regarding the publicity of the topic of IPV against men.

To sum up, the policy level acknowledges the importance of focus in the public sphere in order to deal with IPV, however, no measures with the aim to educate the public sphere in the subject of IPV against men is presented.

Practical level

As mentioned before the interviewees meet difficulties in their cooperation with other actors and explain this with lack of knowledge among other things. Rene argued that there is a need to implement the subject of IPV against men into the educational system for the professionals, such as the social workers (Appendix 3, p. 8). The lack of focus regarding this topic in the educational system influence the professional’s perception regarding the topic, and the topic can might be seen as less important.

Kalle is one of the interviewees which argued that the gender stereotypes are embedded in all the layers of the society, and only focusing on the professionals is not sufficient. The importance of education to all the layers in the society regarding this subject is mentioned by all the interviewees (Appendix 5, p. 12 & Appendix 4, p. 9). Rene also expressed difficulties when trying to make an attitudinal change in the society since the financial aspect influence their capacity to have big campaigns across the country. Rene argued that there is a need to *“try and expose men through a larger perspective in the society”* and that there is a need for a top-down approach where the view on gender stereotypes are changed (Appendix 3, p. 13). The men shelters have pushed for attention in the public and political sphere, and recently launched a conference with a focus on male victims of IPV and how the professionals should address this issue. The conference was mentioned at the local news radio where Rene from Aalborg men shelter talked about the gender stereo roles in the society that influenced the male victims from not seeking help, and the difficulties with lack of knowledge among the professionals (P4, 2018). Journalist Else Holmer who published a book on IPV against men in 2017, which emphasize the importance of knowledge and education in schools, the medical institutions, police, in kindergarten and within the authorities (Holmer, 2017, p. 141).

To sum up, the aspect of male victims of IPV in the public sphere is silenced in the action plan, and the practical level emphasized the importance of education and visibility in order to make an attitudinal change within the society.

Conclusion:

This study has researched how the Danish Government represented the problem of IPV against men through the fourth National Action plan named `Measures to Combat Violence in the Family and in Intimate Relations`. Furthermore, I wanted to research if there exist alignment between how the problem is perceived at the policy level and at the practical level, through the views of the workers at some of the men shelters Denmark. The research aimed to answer this problem statement:

How does the problem representation of intimate partner violence against men in the National action plan from 2014 align or not align with the practical level perception of the problem?

At the policy level the problem representation of IPV against is to enhance the qualifications of the professionals and offer more suitable measures towards male victims of IPV. The practical level acknowledges this problem representation, however, the importance of dealing with the gender stereo types as a reason for why it exists insufficient measures and why the professionals lack knowledge is accentuated. The problem representation at the practical level is therefore an attitudinal change in the society regarding notions of gender stereotypes, and especially masculinity. I have argued that these problem representations are socially constructed due to social interactions and ideas. The stereotypes are not directly addressed in the action plan however, it is presented as the main challenge for both the workers and the victims at the practical level. The analysis of the practical level revealed that hegemonic masculinity is a barrier for the male victims, and at the same time the victim's role is a barrier for the men to be seen as masculine. The professionals and other actors possess traditional view on gender stereotypes that challenge the workers at the practical level. The taboo of gender stereo types is mentioned at both policy level and practical level. However, the aspect is given more attention at the practical level. The problem representation of IPV against men at the policy level partly align with the practical level perception of the problem.

During this research several problematic aspects were revealed. Male victims of IPV are not secured and offered tailored measures through the social service law, which do not fulfill EIGE`s definition of gender equality. This is not addressed at the policy level however; the practical level emphasized the importance of a gender-neutral law. The core of this problem is how the different levels view gender in IPV. While the practical level view IPV as not gendered, the policy level is more divided. The action plan has an underlying idea of IPV as

gendered, since this policy reproduce gender stereotypes in some sections and the main focus in the action is on female victims. However, by presenting men as possible victims of IPV, the policy level challenge the traditional feminist approach to violence, which view IPV due to patriarchal structure. It can seem like the Government are drawn between two stands, one that understand IPV as a gendered issue, and one which understand IPV as a non-gendered issue. The shift in focus from IPV against women to IPV against women and men at the policy level have been criticized. The current Government (Lars Løkke Rasmussen II) responded to this criticism by stating the importance of equal treatment offers to all victims of IPV.

Another aspect revealed in this study was the problematic cooperation between the men shelters and other actors on the area, specifically with the municipalities. The challenging cooperation with the municipality is due to the fact that men are not acknowledged as victims of IPV at the juridical level and this creates challenges regarding financial support. The challenging cooperation with other actors is due to their notions of gender stereotypes, where men is viewed as superior to women. This is coherent with Connell`s view on hegemonic masculinity.

This study contributes with new knowledge regarding how the policy and practical level view IPV against men. I argue that this study is of high relevance since it revealed new aspects regarding the subject of IPV against men.

The main challenge when research into this area, was to navigate in the international debate between feminist researches on side that view IPV as gendered, and then family researchers on the other side arguing that IPV is due to family disfunction. This aspect is not addressed in the Danish context. This research addressed the aspect briefly, however, it should be further investigated. In fact, several aspects within the area of IPV against men would be interesting to research on, such as who the male victims are, if the consequences of IPV is the same for women and men, if the measures proposed in the action is implemented at the local level, and which kind of barriers hinder the male victims to access help and treatments.

The history (previous and present) of women as the subordinate affects the political focus, however, in order to reach gender equality and to combat IPV, the treatment measurements offered should not be determined by victim`s sex.

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