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Some Men. Feminist Allies and the Movement to End Violence against Women

Tinka Schubert¹

1) Rovira i Virgili University, Spain

Date of publication: June 21th, 2017

Edition period: June 2017-October 2017

To cite this article: Schubert, T. (2017). Some Men. Feminist Allies and the Movement to End Violence against Women. [Review of the book]. *Masculinities and Social Change*, 6(2), 190-192. doi: 10.17583/MCS.2017.2787

To link this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4471/MCS.2017.2787>

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Reviews (I)

Messner, M. A., Greenberg, M.A., & Peretz, T. (2015). *Some Men. Feminist Allies and the Movement to End Violence against Women*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0199338771

Men and Masculinity Studies are increasingly becoming a stronger research field in social sciences and simultaneously influence society. In this context, Messner, Greenberg and Peretz make a timely and important contribution to understanding the role of men in ending violence against women (VAW). It is definitely a crucial reading in men's studies, telling the evolution of the feminist movement from the perspective of some men. Starting with the stories of the first men joining the Women's Movement and the Take Back The Night marches to the current panorama of violence prevention programs and transnational Men's movements, the authors also point to the dilemmas that men experienced. In this evolution of men as allies the authors mention relevant issues of which I will only highlight some.

First of all, it is noteworthy that some men define the moment of engaging in the movement as a life changing moment, reflecting the idea that engaging in this struggle is personal and political. Several of the participants have previous experience with violence against women or against themselves as children or have suffered similar discrimination due to other social variables. Getting in touch with their mentors (feminist women and male role models) has sparked their interest and marked their life for good. Ganz (2010) states that social movements require a personal narrative explaining why one engages and believes in a movement. The authors excellently express this idea by pointing to the different life stories of the people interviewed and even the life stories of the authors themselves, providing the reader with the full sense of their endeavor.

Concerning the dilemmas that emerge they highlight the double function of the initial men's groups, internal and almost therapeutic and external for intervention and prevention. The participation of men in a women's movement is done very cautiously in order not to take over leadership or the movement itself, yet some women expect greater participation of men in ending VAW. Dworkin made a harsh criticism at one of the Men's conferences to encourage them to take action in preventing men from hurting.

Hence, men expand their engagement, but always with the idea of being accountable to women – another crucial aspect present in the book. Every action that should be taken is discussed with women to get their approval. Yet, in times of sex wars and a fragmentation of the women's movement this aspect turns in to the question of accountable to which women? While some men's groups managed to overcome this dilemma by addressing common issues to all women's groups such as domestic violence, which started to receive state funding, others did not but continued their contribution in different ways.

Prevention programs emerge, more funding is invested into addressing VAW and the initial social movement thus becomes institutionalized in NGOs or state funded women's centers etc. This implies on the one hand much more resources, and on the other hand, that the initial spirit and feminist claims are more and more diluted. Compromises need to be done in terms of why people engage in this issue, and a healthy balance needs to be found on whether it is to make a living or to end VAW.

Finally, it is important to mention that men's participation in this movement has been fundamental and has also promoted the development of prevention programs such as the bystander intervention to address men not only as potential perpetrators of violence but to engage them as potential bystanders who prevent this from happening appealing to the 'good man'. Though this is the most promising prevention approach, the authors conclude that it is still not clear to what extent these programs actually contribute to ending VAW. In this regard, I would like to point to a crucial element that is still underexplored: being a 'good man' is not sufficiently valued in society. Following the line of preventive socialization initiated by Gomez (2015), men (and women) want to be liked and loved. As long as men are socially successful with violent behavior, many young boys and

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men will continue to opt for this behavior. We need to emphasize the attractiveness of these Some Men who are brave enough to take a stand against violent males and in favor of victims of this violence. Taking Joe Biden as an example, who though not directly involved in the Feminist movement, he has used his power to tackle white male privilege to improve legislation. As a feminist in the field I can only congratulate some men, the authors and editors for their excellent work.

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Tinka Schubert, Rovira i Virgili University
tinkatabea.schubert@urv.cat