



**UNIVERSITY OF GÖTEBORG**  
**Department of Social Work**

*International Master of Science in Social Work*

**Entry-points to men's involvement to prevent men's violence against  
women in intimate relationships in Costa Rica**

**- a qualitative study on men from a gender perspective**

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## ABSTRACT

The research aims to find entry-points to men's involvement to prevent men's violence against women in intimate relationships in Costa Rica. The importance of this research is reflected in the high extend of this specific violence where two to three women per month are killed in Costa Rica. Not much research has been done on the issue from the men's perspective. There is a need to do critical studies on men. The violence will not end if the issue is not made important for men them selves.

I have chosen to do qualitative interviews with eight men in Costa Rica and to analyse them from a gender perspective. To approach the subject in a pragmatic way and to get a comprehension of the processes within the field I have studied concepts like social construction of masculinities, gender equality, men's violence against women and men's involvement to prevent this violence. These concepts are also used in the interviews with the men.

The entry-points that were found, point out important areas of interest in the aim to involve men to prevent violence against women. The first entry-point has to do with the social construction of masculinities and power relations. Masculinities are socially constructed in a context where men internalize the power that is given to its gender class. Men maintain their manliness in a triangulation of violence where the violence against themselves and their masculinities is the fundament to the other two. In Costa Rica the prevailing stereotype of masculinity is called *la machista*. According to the NGO WEM men in general in Costa Rica has to deal with this stereotype, meaning a man with self control, power and strength. The eight interviewees all related to this concept in different ways. There is a need for men to create new masculinities.

The second entry-point treats what the eight men thought they would gain with gender equality that in prolongation is closely connected to masculinities. To involve men to prevent violence against women it is necessary that there are benefits for them selves. If men gain on gender equality and to not exercise violence, the issue will become interesting for men. The interviewees highlighted for instance respect from their families and self respect. WEM emphasized the benefits of higher life quality for men.

The third entry-point illuminates the importance of homo-social groups. The interviewees had all experiences from communication with other men and the sometimes immense pressure to keep up their manliness in homo-social groups. According to theory homo-social groups are forum for men to load their manliness and to get power over other men. Communication between men has impact and is used to sustain power over women and maintain the power relations. To work with homo-social groups tend to be very important to bring about a change.

The fourth entry-point stresses the importance of structural signals to men through for instance jurisdiction. Some of the men in the interviews pointed out the signals they get from society where the man is supposed to be the head of the family and to be the breadwinner. The new legislation that was approbated 2007 sanctions men's violence against women in a more pragramatic way than before and gives clearer signals to both men and women about this specific violence.

**Keywords:** masculinities, gender, power relations, triangulation of violence, men's violence against women.

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Finally, I hope for more attention to men and masculinities in Latin America because the need to prevent men's violence against women so as the men's need to get a higher quality of life is great. My thoughts also return to all the interesting people I met in Costa Rica that make research like this become interesting, exciting and challenging! *Hasta pronto!*

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Choice of subject and pre-understanding

Men's involvement in preventing violence against women has been part of the international rhetoric since the 1980's. During the years there has been a change from seeing men as part of the problem to seeing men also as part of the solution. For instance are men involved in social actions and treatment programs. Despite the international discussions in organisations working for preventing men's violence against women there are not enough programmes targeting men as active participants. Mostly countries are focusing on the protection and empowerment of women. In addition, even fewer programmes target men's violence against women from a gender perspective and with a constructive communication about masculinities and the cultural values that promotes gender stereotypes. (Sexual Health Exchange 2005) Working with the theme from a gender perspective is to target the fundamental roots of inequality in a society that in its most serious form brings violence. (Kaufman 1987:40)

Costa Rica is a former developing country in Central America, with about four million inhabitants and with an economically high standard relative to other countries in the region. Still the amount of homicides due to men's violence against women is increasing. (Sveriges Ambassad Guatemala 2007) Figures from the governmental institution INAMU- the National Institution of Women- show, that around 2-3 women get killed every month due to men's violence against women. There are probably a number of unrecorded cases. There is an ongoing discussion in the society about men's violence against women. The recently legislated law about sanctioning men's violence against women in Costa Rica has met a lot of resistance both before approbation and after but is also welcomed by organisations and people. The discussions treat among other things the need of having a law sanctioning only men why men say they are discriminated in the law. The law is also sanctioning humiliating labelling of women why the discussion handle where the limit goes in daily speech. The former law did not have sanctions so as prison if the violence was not very severe. The new law states therefore important signals into the society. (INAMU 2007)

There are many governmental and non-governmental organisations that focus on research and empowerment of women in Costa Rica. However, not much work is targeting the men. There are a few non-governmental organisations that work with support groups for men so as with education of men and important key persons in gender and masculinities issues. WÈM- the Institution of Masculinity- claims that not only men who have showed a violent behaviour need to work with their perception of masculinities. WÈM states that men in Costa Rica in general suffer from socially constructed stereotypes of masculinities that says that men have to be strong and in power. These stereotypes are based on gender in-equalities. The in-equalities lead among other things to that men more often than women suffer from depression and from risk-taking behaviours. It leads also to potential violence against women. Constructive communication on gender in-equalities and masculinities is a tool to promote better quality of life for both men and women. (WÈM 2007)

I was in Costa Rica during spring 2007 to collect data for this research. Why am I as a woman interested in critical studies on men and why then in Costa Rica? To start with the latter question; Latin America as a region has attracted me for many years, with its people, culture and nature. When planning this research I saw the opportunity to go there because the issue of men's violence against women is alarming in many of these countries. To continue with the former, I am as a social worker and person, interested in studies that might promote change for both women and men. I acknowledge that men not only are necessary as resources to

prevent the violence against women. They also gain in quality of life when working with their masculinities and gender relations. I have studied gender relations before but from a woman perspective. For instance, how three women from Iraq living in Sweden live gendered daily lives and about the situation of women in former East Germany during the transition into the united Germany. As a professional social worker in Sweden I have got in contact with both men that abuse women and women that get abused by men. To study gender relations from men's perspective gives me the other view that I feel is lacking. Many things can be achieved in focusing on the empowerment of women but I do believe, and even more after this thesis, that nothing can be changed fundamentally without the cooperation of the other part; the men. It has been a journey for me as a researcher in reaching a more comprehensive picture of men's situation within gender relations.

Preventing men's violence against women is a work that takes part in a chain. The roots to be targeted are the gender relations that promote in-equalities in societies and lead to among other things men's violence against women. Gender relations are socially constructed in the interaction between people and between people and society. Gender relations and gender identities are currently created and maintained through this interaction. The aim of this thesis is to focus on men and how they can get involved in creating new masculinities. New masculinities can increase gender equality that in the long run can prevent men's violence against women.

## **1.2 Problem area and research questions**

My purpose with this research is to find entry-points to involve men to prevent men's violence against women in intimate relationships in Costa Rica. I have chosen qualitative interviews with eight men and will do an analysis on the empiric material with a gender perspective. I also want to look at why that involvement can be important.

To try to answer this I will look at the following research questions:

- How are gender relations, especially masculinities, connected to men's violence against women in intimate relationships and to men's involvement in preventing that violence?
- How is the actual situation in Costa Rica concerning men's violence against women in intimate relationships when it comes to: occurrence, involvement of men in the preventive work and legislation?
- What resources and obstacles are there from a gender perspective in involving men in preventing men's violence against women in intimate relationships according to the interviews with the eight men?

I am aware of that the prevention of men's violence against women is an immense area of knowledge and I have therefore chosen not to go deep into that field. The important thing in this research is that working with gender equality and masculinities is preventive in it self. However, the social problem of men's violence against women in intimate relationships was selected to both give the research a framework within which the interviews and the analysis could be conducted and to point at the connection between gender research on men and prevention of violence.

### 1.3 Definitions

Men's violence against women can be defined in different ways depending on discourse and meaning. In Jeff Hearn's book *The Violence of Men* he recognizes the violence as men's violence against known women. He then means all kinds of violated women with a known relationship with the violator so as wives, girlfriends, mothers, daughters and friends among others. He focuses on that there is a lot of knowledge in the interaction between the violator and the violated about the violence. There is also usually confidence, trust and close personal contact within the relationship that has to be taken into account and make this violence as a complex phenomenon. (Hearn 1998:38-39) The recent constituted law of penalisation of violence against women in Costa Rica uses the definition violence against women within the marriage, in cohabiting or not. According to this definition it could mean the same relationships as above only that it concerns adult women. (Inamu 2007) The often used term *domestic violence* means roughly violence inside the domestic location and could by definition focus on both violence against women, children and men.

For me, these definitions are all too broad to use in this research even if I agree with Hearn in the importance of recognizing the relationship as a known relationship and all what that means when talking about gendered power relations. I will therefore stick to the definition of men's violence against women in intimate relationships, meaning adult men and women engaged in a marriage or living together as a couple. In the interviews though, I and the interviewees sometimes talked about the violence as domestic violence because the term was the most well-known in that context.

*Machismo* is a concept that is well known in Latin America and from which there is a vivid symbolic representation of masculinity in the society. It is used as describing how a man behaves and attributes a man has, to show that he is a *macho*, a man. Its fundament is the domination over women. The macho behaviour is also reflected in the structural level of a society; in education, health and legislation. (Melhuus & Stölen 1996:57) Johansson (1999:48) argues that the concept is filled with meaning dependent on who is interpreting the concept. It can for elderly people mean an honourable man and for others an aggressive and possessive man. According to Gutmann (1996:14) men are different and there is no such thing as a generalized machismo. However, men are influenced by the picture of the generalization of man that sometimes is called the machismo. Many of the interviewees use the word machismo as something they refer to when they say what they are not. They all have their own definition of the concept but to some extent they refer to a man that is irresponsible economically to his family and wife as well as a man that drinks too much and beats his woman. In the social context he is irresponsible concerning his neighbours and the neighbourhood.

### 1.4 The structure of the grade report

The grade report starts with an abstract and after that an acknowledgement where I give my warm thanks to people that have helped me complete this master thesis. In Chapter 1 I present the subject and the importance of research on the area as well as the aim with the research. I conclude with important definitions that might be unknown to many people or unclear in daily speech. I thereafter turn to Chapter 2 that treats the methods used in the research. The chapter of methods can be read before the rest of the research but also during the reading when the reader has questions about the mode of the procedure. I start with presenting what kind of methods I have used in the research and why. What follows are the presentation of the material and how I have collected it. Under this chapter I also give a more deep description of the interviewees why it can be both important and interesting to put some time here. After that



I share the problems so as the strengths the research has for the reader to prove the reliability and validity of the study. Because ethical issues are always part of the play when it comes to research I give the reader a presentation over important ethical aspects and what have been obvious to take into account in this research. Chapter 3 describes previous research within the area of masculinities and primarily Latin America. There is not much written about masculinities in Latin America and the research I found above all treated closely linked areas. It is important to highlight research from the region and be able to do a comparison with this one for the sake of the reliability. Chapter 4 contains theories and perspectives that treat masculinities and gender relations. The focus is to be able to understand from a gender perspective how masculinities are constructed. I use for instance social constructionism and the concepts of power and powerlessness so as the triad of violence. These concepts are useful to understand how masculinities are constructed as a process and to make a constructive change available. I also give the reader a picture of Costa Rica out of literature but also out of active organisations working with the issues of masculinities and men's violence against women. I then turn to Chapter 5 where I present the interviews and do an analysis of them with the help of the theories and perspectives in Chapter 4. In the discussion in Chapter 6 I try to emphasise the most important and clear aspects that I have seen during the analysis. The chapter finishes with my thoughts about the need for research in the area in the future.

## **2 RESEARCH METHODS**

### **2.1 Choice of methods**

I have chosen to look at the question of the research from a gender relation perspective due to the importance domination and subordination have in promoting men's violence against women in intimate relationships. Furthermore, because of men's as a gender class presumed importance in preventing that violence. Theories about men and masculinities from a gender relation perspective emphasises both problems and resources that men are part of as a social construction. I will therefore look at gender relations and the social construction of these as well as more thoroughly theories about men and masculinities.

The report aims to be explorative about how to attract men to involve in preventing men's violence against women in intimate relationships. An explorative research leads to according to Kvale (1996:100) new knowledge about the issue studied. That means that I have tried not to have ready made hypothesis that I wanted to test with the research. Instead, I as a researcher have aimed to be open to what would show during the research and have tried to build upon what has come up during the way. Gilbert writes about the inductive respectively the deductive research method (Gilbert 1996:22). I believe I have tried to work according to the inductive method when I have tried to be open to new findings. However I have worked deductively by having theories and perspectives as a base for the understanding of the data collected. That means that I have been coloured throughout the research partly from what I have seen through my glasses of gender construction. To use theories as a base of knowledge is a tool both to secure the interest of the research but also to secure the validity.

The method I have used for collecting data is qualitative interviews (Kvale 1996:1) Un-structured qualitative interviews with men as respondents are a way to explore men's opinions according to the issue of the research. (For the interview guide see appendix nr 1) The idea with qualitative interviews is that men themselves are experts on how and why they will involve themselves in the preventive work. I have also done un-structured informative interviews with professionals working in the area of gender, masculinities and violence

against women within marriages. The purpose is to collect data from the field by people who have either their own experiences in working with male involvement or have expert knowledge in the field of the situation for women according to men's violence against women in intimate relationships.

An aspect within social science is that there is always a communication between researcher and interviewee. There is no objective truth but the results are affected by both subjects; I and the interviewed men. This process has to be understood as natural and part of the research. (Johansson 1999:35) This is also a research with a gender perspective. Gender relations are socially constructed in societies and a work that we all do all the time, also in this research. By interviewing, analysing and writing I construct gender in this discourse as well as the interviewed men construct gender when telling me about their reflections. (Connell 2005:68)

## **2.2 The research procedure**

### **2.2.1 Choice of literature**

According to May (2001:175 pp) can documents as sources for research be utilized to explain, make comparison with and to prove data collected in the research. I will mainly use theory and perspectives of social construction and of gender relations as it is carried out within the actual discourse of masculinities and femininities. I will especially focus on following concepts; masculinities, gender relations, power relations, social construction and men's violence. I will also study texts about the situation in Costa Rica concerning masculinities, men's violence against women in intimate relationships and legislation.

### **2.2.2 Data collection**

The data of this study have been collected through qualitative interviews with respondents and through informative interviews with informants (May 2001:153, 124). To find the interviewees for the qualitative interviews I have used the snowball sampling method. Arber (1996:74) states that the snowball sampling can be used when there is a need to find interviewees with special characteristics and there is no list to do a randomized sampling from. It can be a contact that finds the first interviewee and that he/she has more contacts and so on. In the case of this study I have used both the organisation where I conducted an internship in Costa Rica as well as one of my friends that I had got there, to find the respondents for this study. I as a woman had difficulties to get in contact with men to interview on my own and found therefore this solution very practical. (For letter to respondents and informants about the research see appendix 2)

When it comes to the professionals within the field I got help from the organisation where I conducted my internship to find out about ways to contact these governmental and non governmental institutions that we together thought were important within the field.

The number of the male respondents is eight. The interviewees are in this research adult but of different ages, with different social backgrounds and have different levels of education. There are also differences between the three interviews conducted on the island and the five in the city. What they have in common are that they all are active on the labour market and are men with the possibility to be involved more in preventing men's violence against women in intimate relationships.

I will here describe the two different settings the eight men come from in Costa Rica. They are all de-personified to secure that they cannot be recognized by others.

- Three of the men live on a small island that could be called a poor rural area. The island has about 850 inhabitants and they live mainly on fishing. The life on the island is traditional with the men working outside the house with fishing, constructing houses or with tourism. The women have the greatest responsibility to guard the house and to look after the children. They also work with the fish on land and other low income duties. There are a few women groups on the island that carry out sale of homemade bread, clothes and bath sponges among other things. Development work is carried out by the University of Heredia and Non Governmental Organisations to provide more work in different sectors especially with tourism as well as the infrastructure and the social situation on the island. The people I talked to on my time on the island all explained to me the importance of privacy because the island is small and rumours spread quickly. The social control on the island is strong.
- The other five men live in a suburb area of San José, the capital of Costa Rica. The area is more differentiated than the life on the island and the inhabitants have different education, work profession and economical situation. The suburb could be labelled as a blend of middle class and working class area. Due to presence of several educational institutions are people in this area thought to be well enlightened. The reader will get more information about the interviewees in connection to the analysis of the interviews.

During the interviews I used a dictaphone. I also used an interpreter for more or less four interviews. However, I found out that the relationship and the interest in the communication turned out to be better when I spoke with the interviewees myself, although it was with Spanish with deficiency.

Hearn (1998:52) writes about the election of the physical setting for the conduction of the interview in respect of physical safety, open communication and disturbing elements. The interviewees and I met usually in the houses of the men or in their garden. That was partly a practical choice because I did not have access to a place for conducting interviews in the area. It was also a way to be able to carry out the interviews because the men were working and came home late. The risk was great that they would not want to make a great effort to travel to conduct the interviews. The positive thing might be that they felt safer in their own houses and thereby was more open minded and I did not feel unsafe in their company. On the other hand, their families were sometimes close by what could have had an impact on the essence in the interviews.

When it comes to the theory chapter I write about the Costa Rican setting in respect of men's violence against women in close relationships and the involvement of men to prevent this violence. The material is collected from literature but also from interviews I have done among staff in Costa Rica.

- The governmental organisation INAMU, the National Institute for Women, is the most important governmental institution when it comes to men's violence against women. For some years ago they called themselves an institution working with gender issues. When they realized that they were only working for women issues they changed name to what it is today. INAMU is working with the spreading information and giving workshops to educate women and children but also other organisations how to work with the issues.

- The second governmental institution is CIEM, the Centre for Investigation and Education of Women. CIEM belongs to the University of Costa Rica and is as the name says involved in investigations of the situation of women and spreading that information, both inside and outside the university.
- When it comes to non-governmental organisations I made two interviews with WËM, the Institute for Masculinity. The word WËM is from the indigenous language Bribri and signifies a good Man, Brother, Friend and Husband. WËM is according to them selves the only non-governmental organisation that is working with men in a professional way. In addition, there are organisations working with men in the business sector and for men within the Catholic Church. The groups are more like self help groups and not from a psychological therapeutic perspective. In the self help groups they talk about masculinities and how to handle for instance anger when conducting trailers or matrimonial problems within the church.

### **2.2.3 Analysis of the interviews**

Kvale (1996:189) states that analyzing has to be done during the interview as well as afterwards. During the interview the researcher has to ask the interviewee for clarifications and also to help the interviewee to find new meanings in what he has said. This way of conducting the interview will increase the validity. During the eight interviews for this research I tried to ask questions that were aimed to clarify what the interviewee had said. However, due to my Spanish deficiency the interviews were not that fluid that I had wanted them to be. I will write more about methodological problems in the following chapter.

To structure the material Kvale (1996:166) states that transcription should be done in a way that is useful for the research. The interviews are therefore in this thesis transcribed from talked Spanish or in a few cases English (when having used an interpreter) to a reader friendly talked English. When the interview concerned themes that are not actually part of the aim of the research the things said are either in the transcribed version as an abstract or not in there at all depending on the overall interest of the research.

Kvale (1996:190-191) means that after transcription the researcher has to analyze the material in order to understand and interpret the meaning of the written. There are several ways to do this. When it comes to the transcriptions from the qualitative interviews I have chosen meaning condensation in order to shorten the text and make it easier to read; meaning categorizing to work with the text and find parts that correlate in a positive or negative way to chosen concepts. I have also looked for new concepts that seemed to be important for the men within the area of interest. To find new meanings in both what is said clearly but also what is said "between the lines" I have chosen meaning interpretation when working with the text.

There is often an aim with a research that has an impact on the analysis. In this research is the data analysed through theories and perspectives about gender relations and masculinities. The overall aim with this kind of research is to promote gender equality and the rights of men and women to live lives with a better life quality. Therefore, the analysis is used both to describe the situation according to the issue of the research but also to give tools to carry out a constructive change (Kvale 1997:111).

### **2.3 Validity, reliability and generalizability**

Validity, reliability and generalizability are main concepts when it comes to research verification (Kvale 1996:232 pp). Qualitative research are, due to difficulties in getting enough sampling to be able to make statistical generalizations, dependent on good craftsmanship and several forms of validity. Firstly, the internal validity exists when the research answers what it is supposed to answer. It is dependent on the reliability, the researcher's ability to do things right and to avoid and correct biases during the research process. If the reader doesn't know about the biases he or she cannot make conclusions of how to generalize from the research. Secondly, the external validity concerns how well the research fits into the actual discourse.

I will therefore here account for the biases that can have had an impact on the reliability and the internal validity of this research as well as the possible making of generalizations from this research. Firstly, I will account for the biases concerning the collecting of data. Four of the interviews were conducted with the help of an interpreter because of my lacking skill in speaking Spanish at the time. However, I realized that the interaction between the interviewee and me as a researcher was better off without an interpreter and I continued without interpreter afterwards. The language deficiency both with an interpreter and without has probably had an influence in the depth in the interviews. The language deficiency can also have had an impact on the transcription the interviews from talked Spanish to written English. However, I consider my Spanish and English skills to be sufficient for conducting the interviews and for deriving understanding from them. That is also because of the interaction and the questions for clarification I made during the interviews (Kvale 1996: 237).

Before I did the interviews I had questions of how I as a woman was supposed to firstly get in contact with men that wanted to get interviewed on a subject that partly treated men's violence against women. Secondly I had thoughts about how much they would hide away from me because I am a woman or how much I just would not understand because I am a woman and they men. When I look back I see that the men that were asked to join the research agreed to do so every one of them which could show willingness from most of the men to be able to help the way they could. Nevertheless, I can also guess that the themes of the interview have an official answer and another practical doing. In addition, I can see that it was hard to make the men talk about themselves and their emotions. That fits into what Scott Coltrane (1994) describes as "men's superficial characterizations of their internal states" and that "many men are motivated by fears and insecurities" (1994:55). This can be a bias but also the part of the understanding when doing studies on men. Another explanation could be that they had repressed negative experiences and therefore tended to tell about themselves in a more positive perspective. Gilbert (2001:150) explains this phenomenon with the level of shame and undesirable behaviour that makes interviewees tell a more positive story to the researcher. Many of the interviewed men talked about the culture of how men speak to each other and that there is a need to select male friends for confidential talks very carefully. That is partly why I believe that the interviews not necessarily have to be done by other men. The confidence can in some cases be greater for a woman conducting the interview.

When it comes to theories and perspectives I have chosen they are almost all derived from experiences from the North American or European culture. I have found some research that is done on men in Central America, where a few are from Costa Rica. The researches from Central America that I have found use almost the same theories and perspectives that I have noticed are described in the literature from North America and Europe and that I as well use in this research. Still, I can not but wonder if there would be other results if there would have

been more of inductive studies without the theories as a base of knowledge and as a tool for analyse in Central America that it seems to have been. Still, as I will describe in the chapter Theory and Perspectives the discourse today speak about masculinities and not masculinity and that makes the possibility of differences immense.

To get a higher validation, a communicative validation, of the research I wanted the interviewees to read the written text after the transcription of the interviews for confirming or rejecting it. Unfortunately that was not possible because of limits in language skills and because I was back in Sweden when the interviews were transcribed (Kvale 1996:145).

According to Kvale (1996:248-249) can a research also be valid in a pragmatic way. That could be the case if for instance the interviewees started to reflect more about their own lives as men and when there was a need to look for help for instance within a man group. It could also be pragmatic if it led to a higher understanding and therefore to other measures in the local areas or structurally. A small wish is that it could lead to more researches within the area. I surely hope for all.

All together I would say that this research has a relatively high validity because of the researcher's knowledge of how to do research and to take notice of and correct biases that came up during the process. It is not possible to generalize the results due to the small sampling of eight. However, the research is concordant with other research in the area of interest so as research in the geographical area.

## **2.4 Ethical issues**

Kvale (1996:109 pp) means that scientific research serves mankind in finding new knowledge but must at the same time preserve the dignity of the individuals subjected in the research. An ethical perspective must be carried out through out the whole research process. He refers to three ethical guidelines for human research; informed consent, confidentiality and consequences.

Firstly Kvale (1996:112) talks about the requirement of informed consent. To fulfil this requirement all of the respondents in this research have read a letter in Spanish where I describe the aim and the conduct of the interview before they agreed to be part of the research. They have also read information about how I will treat the collected data and about the voluntariness of the research. They have all agreed according to the form of the informed consent. (See appendix nr 3)

The requirement of confidentiality (Kvale 1996:115) is fulfilled by de-personalizing the interviewees names and if there are very specific characteristics in their narratives that can make them recognizable. A problem that occurred on the island and for the other interviewees as well is that many people around them know that they have been interviewed. The sample is too small, for instance only three on the island, to avoid people on the island to recognize them when reading the report. To avoid any inconvenience for the interviewees I will not send the report to anyone that I believe would recognize the individuals on the island.

The third requirement is about consequences (Kvale 1996:116). A consequence that may occur is the pragmatic effect of the interviews. When the research for instance is published is the risk that it might be used by others that I as a researcher cannot control. I as a researcher cannot take responsibility for the long perspective but can take responsibility for the short and what is possible to happen. However I do not see now that that can be a risk.

When it comes to the analysis of such a sensitive material the researcher has to take a stand on how much he or she should interpret the material alone or together with the interviewees. To some extent might an interpretation of the material go more deep and beyond that of the interviewees own perception of the situation. (Kvale 1997:144)

### 3 PREVIOUS RESEARCH

To picture the framework within this research is a part can give a more comprehensive view of the field of interest. I will here try to describe some of the researches that have been done that are related to this research. There is also an aim to look at the research from an international view.

An interesting research that has been done is the PhD study by Anna Johansson; *La Mujer Sufrida – The Suffering Woman. Narratives on Femininity among Women in a Nicaraguan barrio* (1999). Anna Johansson has as the title says done narrative interviews with women in a low-income neighbourhood in Nicaragua. Her aim has been to describe how femininity is created within *la casa* (the house) which is seen to be the domain of women in the society, while *la calle* (the street) is the domain of the men. She emphasises the importance of contextualise the research within time and space. When analysing femininity she also gives the reader a necessary knowledge about masculinities. What is interesting for this study is her discussion about masculinities and the societal stereotype *el machismo*. El machismo has been strongly related to Latin America described as the virile, dominating and strong masculinity. The concept has been almost taken for granted for many years but is now questioned because of the different meanings individuals and groups put into the concept. For more information about the concept see under the chapter of definitions, page 6.

Marit Melhuus and Kristi Anne Stölen have edited an anthology named *Machos, Mistresses, Madonnas. Contesting the Power of Latin American Gender Imagery*. (1996). The editors describe Latin America as a region that is possible for joint collection of research as well as an area of interest due to the often stereotyped discourse about masculinity and femininity. One of the researches in the anthology is written by Eduardo P. Archetti; *Playing styles and Masculine Virtues in Argentine Football*. Archetti describes football as one of the most important homosocial forum for men where they both construct masculinities by excluding women but also a joint national identity by not playing the European style. The masculinity that is the ideal when playing football is the playful youth with no responsibility in contrast to the father that is responsible. Football therefore acts like a mean for men of all ages and civil status to let loose and feel young and masculine. In the same anthology described above Annick Prieur has written an essay; *Domination and Desire: Male Homosexuality and the Construction of Masculinity in Mexico* (1996). She writes about how men compete socially with and attack other men's sexuality by always being the one who is penetrating the partners. The connection to being in power and defending the physical and psychological borders of the human body is strong. The one who succeeds in defending himself is according to this discourse not a homosexual. However, the one who let other men penetrate him is seen as weaker and more feminine.

Some other reflections are made by the Swedish professor Sven-Axel Månsson in; *Gaining or losing? Aspects on men's violence and sexuality* (1998). It is dealing with the growing global industry of pornography, prostitution and other forms of violent and sexual abuse when men at the same time is orientating themselves closer to their families and are increasing in

sensitivity. This article is written from a European and North American society perspective. Månsson discusses that men get ambivalent in their gender identity when equality is extended in the society. There is uncertainty in understanding and coping with the desires and demands of women. To be able to continue perceive themselves as men they have to objectify the sex-partner and therefore seek themselves to hidden markets to exercise a more patriarchal sexual behaviour. To go to prostitutes is a way for men to be free from the responsibility that they have to show in the rest of the society. In addition it is a mean to compensate for the loss of power and control that men previously used to have to a higher extend in these societies.

Men's involvement is a theme that has not yet been so much research on or not many evaluations of projects in this area. Peter Sternberg & John Hubley has done research by compiling evaluations of projects of involving men into sexual and reproductive health issues. The research is called; *Does men's involvement work? Evidence from evaluated interventions*. (2005) The study describes how it during the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 1994 was decided that there was a need for an international effort in involving men as active participants in sexual and reproductive health. Before the men mainly had been seen as obstacles to the empowerment of women but during the 90's men were more and more seen as resources. But still there are a lot of questions and there is also a lot of criticism against involving men. One issue is the balancing act in not letting the man get more power over the reproductive health of the woman than before. The evaluation of 2003 (that the authors date from) concludes 26 international projects directed towards men as active participants. Some of the strategies that have shown result are that the services must be tailored out of the needs of the men and that using work places and existing non-health programmes that men already are involved in can facilitate the involvement. In addition, to use religious leaders that have great influence over the citizens and campaigns through entertainment are important canals in reaching the men. When it comes to men's violence against women only two projects, from Mexico and Nicaragua, were reported and evaluated. It was also these two that had used the framework of gender and masculinities as a base in the discussions with the men. The aim with the groups with the men was to change their perception of masculinities to thereafter be able to change behaviour towards the women. Both of the projects had a positive outcome. The authors ask for more projects with a gender perspective because they note that men's behaviour in many countries is influenced by cultural stereotypes as for instance *machismo*.

#### **4 THEORIES AND PERSPECTIVES**

In this chapter I will try to describe the theories and perspectives of gender relations and masculinities. I have chosen these because they are important in understanding the causes and the possibilities of change when it comes to men's violence against women in intimate relationships. I will also try to give a framework of men's involvement and its strategies so as the situation in Costa Rica when it comes to the occurrence, prevention and legislation concerning men's violence against women in intimate relationships.

The theories and perspectives of gender relations and masculinities almost all derive from experiences from the North American or European culture. Some research is done on men in Latin America, where a few are from Costa Rica. The researches from Central America that I have found use almost the same theories and perspectives that I have noticed are described in the literature from North America and Europe and that I as well use in this research. Still, I cannot but wonder if there would be other results if there would have been more of inductive



studies without the theories as a base of knowledge and as a tool for analyse in Latin America that it seems to have been. However, the discourse of today talks about masculinities and not of masculinity and that makes the possibility of differences immense.

#### **4.1 Theories about gender relations and masculinities**

##### **4.1.1 Introduction to critical studies on men**

Men and masculinities have been objects for research and studies over the last three decades. In North America and in Europe the studies were an answer to the strong women liberation movement. Within the research on men, especially two groups can be mentioned; the mythopoetic men's movement and the pro-feminist men's movement. The mythopoetic movement that started in the late 1980's focused on the pain and powerlessness that many men experience. The movement meant that men had been feminized and had to find their manhood again. The pro-feminist movement emphasized the power that men have over women and other men. Michael Kaufman, a follower of the latter movement, argues that it is the relationship between both the contradictory experience of having power and feeling powerless that is constructing masculinities. (Kaufman 1994:156)

In Latin America the critical studies on men are younger. In the 1960s and 1970s the social science in Latin America was much influenced by the focus on class. This is due to the high economical and social inequality that affected these societies and the aim was to find ways for a social transformation. Dictators and guerrilla wars have been part of the agenda. However, through the studies of how class influenced the lives of and inequality for women a focus on gender took place. The critical studies on men have been carried out in Latin America from the 90's (Melhuus &Stölen 1996:9).

There is a need to do research on men because of the fact that men have been the standard that women and children are measured after. In men's identity lies an acceptance of basic power relations and a taken for granted right of possession of that power. (Hearn 1998:2-3) Critical studies on men from a feminist perspective are according to Scott Coltrane (1994) necessary because of the emphasis on gender that the feminist movement has carried out. Gender studies within critical studies on men emphasize the relationship of power between men and women and between men and men. Some feminists have doubts about what men's aims are when they study men and masculinities from a gender perspective. Is it a risk that the men will take over and reform the area into the patriarchal system? (Coltrane 1994:43) One way to avoid this is to always include power relations that men always have with women, children, other men or the relation with themselves as a concept in the studies (Hearn, Collinson 1994:97).

##### **4.1.2 Gender and gender relations**

Gender can be said is a...

...description of actual social relations of power between males and females and the internalization of these relations of power. (Kaufman 1994:144)

Gender is not a theory about biological differences because of sex, even though the base of the diversion is whether we are male or female. Instead it is the discussion about how we all internalize the power that is given our sex and the characteristics that belong to it and how we throughout our lives are *doing gender*. Doing gender is a work we do when we embody this hierarchic system and then feel that we have to proof our masculinity or femininity to ourselves and others. Because gender is socially constructed it is also possible to change. The characteristics and power relations that belong to the gender relations have also changed

through history. The hierarchy does not only contain the power differences between men and women but also between men and men. Different groups of men are valued differently in societies. (Kaufman 1994:144-147) Gender relations are built on power relations and we will look at that in the next chapter.

The concepts men and masculinity are practically impossible to define because of the diversion of images of men and masculinities that are constantly created and shaped by males. They changes over time but also according to culture, class, race and nationality as well as in every single individual experience. Hearn and Collinson (1994) choose to use the definition of men as

...a gender that exists or is presumed to exist in most direct relation to the generalized male sex, which being the sex that is not female or not the sex related to the gender of women. (Hearn, Collinson 1994:101)

The definition cannot therefore be precise and closed but has to be seen as a process. That is why we speak about masculinities and not masculinity. (Connell 2005:71) The relationship between men and masculinities is complex. Masculinities can be seen as ideological signs that signify for others in the society that this is a man and also what they have to do to reproduce themselves as men.

Although the concepts of men and masculinities are impossible to define, it is important to work with construction as well as deconstruction of the concepts. Not talking about men and masculinities is a way to conceal the power relations that men are part of. To work with construction of men is to speak about men as a group or the gender class of men. That is a tool to make the power relations visible between different gender classes of men or between gender class of men and women. (Hearn, Collinson 1994:104-105) It is also necessary to deconstruct the unities into differences. The aim here is to see that we all are socially constructed and also changeable. Some benefits by working with differences are that it is made visible that men have other experiences than women and also from other men and that masculinities are influenced by fluidity and change in social life. (Hearn, Collinson 1994:114)

#### **4.1.3 Social construction of masculinities**

I will introduce this chapter by shortly describing the theory of social construction. It can be described with four statements. Firstly, there is no taken-for-granted knowledge. Instead, what we think we know is our own interpretations of what we see and perceive. Secondly, how we understand the world is culturally and historically specific. Thirdly, knowledge is constructed in interaction between people. Social constructionists talk about the importance of the language and how language constitutes knowledge. Finally, how we comprehend a phenomenon influences how we deal with it. (Burr 1995:3-5)

According to social construction, language provides a system in which we all divide our thoughts and experiences and give them a meaning (Burr 1995:44). Language is seen as a process where people speak, read, listen and interact with others from conscious and unconscious knowledge. The subjects they interact about, for instance masculinities and gender relations get constructed through this process. Language is to be seen as an action and people involved as agents. (Burr 1995:7, 39) Matthew Gutmann (1996:14) states that masculinities are created by both unconscious and conscious knowledge. The unconscious knowledge is the interpreted generalizations of how a man should behave or not, for instance the concept of the machismo. The conscious knowledge is what derives about masculinities from the daily interaction with others. One example could be how men talk to other men about their wives at home. To sum up when we understand masculinities as a social

construction we have to have this intersectionality in mind. Here it means that the constructions of masculinities are dependent on time, space and the interaction with other people.

Michael Kimmel (1994:120) also stresses the importance of intersectionality meaning that there are several factors that together have an influence on the creation of masculinities. He argues for instance the influence of culture. Anna Johansson (Johansson 1999:48) states that the gender division as it is commonly described in Latin America is very much linked to the machismo, for explanation see page 6. However, the concept has been analysed and deconstructed in critical studies on men and it is clear that the machismo has different meanings for different persons and in different settings. For some people it means a man that has many illegitimate children and for others a man that is responsible when providing food and economical support for his family.

Masculinities as gender images are developed as stereotypes in different societies, often described as specific differences between males and females. To be a socially accepted man in a society you need to follow special rules about behaviours and norms that makes you fit into the stereotype more or less (Johansson 1999:65). One interesting question is where this pressure to internalize the characteristics that belongs to a certain gender image comes from? The answer is to be found on different levels. The aim to be defined as a man by society and perhaps especially other men is a way to create a self-worth. In addition, in a hegemonic society where the power is given to men as a gender class, that power in itself is a reason. However, individually men might not say that they gain on being men in the society. One reason for not seeing this difference in access to power between men and women can be that men as a gender class are more involved in defending themselves and their right to the power while women are more involved in bringing about a change. The gender order is maintained through the institutions in the society. Institutional gendered power can be noticed within for instance differences in salaries between men and women and that schools to a high extent rather promote gender identity differences than preventing them (Connell 2005:70-79).

According to Johansson (1999:184) can the dichotomy private-public be useful in understanding the construction of gender. By the dichotomy means the different areas but also characteristics that are mainly referred to females and males. The public sphere can both be understood as the possibility and duty to work and earn income but also to be part of the economical, political and social power in the society. This power is brought into the private sphere where the man is seen to have the right to make the important decisions because he is the breadwinner of the family. However, the dichotomy has to be deconstructed according to the actual situation.

Robert Connell (1994:32) claims that the school of psychoanalysis also can be seen as part of the social science because it treats the construction of masculinities in relation to others, primarily the parents. According to him, psychoanalysis has had a great influence in the understanding of construction of masculinities. As a conclusion, the importance of the mother and/or the father has been stressed and the boy becomes a man in identifying with his father. The sociologist Nancy Chodorow has had a great impact in stressing the importance of the mother in the pre-oidipal separation from the mother. The boy understands by looking at his genitals that he is not a woman and thereby cannot identify with his mother who is the first love and the most important person for him as an infant. He has to de-attach from her and in that process also de-attach with his relational self. The construction of masculinities according

to this process is stressing the need of boundaries between people and the lack of need of relations with others.

According to Calvo & Campos (2005:204), both psychologists and active in working with the themes masculinities and sexuality in Costa Rica, mean that males in patriarchal societies has to internalize following characteristics: to let the rationality dominate over the emotional, to not feel/show tenderness and fragility instead he should show power and violence to cover the vulnerability, he should be heterosexual, he should be the undisputable father of children and he should have the political, economical and social power both in public and the private life. The authors put emphasis on the importance of sexuality and that the men have to show their virility and willingness permanently to demonstrate their masculinity. Many men seem to feel this pressure in these patriarchal societies. However,

...the stereotypical Latin American gender dichotomy – the image of the strong and dominant male and the meek and subservient women – indicating that masculine and feminine images and identities are characterized by ambivalence and contradiction. (Melhuus and Stölen in Johansson 1996:34)

Because the gendered identity is shaped by its settings there are different masculinities, although there are always some definitions of man that have more power than others. These ideal images are different in different settings. (Connell 2005:70)

Gutmann (2003:3) describes four concepts of masculinity that he has found among scholars in Latin America. He means that the first concept includes everything that men do, say or think. The second concept distinguishes the definition meaning everything men do, say or think to show that they are men to others. The result of this is that there often is a relation between men who is more masculine than another. Third, there can be a difference in masculinity dependent on what qualities a man has, for instance what attributes he is born with. Fourth, a man can distinguish his masculinity in comparison to women and femininity. The less femininity the more a man.

In the anthology of Gutmann, the Peruvian sociologist Norma Fuller (2003:138-151) writes about her study on the social constitution of men in Peru. She states that masculinity is constituted from the teenage virility to *hombría*-to be a man. That is to be responsible in the domestic sphere and the public life. The keyword is *work*. Through work men earn their own money and have the possibility of providing for a family, which is one of the main concepts of being a man in Peru, plus being a part of a homosocial context which is described as a second home in the study. To some extent are the demands of the masculinity in the different life spheres contradictory. In the public homosocial sphere are men supposed to both have a family and provide for it but also to show virility through having extra-marital relations. In the domestic place are men supposed to be the predominant person of the family but only if he gives his wife respect. In the peer-group he has to show that he is in charge of the family otherwise he is seen as effeminized.

To better understand the social construction of masculinities and the connection to men's violence against women in intimate relationships two concepts must be further described. These are the concepts of power and the contradictory powerlessness.

#### **4.1.4 Power and powerlessness**

Power is a word that for many people is connected to men's power over women. Instead power in it self can be both positive and negative dependent on how the owner uses it. Power can be the tool humans have had to bring forth societal development. The power of love,

intelligence, muscles and the power to fight injustice are positive ways of using this power. Empowerment is also a concept that is used by social workers to increase the power of their clients. Power can also be used as a way to control someone else or something for the wish to gain something on the cost of the other. (Kaufman 1994:145)

The social constructionist Vivian Burr refers to the French philosopher Foucault's explanation of power and how power is executed. Foucault states that power is not a form of possession but the power of a person or a group is depending on how much it can define the world or a person so that it can claim resources and power out of that. The one who defines a character or behaviour as normal and others as abnormal has power. (Burr 1995:64) From a feminist perspective are men part of the society and have the disciplinary power in both defining that they have power but also the possibility to protect and favour other men. (Hirdman 2001:69)

To explain the dichotomy of power and powerlessness we have to go deeper into the social construction of masculinities in families that live in hegemonic societies. See also the paragraph about the psychoanalysis concept of pre-oidipal separation from the mother in the previous chapter. Kaufman (1994:147-149) states that power over others, and especially women, is the main thing that makes a man. According to Kaufman is the dichotomy more or less prevalent in most societies. The boy learns that the power of being a male in the society must be internalized, both because he learns that he will gain on it but also because it will give him the sense of self-worth. The boy learns to suppress characteristics that are linked to his mother (as emotions, caring and sympathy) to identify with his father instead. The father might not be very present while the boy has to identify with an image instead of a real person. The boy reidentifies when he internalizes that he is a man and not a woman but does not reattach. The power of being a male has to be won over and over again to show both others and ones self that here is a real man. The worst thing that could happen to a man, in this context, is that he will be taken for feminine. The powerlessness many men feel has to be understood as the base and the reason for the fight for power. The more fear of not being a man, the more need for power and to be in control over others.

The fight for power is as we have seen generated by fear of being feminine. The masculinities relying on this power is created and maintained by alienation. These men cannot come close emotionally to other persons, whether they are males or females if they do not have much confidence in the other. When men do not talk about the feelings of fear and powerlessness maintains the identification of masculinity as being in power. (Kaufman 1994:150-151) The fear of possible humiliation if showing weakness and for instance standing up protesting against unjust exercised power leads to shame. Shame leads to silence. Still men needs homosocial forum to let other men grant them their masculinity, for instance the unification around football, politics or women (Kimmel 1994:131).

#### **4.1.5 Men's violence**

Hearn (1998:15-16) states that violence is defined according to locality and discourse. It has to be seen in its context and defined out of that. There is individual but also structural violence. The individual signifies the violence that is directed from one person to another and with the intension of causing harm or with the experience by the violated of being damaged. The structural violence is seen as the social phenomenon that different groups in the society exercise over others like men's violence against women. It can also be those orders in the society that underwrite violence, like the capitalism. Connell (2005:83-84) writes that violence of states comes from the violence of the stereotype of masculinity. He also states that a totally legitimate state would not have to use violence in either way. Gender relations are

not the only cause behind violence. For instance is there a link between violence and regional poverty (Connell 2005:258).

Kaufman (1987:30-31) describes men's violence as a triad; towards women, towards other men and towards themselves. The violence against women cannot be prevented and eliminated without confronting the violence towards the other two. He also states that it is basically the violence towards the man himself that promotes the other two types. The violence in itself is a consequence derived from the suppressing of emotional desires that would be feminine to feel and show. The violence is thereby a defence to not be taken for a woman. The violence in the triad starts by the violence men directs towards themselves and that means that they have to be powerful and in control to have the right to be called a man.

The other corner in the triad is focused on men's violence against other men. Kaufman (1998-41-42) describes it as both structural and individual violence; wars and aggressive sports as well as the homophobia and economical and political competition men exercise. It is also showed in men's fear of being humiliated by other men. If they would show weakness or that they have lost power other men would take advantage of the situation and take power over the first one. That fear leads to alienation and to lack of confidence between men.

The violence against women is as described earlier the clearest expression of the power relations between male and female. It is men's as a class taken for granted way to get and to stay in power and control. Women are in these power relations seen as weaker and thereby more easy to exercise this power on. Kaufman (1987:41) states that because of the power relations to other men, men often get dependent on a woman to be able to interact on an emotional level. That leads to a contradictory situation because it is also in the family and with a relationship to a woman, which is according to the societal power relations weaker, that the men can re-establish lost power in for instance the working place. Kaufman emphasises that the possibility to exercise violence against women in the order of power relations lies within all men, but it is important to see that not all men use it. He means that the risk is higher when the men are insecure or have a daily feeling of powerlessness in for instance the working place.

#### **4.1.6 Men's involvement as prevention to violence**

This research is focusing on the involvement of men to prevent men's violence against women in intimate relationships in Costa Rica. Much of the previous research that has been done, focus on the involvement of already violent men to work with their perception of masculinities and how to cope with their anger and relationships. However, there are some literatures within the field of gender and masculinities that are treating the issue of the non-violent men.

Men are the gatekeepers of current gender orders and are potential resisters of change. If we do not effectively reach men and boys, any of our efforts will be either thwarted or simply ignored. (Esplen 2006:1)

The quotation above explains why men are important to promote gender equality; men are both part of the problem so as the solution. Efforts are many times ineffective when they are directed to empower women and the men are not involved in the same issues. Still there is a resistance against directing governmental and non-governmental resources on men. Women are afraid that men will take control once again over issues that affect women. An explanation from a gender perspective of the resistance from the governmental institutions is that they are part of a hegemonic society and therefore avoid talking about men's responsibility that could reduce men's power in gender relations. To make room for changes, it is important to talk

about the gender relations and the interdependency between men and women and also the concepts of power and powerlessness that affects the behaviour of many men. (Esplen 2006:1-2)

To attract men to involve in reflecting over and taking practical steps concerning their perception of masculinities and the cultural stereotypes that might affect them in their choices, there is a need to focus on the positive gains for men. Many men live in societies where men should be the breadwinners in the families, be physically and psychologically strong. Through the social construction of masculinities they have more or less embodied these characteristics and they have to proof their masculinity through acting out in the families and in the society. (Esplen 2006:3) The professor Jose Manuel Salas Calvo from WEM states that men in Costa Rica are to a great extent influenced by the hegemonic characteristics. He says that men can gain a better quality of life when they reflect and take responsibility for their behaviour and perception of masculinities. For instance can they get a better self confidence when the fear of being weak is diminishing, they can be more satisfied when getting better contact with themselves as emotional persons and they can get better relationships with their wives and children. Many men as well feel the gap between the demand of being in power and their reality. The feeling of being powerless can be great in different situations and in relation to different persons. The need for balancing this gap can for instance make an unemployed man to turn into violence within his family (Salas José M 2007).

Hearn (1998:221-223) states that to prevent men's violence against known women (his definition) has to be made on different levels in the society. The prevention that he talks about aims both to stop men from exercising violence but also to make men not start exercising violence. Hearn points out the importance in focusing on policy development; educating men on issues of violence, the production of clear policy statements, public campaigns and addressing power, control and responsibility in groups with men, amongst other things. He also focuses on the importance of the interaction between men where men tend to support each other in violent behaviour. Instead they should support each other in refusing violence.

## **5 THE COSTA RICAN SETTING**

As Connell (2005:185) states are masculinities constituted in relation to the specific cultural and historical contexts. In the same way, men's involvement to prevent men's violence against women in close relationships must be influenced by the society. It is important to see how these issues are treated in the societal context. I will therefore in this chapter try to give some glimpse over of the Costa Rican setting in respect of the situation of men's violence against women and the legislation and preventive work that is done by governmental and non-governmental organisations. The material is collected from interviews with representatives from three organisations. I am of course very aware of that much more can be said about the situation in Costa Rica.

### **5.1 Costa Rica - the country**

Costa Rica is a country in Central America with about 4 million inhabitants. It is a democratic republic that is led by the president Oscar Arias. The country has had a social democratic welfare system for many years but is now more and more changing into a liberal system. Oscar Arias is an eager spokesman for a closer relationship to the United States and that is made clear during the current negotiations of ratifying the free trade agreement with the US and the other countries in Central America. ([www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov) 2007) In the 1940s, Costa Rica

abolished the army and Costa Rica has had peace since then. In the same decade did the country get its first labour and social security laws. Banks and insurance companies were nationalized. The social democratic party, the National Liberation Party (PLN), together with the elite politics and the middle-class set the tone of the political system in Costa Rica until the 1990s (Booth Wade Walker 2006:56-57).

The neo-liberal politics from the 1990s led to privatizations, reductions of trade barriers, a decline in investments in agriculture and a decline in production of domestic agricultural products. The informal labour sector increased in for instance street vendors and unlicensed taxi-drivers. The ones who experience a decline in living standards are the already poor people who become even more poor and vulnerable (Booth Wade Walker 2006:64).

According to a report on *Social spending on the poor* from the World Bank (2003) the welfare system in Costa Rica has gone through a reform during the last years. The cause has been problems with high spending costs on social welfare which were not proportionate to the contributions from the citizens. The cost in the future would also be even higher due to low fertility rates and an increasing elderly population. The often universalistic aims of the programs make that the benefits of the programs often are captured by the middle-class and do not reach the poor to the same extent. Another problem lies within the institutions working with insurances and social development. They are criticized of being too rigid through laws and earmarked resources that give them difficulties to target the poor and needing citizens. There is also a lack of cooperation and effective work between the institutions.

([www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org). 2003:3 (1))

The educational attendance is almost 100 %. The female attendance is slightly higher than that of men. However, the female labour participation is around 34 % of the total labour force. ([www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org) (2)) In addition, women are dominating among the poorest in Costa Rica. Women in the poorer groups live to a great extent in the rural areas. They have in general a low educational level and less labour force participation. In addition they have more young children and there is often a lack of childcare facilities. It is especially economically hard for single mothers. ([www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org). 2003:17 (1)) The pension system and other insurances are to a high extent family based. The result of this is that women are encouraged to stay at home and take care of the family and not to join the labour force, while men are encouraged to work and be the breadwinners of the families. This can also be a way for the government to protect the nuclear family and to make it harder for women to divorce (Ståhlberg 2002:229).

## **5.2 Costa Rica - Men's violence against women in intimate relationships**

The social problem of men's violence against women in close relationships is severe in Costa Rica. INAMU states that in the year 2003, 58 % of the adult women in Costa Rica have at least once in their lives perceived themselves as being subjected to physical or sexual violence (Velascu 2007). During 2006 was 30 women killed by men in close relationships, about two to three women per month (INAMU 2007-02-20). There are probably a number of unrecorded cases. There are only three shelters in Costa Rica for women and their children who have to escape from a violent man. Normally the families can stay there for six weeks but also up to one year. There is also a telephone line for women in need and a delegation within the INAMU that are specialised in these questions to help women practically when they search for help. In the last five years an average of 5263 women have got help from the delegation (INAMU 2007-09-18).



Costa Rica ratified the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Sanction and Eradicate the Domestic Violence against Women in 1995. The year after the Assembly of Costa Rica approved The Law against the Domestic Violence. The law gave women the possibility of protection and measures after having reported a case of domestic violence. The strengths of the law are that the domestic patrimonial violence got acknowledged and that there are measures to put up against an aggressor to prevent more violence. For instance, the aggressor can be forbidden to return to the home. One of the most important weaknesses is that there are no sanctions against an aggressor that do return to the home and that continue harass the woman. (INAMU, Ley Contra la Violencia Domestica 2004:7-8) According to the Penal Code has severe violence against women been penalized however repeatedly lighter violence not (Velazcu 2007).

In the end of May 2007 the president of Costa Rica signed the Law of Penalisation for Violence against Women. The crimes assumed in the law are physical, emotional, sexual and patrimonial abuse against adult women. The sanctions for insulting, ridiculing and threatening an adult woman are according to the law between six months and two years of prison. Furthermore for homicide is the sanction between 20 to 35 years in prison. The new law refers to eleven crimes that are not recognized in the Penal Code. It has taken eight years for the law to be approved and signed since it was taken up the first time in the assembly in 1999. (La Nación 2007-05-25) Before and after the approval of the law the discussions in the media treated issues of the favouring of women in the law for the disadvantage of the men. Men wondered where the limits for insulting and ridiculing were and what could lead to prison. CIEM, INAMU and WEM find the law positive but question the impact the new law will have on the daily life of women and men and leave the answer for the future to show. (CIEM, INAMU, WEM 2007)

INAMU is the governmental institution for equality and women's rights. INAMU is working actively with spreading information and giving workshops about the issues all around Costa Rica, mainly towards women but also towards other organisations. They also work preventive with youths of both sexes in order to create gender equality. (Velazcu 2007) CIEM is another governmental institution and belongs to the University of Costa Rica and is the centre for Women studies in Costa Rica. It was funded in 1987 with the aim to bring out gender studies. The purpose had to change because it got clear that there was a lack of interest of studies of masculinities. CIEM investigate and educate about women's rights in different ways. For instance, they educate health care professionals that meet women and they have cooperation with TV and radio production to bring out information. One aim is also to reinforce a gender perspective to all courses at the University. Until recently has CIEM had a special research program on violence against women but now the funding has stopped. The director of CIEM Teresita Ramellini Centella states that the educational system is important when it comes to changing attitudes and working preventively (Ramellini Centella 2007).

### **5.3 Costa Rica – men's involvement to prevent the violence**

The chapter above treated amongst other things prevention of violence against women. The above cited governmental institutions both worked with the spreading of information and with education. They both claimed that they were and should focus on studies and the rights of women. Furthermore, the law that sanctions men's violence against women has been affirmed just recently. The previous law focused on the rights of women but did not focus on the duties of the men. When the involvement of men to prevent violence against women in close relationships is one of the main issues of this research I will now focus on that.

INAMU is expressively not working with men because of their standpoint that the resources are to be given to the victims and those are women and children in this case. For INAMU it is an ethical issue to take a stand for the women and not for the men. However, they are working with youths of both sexes as prevention. INAMU thinks that it is important that other organisations work with attention and sensibilization in these issues with the men but it is not their obligation to do it. According to INAMU there is no other governmental organisation that has the aim to work with the men, the violent nor the non-violent. On the question how they cooperate with other organisations that work with the men they say that they have educated WĒM, the institute for masculinities, in giving workshops. They have a good relationship even if the cooperation is not active nowadays. (Velazcu 2007) These discussions are recognized in other countries as well, for instance in feminist groups in Sweden (Lennér-Axelsson 2008).

CIEM states that it must be men that work with other men because they listen to each other. To some extent can the work that is done with women affect men because the women change and know the rights. Furthermore do the women have an influence on their children and new more sensible generations can grow. The director of CIEM claimed that there was no meaning in working with the male population over forty years old because they will not get interested. She also did not see the meaning of working with the men in these issues because of the lack of interest to change in their masculinities. However, there are some treatment programs in the prisons focusing on violent men and the CCSS, the Costa Rican Social Service, has the obligation to work with offenders even if they do not do it practically yet. (Ramellini Centella 2007)

The institute of Masculinities, WĒM, is run by psychologists mostly working voluntarily in the institute. WĒM was funded seven years ago by psychologists having worked with women abused to violence and saw that there was a need to focus on the men. WĒM recognizes the lack of interest in the men in the Costa Rican society and states that it is the only organisation that is working professional with the focus on men. It believes that men's violence against women can never be stopped without also focusing and working actively with the men and masculinities. The society's lack of interest in working with the men is also a lack of an important signal that the violence is wrong. What signifies WĒM is that it is working with men from the men's perspective. According to WĒM are men suffering under the pressure of the prevailing masculinity that pushes men to be strong physically and emotionally. Men are supposed to be in charge of women and in the family, to succeed in their working life and to oppose themselves to dangerous situations so as driving with alcohol in the blood. WĒM also states that men suffer to a high extent from depressions and diseases because they do not search for help. (Solano 2007)

WĒM is working practically in several ways to reach out to and to work with men. The institute recognizes the problem not just that men abuse women but also from the men's perspective. Men come to WĒM with different problems but the fundamental core is mostly a rigid masculinity that many men are influenced by. Dagoberto Solano, a psychologist working for WĒM informs about the work of the institution: firstly, groups of help for men who have been violent where the themes treat the human rights, freedom of violence and to deconstruct the machismo and construct new masculinities. Secondly, therapeutic reflection groups for non-violent men that treats fatherhood and construction of new masculinities. Thirdly, they run a telephone line to which men can call and ask for help and support. Fourthly, they give workshops to for instance truck drivers that need to learn how to manage their anger when driving or for priests that meet men that need support in their daily work as priests. Finally,

they give therapeutic talks to couples that have problems although not if there is a risk that the man can get violent against the woman. (Solano 2007)

Solano does not recognize the picture that men with problems managing their anger or need of control do not want to change. On the contrary, he sees that there is a need among men and that the greatest gains the men do after having worked with their masculinities are in general better quality of life. The men themselves often search the support of WEM to get a better relationship to their partners (Solano 2007).

## **6 EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND ANALYSIS**

In this chapter I will analyse the eight interviews with men that I conducted in Costa Rica. According to the purpose of the research, I will try to look for resources and obstacles in involving men to prevent men's violence against women in intimate relationships in Costa Rica. To structure the analysis I will go through the themes that I used in the interview guide and then interpret the answers according to concepts within gender relations and masculinities. The themes that I used were: masculinities, gender equality, and men's violence against women so as men's involvement to prevent that violence.

The following is a short summary of the men concerning age, living, family situation, work and educational level. They have all different backgrounds when the aim is not to compare and find findings according to their life situation, but to find ways of involving men to prevent violence against women. For more information about the data and the data collection, see under the method chapter.

1. Jorge is 55 years old and lives on the island with his wife. He has three grown up sons. He is working as a fisherman. He has no higher education.
2. Carlos is 27 years old and lives on the island. He has no wife or children yet although he is searching for a partner. He works with fishing and with the tourism on the island. He is also active in church and associations on the island. He has no higher education.
3. Juan is 50 years old and lives on the island with his wife and eleven children. He is a fisherman and a constructor of houses. He is engaged in the church and associations on the island. He has no higher education.
4. Diego is 53 years old and lives in the suburb with his wife and three children. He works at a hospital as a clinical microbiologist. He has two specialities within this profession.
5. Pedro is 43 years old and lives in the suburb with his wife and two children. He works with private transportation. He has no higher education.
6. Luis is 23 years old and lives in the suburb with his wife and one at that time five months old son. He and his wife have been married for two years. He has grown up in a home where his father was violent against his mother. He has been working as a barber since he was 12 years old and had to quit school at the same time.
7. Guillermo is 31 years old and lives in the suburb. He has no wife or children. He works as a seller and has no higher education.
8. Wilhelm is 29 years old and lives in the suburb with his girlfriend and their two children. He works as a constructor of houses and has no higher education.

## 6.1 Masculinities

I asked the men about their perception of masculinities and how they would describe a man. I also asked them about communication with other men and especially when they had personal problems. The aim with the questions was to capture their understanding of the theme and to find out about potential resources and obstacles to make men interact more in preventing violence against women. I found three main concepts that all men related to in different ways; responsibility, machismo and alienation.

### 6.1.1 Responsibility

“Well, I believe that to be a man is to be responsible. Responsible towards the home, the children, the society and the neighbours. That this person cares about that everything turns out well. This is my concept of the masculine person. Above all, the responsibility. To be a man is not to feel or do something out of my sex, to be superior to other men or women. I think that that is the most logical way to describe this person. To be a man for me, the relation is a person that goes around well with other persons but principally with his family, that they have it well and that they are satisfied. //...For me, maybe I will touch a little bit of a machista; I feel that the man has more responsibility than the woman. Concerning what? To look for money to survive; to buy the things... I know that in this time the things have changed so that women nowadays are out working and I think that is good. But I think that the man is principally called to this function.”

Pedro 43

Above one of the men describes that the most important factor when being a man is to take care of the family but also to handle the relationships with the neighbours and the society in a good way. Even if this man as well emphasises the equal rights between his wife and himself he still feels that he has more responsibility than his wife in being the breadwinner and to secure the economical standard of the family. To put masculinities in relation with the responsibility of seeing to the family is something that all the eight men do. Several of the men also put responsibility in connection to work and in the community.

Luis (23) comprehends the concept as the one who sees after the family and respects the woman.

Diego (53) means that he searches respect for his person from the whole family. He wants to be responsible in work but also as a father.

When talking about what it is to be a man all but one of the men also use the expression *being the head of the household* that is closely linked to the concept of responsibility. By this expression they emphasise that they hold an exceptional position in their families. However, when they later on in the interviews talk about equality almost all of the men state that they and their partners are equal and have equal rights.

Jorge (55) describes what he thinks by saying that he is the head to think in the family. He tells about other families where the woman is the head and decides about things in the family.

Sometimes the man is very passive and the woman gives the orders in the house. And that is not how it should be. If my woman tells me something I will analyse it and then think that she has right. Let's do what she has asked for. It has never been like... I work and I put the money in my pocket and I give her a little for what she is thinking about. Just as well it shouldn't be like I gave her much and said "spend it badly". One has to spend the money in what is really the preoccupation. It has to serve the family.

Jorge 55

Jorge (55) also tells me about him and his wife as that they have equal rights and that the most important thing is to respect each other. He still finds the man to be the person that is best suited for the task to think in the family.

For Diego (53) is to be *the chief of the family* more like an image, because he also states that he and his wife are equal. He wants his family to have it all and that he will gain their respect.

Luis (23) also talks about being the head of the family but means at the same time that he and his wife are equal and have equal rights. For him the explanation of the concept is the one who *treats everything in the house* but that he takes help from his wife.

Guillermo (31) means that to be the head of the family is to be a good example.

Wilhelm (29) states that the concept for him is to be the breadwinner and the one who earns the money takes most of the decisions in the family.

According to Kaufman (1994:144-147) is becoming a man the process of internalizing the power that is given the male gender class and the characteristics that belong to it. The process of *doing gender* is permanently continuing and the man has to proof his masculinity to himself and to others in every new situation. In the interviews refer almost all the eight men to themselves as men with almost similar expressions; taking responsibility and being the head of the household. However, they fill the expressions with different meanings, at least in the speaking moment. This can be understood as their socially constructed masculinities that they have internalized and put themselves within a power relation to others. They are at the same time constructing masculinities by referring to themselves with gendered expressions. Language is according to the school of social constructionism very important in constructing behaviours (Burr 1996:44).

Hearn and Collinson (1994:101) state that masculinities are through the gender doing socially constructed and change according to time and context. They mean that it is therefore also important to analyse masculinities in connection to the actual time and context. Calvo & Campos (2005:204), stress that masculinities in Costa Rica as a hegemonic society are build on domination and repressing emotions, to be virile and to have economical and social power both in public and in private life. However, Johansson (1999:34) do not agree but say that there is no dichotomy between the strong man and the weak woman in Latin America. Instead they are built upon ambivalence and contradiction. The probable contradiction between the men's perception of wanting to be the head of the households and at the same time being equal to their partners could perhaps be explained by these differences in masculinities. There is not only a hegemonic masculinity but also other masculinities that are more emphasised in other contexts. In this analyse it is also possible to deconstruct the expressions in their meanings and find that the men have different masculinities and are therefore changeable. (Hearn and Collinson 1994:104-105)

The seemingly contradiction between having the power and being equal could also be explained by the process of concealing men's gendered power in the society and justifying it by calling it equality. When the men are seen as a unit the gains are that power relations are made visible. Foucault (Burr 1995:64) explains this by the process of constructing power. In this case it could mean that men as a gender class have the power to decide what is normal and what is not as well as how the discourse is conducted about men's power. Men's power of the discourse could conceal inequality and weaken the opposition.

To have the responsibility in being the breadwinner is hard says Wilhelm (29). He also says that it is normal and that all of the men and the families have to know that. Being the breadwinner can be a mean to get power within the society as well as within the family.

“The one that is working and earns the money also has the capacity of thinking and to think about how to make the money.” Wilhelm 29

Wilhelm (29) affirms the statement above by saying that because he has earned the money he has the right and the possibility to decide in economical matters in the family. Some of the men in the interviews emphasise the responsibility, freedom and power men have by working and earning the money for the household. Diego, 53, tells me in the interview how he did not want his wife to work as a student because he earned a salary and wanted her to take advantage of that money. Luis, 23, on the contrary, says that he has been working almost all his life and has no problems with that his wife is working too. Right now she is at home with their little child. He gives her money everyday and they take the decisions together. Pedro, 43, was of the view that every family would be happier with two incomes because it would make the economical pressure lower, although he thought that it principally was the duty of the man to have the income for the family as his responsibility.

Johansson (1999:184) uses the concepts *la casa* and *la calle* for differencing the different areas of construction of gender identity. According to her, the men construct gender in the streets that is in the public sphere; work with salary. Connell (2005:70-79) says that even institutions are inserted in power relations and can mostly be related to hegemonic masculinities. This makes the society as a strong agent in the social construction of masculinities. Public work has therefore been one of the activities that has been emphasised, both for the survival of the society but also as a mean for the gender class of men to achieve power over women (and other men). Even though the men explain being the head of the family in different ways it can be comprehended that the expression states a relation of power within the family where the men are the ones who gain on this relationship.

### 6.1.2 Machismo

Most of the men refer to machismo when talking about negative masculinities. They then talk about the irresponsibility; when a man drinks alcohol and does not bring food and alimentation for the family so as the one who beats his wife. El machismo is usually meant to signify the stereotype of the masculinity in Latin America; strong, aggressive, sexually virile and dominating and possessing women (Calvo & Campos 2005:204). Johansson (1999:48) states however, that it has become evident that the expression has different meanings for different individuals. However, the men in the interviews use the expression of a machista to signify a violent and possessing man, a man that is not like themselves. Wilhelm (29) was the only one concerning this concept, that distinguished himself by saying that men consist of both good and bad because no man is perfect. Jorge (55) uses the dichotomy responsibility and irresponsibility when talking about machistas.

Well, let's say if one weekend I have earned an amount of money and I went to drink alcohol. I would leave buying food for the family, clothes for the family and the woman and the children would complain. She cannot leave the house to earn money because she has her duties in the household. “I don't care, because I work and I enjoy what I have earned.” This is the machismo. If someone is responsible this situation doesn't exist, because first I think about the alimentation of my family, the alimentation of my house and after that, what is left is for enjoyment. But for a machista, he enjoys first and what is left he gives to his family. For me, that is not a good man. A man irresponsible, a bad man, a bad husband and a bad father... Jorge 55

Jorge (55) does a difference between responsibility and irresponsibility. The irresponsible man he calls the machista that thinks about himself first and then about his family.

The concept of machismo is important to highlight because of the confusion that might occur around the concept and how it is used. The eight men used the concept as something they were not. A concept that is available for describing a bad man that is mandating and possessive towards his partner. As long as you are not a machista, you are safe. Johansson (1996:65) describes gender identities as specific characteristics that a society develops. Men have to embody and reproduce the characteristics to be able to be called men. The “doing gender” is a life long process of social construction. Connell (2005:70-79) states that men as a gender class have power to gain when defending and maintaining the domination. In a hegemonic society institutions and structures are as well influenced by hegemonic masculinities and promote thereby hegemonic masculinities. Connell ((2005:70-79) states that the power is given to men as a gender class even if individually men would not say that they neither try nor win on being men in the society. As gender class men are more involved in defending them selves and there right to the power while women are more involved in bringing about change.

### 6.1.3 Alienation

When I asked the men if and how they communicated with other men about personal problems the main answers were that it was difficult and that they in general solved their problems within the family. If they would talk to others about personal problems it would be with a person that they had known for many years or had great confidence in. Some examples that can represent the eight men in the interviews are given here:

If I am with a friend that I have known for a long time I can have total confidence.// I think that a good advice could come from a friend, depending on if the person himself comes with the problem. If he doesn't I believe it is difficult to lift up the question. But if a man comes with a problem about domestic violence he could comment it to a friend and he could get a good advice that would be a good thing. Pedro 43

No, not among men. Very little. // Because that is your own business. Yours and your family's. I wouldn't tell it to someone else. Guillermo 31

Well, it's a little bit difficult, right, because there are different kinds of upbringing. Many people use a pressure, more men than women, and they don't have much respect for other people. When I am with friends I need to have patience because there are some forms that I don't like. And there is also a pressure that you should be more of a man, always a psychological pressure. // Let's say, when a man is married he has to be in control of everything, right. So if a man would admit that he has problems he would loose control and it would affect him negatively. So, the men talk about other things. Carlos 27

They talk about everything. But it costs a lot for a man to talk with others about that I am bad in this. I have problems in this and this and this. Because the others would make jokes about it. There are some people that come and tell one about their wife, that they have found their wife together with another man, that their woman has left them because he couldn't get erection. There are some that come and tell this. And then there are no jokes, but the contrary; “take it easy that is nothing. Search for help”. Everything comes. Luis 23

These men tell us on one hand about the pressure that these men experience in their society to not show weakness because it could lead to their friends making jokes about it. Luis explains for instance later on in his interview that he often tells his friends and people around him that he helps his wife in the household and takes care of their child. The reactions he gets are mostly negative and they say that in his house *canta la gallina* that means that the wife decides in the house and that this is not how it should be. They are insinuating that Luis is not a real man.

This process can be connected to Kaufman's (1994:150-151) concept alienation that signifies men's tendencies to not share emotions and weaknesses with other men. That could lead to that these men do not get into close relationships with other men unless there is a great

confidence built up under several years. The fear of humiliation is too strong. A logical conclusion could be that these obstacles can counteract men's possibilities in helping each other or serve as role models for other men when talking about personal problems. Perhaps that is why it is important to have tested the confidence throughout many years.

The communication between men, according to some of the interviewees, teaches men to behave more like "men". This can be comprehended as part of the social construction of a gendered identity. Burr (1996) emphasizes the social construction through language and the interaction with other people. She means that we both behave out of unconscious knowledge, for example stereotypes of masculinities but also construct masculinities when we interact with others.

## **6.2 Gender equality**

I asked the men about how they perceived gender equality and how this was exercised in their daily lives. The purpose with the questions about gender equality was to capture the view the men have on the power relations between men and women and to see if there could be resources and obstacles that could be used to involve men to prevent men's violence against women. The theme of gender equality coincides with the previous theme of masculinities. However, some concepts have been clear in the interviews that can be interesting to illuminate here. They are: gender equality as a discourse, decision making and what men lose or gain with gender equality.

### **6.2.1 Gender equality as a discourse**

When I asked the men about how they perceived equality only one man had not thought about gender equality before. The others talked about gender equality in somewhat different ways.

I have always thought that women are equal to men. If I marry a woman I will never think that I will own her and that she should change. And she because she married a man that she is the owner of the man. I would say that the equality we are creating doesn't exist. Still there are many individuals that believe that the woman has to obey.// We who are educated know that there is no work for nobody. There are women who work as pilots, within the police, so it doesn't exist any gendered work. It is the mind of people that makes the gender. And we have taught our children that if the clothes have to be washed they have to do it. It is not a woman's work; it is his need so he has to do it. Because if they had been taught that it has to be the mother or a sister who had to wash the clothes or iron the trousers or many other things, we wouldn't be where we are today. Because we don't have a lot of money. So from that the boys were small they know that there doesn't exist work for women or work for men. So that is why I say to you that for me the word masculinity is one and the word machismo is another.

Jorge 55

Jorge explains that something profound about equality is that men and women are free in the relationships and that no one owns the other. There is also a culture in Costa Rica that says that there are some jobs for men and some for women. However, he and others who are educated know that it is not correct. Carlos, also from the island as Jorge, states that there is no thing as inequality because men and women are equal in reality, however not in practical living.

Well, I have heard and read much about this and I believe that we in reality are equal, right. We don't have to fight against inequality that much because in reality we are equal, right. That we have to fight against the myths in our heads, right, that we have learned through the upbringing.

Carlos 27

Another perspective on equality gets illuminated when Luis talks about his situation as a married man wanting to be equal to his wife.

I would say that everything has to be equal. But in the society where we live it is not equal. Because I couldn't say that I would like to stay at home and take care of my child when she is working and I am staying here taking care of him. But in the society that would be seen as if I was crazy, like if I was a parasite and that she had to



provide for me. And as well as she was the head of the house. I try to make everything equal in everything that is possible. Luis 23

Luis states that the society supports the gender class of men. He has to be the breadwinner and the head of the household. His statement makes it clear that the society has great influence on how ordinary men either tend to think and behave or how much energy they have to put into the struggle to get equal. As we shall see later on, several of the men also mean that men in general would gain if the relationships would be more equal. The discourse of gender equality in the society seems to be contradictory. Men are supposed to be more equal but only to some extent or only in some specific areas. One explanation could be that the society is partly hegemonic and therefore promotes the power of men to some extent. (Connell 2005:70-79) That is also evident if we look at the two governmental organisations that were interviewed within this research, CIEM and INAMU. They only focus on women and their situation as victims under the inequality in the society. (CIEM, INAMU 2007) It is clear that there is a lack of focus on men in these issues and support for men who want to exercise equality. Instead there is confusion within the gender relations.

Another aspect that Gutmann (2003:3) stresses is that men are individual agents in the social construction of masculinities and therefore will always different shapes of masculinities exist. Luis says that it is not easy to know what the right thing to do is and that appreciation perhaps is not to expect from others.

### **6.2.2 Decision making**

I asked the interviewees about decision making in the household which is a practical situation where the issue of equality often is visible. Most men said that they and their partner make the decisions together. In addition, some of them also emphasized the stress on men if they alone have the responsibility to make decisions that is for the best of the family.

Yes, because of the culture. The culture has a great pressure on the people, so if the father doesn't take the decisions but the mother it would be like the mother decided and the man loses in masculinity. // Well, it is affecting because the machismo is formed through the generations, right. And when only one is taking the decisions it is not good. If the two are taking the decisions it is better when it comes to the result. Because when the two participate and make the decisions the woman is also responsible for the results. Carlos 27

Carlos (27) focuses on the possible relief in the responsibility of the family that many of the men have. He states that many decisions could be better if the couple did them together. Luis (23) agrees with him by saying:

I say that the decisions belongs to both. I think that they feel like the maximo that they can take whatever decision that they like and that she cannot say nothing. But I say that the best is when the two take the decisions together. Above all because of the responsibility. If it was only my responsibility it would be much tougher for me. To think that it is only I that have to do it, only I that has to... Yes, much pressure. If we take them together, no. Because I say to her that no, help me and take decisions you as well. And many times the women have a colder mind to make the best decisions. Because of the work, whatever thing or much pressure I think that many men can make very stupid decisions. Luis 23

However, Wilhelm (29) is of another view.

Well, I think in my case that the greatest part of the times I make the decisions. Because I am often tired after work or because I don't have money. But if I don't do it my woman does. We are two in the house, right. But the things about the children for instance it has to be done by the father. // My woman doesn't work. She doesn't have money. I work so I have money. So I can see if we can go to some place or not. Like, the last week, we talked about to leave the house and I knew that the trip would cost 1000 colones and we talked about if we could go or not. But I know that we have to pay the rent the next week. They don't think about this or they forget it. So

they say that, lets go, lets go. And I say no, it is not possible. The man is... Well, I know that I have to take care of what the money goes to and the woman helps me. I am..., the money is in my hands. Wilhelm 29

Wilhelm (29) connects the right to make decisions to the one who earns the money for the household. According to Johansson (1999:184) the men's easier access to the public life is connected to that they also have the power to make decisions both in the public sphere as in the private. Foucault (Burr 1995:64) explains people with power as the ones who can decide how phenomena are comprehended and thereafter maintain or increase power for themselves.

However, as we saw earlier equality in the decision making can be a theme that can be discussed as a way for men to get relieved from some of the pressure it means to be a man. As Esplen (2006:3) states must men's own experiences and the possible gains for men get illuminated if they are to get involved in changing their masculinities to the better for both men and women. This issue is perhaps both clear and important because it illuminates an area where men both loose and gain although the great obstacle is that decision making obtains the question of who has got the power.

### **6.2.3 Loose and gain with gender equality**

To find out more about resources and obstacles when it comes to the men's own experiences in gender equality I asked the eight men what they thought they would loose and gain with gender equality. Some of the men talked about the lost of freedom that they loose with equality. Wilhelm (29) introduces this chapter with his clear example of the difference between his and his partners freedom. The question that he is answering is what advantage he might have in the household as a man. W stands for Wilhelm and I for the interviewer.

W: Maybe that I don't need a permission to go out with my friends.

I: She needs to have permission if she wants to go out with her friends?

W: Yes, but she doesn't do it! It is not like permission. It is more like she at least says that she will go out to a certain place and come home late and it is ok. It is not permission, right? If I say that no, you are needed for another thing or for another motive it is... But it is not permission! Only that the man doesn't have to do it. The man, if I want to have a drink after work I go. I don't ask for permission.

I: This is an advantage for the men? It is like freedom.

W: Yes, it is more like freedom.

Wilhelm 29

Wilhelm explains that his partner has to ask him if she wants to do something outside the house one evening, when he does not have that obligation. I assume that with more gender equality he would loose some of his freedom and also the power over his partner. Some of the other men talk about that they would have to do more house work if the relationship would be more equal. They would in that case loose part of their time and freedom. On the other hand the partner would perhaps start working and that would bring a double income to the family. As Pedro (43) puts it that would be for the benefit of the whole family, however a bit difficult if the woman would earn more than the man.

Another thing, that some of the men talk about is the relationship to the children in the family. Especially Diego (53) states that he would have wished to be closer to his children. Diego had been working many years far away from the home and he now sees what he has missed. He has to work hard today to get the children's confidence as the mother to the children has.

However, Pedro (43) is of the view that it is okay with him that his wife spends more time with the children because of his work. He means that that is the situation and nothing has to be changed.

One central key point that nearly all men talked about when telling me about what they might lose or gain with gender equality in the household is the issue of respect. Here is Diego's (53) answer on what he might lose with gender inequality.

The care and love from my children. That is what I would lose. I would lose my home. // I would feel bad, like an egoist because I think I am the number one and this is not right. // I think, that the man who feels like he is the chief, number one, his purpose is to fill his ego, his ego. Feel himself like more than others. That he is on a higher level than the others. And this is stupid. No, no I don't like it. He would lose his dignity. His respect to himself. Diego 53

Diego (53) can count several things that he would lose with gender inequality within his household. As a conclusion he says that he would even lose the respect to himself. Wilhelm (29) puts it from the other point of view, what a man would gain with gender equality.

Ok, he will gain respect. Well, at least now because of the way that the state sees on these things. But before, he would have lost respect. For the woman, the children and for the whole household, right? // He will feel much better, right? When he is much more responsible. For me, a man that pays for the house, the food and pays... that is a man. // No, he won't lose much because everything is healthier and that will be better for him, and for everyone. For the family, for the children. And mentally for the children that they have a father in the house and they see that they have a father in the house. The change is very drastic, right, but very good as well. The only problem is that he loses the respect. The bigger change it is for a man the more he has to chase the respect that he had before. Wilhelm 29

Wilhelm (29) talks about the contradiction of respect. When he gives up part of the power within the household, the family is feeling better and he as well. He is behaving like the man he wants to be. At the same time he is losing respect, at least according to how the social rules used to be. Perhaps also according to some norms in the society of how a man is supposed to be that is colliding with other norms of masculinities. As said before, Connell (2005:70) states that there is no masculinity but only masculinities. There is also a hierarchy and a never ending fight for men to express power and that they are men. However, what kind of masculinity that is on top of the hierarchy depends on the setting.

What a man should do to gain or lose respect seems to be contradictory in the society. It seems like all of the men carries a stereotype of a man as the primary breadwinner that takes responsibility for his family. However, almost all also state that they have or they want to have gender equality in the household. What has been shown earlier in the analysis is also that many men has to prove their masculinity towards other men to not be associated with femininity. Kaufman (1994:147-149) talks about the dichotomy between power and powerlessness. He means that the power over others, and especially women, is the main thing that makes a man a man. However, he always has to prove his masculinity to not lose in respect and feel powerless. The respect is according to Kaufman (1987:30-31) showed in the system of the triangulation of violence of men. One of the aspects in this system of violence is the respect that men need from both other men but also from women to prove that they are men and not women; meaning that they are supposed to be strong and worth respect. The society in this system also promotes men's power over others as something that is worth respect. At the same time the interviewed men in this research state that they are supposed to be equal to their women to not risk being called machistas and to gain respect. It seems like men have a tricky balancing act to perform between gender equality and gender inequality and that the signals they get from both the society and in interactions with others are contradictory.

### **6.3 Men's violence against women in intimate relationships**

The purpose of this research is to find out ways to involve men to prevent men's violence against women according to the eight men that I interviewed. One important issue is to hear how these men perceive men's violence against women in intimate relationships and how those answers can be interpreted according to gender relations and masculinities. Another theme that came up during the interviews is the question of the responsibility of the abused woman.

#### **6.3.1 Descriptions and causes to men's violence against women in intimate relationships**

All of the men describe the violence as something wrong and criminal. Several of them also talk about the violence as not only physical but also psychological and that especially the children suffer in families with violence. Diego (53) explains it like this:

It is barbaric. It is a crime against the human beings. It's a shame. I don't agree with either part of the violence, neither the woman who beats the man nor the man who beats the woman. What happens is that the domestic violence also is psychological.// Perhaps that after... that the man doesn't give her importance. For instance take a walk and not listen to you, laugh at you. Many things are psychological violence. Perhaps hurt more than if someone hits her. And afterwards, that he doesn't give her interest. And if you are sick, how nice if someone takes care of you and ask: what do you have, where does it hurt. But no, no.

Diego 53

Diego (53) continues by saying that in Costa Rica there are not many cases of physical violence. More prevalent is the psychological violence when a man has a woman outside the marriage and the wife stays without saying anything because of fear that he would leave her.

Carlos (27) also concludes psychological violence in his description.

...Well a part of the violence is for instance who is making the decisions is like to put tape over her mouth, that she is not allowed to say what she wants to say. Another form of the violence is that she has to do everything in the house is like a slavery. Also that she needs a permission to leave the house from the man but the man not. So, this is not good...

Carlos 27

Hearn (1998:15-16) means that violence is defined according to the actual context. What several men talk about in the interviews is that the violence when not being physical just as well can be psychological and make the woman feel restricted in her ordinary life and not respected. Kaufman (1987:30-31) states that men's violence cannot be eliminated without confronting the violence men exercise against other men and most of all against themselves. That violence's core is the fear of being feminine and the suppression of feelings that many men suffer from. There is to a high extend a pressure both from within men but also from other men and from the society to be powerful and emotionally strong. That stereotype is recognized by the psychologist Salas (Salas José M 2007) in Costa Rica as a way to explain the reality of many men in the country.

When it comes to the causes to the violence several of the men talk about economical reasons and that the machista within the men wakes up with alcohol. However, especially Carlos (27) and Wilhelm (29) talk about the communication between the partners as one important reason, but from two different angels. Carlos (27) states that the profound core is the ignorance against the woman. That the woman often is at home taking care of the house and she gets very tired because she feels like a slave and there is no time for sharing, for rest. When the man comes home there is a risk for an argumentation and that can lead to violence. Wilhelm, on the other hand, means that this lack of dialog occur when the man is out

working, like himself, and comes home tired. He goes to sleep and then goes back to work. There is no time for dialog.

We are talking about the men but there are not only men who are doing the domestic violence, right? A problem that comes up within this question is that the man is a machista by nature. So, if you would say to your woman that: "I don't want you to make soup today", because you don't want soup, right? And you come home and find soup, the domestic violence enters. If the woman goes against you, the domestic violence comes. If you say "buy all these things, but don't make soup" and you find soup, so that is the moment when the machista in you comes. But it is like, also, that one is not a machista. But if the woman, the partner, understood that one comes home tired and that you have to think about that you have to pay for the house, pay for the electricity, pay for the water and pay for the food and the school and whatever. If it was like this it wouldn't be that much violence. If it was more dialog ...

Wilhelm 29

To some extent could the underlying meaning in Wilhelm's story be that he had wished that he had more patience so that he did not have to get that angry. With more time for each other and not that many worries they would have a better life together. He explains the violence with the lack of communication. However, it seems like it for him is the lack of obeying from the behalf of the woman that leads the situation into violence. When Wilhelm (29) continues in the interview he also says that the woman could prevent the violence by being more loving and understanding against him when he comes home tired from work.

Kaufman (1987:41) argues that men often are dependent on women in close relationships to be able to show emotions because they cannot do it with other men due to the power relations between men. That leads to a contradictory situation because it is also in the family and with relationships to women that men can re-establish lost power. In the quotation above Wilhelm (29) relates the violence to the lack of communication between the couple. According to social construction and Foucault (Burr 1995:64) is communication a mean to construct gender relations. How we talk and how we define our reality makes us see the world and others with different eyes. In the quotation above is the unwillingness of having communication with each other also a mean to not having to change the attitude and behaviour. Wilhelm (29) constructs gender relations by saying that it is the fault of the woman that he had to get into violence, even if he emphasizes that he did not want to. If she had been more emotional and listening he would feel better. This is a type example of the being in power and the need of love and care that men try to fulfil within close relationships and that make the situation dangerous for many women and at the same time unsatisfying for many men.

### **6.3.2 The responsibility of the abused woman**

Several of the men speak about the woman's responsibility of saying no to the violence. For instance, Juan (50) states that on the island the machismo culture is strong and the women have too little information about their rights and have to claim their respect from the man. He means that many women act contributively when they do not react against the violence. He takes up sexual harassment as an example and says that the men should stop themselves but that they at the same time are children of their upbringing. Others, like Carlos (27) also talks about the lack of information that women have about their rights.

Jorge (55) means that the women are to blame because they know who they married and could have chosen otherwise, but also that it is a social heritage to continue to accept gender inequality.

Another thing that I often see is for instance a girl that gets married; let's say that the father drinks alcohol and her boyfriend drinks alcohol. She doesn't see the difference. She accepts it because her mother has a husband that drinks so "why should I do the contrary". I think that the girl has to think it over, because she was suffering

in the house having a father that drinks so why is she going to have a husband that drinks? She knows that it will lead to bad things. She is going to have the problems that the man will leave bringing clothes and give food, all which is necessary for the children. And he will hurt her because he has to be much a man. She is almost sowing that she will be hurt. She, because she accepted to take a man that drinks. That is what I think. But, maybe she thinks that it is normal because her father drinks. So why should I be that delicate and not have a man that drinks. So, I think that it is her fault partly. Jorge 55

Another example that almost all the men talk about is the phenomenon that abused women choose to stay in a relationship with a violent man. Several of the men talk about when they themselves or other men have tried to help an abused woman from her violent man. One of the stories comes from Wilhelm (29).

Because once, one friend of mine was beating his girlfriend. I went there to stop it. He pushed me away and started to argue with me. I noticed that the woman was arguing with me as well. I tried to stop him from beating her, but found that they were both against me. There is domestic violence in many households, right? All of them get solved in bed, right? So, one get to be like a gossip, right? So I don't want to... If there is a household with domestic violence the woman should report it to the authorities and she would solve the situation. Wilhelm 29

The woman is according to Wilhelm (29) not grateful but reclaims on the helper because he had hit her husband. According to the men in this research this behaviour is hard to understand and that it might show that the woman accepts the violence. This way of looking at the violence as partly the responsibility of the women can to some extent be related to the Costa Rican setting. In Costa Rica this problem is to a great extent seen as the issue of women. According to the governmental organisation INAMU their work is only directed to empower women. They do not have the aim to work with the men and neither does any other governmental organisation. (Velazcu 2007) It is also the case within many Non Governmental Organisations (Salas 2007). Perhaps the situation in the country now is changing because of the recently constituted law (INAMU 2007). The focus in the new law is on sanctions on men that exercise violence in any form towards women.

#### **6.4 Men's involvement as prevention of violence**

The last chapter in the analysis treats the principal aim of the report from a more pragmatic entry point. When I asked the men about men's involvement they found it hard to understand my questions which might depend on the weak interest the question has in media and society. In the interviews two themes have become clear; men as important actors to prevent violence and how that involvement could be promoted.

##### **6.4.1 Men as important actors**

The question of how important men are as actors to prevent violence against women is not unanimous among the eight interviewees. Luis (23) is the one among the eight that talks from his own experiences being brought up with an abusive father. He is very clear in his statements that men are very important and need to react against the violence. He talks about this reaction within several areas. One area is with an example from his own childhood that he had wished that another man would have come to his father and told him that it was wrong what he did. He states that there is a special authority behind a man.

On the contrary Diego (53) means that there is no difference between men and women according to authority and they are therefore just as responsible to react when the violence is evident.

Juan (50) on his side says that on the island where he lives do women not have that possibility but either a man or a professional if the reaction is supposed to have an effect.

Connell (2005:70) states that gender relations and masculinities have to be looked at from the special context where the phenomenon is studied. It must also therefore be dependent on the context whether men or women have the greatest authority to react against the violence. However, while women in these cases are victims and the perpetrators often have a need to exercise power over women, a guess is that men at least are higher up in the hierarchy to be able to make an effect.

Another area where men can be important to react against violence against women is within homosocial groups. How men talk to other men can either promote or prevent violence (Hearn 1998:221-223) Luis (23) is clear when he talks about what reactions he gets from other men when he tells about his own family situation at the barber shop.

There are some that are very silent. Others say that "dude, you shouldn't have done that". And if it were me, I wouldn't have done it against her. It is like when another man says it... Well, my mother lived with that, so when someone comes and says this I "dude, I lived with this". // And for me it is not bad! I don't think it is bad to want to help my wife, personally. There are others that say that "dude, never. That is stupid. Now the wife is ruling in the house!" (Canta la gallina) I go to the barber shop and tell that I help her with the dishes and to put the clothes for washing. And many people take this as the hen is eating. (Come la gallina) That she decides over the things in the house. And the others no. They say that "In the house I am the one who decides and she has to do everything". // Because there are more friends that are helping him saying that he is doing right than the ones like I that say that it is wrong. If there had been more men that had helped each other in this sense the things could have changed more.

Luis 23

Carlos (27) emphasizes the same phenomenon of having to be strong and masculine in groups with other men. He also tells about that the way men speak to each other changes when taking place in a homosocial group. The phenomenon of the homosocial group to create masculinities has been illuminated in previous research. Kimmel (1994:131) for instance explains this by recognizing the need for men to load their manliness and to re-learn how to be a man by acting out in homosocial groups. He will in the group get support, neglect or be ridiculed according to what masculinity that has a high status points out. Gutmann (2003:3) emphasises men's need to show for others that men as a group is powerful and the individuals as well. There is always a strong loyalty among men. At the same time, the hierarchy between men in homosocial groups makes the power over women very important as a mean to show manliness and not femininity. The key point in this process of creating masculinity is according to social constructionism the language (Burr 1995:44). By thinking and talking differently new masculinities can be created.

As Chodorow (Connell 1994:32) states the key point within psychoanalysis is the creation of a relational/emotional self fundamental. In many contexts do men today de-attach from their mothers because they understand that they have to identify with their fathers to become men. However, that means that they have to suppress their inner feelings and learn how to be physically strong and emotionally de-attached. Instead they have to get into power over others to reach to self confidence which leads to a never-ending struggle between the feeling of power and powerlessness. When it comes to the interviewees in this study almost all of them talk about their authority as fathers to learn their children both by being good role models but also how they talk about equality and masculinity with their children.

Well, I am a man so I already have my destiny, my mentality. The problem is the boys. The television has great influence over their future. That should be a great change. The less violence that they see, the less violent there will be. I won't change. I already am like this, I cannot change. But if my son, with 6 years, sees less violence, that is a way to change.

Wilhelm 29

Wilhelm (29) talks about the possibility for boys to not grow up as violent men. He also says in the interview that his father had told him to be the one who rules in the household. However, at the same time as he has hope for his son he does not see that he himself can change.

The ability to change is also an important concept within the hegemonic stereotyped masculinity that according to the Costa Rican researchers Calvo & Campos (2005:204) has a great influence in Costa Rica. If a man can change he confirms that he has been wrong about himself and thereby shows weakness. Face saving is very values among men more than among women.

Luis (23) talks about the ability to change in his interview and he states that it is possible by looking at his own life.

All the machistas have it. All men have it. I am like I am and I cannot change. But these are things that one can change. When we first married I used to scream to her. But she said: No, pay attention and let's talk because we talk. I want to talk and we are going to talk. // And we talked to the priest that said that I didn't have to scream at her. You have to continue trying because it is not going to change over a night. // With help you can change, but it doesn't exist. Luis 23

Another factor that has come up during the interviews as an absolute influence on the creation of masculinities is the societal signals through social policies, jurisdiction and governmental organisations work.

Luis (23) again gets to be the speaker of some of the interviewees when describing his own situation. He states that many tasks in the society demand a man to do them. This might be analysed by the dichotomy of public and private spheres (Johansson 1999:184). The society allows and supports men to become agents in the public sphere where often the economical, political and societal power is available.

#### **6.4.2 To promote men's involvement**

To promote men's involvement in preventing men's violence against women in intimate relationships the issue has to be turned into a problem and a responsibility for men as well as a mean to gain in life quality for men. The issue of preventing men's violence against women has to be treated from an angle that feels important for men. (Espen 2006:3) It is also important to start with the fundamental core, namely masculinities and power relations that in the prolongation can create violence against men themselves, against other men and against women. To prevent the violence against women the other two pillars must be emphasized and above all the violence against the self in the shape of hegemonic masculinities. (Kaufman 1987:30-31) Professor Jose Manuel Salas Calvo from WEM (2007) states that men in Costa Rica are to a great extend influenced by the hegemonic characteristics. He says that men can gain a better quality of life when they reflect and take responsibility for their behaviour and perception of masculinities. For instance they can get a better self confidence when the fear of being weak is diminishing, they can be more satisfied when getting better contact with themselves as emotional persons and they can get better relationships with their wives and children.

When I asked the interviewees in this research about what they thought men could gain by living in equal relationships versus unequal relationships all of them answered that they would gain respect from their families and from the society. They would keep their families instead of being alone when the family had left them. Diego (53) also says that the man would get a



better self worth. At the same time Luis (23), Carlos (27) and Wilhelm (29) are doubtful whether the society would support the equality between the relations. Luis and Carlos talk about how their friends would laugh at them when they do not fulfil the hegemonic masculinity. Wilhelm is uncertain whether the society would give respect or not if a man would live in an equal relationship. An analysis might show that it is not clear what these men think they would gain if they would change their view on their masculinities. The signals from themselves, peer groups and the society are not unanimous.

Hearn (1998:221-223) states that to prevent men's violence against known women (his definition) has to be made on different levels in the society. The prevention that he talks about aims both to stop men from exercising violence but also to make men not start exercising violence. Hearn points out the importance in focusing on policy development; educating men on issues of violence, the production of clear policy statements, public campaigns and addressing power, control and responsibility in groups with men, amongst other things. He also focuses on the importance of the interaction between men where men tend to support each other in violent behaviour. Instead they should support each other in refusing violence.

On a group level, as is emphasized above some of the interviewees state that the discussions in the peer group is very important in promoting or preventing inequality between men and women and thereby also in prolongation violence against women by men. According to theory of masculinities and social construction that is very important, as we have seen above. Another mean on this level is the work with sensibilization and creation of new masculinities one mean to work with the issue. Luis (23) is one among the interviewees that is both engaged but also emphasizes the need of groups for men. Also Carlos (27) talks about the need of groups for men.

Also to share with other men what it is to be a man. There is a lack of information but you need to talk to other men also. The more people talk and express their feelings the more relaxed and less frustrated are they and they don't have to come home and argue with their wife's. Carlos 27

Carlos (27) and Juan (50), both from the island, also state that these groups have to be made attractive for men by calling those constructive names and not about the violence because the men would not come to these meetings. Pedro (43) argues for the need of professionalism when conducting programs for men. He means that there should always be knowledge about the theme and to whom the programs are conducted to make them effective.

WEM states that it is the only organisation in Costa Rica that works with men in a professional way. By that they mean that they are educated psychologists and have special knowledge about masculinities. They have carried out groups for men throughout many years. They see a need for more economical resources from the government for themselves and other groups to be able to reach more men. For instance, WEM have a telephone line that is available for men to get in contact with a psychologist. WEM sees that the line is much used by all kinds of men, both violent and non-violent men. They also see that many men take contact with their different groups to get help in difficult situations. WEM also carries out educational programs to for instance priests and truck drivers. They are all men and either need to be able to help others with their masculinities like the priests or need to learn how to control anger while driving. (Solano 2007)

On a structural level several men talk about the importance of school and education. They say that the school in Costa Rica today has an important role in educating children in stereotyped

gender relations. It is therefore important to change the attitude within the schools for the future children to grow up with other ideas about themselves as girls and boys.

Luis (23) emphasis the importance of how the society is looking at the issue and if it is changeable or not.

I don't know... If the society is looking at it as something bad they won't come. They would have to give propaganda... that it is something normal to say that I was wrong. That it is not bad to say that "I am machista. I can change". That is something that one can change. It is not something that "I am machista and I am machista and enough with that". I beat my wife and I will continue beating her until she dies. No, that is something that one can change, that is able to stop. Luis 23

An explanation from a gender perspective of the resistance from the governmental institutions is that they are part of a hegemonic society and therefore avoid talking about men's responsibility that could reduce men's power in gender relations. To make room for changes, it is important to talk about the gender relations and the interdependency between men and women and also the concepts of power and powerlessness that affects the behaviour of many men. (Esplen 2006:1-2)

Almost all of the men thought that the jurisdiction at that time was strong and that one powerful way to stop violence was to call the authorities. However, the organisations in this study argued that the jurisdiction had problems because it lacked sanctions against the violence. Since May 2007, the jurisdiction is improved with sanctions against men's violence against women (INAMU, CIEM, WEM 2007). The effect of this jurisdiction is partly that the society gives signals that it rejects men's violence against women. According to social construction this communication between society and its people could be a mean to create new masculinities (Burr 1995:7, 39).

## **7 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION**

The aim of this research is to explore entry-points to involve men to prevent men's violence against women in intimate relationships in Costa Rica. The issue is important due to the high extent of the violence that is prevailing in Costa Rica so as in many other countries. Research on men has been done earlier. I refer here to the chapter on earlier research. For instance projects to involve men to prevent violence against women showed success when the project had a framework of gender and masculinities in the discussions with the men. However it is clear that also in other countries there is a need to focus more on men in research. To approach the subject in this study in a pragmatic way and to get a comprehension of the processes within the field I have studied concepts of masculinities and gender equality, men's violence against women and how to prevent this violence. I have tried to investigate how the interviewed men perceive these concepts and how they are experienced in their daily lives. As Esplen (2006:3) states men has to be involved in the process with the purpose to gain something for them selves. In this chapter I will try to discuss the most important aspects that I have seen during the research. I call these aspects entry-points to the preventive work because it is not only a question of finding practical tools but to understand the underlying processes that creates and sustains the power relations that make violence against women possible. Finally, I will shortly discuss why an analysis through a gender perspective has been valuable to this research.

## 7.1 Four entry-points

### 7.1.1 Social construction of masculinities

The first entry-point I would like to illuminate is the social construction of masculinity and its relationship to power relations. Men internalize the power that is given to men as a gender class. According to Kaufman (1987:30-31) and his triangulation of violence, men perform within the hierarchy of power relations where to be a man includes having control over him self and his feelings, over women and over other men. Power relations are profound in the society and the man has to handle the dichotomy of power and powerlessness by performing his manliness every day to still be seen as a man. The violence against women cannot be prevented and eliminated without confronting the violence towards the other two at the same time. He also states that it is basically the violence towards the man himself that promotes the other two types.

In this research it has become clear that the eight men utilize the concept of machista frequently when talking about masculinities. Often the interviewees use the concept machista to relate them selves to as something that they are not. It illuminates the importance and the negative value the concept has in their society. However, in daily life the interviewed men focus on their practical responsibility in different matters and do not see the impact this has on gender relations. On one hand the duty most of the men felt to be the responsible for the family when it came to economy and to make decisions both works contradictory to the irresponsibility the machista exercises. On the other hand this responsibility as the head of the household leads to more power within the household so as societal power. The men also talked about gender equality as something they exercised in their families. At the same time they, as said above, wanted to be the head of the families which is an expression of hierarchy. Some of the men talked about the signals from the society they got where it was not clear how they would behave when it came to gender equality. A conclusion therefore is that it is difficult for men to create masculinities based on gender equality when signals are that contradictory. One might think that a gender identity becomes ambivalent when equality is extended in the society. The former stereotype of masculinity is no longer something to lean on.

Another conclusion of the utilizing of the concept of machismo is that the men are at the same time constructing masculinities by referring to themselves with gendered expressions. Language is according to the school of social constructionism important in constructing behaviours (Burr 1996:44). This process of constructing a bad and a good personality might help these men avoid having to look at themselves as part of a gender class with more access to power compared to women. Another reflection is that the stereotype of machismo is used by the men in a positive constructive way. By referring to what they do not want to be they get help to act and react according to the opposite of being a machista. The stereotype can therefore bring a moral and educational effect for the increase of gender equality.

In addition, to create new masculinities demands a person to change. According to some of the interviewees this is one of the core issues of the hegemonic masculinity. A person who accepts to change also admit that he before were wrong. That is the opposite of a machista that always is in control and therefore always knows what is right. One of the interviewees emphasized the importance of how the society handles this issue. He states that it must be accepted to go out and admit that I have been a machista. It seems like the expression today has a very negative label in that sense that it is to shameful to admit that a person has been a machista but want to change. To sum up the first entry-point; if men want to stop using

violence against women to balance power relations they need to create new masculinities that are not gendered.

### **7.1.2 What to gain with gender equality**

I would like to continue by highlighting the second entry-point. It treats what the eight men thought that they would gain with gender equality. In the Costa Rican setting the concept of the stereotyped masculinity *machista* is very much alive. According to WEM (Solano 2007) are men suffering under the pressure of the prevailing masculinity that pushes men to be strong physically and emotionally. Men are supposed to be in charge of women and in the family, to succeed in their working life and to oppose themselves to dangerous situations. WEM argues that men in Costa Rica in general tend to behave according to this stereotype and need to create new forms of masculinities. WEM focus on the promotion of life quality men would gain on this process. For instance, when it comes to more contact to inner feelings, better relationships with their partner and to other men. The men in the interviews focused on that they would gain respect both from their families and self respect and to be able to have two salaries when the partner had an employment outside the home. Altogether these signals are important to use in the aim to involve men and to make the issue of men's violence against women as a problem and an interest for men. A conclusion might be that the power relations and the social construction of masculinities that is prevalent in Costa Rica today have a negative impact on life quality of men. In the prolongation, these give birth to men's violence where women are one target amongst others, including them selves.

### **7.1.3 Communication within homo-social groups**

The third entry-point I would like to carry out is the possibility to work with communication in homo-social groups. The social construction focuses on what language, both unconscious and conscious, mean to the social construction of in this case masculinities. Foucault (Burr 1995:44) emphasizes the power the leading gender class has in society on deciding how situations are interpreted through language. The men in the interviews spoke about their experiences of communication with other men. No one found it easy to talk about personal problems in the family within the group. The expected reactions were to become ridiculed and a pressure to get back into the role of the man in power in the family. As Kimmel (1994:131) states are homo-social groups both a forum where men compete to get a higher position in the power relation hierarchy as well as a forum to load manliness, which makes it difficult for new masculinities to take form. Alienation from showing feelings and weakness to others is a strategy for men to keep power and masculinity. Men's communication with other men is according to this research very important to create masculinities. Men in groups serve as role models and language is one of the tools. However, WEM states that groups for men with men also are important fora where men can dare show feelings and weakness to other men. In these groups new masculinities can take form. The proposals some of the men in this research made were that the government should constitute more resources to men to work with these questions. Important aspects to include are to create groups for men with the focus on things that are important for men, otherwise men would not come.

### **7.1.4 Structural signals in Costa Rica**

That brings me to the fourth entry-point that has become evident as important to involve men, namely the structural level. In Costa Rica there is a need to make men's violence against women to a problem of men. The interviewed men were all very clear that violence is wrong and something that belonged to a machista and not to them selves. However, many of them tended to put part of the responsibility of the violence on the woman and not fully on the man. The organisations interviewed were aware of the government's lack of interest on men. At the

same time two of them only focused on empower women as they are the victims of this specific violence. These feministic organisations put the responsibility on men to change men. However, also this give signals to others in the society and the focus will still be on women. WEM was the only professional nongovernmental organisation that focused on men. All three organisations stressed the need of focus on men from the government of Costa Rica.

The three organisations interviewed welcomed the new law where men's violence against women are sanctioned, but complained about the long wait for the approbation of the law. An explanation from a gender perspective of the resistance from the governmental institutions is that they are part of a hegemonic society and therefore avoid talking about men's responsibility that could reduce men's power in gender relations. (Connell 2005:70-79) The new legislation will give signals to both men and women that violence is wrong, which will make it more clear and necessary for men to work with their own masculinities.

## **7.2 An analysis from a gender perspective**

The advantages by analyzing the eight interviews from a gender perspective have been that the structural gender order within the issues of interest of this research has become clear. It has been illuminated that the every day life of the eight men and their comprehension of the issues of this research is affected by the "doing gender". For instance is the men's experiences of communication in homo-social groups evidence for the social construction of masculinities and how men have to proof themselves as men. In addition, a gender perspective aims to change the gender order. This research aims therefore to be pragmatic and to support change for the best of both men and women. To analyse the interviews from a gender perspective where the structural order is seen as a social construction gives by hand a re-learning process. Working with masculinities is a way both to focus on men as a gender class and the power relations that men exercise so as to see that masculinities are influenced by fluidity and therefore are changeable.

## **7.3 Future need of research**

I find this area very important due to the many subjects of violence there are concerning both gender classes of men and women. The specific violence that is the focus in this research is dependent on the other two pillars in the triangulation of violence. I would therefore like to see more research on the violence men direct versus themselves to make the processes of negative masculinities visible. I believe it has to be made transparent and clear the negative impact men's power in gender relations have. The extern power many men exercise has to be set in relation to the intern power or powerlessness many men feel. You cannot change something you do not know about.

Furthermore, it is difficult to change if you do not have positive imaginaries as role models and have access to forum to make this construction of masculinities possible. Therefore I find it important to make new research on homo-social groups and the processes men go through when working with their masculinities. What are the criteria of homo-social groups where there are good conditions for free and positive changes?

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## 9 APPENDIX

### 9.1 Appendix 1

#### Interview guide to men

1. Can you tell me something about your current situation concerning age, family and work?

2. Masculinity

How is your perception of masculinity?

Fill in:

A man is a person who.....

A good man is a person who.....

A bad man is a person who.....

If there is a connection between masculinity and men's violence in marriages in Costa Rica, how would you describe this relation?

3. Men's violence against women in marriages

How would you describe men's violence against women in marriages?

What opinions do you have upon men's violence against women in marriages?

Do you know some one who uses violence in some form against his wife and what do you think about that?

What do you think causes men's violence against women in marriages?

What do you think you, and other men, can gain on violence in a marriage?

What do you think you, and other men, can loose on violence in a marriage?

4. Gender equality

Have you ever talked with a girl friend or a male friend about equality? How did you talk about it?

How do you perceive equality between men and women in a marriage?

What do you think is the most important you, and other men, can gain with equality in a marriage?

What do you think is the most difficult you, and other men, can loose with equality in a marriage?

In what situations in a marriage do you think men have more privileges than women?

In what situations in a marriage do you think women have more privileges than men?

5. Prevention and male involvement

What influence do you think men can have in preventing men's violence against women in marriages?

How do you think you, and other men, can prevent men's violence against women in marriages?

How do you think men can get involved in preventing men's violence against women in marriages?



What entry-points do you think would be successful? In what way?

Suggestions:

Specific male involvement groups

Fathers

Brothers

Peer groups

Educations

In working life

Priests

Politicians

Medias

Journalists

Others

What do you think is most important in the future in preventing men's violence against women in marriages?

## 9.2 Appendix 2

International Master of Science in Social Work

2007-03-08

Gothenburg University

Anna Johansson

**Hi!**

I am a Swedish student who is studying International Social Work at the University of Gothenburg. I am writing my master thesis during March and April in Costa Rica, San José. To be able to complete my thesis I am now looking for persons to make interviews with.

The thesis aims to look at positive strategies to involve men into the preventive work against men's violence against women in relationships. For many years mostly women have been working with the issue and then mostly with the women. In the recent years male movements have been increasing around the world. The perspective for the movements is that men also are victims to some extent under the pressure of the "machismo", the part of the masculinity that demands the man to for instance always be in control, always strong and successful in work. The violence against women in families can to some extent be explained by this "machismo".

It has been made clear, that to make a change, which would improve life for both women and men with a better quality of life, there is a need to discuss masculinities and what impact they have on the daily life within the relationships. It has also been made clear that men in general, "not violent men" are very important to help the process forward. Men listen to other men and between men new healthy masculinities can grow. The problem is that the issue is closely related to blame and shame. How then find **positive strategies** that make men want to involve more? I am interested in what men themselves think is the answers to that question.

I would like to interview men with different backgrounds around the themes masculinities, equality, violence against women in relationships and positive strategies to male involvement. The interviews will be conducted individually with the help of an interpreter, with a recorder and will take around 1½ hour. I also attach a letter with more specific information about the interviews and how I will deal with the information that will come out of the interview.

It would mean a lot to me if you would like to be interviewed. Take contact with me or with the one who gave you this letter and let us make up an appointment. I am interested in what you have to say!

Anna Johansson  
annapanna\_joh@hotmail.com

¡Hola!

Soy una estudiante sueca de Trabajo Social Internacional en la Universidad de Gotemburgo. Estoy escribiendo mi tesis de maestría durante marzo y abril en San José, Costa Rica. Para poder completar mi tesis, estoy buscando personas a las cuales hacer entrevistas.

La tesis busca estudiar estrategias positivas para involucrar a los hombres en el trabajo preventivo contra la violencia masculina en contra de las mujeres en las relaciones. Por muchos años, han sido mayormente mujeres las que se han ocupado de este asunto y además principalmente con mujeres. En años recientes, los movimientos de hombres se han incrementado en todo el mundo. La perspectiva que tienen los movimientos es que los hombres también son víctimas hasta cierto punto, bajo la presión del “machismo”, la parte de la masculinidad que exige al hombre, por ejemplo, estar siempre en control, ser siempre fuerte y exitoso en el trabajo. La violencia contra las mujeres en las familias se puede explicar, hasta cierto punto, mediante este “machismo”.

Ha quedado claro que, para hacer un cambio, que mejoraría la vida tanto para las mujeres como para los hombres, mediante una mejor calidad de vida, es necesario hablar sobre las masculinidades y el impacto que tienen en la vida diaria dentro de las relaciones. También ha quedado claro que los hombres en general, los “hombres no violentos”, son muy importantes para impulsar el proceso. Los hombres escuchan a otros hombres y, entre hombres, nuevas masculinidades pueden surgir. El problema es que el asunto está muy ligado a la culpa y la vergüenza. ¿Cómo entonces encontrar **estrategias positivas** que hagan que los hombres se quieran involucrar más? Me interesa lo que los hombres mismos piensan que es la respuesta a esta pregunta.

Me gustaría entrevistar hombres de diferentes entornos sobre las temas de las masculinidades, la igualdad, la violencia contra las mujeres en las relaciones y las estrategias positivas para el involucramiento de los hombres. Las entrevistas se harán individualmente con la ayuda de un intérprete, con una grabadora, y tardarán alrededor de una hora y media. Adjunto una carta con información más específica sobre las entrevistas y cómo voy a manejar la información producida en las entrevistas.

Significaría mucho para mi si usted quisiera ser entrevistado. Póngase en contacto conmigo o con quién le dio esta carta y fijemos una cita. ¡Me interesa lo que usted tenga que decirme!

Anna Johansson  
annapanna\_joh@hotmail.com

### 9.3 Appendix 3

#### Informed Consent

The following is a presentation of how I will use the data collected in the interview.

The research project is a part of my education in the International Masters program in Social Work at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. In order to insure that my project meets the ethical requirements for good research I promise to hold to the following principles:

- Interviewees in the project will be given information about the purpose of the project.
- Interviewees have the right to decide whether he will participate in the project, even after the interview has been concluded.
- The collected data will be handled confidentially and will be kept in such a way that no unauthorized person can view or access it.

The interview will be recorded as this makes it easier for me to document what is said during the interview and also helps me in the continuing work with the project. In my analyze some data may be changed so that no interviewee will be recognized. After finishing the project the data will be destroyed. The data I collect will only be used in this project.

You have the right to decline answering any questions, or terminate the interview without giving an explanation.

You are welcome to contact me in case you have any questions.

Anna Johansson  
[annapanna\\_joh@hotmail.com](mailto:annapanna_joh@hotmail.com)

## **Consentimiento informado**

La siguiente es una presentación de cómo usaré los datos recolectados en la entrevista.

El proyecto de investigación es parte de mi programa de estudios en la Maestría Internacional en Trabajo Social en la Universidad de Gotemburgo, Suecia. Para asegurar que mi proyecto cumpla con los requisitos éticos de una buena investigación, prometo adherirme a los siguientes principios.

- Se dará información a los entrevistados sobre el propósito del proyecto.
- Los entrevistados tendrán el derecho de decidir si participan en el proyecto, incluso después de que se haya concluido la entrevista.
- Los datos recolectados se manejarán confidencialmente y se guardarán de manera tal que ninguna persona no autorizada pueda verlos o accederlos.

La entrevista será grabada, por cuanto esto me hace más fácil documentar lo dicho durante la entrevista y también me ayuda en el trabajo continuado del proyecto. Durante mi análisis, algunos datos podrán ser cambiados, de manera que ningún entrevistado pueda ser reconocido. Después de finalizar el proyecto, los datos serán destruidos. Los datos que recolecte solamente serán utilizados en este proyecto.

Usted tendrá el derecho de declinar responder a cualquier pregunta, o dar por terminada la entrevista, sin dar ninguna explicación.

Le invito a contactarme en caso de que tenga alguna pregunta.

Anna Johansson  
annapanna\_joh@hotmail.com